



Mid Wales Matters



The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

New Web site: mwam.btck.co.uk

I AM a better road user ...

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From the Chairman



What make are these, then? Well, as it happens, they don't exist yet, but should they get beyond the concept stage, they'll both be MGs. These are the first official sketches of the CS crossover SUV vehicle and the all new MG3 supermini. There are plans to display the latter at the 2013 Shanghai Motor Show, but the future of the CS is a bit vague. MG's publicity material claims that it has the potential "to create a sensation among young, fashion conscious people who are looking for a trendier SUV than those available from competitors." Not for me then!

Time for a change?

If you're looking to buy a used car for the best possible price, now probably isn't the best time. If, however, you're looking to sell a well-specified three to four-year-old motor – happy days.

According to the Vehicle Remarketing Association (VRA), a trade body for car makers, dealers and auction houses, used cars are currently overpriced because dealers are gagging for new stock. It says there are currently about 15 per cent fewer used cars on forecourts all over the country than there were 12 months ago. The result is that dealers are willing to pay top dollar to get quality cars on their forecourts because they know these will sell quickly – and for good money. Sadly for sellers, fortunately for buyers, this state of affairs won't go on for ever. April will see used prices fall slightly as the big fleets swap cars at the end of their warranty periods for new models and more motors arrive on forecourts. But they'll only drop to a value that's normal for the time of year. No bargains to be had there, then.

Inflated prices can't go on. New car sales are currently strong, up on last year with experts predicting that will continue through the year. According to the National Franchised Dealers Association, growth isn't going to be major but the market will at least be stable. However, the VRA reckons a lot of this apparent growth is down to dealers registering their own cars.

Dealers do this because manufacturers, desperate to appear more successful than rival companies by appearing to shift more metal, set their franchises hefty targets. The result is dealers "buy" the cars themselves so that they appear registered. These cars then add to the supply of high-demand, quality used cars where they're sold as nearly new or "demonstrators".

****Don't forget AGM at 7pm on Thursday 9th May 2013****

Annual General Meeting

You are cordially invited by the group committee to the re-scheduled 9th Annual General Meeting of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists which this year is being held at 7:00pm on Thursday 9th May 2013 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 2012 for approval by the members and also to conduct an election. 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 new website mwam.btck.co.uk 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

If you can't resist temptation...

The CU80 Behaviour Device stops motorists using their mobiles, laptops, tablets, and MP3 players on the move. This Bluetooth device connects to the port that is typically found close to the steering wheel. The owner of the system then sets parameters via a web-based interface. As such the CU80 could block calls, texts, and a web browser but permit access to a phone-based sat-nav. The device can also be configured to enforce (or allow) calls through a hands-free systems - and it will not prevent the motorist phoning the emergency services. The CU80 also allows the driver to use his/her gadgets while parked but deactivates them within seconds of moving. Its manufacturer says this is the first system of its type in Europe and that it is compatible with almost every type of phone and device. It therefore benefits those who want to influence the behaviour of an inexperienced or business driver. The CU80 Device also monitors how far the vehicle has travelled and the motorist's driving style. Action can then be taken if it is not being driven appropriately.

The wrong arm of the law

One of my neighbours received a fixed penalty for driving at 32mph in a 30 limit. Another received a Thames Valley Police fine for stopping in a disabled parking bay at 9pm, not exactly rush hour, to collect a blind, 80-year-old lady who does not think it appropriate to have a blue badge because she does not drive. Things like this harm the public's attitude to the police. I'm sure most people do not intend to speed, but drifting fractionally over the speed limit is hardly a cardinal sin. The alternative, I suppose, is to watch the speedo rather than the road and risk crashing into the car ahead.

(Letter to the "Daily Telegraph")

Smart enough for you?

The new Fortwo Electric Smart Cabriolet made by Mercedes blows away any negative preconceptions you may have had about such vehicles. It has a theoretical range of 90+ miles on an overnight charge from domestic supply and, after just a brief drive I can say that this is not only the best Smart yet produced: it is the only one in which I could bear to drive more than a mile.

Petrol-powered Smarts are abominable. They have jerky semi-automatic transmission systems and their light, high bodies ride on their little wheels with all the smoothness and sophistication of an orange box on a skateboard. Every lump and pothole they hit delivers a jarring shock through the spine of the driver who is condemned to hang on for grim death to the steering wheel.

The electric Smart smooths away these horrors with a single turn of its power key (no ignition here). Its gearless drive system (simply choose forward, reverse or neutral) delivers instantaneous, creamy power. Step on the accelerator pedal and you can nip silently and cleanly away at a pace to match all but the maddest dispatch riders. Previous electric Smarts ran out of power at about 60mph but the new car's top speed might get you into trouble with the police on the motorway.

The combined weight of the 17.5kw lithium-ion battery and the 75bhp magneto-electric synchronous motor anchor this Smart to the road – meaning that you've got a good chance of speeding accurately around a corner on minor roads without bouncing unintentionally from kerb to apex and back again. A sophisticated suspension combination of Macpherson struts at the front and a DeDion axle at the back supplies a ride that is merely grim rather than the normal Smart's unbearable. The steering is delightfully positive and firm.

It's not cheap, though – my test model cost £17,750. Not the basic form, of course, but virtually anything worth having is an extra. How do you fancy a cup holder for the back at £30?

(The Telegraph Motoring)

Make a sane lane change

The IAM is offering weekly motoring tips from Britain's top advanced driver, Peter Rodger. Here's one of them advising on lane discipline on the motorway.

- It is especially important to check all of your mirrors regularly when on the motorway, particularly before making any manoeuvre or lane change.
- Signal early to give other road users time to react before you make a move – many people will be happy to let you out if given enough warning.
- Change lanes gradually. Don't expect or force other drivers to move out of your way.
- Don't compromise your safe following distance when changing lanes. Always look out for other cars aiming to move into the same space as you from another lane.
- Never get in the way of other vehicles unnecessarily. Always try and stay on the left hand side of faster moving traffic.
- Read the overhead gantry signs – they give useful information and can help you decide which lane to use.
- If you are in lane two, watch the gaps in the traffic in lane one – that way you can spot that someone will want to move out into your lane, and be able to plan your own lane change earlier, rather than having to manage it at the last minute.

IAM chief examiner Peter Rodger said: "By using your mirrors, keep a 360 degree awareness of the traffic around you when on the motorway to make changing lanes easier and safer. Always check, and then check again before making your manoeuvre."

More support needed for young drivers

Young drivers need more guidance and support in the first six months of obtaining their licence, according to the IAM. Last month, the DfT announced a green paper would be published this summer looking at ways to improve the safety of young drivers. The announcement includes the possibility of introducing graduated licensing, with curfews and controls which will prevent young people from gaining experience on the road.

The IAM will be recommending to the government the following changes to help improve young driver safety:

- A tougher test to include rural roads – where young people are most vulnerable
- A new focus on treating driving as a skill for life – through continuous learning with post-test check-ups in the first six months of solo driving
- A minimum driving period during learner stages to increase exposure to as wide range of traffic conditions as possible
- A relaxation of the rules allowing learner drivers on motorways
- IAM director of policy and research Neil Greig said: "Continuous learning will do more to keep young people safe on the roads than restrictions. During and after supervised learning, new drivers need to gain as much experience as possible to prepare them for driving independently – something which curfews simply cannot deliver."






Not just hot air

In these desperate times when motoring is becoming more and more expensive, there is a flower growing up through the concrete. In January, Peugeot announced that it had developed a car that ran on air. It officially launched the Hybrid Air vehicle to the world at the Geneva motor show this month, and revealed that it would be in production by 2016. The car did not solely run on air, of course; the new technology was twinned with a petrol engine. But Peugeot believed that it had significant advantages over battery-powered electric hybrids, such as a Toyota Prius. Their cars would be cheaper to buy, for a start, and extra savings would come from a fuel economy of around 81 miles per gallon.

If Peugeot could back this up, Hybrid Air would shake up the whole car industry. The ailing French giant could certainly do with it being a success – its long-term survival might just depend on it.

Associate Course Dates

 Denotes Car Course  Denotes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
 13/2 	22/05/2013	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
 13/3 	24/07/2013	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
 13/4	25/09/2013	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
11/05/2013	Saturday	10:00AM	12:00PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
03/07/2013	Wednesday	7:00PM	9:00PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
26/10/2013	Saturday	2:00PM	4:00PM	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 Secretary Geoff Smith 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.