



## **Sussex Advanced Drivers – Newsletter**

**Autumn 2020**

### **A word from the Chairman (and temporary editor)**

Hi all,

I have been given the task of editing the newsletter.

It has been an odd year; we as Group have not been able to meet.

Neither have we been able to do observed runs.

Thanks to Margret the Committee has been able to meet via Zoom.

We also held an AGM via Zoom and invited Neil Worth from GEM to talk about dealing with emergency vehicles. This was an interesting subject and there is a YouTube video.

Regrettably we have lost some committee members:

Malcolm Taylor who has served on the committee for many years and has also been a tutor. He was always at meetings serving the teas and coffees. So my thanks to him for all he has done.

Michael Murphy has been a stalwart preparing the Newsletter; so thank you Michael.

Meg Heyworth stepped into the Treasurer's role but recently found it difficult to continue; so thanks Meg.

However, we have gained some new members:

Matt Porterfield is our new Treasurer, also David Raine and Douglas Wragg.

What of the future, we all hope some normal service will resume? Tutors might soon go back to doing observed runs if they so wish but will have to let Duncan our senior Tutor know.

It remains for me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and hopefully a Happy New Year. I look forward to seeing you at a physical meeting.

Best Wishes

Anthony Platts

Chairman and Temporary Newsletter Editor.

## From the Group Secretary

Hello everyone,

Once more we are in lockdown, fingers crossed that it will have the desired effect and reduce the number of new cases of Covid-19.

It is so frustrating; as a committee we had just decided that we would recommend a carefully restart of driving tuition for our associates – we did not even get as far as explaining the new Covid-secure procedures to our tutors before the new lock-down. However, the committee is scheduled to meet again beginning of December, hopefully the way ahead will be a little clearer by then.

And of course there is the promise of a vaccine being imminent, will life be able to return to normal before long? And will the new 'normal' be the same as the old one?

I don't know about you but I have made good use of Zoom on my computer and even Smartphone these last few months. I enjoy photography and there have been a lot of workshops and talks which have made me a lot more knowledgeable on that subject. Which makes me think, should we do the same for our Group, arrange talks about driving related subjects over Zoom, the perfect way to take part, you don't even have to leave the house.

On the other hand, we had arranged a couple of talks (Graham Feest and Neil Worth) which were not well attended but what were the reasons? My question to you today: would you like your committee to arrange some talks over Zoom? Would you please let me know at [margretp@clara.co.uk](mailto:margretp@clara.co.uk) .

As I write this Christmas is only a few weeks away and it is unlikely we will meet before then. Therefore, and much too early – may I wish everyone a happy and healthy Christmas and best wishes for 2021. Let's hope that all the present problems will become just a memory.

Keep safe, keep well

Margret

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## Some Group News

A little premature but I have the pleasure to tell you that before long, maybe before Christmas, we will have a brand new website for the Group, professionally developed. I will let you know when you can log in and have a look.

Margret  
Group Secretary

## **My Road to the Advanced Test** by Graham Lawrence

When I began my advanced driving tuition in October 2018 I sought out every opportunity to learn, and every resource, so when I was asked to write this article following my recent test success I was delighted to do so in the hope that it may be of help to associates.

I have had an interest in advanced driving for many years, inspired partly by a good friend who had a long career in traffic policing, but I decided to 'take the plunge' after buying a car with a good level of performance. I wanted to be able to enjoy the car while also remaining safe and legal.

After contacting the group I was paired with an observer, Nigel Lofting, and began tuition. At the time Nigel was working with another associate and I was about to have a holiday so I focused initially on some other learning resources to which Nigel referred me; reading Roadcraft and the Highway Code, and watching videos on You Tube (more of which later). A few weeks later, though, Nigel and I began our observed drives.

The course of 20 hours of observed drives, which for me comprised 10 two-hour lessons, is at the heart of the tuition but also important was developing a thorough knowledge of Roadcraft, recently updated, and of the Highway Code. I supplemented my reading by using the online version of Roadcraft, [www.roadcraftonline.co.uk](http://www.roadcraftonline.co.uk), and for the Highway Code I purchased some test materials and the associated book, "Know Your Traffic Signs". I also watched the many short videos posted on You Tube by Reg Local, a tutor and an IAM examiner and a former Police driving school instructor, and I purchased a set of DVDs produced by Chris Gilbert, also a highly qualified and experienced tutor and former Police instructor, [www.driving4tomorrow.com](http://www.driving4tomorrow.com). Reg Local's book, Advanced and Performance Driving (which is also the title of his You Tube channel), was helpful too. I thoroughly recommend both tutors' videos as excellent illustrations of **how** to apply the guidance and techniques in Roadcraft.

I gradually developed my skills and knowledge, learning first the key points from Roadcraft, particularly the system of car control, and then addressing more complex techniques such as overtaking and commentary driving. I found this difficult at times and to be honest I doubted whether I could achieve the skill level required but I persevered under Nigel's guidance and I improved gradually. I found it particularly difficult to observe and prioritise hazards while simultaneously planning my response to them by applying the system, so that nothing was left to chance (as Roadcraft says). Committing time to regular practice drives was key to this, alongside encouragement from Nigel and the learning resources I described above.

As I neared the end of the course, and my test in September with a serving Police Sergeant as my examiner, I polished my driving and ensured that I knew very well the contents of Roadcraft, the Highway Code and Know Your Traffic Signs. I also made sure that I was able to describe to the examiner my car and the various functions which I would use during the test. I spoke a few times to the examiner, to understand as best I could his focus for the test. That test was challenging, as it should be, but the learning and practice paid off because I achieved a Silver grade.

I am delighted to have become an advanced driver because I have developed the ability to drive progressively when appropriate, so that I can enjoy the performance of my car, but also to exercise restraint and at all times to drive safely and legally. I like to think

that my learning is summed up by a recent comment from a passenger who said 'Graham, you seem to enjoy driving and to be calm and completely unflustered by what is happening on the road'. That is precisely what I aimed to achieve when beginning the course! I am very pleased to have achieved a Silver grade but, as Roadcraft recommends, I shall continue to self-assess and to improve my driving so that at my re-test in three years, perhaps I will reach Gold standard!

I hope that all associates will enjoy and gain as much from the tuition as I did.  
Graham Lawrence

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## DRIVING SINCE TOTAL LOCKDOWN

Many drivers feel less confident on the road now than they did before the COVID-19 lockdown, according to an AA/Populus poll. The survey found one in ten (11%) feel more nervous driving around others now than before lockdown, equating to around 3.6 million drivers, while 17% feel more confident getting on the road post-lockdown.

Overall 15% of women said they feel more nervous driving now compared to less than one in ten men (9%).

Millennials (aged 25-34) topped the polls for feeling the most nervous, alongside drivers aged 35-44 years old (both 13%).

Drivers in Northern Ireland feel the most nervous out of all geographical locations (13%). More men said they feel confident driving now than women; 18% agreed with the statement compared to 15% of women.

More than a third of young people said they feel more confident driving now given others' behaviour on the roads (35% 18-24s). Millennials were also at the top of the table for post-lockdown confidence (24% 25-34s).

Drivers from Wales feel the most confident (21%); followed by those in London (20%) and the North West of England (20%)

**Source:** Graham Feest Consultancy Newsletter

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## Parking on Pavements



There is much going on at present with regard to what action is to be taken by the various countries regarding parking on the pavement.

**Scotland** is to pursue a country wide approach to banning parking on the pavement.

Whilst in **Wales** it is likely that Local Councils could have greater powers to prevent pavement parking by 2022 after ministers backed recommendations from an independent taskforce resulting in potential changes to Traffic Regulation Orders so that individual Local Authorities in the principality could target particular locations of concern and then use their civil enforcement powers to prosecute offenders.

The current consultation as to what actions should be taken in **England** is subject to current consultation which sets out three options and closes on 22nd November 2020. Recently the National Road Safety Committee voted to support an outright ban on pavement parking very much on the basis that there needed to be a consistent approach throughout the Country and leaving it to Local Highway Authorities to determine individual approaches would lead to confusion amongst the public such as we currently have in other areas particularly when it comes to bus lanes, times of operation and enforcement practices and policies.

**Source:** Graham Feest Consultancy Newsletter

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## COMMUNICATING WHILST DRIVING IS A BIG ISSUE

A survey, carried out for the RAC Report on Motoring 2020 has indicated that the growing popularity of FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Snapchat for video calls is posing a new and present danger on the UK's roads.

Younger drivers are more than twice as likely to say they make or receive video calls while driving – on average 8% of all UK drivers say they do this, with the figure rising to 13% among those aged 25 to 44. Equally worrying is the finding that just under one-in-10 drivers aged 17 to 24 (9%) say they play games on their phones while driving, making them three-times more likely to do this compared to the average UK driver. Other drivers' use of handheld phones is the second biggest overall motoring-related concern identified in the research, *after the state of local roads* – a third of all UK drivers surveyed (32%) say the issue concerns them and strikingly nearly eight-in-10 (79%) now want to see camera technology introduced to catch drivers acting illegally. Alarmingly, 29% of drivers of all ages in 2020 say they make and receive calls on handheld phones while driving, that's 5% more than in 2019 and the highest proportion since 2016. While younger drivers are still more likely to do so (42%, down from 51% last year), those in the 25 to 44 age group are also statistically more likely to break the law in this way (32% admit to doing so, almost unchanged on 2019 figure of 33%)

More positively, the proportion of drivers admitting to other dangerous activities such as checking or sending text messages or taking photos or video appear to be reducing – although it is unclear whether this is simply down to lower overall car use this year as a result of the pandemic. Eight per cent of all drivers say they text or send other messages while driving, down from 14% last year and from a high of 20% in 2016. But young drivers are again much more likely to break the law – 15% of those aged 17 to 24 say they are doing it in 2020, although this is down substantially on 2019 (37%). More than one-in-10 motorists (14%) this year say they check texts or other app notifications while driving, down from 17% in 2019. Among younger drivers, the proportion is 22%, down from 35% last year.

Given the enormous police resources required to 'catch drivers in the act', motorists seem particularly keen on enforcement taking place using cameras, something that has been pioneered in Australia. Of the 79% who support the introduction of camera technology to identify illegal mobile phone users in the UK, the vast majority (52%) are strongly in favour of this happening.

Meanwhile, nearly three-in-10 (29%) of all drivers say they make and receive calls on handheld phones while driving – 5% more than last year and the highest proportion since 2016.

Just under one-in-10 young drivers (9%) say they play games on their phones while driving, making them three-times more likely to do this compared to the average UK driver

The RAC says the data suggests a renewed focus is needed to bring about a lasting change in behaviour among motorists, particularly younger drivers.

**Source:** Graham Feest Consultancy Newsletter

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## **THE KILLER CAR** by Douglas Wragg

The Caldwell Saga, Part 2

Having successfully sorted out the problem of Mrs. Caldwell's defective Datsun, I little thought that my services would ever be required again, but I was wrong.

I had an urgent telephone call from her five years later and she outlined the situation to me.

Her son, Brian was eighteen, had recently passed his driving test, and a week later had purchased his first car from a private seller. The vehicle had passed an M.O.T. test a couple of days before he took delivery of it.

The previous day he had been driving his girlfriend home when the car went out of control and crashed through a wooden farm fence and into a field. In the process, one of the fence posts had come up through the floor of the car and killed his girlfriend.

Needless to say everyone was quite devastated by what had happened.

The Police attended the incident and they breathalysed Brian. The test proved negative as Brian never drank alcohol. They were of the opinion that excessive speed was the cause of the accident, and they charged Brian with Death by Dangerous Driving.

I was unable to see the vehicle for three days, as the Police Accident Investigation Unit had impounded the vehicle whilst they inspected it. Eventually permission was given to inspect the vehicle, and the process of gathering information began. When I arrived at the workshop I was met by the investigating officer, who, as so often happens in these cases, was quite hostile. He had the mistaken impression that my presence there was an attempt to make him look stupid or incompetent.

Nothing could be further from the truth, and I took particular pains to re-assure him that what we were both seeking was the truth – nothing more – nothing less.

He walked me around the car, which was a metallic gold Ford Cortina GT Mk IV, and showed me the sports steering wheel. "See that" he said. "It's typical!" "Jack-the-lad gets his car, puts on a small diameter wheel not realising that the reverse torque through the wheel means that when things go wrong he hasn't the strength to hold the wheel and it slips through his hands." Soon after he left and I started my investigation.

The quote from Winnie the Pooh started to go through my mind “The more piglet looked through the door, the more Eeyore wasn’t there.” The more I looked at the vehicle the worse it became. Eventually, I took an unconventional step and telephoned the Police Engineer, whom we shall call Peter Goodhand, and politely insisted that he return to the workshop, and that we should go through the vehicle together. He was, quite naturally, reluctant at first, but then agreed to join me.

As we systematically dismantled the vehicle, a pattern started to emerge. Just about everything that could be wrong with this vehicle was wrong. This list is not endless, but is comprehensive.

1. Four different types of tyres
2. Mis-matched front road springs
3. Mis-matched front suspension dampers
4. Mis-matched rear road springs
5. Mis-matched rear suspension dampers.

When using the term mis-matched, the implication or suggestion is that at some time one but not both of the components has been changed.

Safety critical parts such as these should only be changed as a matched pair; otherwise the road holding characteristics of the vehicle can be adversely affected.

When faced with a case such as this, my experience shows that you leave no stone unturned. Therefore, the entire front and rear suspension was dismantled, labelled and photographed. When the front suspension was in the process of being dismantled it was discovered that when the spring had been removed, due to the wear in the suspension pivot bolts, the lower suspension plate could be moved forward and backwards by about 1½ inches. This situation existed on both sides of the car.

The rear suspension bushes – sometimes referred to as “void bushes” were worn to the extent that the rear suspension was free to move in any plane as the prevailing forces dictated.

By this time, P.C. Goodhand and I had struck up a good working relationship, and he was as committed as I to establishing the mechanical status of the vehicle. He was at pains to point out that the final outcome would be decided by those much higher up the management structure. So sad, so true and so often the case. The attitude that nothing good or worthwhile could come from below is one of the major illnesses of modern British management.

After all the components had been removed from the vehicle for further investigation, I made a thorough search of the interior for any more evidence which might be there. It is at times like this, no matter how professional and detached you believe yourself to be, that the human reality of what has happened hits you. Mercifully, you are mostly alone, so there is no one to see the tears.

A search of the glove locker revealed a scrappy receipt from a tyre fitting company dated five days before the incident, and which stated “To fitting one second-hand tyre as supplied by customer.” The implications of this were obvious and deeply worrying.

The suspension springs were subjected to compression tests in order to establish the relative spring rates. The results were no surprise, they had completely differing rates. The suspension dampers were sent to a leading manufacturer for testing, and the results were the same as for the springs.

Detailed enquiries with one of the tyre manufacturers produced a handling picture for this vehicle fitted with this combination of tyres. The main problem would have been in cornering, as the tyres gave widely different grip characteristics.

The situation for this vehicle was that at any speed it would start to wander, any correction to the steering would allow both the front and rear suspension to change position and produce a greater course deviation in the opposite direction. Further correction would produce a “pendulum” effect as the course deviations became greater. It was no wonder that this incident had occurred.

My report was submitted, and shortly afterwards I learnt that the police were unimpressed with my findings, and, as a result, the charge of Death by Dangerous Driving was to proceed to the Crown Court.

It was at this point (as Gerard Hoffnung said in his rendition of the bricklayer’s saga) that I lost my presence of mind, and via another accident investigator sent notification to the Police that we had agreement from the insurance company to obtain another vehicle of the same year and model, and to re-build the suspension using the components from the damaged vehicle. We had also applied to the court for permission to close the section of the road so that the vehicle could be driven over the same stretch of road whilst being filmed and photographed.

I am ashamed to admit that this was nothing more than bluff. However, it had the desired effect. The charge against Brian was changed to Driving without Due Care, and to which on legal advice he pleaded guilty.

The case was heard at Crown Court where he was duly fined and had his licence endorsed. The general consensus was that he had suffered more than enough already.

There are some points which emerge from this case, and which I can almost hear you voice.

Why, for example did Brian not know that there was something fundamentally wrong with the vehicle?

The answer is that Brian had learnt on a driving school car – a Datsun Sunny, and therefore had never driven another vehicle, and so had no experience reference point on which to base a judgement.

Also, Brian was a very open and trusting type of person. When told that the car he was buying was in good condition and had an M.O.T. certificate he believed that this was true and accepted it on face value.

It worth noting that neither the private seller of the vehicle nor the M.O.T. testing station was prosecuted.



## This is your committee

(Please don't hesitate to contact any of us if you have a query).

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### Group Secretary's notes:

#### All meetings are held at:

St John Ambulance, 16 Crowhurst Road, Hollingbury, Brighton, BN1 8AP

Start time: 7.30 for 8pm

To ensure you are kept informed of news and extra activities arranged for the Group, please could all members and associate members let us know of any changes to their contact details so that we can update the Group's database.

Margret Preece (Group Secretary - [margretp@clara.co.uk](mailto:margretp@clara.co.uk)) or

Gwyn Davies (Membership Secretary - [membershipsecretary@mail.com](mailto:membershipsecretary@mail.com))

### Events

Sadly due to the on-going pandemic no events are planned at present. Our program of talks will resume once the present crisis is under control and we can meet again in groups without worrying of catching the corona virus. We had to cancel speakers like Neil Worth of GEM, Colin O'Neill, the examiner etc.

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### Sussex RoSPA

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