



# Mid Wales Matters



## The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

Web site: [mwam.powys.org.uk](http://mwam.powys.org.uk)

I AM a better road user ...

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## Chairman's Comment

We've all experienced this, haven't we – the sharp intake of breath, the frowning of the brow which precedes the diagnosis by a visiting tradesman that our TV/dishwasher/microwave/laptop is in need of expensive and urgent attention. Unless we have relevant technical knowledge (in which case we probably wouldn't have called him in the first place) we are entirely at his mercy; we have to believe in both his judgement and his honesty. The same applies to car problems, of course – we are at the mercy of the repair man. There was a time, now long gone, when most motorists had a rudimentary understanding of how an internal combustion engine works and were able to diagnose and rectify minor faults. Changing the plugs, adjusting the points, fitting a new bulb, replacing a frayed wire or dodgy hose – these were all child's play for the average weekend dabbler. Only inexplicable or serious problems required expert intervention – (sharp intake of breath) "Sorry, sir/mate/love, yer big end's on the blink."

People like myself, who drive classic cars, do tend to pick up expertise; we can open up the bonnet, see where things are and roll up our sleeves. The workings of a modern car, however, are hidden away under shiny metal covers with barely a wire in sight. Out of reach for the average handyman, alas.



## Editor's Spot

Yes indeed, modern cars can be difficult to repair with hundreds of engine components, some of them very high tech., crammed into a small space. The average independent workshop will probably not have access to a diagnostic computer, so we may have to go to a main dealer and pay high labour charges.

Whichever repair service you use, you need to be as sure as possible that only agreed and necessary work will be carried out. There are, alas, unscrupulous operators who do a shoddy job, charge for fictitious work and even fit counterfeit or second hand parts, charging them out as new.

So, how do you avoid the scammer and get yourself the best deal? Well, I suppose, knowledge is power – find out what you can about your potential saviour. Word of mouth is perhaps the most valuable guide, and those of us with even modest IT skills can do an internet search. Then ask your chosen establishments for assessments and quotes – but remember, the cheapest isn't necessarily the best.

I think I've only once been diddled in the car repair minefield, and that was when I lived abroad. Beware the outer limits of the EU!

### **New Treasurer Required**

Our long serving treasurer, Mandy Giordano, has to give up her post in the very near future, and we urgently need to find someone to replace her. The MWAM treasurership really isn't an onerous task – just a matter of keeping a record of our income and expenditure and presenting a brief financial report at each of our bi-monthly committee meetings and the AGM. If you think you could help us out or would like to know more, please get in touch with either Mandy, or Geoff, our secretary. Contact details see page 4.

**\*\*Don't forget AGM on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

## Annual General Meeting

You are cordially invited by the group committee to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists which this year is being held at 2:00pm on **Saturday 10th March 2012** at the Bracken Trust, Cefnlllys Lane, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LJ. This is to enable the trustees of the group to present their annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2011 for approval by the members and also to conduct an election.

This is your opportunity to find out how we have spent your money and to question the committee on its activities. We are nothing without our members and we need support and guidance on what we should be doing for the groups and your benefit. If you don't like what we are doing, come along and say so; if you do, please come and let us know. Your continued support is appreciated and we would encourage as many members as possible to become involved in the running of the group. This year we need to find a replacement for our Treasurer Mandy and we would also welcome new committee members who are able to give their time and energies to the future success of the group. We also need additional observers who will be trained to assist new associates. If you feel that you cannot play an active role, please continue your financial support by renewing your membership of MWAM. A formal notice for the AGM and nomination forms has been sent to members who do not have computer access and copies are available for download from our website for those who have this facility. If you have not received these or you would like a printed copy, please contact the secretary.

*Geoff Smith*

## Membership Renewal 2012

We thank the 75% of members who have already renewed their membership for 2012 and for their continued support. Annual subscription for group membership is due on 1<sup>st</sup> January each year and renewal notices were sent out at the end of last year requesting payment of the £10 fee. Over 60% of our membership pays their subscription by banker's standing order and this is the preferred method to ensure that membership does not lapse. If you have not received your membership renewal notice and MWAM membership card for 2012 please let the membership secretary know and these will be sent to you again. Members are also asked to return the 'Renewal of MWAM Membership' form in the addressed envelope provided. This contains the details held on each member and affords the opportunity to amend any of these. This form should be returned to the membership secretary even if all details are correct as its primary purpose is for each member to declare that they are current members of the IAM. They are asked to enter the expiry date of their **IAM membership** on this form. Unfortunately unless you hold a current IAM membership you are not allowed to join a local group and we are not permitted to accept your renewal. If you have not yet returned your renewal form and/or payment please do so as soon as possible. Equally if for some reason you have decided not to renew please return your membership card with your resignation confirmation.

*Geoff Smith - Membership Secretary*

## Zero emissions – is hydrogen the answer?

The opening of the UK's first public refuelling station for hydrogen vehicles in Swindon is part of efforts to create a "hydrogen highway" along the M4 motorway. It is also seen as an important step in a UK-wide scheme to make hydrogen vehicles a viable alternative to petrol-driven cars. "A hydrogen car is much cleaner than a conventional car," says Professor Kevin Kendall, a hydrogen and fuel cell expert from Birmingham University. "This will clean up our cities enormously, no emissions whatsoever." Professor Kendall believes fuel cell cars will change the way we drive. Hydrogen-powered cars rely on a fuel cell that takes oxygen from the air and combines it with hydrogen from a tank to create electricity. The electricity is used to power electric motors, which turn the car's wheels. As such, hydrogen-powered cars can be seen as electric vehicles that are not held back by the limited range of batteries. "Your electric battery car does 60 miles [100km], this does 300 miles. It fills in five minutes rather than five hours," says Professor Kendall. "This is the one for the future, there's no doubt in my mind." Creating a hydrogen refuelling infrastructure is essential for the future of hydrogen-powered motoring, which some carmakers see as the eventual future of so-called zero-emissions motoring. "For long-distance driving, hydrogen fuel cells are very promising," according to Dieter Zetsche, chief executive of Daimler, the owner of Mercedes and Smart cars." Rolling out the infrastructure will not be cheap, of course, but it might be a more cost-effective solution than the creation of a battery recharging infrastructure for conventional electric cars.

For battery electric vehicles, you'll need infrastructure that is probably more costly than hydrogen. More charging stations mean more parking places are needed because it takes longer for them to refuel." Other carmakers are less concerned about costs relating to conventional electric motoring. BMW, for instance, believes most people will charge their electric cars at home, so the need for an extensive infrastructure is not as great as many believe. During 11 million kilometres of consumer testing with the company's electric Mini, it found that the average driver covered just 25 miles per day - well within the range of modern electric cars, says BMW's head of research and development, Klaus Draeger. Consequently, the test drivers rarely recharged their cars away from their homes, and many of them only recharged their cars every two or three days," he says.

Nissan's global head of planning and marketing, Andy Palmer, agrees that there is only a limited need for an extensive infrastructure to recharge electric cars fast. Fuel cell cars could become a common sight on our roads in the future. "If you think about the electric car, the infrastructure exists everywhere. The infrastructure is already there," he says. "So you don't have the high investment costs you would have in putting down a hydrogen station." Instead, the existing grid and existing plugs will do the job for most of the people most of the time, he believes. However, he acknowledges there need to be some fast-chargers around the country to help those doing longer journeys top up their batteries, but this only takes 15 minutes with existing technology, he reasons.

Today, there are really only two ways of executing zero emissions. One is the electric car; the other is the fuel cell or the hydrogen car. The potential of electric vehicles and fuel cell vehicles to dramatically cut emissions from cars is tremendous, though the term "zero emissions motoring" needs to be treated with caution.

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Both require the energy to be produced in the first place, whether to create electricity or to create hydrogen. So to ensure the overall emissions that result from our transport needs are genuinely minimal, that power will either need to be created in nuclear power plants or it needs to come from renewable energy sources such as hydropower or wind farms. As long as fossil fuels such as coal and gas remain part of a nation's energy mix, the vision of completely emission-free motoring will remain a pipedream



## Watch this space



A North Wales man and his daughter have refused to pay a parking fine because the ticket, issued by a private firm acting for the local council, was not bilingual. "Our first language is Welsh. It's what we speak at home. It's not fair that they've issued the ticket in English," they said.

The Welsh Language Society says that their refusal to pay is on flimsy legal ground, as documents issued by private companies are not covered by the 1993 Welsh Language Act. A spokesman for the company said: "We are waiting for legal advice. In the meantime the fines are on hold."

## New Members

Congratulations and a warm welcome to the following associates who were successful in their IAM Advanced

Driving  or Riding Test 

Name	Location	Observer	Date
Lynne Millington 	Llandrindod Wells	Geoff Smith	Sept 11
Roger Jepson 	Llanidloes	Chris England	Oct 11

## Associate Course Dates



Denotes Car Course



Denotes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
12/1	21/03/11	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
12/2	25/05/11	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
12/3	18/07/11	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
12/4	26/09/11	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

## Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
24/03/2012	Saturday	10:00AM	12:00Noon	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
04/07/2012	Wednesday	7:00PM	9:00PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
27/10/2012	Saturday	2:00PM	4:00PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Please note that all the above-published dates and venues may be subject to change due to circumstances beyond the committee's control. For the latest information, visit our web site: [mwam.powys.org.uk](http://mwam.powys.org.uk) or contact the group secretary. **Please contact our Chief Observer John Scott if you require any further details.**

## Your Committee

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Mid Wales Advanced Motorists (MWAM) publish this Newsletter to provide a means of communication within the group to Members and Associates. The opinions are those of the Editor and individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the view of MWAM or the Institute of Advanced Motorists to which it is affiliated.