



Sussex Advanced Drivers – Newsletter

Spring 2023

From the Group Secretary and Temporary Editor

Hi All,

I hope that you have all survived the winter and are ready for some warm and sunny days. It is now just over 3 years ago since we started the first lock-down, isn't it surprising how quickly the world has returned back to normal.

Next month (17th May) will be the Group's AGM – in those (2020) days we had a much delayed AGM via Zoom, this time we will be using the premises in Scaynes Hill. And after a very brief official part we will have Katie Bourne as our speaker, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex. She is a very good speaker; I have heard her before.

The AGM details:

Venue: Scaynes Hill Memorial Hall, Lewes Rd, Scaynes Hill, Haywards Heath, RH17 7PG.

Start: 7.30pm for tea and coffee and a prompt 8pm start.

Nearer the time I will send out reports from the various officers for you to read at your leisure rather than listening to the reports at the meeting. Of course you are welcome to ask any Group related questions you might have, either at the AGM or at any other time.

The good news is that we have found enough volunteers to keep the Group alive for another year. One of our tutors, Paul Purdy, has agreed to take over as chairman and a very new member, Edward Redman, has volunteered to take over my job as Group secretary. Edward will also look after the website whilst I will edit the quarterly newsletters. Of course all this depends on the Group members at the AGM voting in favour of the suggested new committee.

And as this is the last time I write as Group Secretary – thank you for having put up with me all these years and all best wishes for the future.

Margret

From our Chairman

Hello All.

This will be my last newsletter report as our AGM is on 17th May 2023. and I am standing down as Chairman, having been in post for some time.

After the AGM we have a talk from the present Police Commissioner Kathy Bourne; do you have any questions you would like to ask her?

In September we are arranging an off-road day at the Blacklands Farm near East Grinstead for group members, more details about that later.

Last month we had another of our tutors training mornings with some of the associates who had the opportunity to have a drive with a different tutor. I hope they found it useful.

The next session will be on 29th April 2023, meeting at Hickstead Services.

We are also planning to have a stand at the Rustington Street Fayre on 8th July.

I hope you will all be able to attend the AGM on 17th May 2023 at 7.30pm

Best Wishes to you all.

Anthony

From the Group Training Officer

Learning to drive

If you are reading this, I expect you are interested in the improvement of driving skills. An advanced level of driving can only be achieved by developing the skills we have been taught from the very beginning, and this development never seems to stop, in my experience. I still have those “light bulb” moments where something becomes clear that I may never have considered before.

Once we have been given the tools to drive, and passed examination by the Licensing Authority’s agency, our development depends on our own assessment using the skills we have been given for the task. “Your ability to honestly self-assess your own driving performance accurately and learn from experience is the most important skill of all” – (Roadcraft).

To aid in this self-assessment, we use coaching by our tutors which help to provide as many “light bulb” moments as possible. Sometimes a drive with a different tutor throws a light on an aspect of “best driving practice”, which gives us a new perspective. This is one of the benefits of our Group “tutor reviews” which happen occasionally on Saturday mornings (Associates all receive an invitation, but members are also welcome).

We met up in March and it was a mix of tutors, associates, and some members who were preparing for their re-test. After our initial introductions, we were allocated to different cars, some with a third person who could observe the interaction between tutor and driver – another interesting experience that helps in our own development. Apart from the moments of clarity during a coaching session, it can be enlightening to watch another advanced driver using their skills, no matter what their stage of development; and it is often refreshing to see that we all make mistakes!

As the days become longer and brighter, we can all enjoy more daylight driving, and I hope that you all can enjoy your own personal development for as long as it continues to happen.

Duncan

Project Edward.

From Monday 15th to Friday 19th May 2023.

What is 'Project Edward'? -

Every Day Without A Road Death.

How can we achieve that?

This is the official line as put together by the police and all the various road safety organisations involved:

Day1 – Safe Roads.

Roads and roadsides are designed to reduce the risk of crashes and minimise the severity of any crashes that do occur. Take a moment to observe these measures such as separating different types of traffic, providing safe spaces for pedestrians and cyclists, and reducing speed limits.

Day 2 – Safe Vehicles.

Vehicles are designed to protect occupants and other road users in the event of a crash. Take a moment to consider the measures you have available, such as electronic stability control, advanced braking systems, and side impact protection.

Day 3 – National Safe Speeds Day.

Speed limits are set to ensure that vehicles are traveling at safe speeds for the road environment. Take a moment to observe your speed, the road markings, and the infrastructure design around you.

Day 4 – Safe Road Users.

is the 4th component of the 'Safe Systems' approach to road safety. Road users are encouraged to behave safely and respectfully on the road. This can be supported by measures such as driver education and training, public awareness campaigns, and enforcement of traffic laws.

Day 5 – Post-Crash Response.

It is important to respond quickly and effectively to crashes to minimise the harm caused. Take a moment to appreciate the support of the teams providing emergency medical care, clearing the road quickly, and investigating the causes of the crash to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

RED X (from UK Road Safety Network)

At a recent advanced driving test the examiner asked me many questions about what I would do if I was on a motorway and there was a red X displayed over one of the lanes. Then I found this article in the Road Safety Network newsletter and I decided to share it here – just in case anybody else gets interrogated about the red X. Please excuse me if you knew all about it anyway, this is for those who don't.

National Highways have released a report stating that nearly 10% of motorway users in the UK ignore the Red X mark seen on gantries. It is used to close lanes when obstructions or accidents have occurred on the road ahead. They are also used to show that a broken-down vehicle has been detected.

Drivers should abide by the signal by law, and this vital to avoid a potentially serious collision, and fines.

Enforcement cameras are now used that can automatically detect vehicles passing illegally under a red X or entering the lane beyond a red X, which can result in a fixed penalty of up to £100 and three points or, in some cases, more severe penalties or a court appearance.

As a result, emergency services have now joined forces with National Highways to remind drivers of the risks of ignoring these Red X marks on the motorways.

Surrey Police began enforcing camera detected Red X offences in November 2019 and so far, there have been 9,427 first Notices of Intended Prosecution sent out by the force.

Out of those who received these notices, 4,926 drivers have completed a safety awareness course, while others selected alternative disposal options such as paying a fixed penalty or having the matter heard at court.

Chief Constable Jo Shiner, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Roads Policing, said: "Red X signals are in place on the motorway for your safety and the safety of others. Sadly, there are too many instances where motorists fail to comply with a Red X signal and put others in incredible danger by driving in a closed lane. This is unacceptable and drivers who do so need to understand they face prosecution."

JUST A FILLER

A Minister parked his car on double-yellow lines in a large city and attached the following message to his windscreen: I have driven around the block 10 times without any luck. I have an appointment to keep. Forgive us our trespasses.

When he returned to his car, he found this reply attached, along with a ticket: I've policed this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I will lose my job. Lead us not into temptation.

THE LIMITATIONS OF HGV's (from UK Road Safety Network)

National Highways has launched a new campaign amid concerns car and van drivers underestimate limitations HGV drivers face in seeing passing vehicles. In a recent survey commissioned by National Highways, while nearly three quarters of people said they take extra care when overtaking a HGV, many said they did not know how many blind spots an HGV had.

Whilst lorries now have additional mirrors as standard which has improved driver visibility they still have 'blind spots'..... HGV drivers have four areas of 'limited visibility' – at the front, rear and each side of the vehicle. ...drivers are being urged to 'know the zones' – where HGV drivers have limited visibility.

The advice for drivers is also: pass quickly and safely
Where possible, don't linger next to a HGV.

Jeremy Phillips, head of road safety at National Highways, said:

Safety is our number one priority, and we all have a role to play in keeping each other safe when driving. Our advice to motorists overtaking a HGV is simple; avoid tailgating the HGV when considering an overtaking manoeuvre and as the Highway Code states, do so quickly and safely to avoid staying in an area of limited visibility.

Persistence (from RAC Newsletter)

A South Korean woman who spent over £11,000 attempting to get her driving licence, finally succeeded on her 960th attempt. Although the day she passed is almost 15 years ago, the story has risen to prominence recently after it has been reshared thousands of times on Reddit – and in the process has made international news. In the weeks following her successful test, she became a national celebrity for her tenacity and commitment.

Cha Sa-Soon's first attempt at the written test took place in April 2005, but she unfortunately failed. Despite the disappointment, she continued to relentlessly take the test for the next few years. In total, Sa-Soon sat the exam every day, five days a week over three years. She then reduced this to two exams a week, until she finally passed the written test on her 860th attempt.

She then attempted to pass the practical test. But as you might imagine, this was also a challenging ordeal. Cha Sa-Soon had to take the practical test an eye-watering 100 times, bringing the total number of driving examinations up to 960 before being able to have a full driving licence. The estimated cost for all these exams was around £11,000 – not including driving lessons.

Her continued dedication to passing was driven by the fact that she needed to be able to drive for her vegetable-selling business.

According to Cha Sa-Soon's driving instructor, when she finally passed, it was 'a huge burden off their backs'. Cha Sa-Soon's instructor, at Jeonbuk Driving School, said: "When she finally got her licence, we all went out cheering and hugged her, giving her flowers. "We hadn't had the guts to tell her to quit because she kept showing up."

Following the news of her success at the 960th attempt, South Korean car manufacturer Hyundai gifted her a brand-new vehicle worth £11,640.

THE BRAKE THAT NEVER WAS

When looking back through the files, certain cases merit another reading, not least this one, as it was the first case I ever undertook.

The story starts in 1977, when I was approached by a “Man from the Ministry” who asked me to look into an incident which had happened a few weeks earlier. He could not, by virtue of his position, take any action in this case. This situation involved a lady, whom we shall call Mrs. Caldwell. She had been driving a new Datsun, which she had owned for only a matter of weeks, from Beachy Head to Eastbourne on a hot and sunny day in the middle of summer.

As she began the descent, she put her foot on the brake pedal which went straight to the floor. She pumped the pedal, but to no avail. The car continued to pick up speed. Vainly she tried to engage second gear, but by this time she was travelling too fast to make the gear change. Eventually, and in desperation, she pulled on the handbrake – just at the point where the new loose chippings had been laid on the road that morning. The rear wheels locked, and the car spun round several times before coming to rest by the side of the road.

The result of this “manoeuvre” was that by now three cars had been written off. The Police were summoned to the scene of the incident. Mrs Caldwell told the officer “I put my foot on the brake pedal and it went straight to the floor.” The Police officer put his foot on the brake pedal and found a firm and hard pedal, indicating that the brakes were fully functional.

Mrs. Caldwell was adamant in her assertion about the lack of brakes. The Police officer told her that he believed what she said was true, but that the final decision did not rest with him.

Eventually Mrs. Caldwell was charged with dangerous driving. This she strenuously denied. She freely admitted to writing off three cars, but not driving dangerously.

The scenario of this incident sounds like it could have been written by the script writers of a television “soap”.

Where to begin in this investigation? As always, due to the elapsed time, there was little point in visiting the scene of the incident except to gain a pictorial view of the area. Therefore, the first port of call was with the vehicle itself.

This took some time, as the car had been removed to a breakers yard. Eventually it was tracked down and an appointment made to inspect the vehicle.

This was not entirely straightforward procedure, as it was “neatly stacked” under two other vehicles, and working on it was slightly hazardous.

However, despite all of this, the brake master cylinder was removed and sealed, a sample of the brake fluid was taken for analysis and the front and rear brakes were examined.

Of particular interest was the fact that there was a considerable amount of brake dust on the front disc brakes and pads, but the rear brakes and drums were completely dust free. "Curiouser and curiouser" said Alice.

The sample of brake fluid was sent to a well-known oil company who measured the water contamination and boiling point of the fluid.

It is worth recalling that in 1977 considerable interest was being shown in this country on the effect of water contamination of brake fluid and its relationship to the boiling point. When the fluid boils it produces a condition known as "vapour lock". When this occurs, the fluid becomes steam and it readily compressible. In liquid form, brake fluid is almost incompressible. The expansion rate from liquid to vapour is in the region of 1700:1

A great deal of pioneering work had been done in the U.S.A. by Markey, who as far back as the 1930s had maintained that vapour lock could, and did occur. He was not immediately believed, and his findings went largely unnoticed for many years. Ironically, perhaps, that when interest was shown in this country, the industry standard equipment was known as the Markey Tester. It was an adaptation of a laboratory apparatus for determining the boiling point of liquids.

In its original condition, brake fluid (depending upon its specification) will boil at about 250°C. 1% of water contamination will lower the boiling point to 175°C, and thereafter, progressive contamination lowers the boiling but by a lesser amount. (The graph is a curve rather than a straight line.) The recommended maximum of water contamination for brake fluid at that time was 1%.

The results of the tests on the brake fluid showed a boiling or vapour lock point of 120°C indicating significant contamination. The fluid was also heavily discoloured due to heat, and contained a large amount of rubber particles.

A question sometimes asked is where does the water found in brake fluid come from? The answer is that brake fluid is hygroscopic – it has an affinity for water – and will absorb moisture readily.

This can be via the dust seals on the brake wheel cylinders and callipers, via the atmospheric vent hole in the in the brake fluid reservoir filler cap, and interestingly, through the flexible brake hoses.

In order to obtain a valid assessment of the condition of the brake fluid in a vehicle, a sample is taken (in this country) from the left-hand front brake assembly. Left-hand, because it is the dirtiest side of the vehicle and nearest to the kerb, and front brake, because more work is done by the front brakes in relation to the rear brakes.

Having established the condition of the brake fluid, attention turned to the brake master cylinder. This was of the tandem type, whereby there are two actuating pistons; the front one controlling the rear brakes, and the rear piston controlling the front brakes. For ease of recognition and clarity, these are most usually referred to as the primary and secondary circuits.

In theory, if one of the circuits fails, the other one will provide braking, albeit at reduced efficiency. This did not appear to have happened in this case, and the foremost question was “why”?

Upon dismantling the master cylinder it was discovered that the piston seal for the rear brakes was deformed and part of the lip seal could not touch the cylinder bore. From the condition of the seal it was apparent that the deformation had occurred during the manufacturing process, and that the seal had never worked at all.

Therefore, all braking had been carried out on the front brakes. This would have given the impression to the driver of a powerful braking system, as the nose of the vehicle would have dipped on firm application of the brakes.

This also explained why brake dust was found on the front brakes and why the rear brakes were dust free.

A picture emerged of a braking system in which only the front brakes functioned, and brake fluid which was contaminated.

Given the prevailing conditions; a hot day, a steep downhill descent and only one braking circuit functioning, it was easy to see that in all probability this vehicle had suffered vapour lock immediately prior to the incident.

It would also explain the fact that when the Police officer put his foot on the brake pedal he found a firm resistance. In the intervening time between the incident and his arrival, the brake fluid would have cooled sufficiently for it to return from vapour to liquid.

One thing I could never understand was why almost nobody believed Mrs. Caldwell’s version of the events. She was an intelligent, professional and highly articulate lady – not the sort of person to invent an excuse in order to avoid responsibility.

At the court hearing, the Police offered no evidence, and so the case was dismissed by the Bench.

Mrs. Caldwell left court without a stain on her character, smiling sweetly and saying “I told you so.”

Everyone was happy, justice has been done and my first case had been successful. In accordance with the solicitor’s instructions I returned the parts from the car to the breakers yard and consigned the file to the archives.

Imagine, then, my surprise when six months later I received a letter from the solicitors informing me that Mrs. Caldwell had decided to sue Datsun for selling her a defective car.

All the material evidence had now disappeared, and this promised to be a fiercely-contested case – based almost entirely on the technical evidence.

Months later, after counsel's briefing and endless correspondence the case was heard in front of learned judge, whose grasp of things mechanical was not overly great. I had obtained an identical brake master cylinder, which had been dismantled and laid out on a sheet so that the components could be seen by learned judge as they were referred to in evidence. At one point it was necessary for me to leave the witness box and stand next to him to point out the various parts of the braking system as they were being discussed.

He was having considerable difficulty with the concept that the front piston controlled the rear brakes whilst the rear piston controlled the front.

In all innocence – remember that this was my first case – I said to the judge “would it help if we referred to these as the primary and secondary pistons and circuits?”

“**No it would not**” was the quite emphatic reply.

In all, my evidence lasted for 7 hours - 6½ of those under cross-examination!

That really has to be an understatement, as for those last 6 ½ hours I was having the stuffing knocked out of me by the counsel for the defence.

I felt quite dispirited when listening to the summing up by the defence, who, with dramatic oratory declaimed “...and I find it incredible that the expert witness states that...” “...Mr. Wragg's assertion stretches credulity to the breaking point...”

So it went on, and I sat there feeling quite miserable, and with an overwhelming feeling that I had let people down.

When the counsel for the plaintiff rose to give his summing up, the judge smiled at him and said “I will not trouble you further, as I have already decided this case, and I find for the plaintiff.” Whereupon, he rose, bowed and left the Court. It took me a few moments to grasp what had actually happened – we had won!

The verdict was in favour of Mrs. Caldwell, which was very satisfactory for everyone except Datsun – no smiles from that side of the court.

After the departure of the judge, the two counsels approached each other, drew calculators from somewhere inside their gowns and started a little haggling. “..So that is three cars at £10,000 a piece, over 2 ½ years at 8% per annum...” and so on.

I never thought that I would ever have occasion to act for Mrs. Caldwell again, but I was wrong. About five years later she telephoned to ask for urgent help. But that is another story for a later time (and the next newsletter.).

This is your committee

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

Chairman	Anthony Platts	aplattsdrivertraining@hotmail.com	07885 096921
Group Secretary	Margret Preece	margretp@clara.co.uk	07773 874562
Treasurer	Matt Porterfield	matt.porterfield@fireflyuk.net	07799 640641
Training Officer	Duncan Hauser	duncanhauser@ntlworld.com	07958 284577
Membership Secretary	John Norris	johnsnorris@gmail.com	07775 781699
Vice Chairman and Events Organiser	Kevin Reader	kevinreader@btinternet.com	07761 635027
Newsletter Editor	vacant		
Webmaster	vacant		
Committee Member	Dave Raine	david.raine41@gmail.com	07887 695385
Committee Member	Douglas Wragg	dgwragg@gmail.com	07778 811349
Committee Member	Gwyn Davies	gwynjanet@aol.co.uk	078870616505
Committee Member	Paul Purdy	paulpurdy948@btinternet.com	07548 986820

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.

Margret Preece (Group Secretary - margretp@clara.co.uk) or

John Norris (Membership Secretary - johnsnorris@gmail.com)

Future Events

All events start at 19.30 with tea and coffee for a prompt 8pm start.

19 April (AGM)

Katie Bourne (Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner)

19 July 2023

TBC

Sussex RoSPA

Disclaimer: The information contained within this communication is drawn from a variety of sources and whilst every effort is made to ensure it is correct, Sussex Advanced Drivers cannot be held responsible for any misinformation provided by third parties. It should also be noted that in using the information it does not necessarily reflect RoSPA policy, practice, or its position on any given matter, unless specifically stated, but is provided for the purposes of information to its members.