



Mid Wales Matters



The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

Web site: mwam.powys.org.uk

I AM a better road user ...

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Editor's Spot



A month or so ago I decided to change my car - for good reason. I have a couple of dogs that travel on the back seat, and despite the fact that I've installed a sort of hammock for them, which keeps muddy footprints off the upholstery, hair still gets everywhere. The answer was, of course, to buy an estate; the hounds would be banished to the rear quarters, and I could welcome back-seat passengers without the need to get the Hoover out first.

I mentioned this to my son when I was visiting him in Manchester, and with a flash of his iPad, he located a dealer offering three used Focus estates for sale. The website must have been neglected for some time because by the time we arrived two had gone; the last one was very much top end and almost new - rather more expensive than I'd planned. I asked the salesman what I'd be saving compared with the price of a new one. He said he didn't know; he only dealt with the second hand side. Why didn't we pop into the new car showroom and ask there? We did.



Coffee was served instantly, and within minutes I'd been made an offer which ordinary mortals would have found impossible to refuse. However, the "why-not-have-a-new-car" seed had been sown - there was no going back.



When I got back home I did make a half-hearted attempt to find a second hand vehicle, but gave in pretty quickly. To cut a long story short, my new bright red carriage should be delivered in a few days. The dogs are looking forward to it.

And the point of this yarn? Well, this car is powered by a 1 litre 3 cylinder engine! At the time of ordering, the model wasn't in full production so I had no chance to try it out. I did, however, read reviews in the motoring press which were all most complimentary. It's supposed to do 58 mpg. If it doesn't I shall want my money back.

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
Conrad Trevelyan 	Machynlleth	Rees Thomas	Nov 11
Anthony Rosser 	Llanwddyn	David Tompsett	Nov 11

Annual General Meeting 2012

The 8th Annual General Meeting of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists was held on Saturday 10th March 2012 at The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells. This was attended by Group and Committee Members and John Lickley, IAM Region 3 Group Support.

Our Chairman Francis Torrens addressed the meeting and outlined the achievements and disappointments of the last year and the challenges for the future. The Secretary Geoff Smith reported on the success of our Associates and Observers. He also commended the Group Newsletter, Mid Wales Matters and the Web Site to members. The audited Group Accounts for 2011 prepared by Mandy Giordano and audited by Clive Payne, were approved and elections were held for our Officers, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer together with those for new committee members.

Mandy Giordano could **not** stand for re-election as Treasurer due to her employment commitments and unfortunately no other nominations have been received. Mandy was thanked for her diligent work as our treasurer over the last six years.

The group has to have a Treasurer in order to continue and in the absence of any other volunteers Nigel Godman agreed to take over as Treasurer for a period of 12 months until a replacement could be found. Those Officers appointed to serve for 2012 are:

Chairman: Francis Torrens

Vice Chairman: John Scott

Secretary: Geoff Smith

Treasurer: Nigel Godman

In accordance with group rules one third of our committee stands down each year. This year Pat Allen and Humphrey Morgan had served their term and both were unanimously elected to serve on the group committee for a further three years.

No nominations for committee membership were received prior to the meeting and none were forthcoming from those present. Mandy Giordano offered to continue as a committee member and was unanimously elected to serve on the group committee for 3 years. This means that we have a vacancy for two additional members to join our committee of 4 officers and 8 committee members. If any member wishes to offer their services to fill these positions they should make contact with the secretary to discuss the commitment required.

Why not try this yourself?

This all started when my IAM membership card arrived on the mat. I opened the envelope and had a browse at the contents and decided to have a look at the new easy to use web site. Here I found an item entitled "Members Driving and Riding Assessments". Now, it has been five years since I became a member, and so I thought it may be wise to have an assessment to keep my standard of driving up. Before pursuing this course, I gave Geoff Smith, our MWAM secretary, a call. He agreed it was a sensible thing to do and asked if I knew that an annual assessment was available free to all paid up members of the MWAM. I have to admit I did not. Geoff did not push the local course and left the decision to me. Well, it didn't take long! A saving of £35 sounded good to me, so the drive was arranged at a time and date to fit in with me. Wonderful!

On the day of the assessment it was dry and quite pleasant. Geoff explained what the drive entailed and I set off. The route covered 33 miles - a drive through Llandrindod then around Builth's narrow streets and on to Beulah, where we took the B4358 to Newbridge and back to Llandrindod. It was a good route with many challenging parts to keep me on my toes!

I enjoyed it very much. First of all I love to drive, and to go out with someone who has the same interest and has the knowledge to pass on was a great experience. When we arrived back there was a friendly chat about the drive with a few pointers to help me. I also received a report of my assessment online the same evening. All that was left for me to do was to thank Geoff for his expertise and time.

To anyone who has ever thought about checking their driving standard, I would say: "Do it!"

Peter Brown.

Voulez - vous faire un alcotest?

As from July 1st all drivers visiting France will need to carry a breathalyser in their cars, the rules apply to anyone travelling to or through France by car in the summer holiday season even just for a day trip.

IAM (the Institute of Advanced Motorists) is advising motorists in France to have at least two breathalysers at all times, so that if one is used you still have one to produce for the police if you are stopped. Neil Greig, director of policy and research said "the new French rule is a genuine attempt to reduce the number of alcohol related-accidents. France's lower limit means it's very easy to be over the limit the morning after as well. As always, the best advice for motorists is not to drink and drive at all."

The legal limit in France is 50 mg per 100 ml of blood lower than in the UK (the UK limit is 80mg). The breathalysers cost about £2 and will be available at ferry and tunnel terminals for crossings to France. It is intended that people will be able to test themselves to check whether or not they are over the French limit. Single-use breathalyser kits will satisfy this requirement.

On the road in Egypt

I have visited Egypt twice in the last 3 years and have been interested in Ancient Egypt for many years, probably since the time I went on a primary school trip to the British Museum to see King Tutankhamen's treasures. However, this article is not about visiting sites of antiquity, amazing as they are, nor is it intended to offer advice on where to stay or what to eat.

This article is about driving in Egypt or rather watching Egyptians drive, because I didn't attempt to drive while I was there. To begin it is helpful to realise that the extremes of the Egyptian economy are reflected in the vehicles on the road; top end Mercedes and Range Rovers in practically showroom condition compete for road space with the cars of much less affluent travellers which will be, at best, battered old Peugeot 504 estates or Lada Rivas, all equipped with a stylish yet functional piece of carpet where the dashboard used to be until it melted away in the hot sun. Those whose finances don't stretch to four-wheeled travel ride low powered motorcycles, and even lower down the social classes of road users are those who rely on donkey carts, horse drawn carriages and camels.

Passing a test in Egypt seems to require the same skill level as in India, that is the ability drive forwards keeping within visual distance of the examiner, indicate, turn round and come back. That is, of course, unless you know the examiner in which case you don't need to worry about moving the car. The Egyptian Highway Code must be a very concise publication, because there don't seem to be any rules at all. Getting to the spot on the road you want before anyone else seems to be the general idea. Appreciation of other road users travelling at very different speeds and generally anticipating hazards are unknown concepts; driving on the wrong side of a dual carriageway is routine even when juggernauts are hurtling in the opposite direction. Anyone involved in an accident leaves the scene immediately.

This is all bad enough in daylight but I have also observed what happens at night. This is a strange time for Egyptians, it seems to me. Sidelights are never used, and headlights are only flashed when a driver thinks he's about to collide with some other vehicle. Often he only flashes one headlight with the result that oncoming traffic can't tell whether a motorcycle or a wide load is approaching. There's so much flashing going on that I began to suspect that the electrical systems of Egyptian cars are run on flakey alternators!

Most worrying is the long distances that are driven. The coach drivers routinely drive 6 hours one way and 6 hours back for a day excursion and to cope with roads that often divide a featureless desert, they consume amphetamines en route just to stay awake.

A bleak picture then, but the good thing is that I have survived three visits to this fascinating country. All I can advise you to do before you go there, is to forget all you've been taught about safe driving techniques – it'll spoil your holiday if you don't!

Nigel Godman - Senior Observer

Associate Course Dates



Denotes Car Course



Denotes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
12/2	16/05/12	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
12/3	18/07/12	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
12/4	26/09/12	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
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 or contact the group secretary. **Please contact our Chief Observer John Scott if you require any further details.**

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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.