

Sussex Advanced Drivers – Newsletter

August 2023

A word from the new editor

Hi All

A new editor, yes; but you have all known me for some time. We had a 'cabinet re-shuffle' at the AGM in May, I resigned as group secretary but as we had been looking for a newsletter editor for quite a long time it seemed a good idea to take over that job.

Anthony Platts also stood back as chairman; he had been guiding the group in various capacities for many many years and deserved a rest. However, we will still have the benefit of his experience as he is staying on as a committee member; he has been made a life member.

More important: there were two people who came forward to save the group from folding: Paul Purdy is our new chairman. Paul has been part of the group for many years as tutor, he joined the committee last year and then stepped forward to become our chairman.

Edward Redman is more of a newcomer, he joined as an associate earlier in the year, passed the test – and offered to become our web master. A problem solved, another vacancy filled. And much to our relief he also agreed to take over as Group Secretary, thank you Ed. This finally meant that the group had a future, we had a new chairman and a new secretary.

Margret Preece

From The Chairman

Firstly I would like to thank the outgoing committee for their hard work over the last 12 months and I would like to welcome the new committee for standing and ensuring the group will be able to continue. I would also like to thank those attending the AGM for voting for me as chairman, I hope I can keep up the standards set by our previous chairmen.

After our AGM the speaker Katie Bourne attended the meeting but was very ill so was unable to continue, but did inform us she would be willing to attend a future date. So thank you Katie for making the effort to come and tell us in person. What do we do now? Don't panic was the cry, and Margret pulled out one of David Raine's quizzes. Now I'm not a quiz person but not only was it a head scratcher but it was also highly amusing and all based on a motoring theme. So, well done David for an entertaining quiz and to Margret for saving the day.

I must say it was disappointing that only a few of our members attended the AGM, but I know this is common to most clubs. Remember folks, this is your club and we can only deliver a program for your entertainment if we know what your preferences are. Kevin is putting together an interesting programme for you all for the evening meetings and of course the Off Road Day. Please give him your support by attending some of these, it's not very encouraging when so few members turn up.

We have now had our first committee meeting and put together a plan for hopefully moving the group forward. We would like to put in an appearance at some local shows and try to increase our membership, and as we are a charity I hope we could achieve this with minimal outlay. So, if anyone knows of a local event where we might be able to recruit some new members please let us know. But to do this can we prevail on our membership to help as we cover East and West Sussex. It would be helpful for those nearest to the event to help man the stand and reduce people's travel time.

Duncan is arranging some more observer training days, something we all need from time to time, and we would like to offer our members some free refresher training whilst the observer is under training conditions. We are meeting at Hickstead Services A23, so there would be time to meet other members and make it more of a social event. I hope to see some of you there.

Finally we will need **a new treasurer** to take over at the 2024 AGM as Matt will defiantly be stepping down. He did intend to step down this year but has graciously offered to serve one more year as no one came forward to take over. By doing so he averted the group from folding. He said he would be more than happy to coach someone over the next year to make the transition easier. It would be nice for the group not to be put in the position it was in this year, we cannot run without a treasurer. So please someone put your name forward and join us on the committee.

In the meantime have a great summer and enjoy your driving

Paul Purdy.

From our Group Secretary.

Thanks to the members and the committee for voting me in to become your group secretary at this year's AGM. I have received invaluable support from Margret, my predecessor, with her patience I'm gradually getting to grips with my new role, it's been a steep learning curve for me.

Highlights for me so far since taking on the role:

Our first committee meeting as secretary.

Becoming a tutor.

Contacting my first associate.

Attending the Rustington (nr Worthing) Street Fayre.

A little bit about the street fayre: I attended along with Margret and Kevin from our group on 8th July where we had our RoSPA stand. The weather was mixed along with the members of the public visiting our stand. I was able to stay for just a couple of hours and by the time I left we already had a few people sign up for our free observed test drives. The West Sussex Fire Service were also in attendance at the fayre and a couple of the crew came and had an interesting chat with us about their role and the driving of the appliances.

Edward Redman

Rustington Publicity

We have talked about our stand at Rustington Charity Street Fayre – this is what it looks like. We have informative material from RoSPA and the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership. But most important, we offer free taster drives to anybody interested and we have recruited several new associates this way. As mentioned before, we need other venues to attend (medium sized village fetes or similar) and we need help to man the stand. Who can help? Please.



CAR THEFT IS RISING (Graham Feest – Traffic Safety Roads)

Data released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) indicates that stolen vehicle theft increased by 29 percent between September 2021 and September 2022 and as the cost-of-living crisis continues more people are tempted into criminal activities to make ends meet with car crime near the top of illegal activity.

While older cars are vulnerable to being taken by old school "smash and grab" techniques, most thieves have gone hi-tech to take advantage of vehicles with keyless entry.

The AA Insurance Services have released a list of "dos and don'ts" to help drivers keep hold of their cars and stave off potential attacks.

The first, and potentially most important, is for drivers to invest in vehicle security. Items such as crooklocks and disc locks are relatively cheap and easy to use but are a great deterrent as thieves will often just move on to the next target. Wheel clamps that lock around the vehicle wheels and a pedal box over the foot pedals are also very effective.

For vehicles with keyless entry, buy and use some faraday pouches (for both the main and spare key).

Another key check that drivers can ensure they do every time is to make sure the car is locked before walking away, even if it may seem obvious.

Top 10 most stolen cars in 2022

- Ford Fiesta
- Land Rover Range Rover
- Ford Focus
- VW Golf
- Land Rover Discovery
- BMW 3 Series
- Mercedes C Class
- Vauxhall Corsa
- Vauxhall Astra
- Mercedes E Class

THINK! - Travel Like You Know Them Campaign

Following a review of The Highway Code in 2020, changes were made in January 2022 to help improve road safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and horse-riders.

To raise awareness of these changes, THINK! launched the 'Travel Like You Know Them' campaign.

Travel Like You Know Them

The campaign, which was launched in July 2022, speaks to everyone who uses the road, with a focus on those who have a greater responsibility to reduce the risk that they may pose to others.

By offering an insight into the lives of everyday road users, the campaign aims to help people better understand each other and see more than just vehicles on the road.

The campaign is being re-launched on Thursday 3 August 2023, so look out for any messages on our social media pages.

'Traffic Drones'. (excerpt from RAC newsletter)

Devon and Cornwall Police have started using drones to record driving habits of its residents – in an effort to improve road safety. The official 'Drone Unit' has partnered with the road police teams to track dangerous drivers and illegal activity.

Due to the changing weather experienced in the UK, the new fleet of drones are fitted with innovative technology that ensures that the drone can keep working in varying weather conditions and temperatures.

According to the new unit, the drones can track a vehicle's speed on the road, as well as being able to record any incidents. They can then use the video as evidence against drivers who exceed the speed limit. They can also be used to check a vehicle's insurance, MOT, and road tax status. Finally, it can also be used to find and track stolen vehicles.

The information can then be provided to road police, who can then use it to convict those that break the law.

The drones themselves can record a vehicle up to four miles away – and are being deployed in 'high harm routes'.

This new unit is part of the police's attempts to cut the number of road deaths and injuries to zero – and is called 'Vision Zero South West'.

The introduction of drones by the police to track road users is a first for the UK – and the evidence recorded could lead to fines and penalty points for drivers. In more serious cases, footage will be used in court.

Inspector Colin Harper, from Devon & Cornwall Police's Drone team, added: "This innovative use of drones will give us early warning of any offences and allow us to be far more targeted in our approach on the ground. "This technology can and will be used to help detect speeding and dangerous driving in all vehicles on our roads.

Do you think the introduction of drones will help reduce accidents and dangerous driving on our roads? Or should police efforts be focusing in other areas?

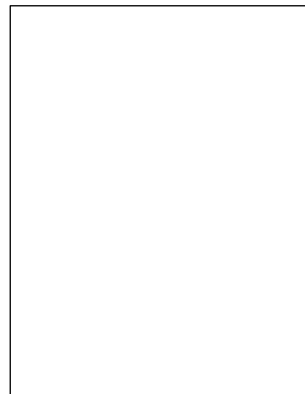
Signalling

I hope you have all been enjoying the lovely Summer weather we have been having this year, and, although the train strikes and other problems have caused a fair amount of chaos on the roads, I hope you still find some enjoyment in driving with care and elegance.

Quite a few of our associates have been participating and enjoying our occasional Saturday morning jaunts with tutors exchanging views and providing casual insights into improving our driving experience on what started as “tutor reviews”. It still has a function in keeping us up to the mark as tutors as well as providing a relaxed environment for the pursuit of better driving, and we hope to open the invitation to all our members – look out for an invitation email in the near future.

On the last outing, there was a discussion about signaling. We hear a lot of rules about giving a signal when leaving a roundabout, and we don't need to signal if we are going straight on (is that the 2nd exit?). I looked up some theory for this type of rule, and there were all sorts of wonderful graphics showing mini roundabouts, “magic” roundabouts and all sorts, but there was a gaping absence of the roundabout with 3 roads leading to it.

You are the car with the arrow going what you consider to be “straight on”(the second exit). The rule of thumb would be that there is no need to signal, and on a roundabout near me that is exactly what a lot of motorists do. However, the majority of motorists taking the first exit consider it to be unnecessary to indicate because their intentions are obvious(?). What do you consider to be the most helpful and safe thing to do in this scenario? When our actions are easy for other people to predict, then we create a safer environment for ourselves.



Here is a junction on a corner:

Would you consider it necessary to indicate that you are taking the exit here? After all you are going straight on. If you will be proceeding along the main road and round the corner, would right hand indicator not re-inforce your intention? What would be the harm if you did this? So, giving information is not something that is governed by a set of rules; it is something that can create a safer environment around our vehicle and should be used whenever we feel that it is necessary and appropriate. I hope to see you the next time we have one of our “tutor reviews” on a Saturday Morning



Happy Motoring
Duncan

Potholes etc (excerpt from RAC newsletter)

The poor condition of Britain's local roads is laid bare by new figures from the RAC which show its patrols went out to more than 8,100 pothole breakdowns between April and June 2023, the highest number in five years. Since the start of 2023, the RAC has dealt with 18,250 breakdowns for damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs or distorted wheels – the call-outs which are most likely caused by defective road surfaces.

The 8,100 pothole-related breakdowns recorded in Q2 is the highest the RAC has since the 'Beast from the East' cold snap plunged much of the UK into a deep freeze with heavy snowfall five years ago.

The figures show that 27,250 breakdowns occurred in the 12 months up to 30 June 2023 where vehicles had been damaged by a pothole, compared to 22,800 over the same period in 2022 – 20% increase more than last year (4,550 more breakdowns).

The RAC Pothole Index, which tracks pothole call-outs since 2006 seasonally adjusted for weather, reveals drivers are now over 1.6 times more likely to break down due to the repeated wear caused by potholes than they were 17 years ago.

This does not include punctures as other factors such as nails and screws may also be to blame. However, the number of punctured tyres RAC patrols went out to in the second quarter of 2023 (101,200) was 13% higher than the previous year (89,600), indicating that poor road surfaces may well have played a part.

A Freedom of Information request made by the RAC* also reveals councils have forked out more than £11m over the last four years to drivers who successfully claimed their vehicles had been damaged by potholes.

The RAC also asked councils to detail how much they spend on maintaining their roads over the same three years. The findings show that, among the councils that supplied data, almost £1bn** was allocated with a further £3.5bn*** spent on carriageway resurfacing.

Interestingly, the amount councils spent on routine maintenance per year rose by 17% between 2018/19 (£237m) and 2021/22 (£277m) **, though the effect of inflation on material and labour costs may well mean this increase have drastically improved road quality. Meanwhile, the amount spent on planned resurfacing went up by 9% between 2018/19 (£851m) and 2021/22 (£928m) ***.

THE CALDWELL SAGA, Part 2

THE KILLER CAR

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

Douglas Wragg

This is your committee.

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

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Committee Member	Gwyn Davies	gwynjanet@aol.co.uk	07887 616505

Group Secretary's notes:

All meetings are held at:

Scaynes Hill Millennium Hall, Lewis Road, Scaynes Hill, Haywards Heath, RH17 7PG

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.

Edward Redman (Group Secretary - secretary.sussexadvanceddrivers@outlook.com) or
John Norris (Membership Secretary - jsnorris@me.com)

Future Events

All events start at 7.30pm with light refreshments, for a prompt 8pm start.

20 September 2023 TBA

22 November Katie Bourne (Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner)

Sussex RoSPA

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