



Sussex Advanced Drivers – Newsletter

November 2023

A word from the editor

Hi All,

Summer is a memory, Christmas is only a few weeks away (help!) and we have to adjust our driving to dark and damp conditions.

On a dark and wet day, for a bit of fun and maybe looking into the future I recently played a little with AI, ChatGPT4 to be precise. And this is the answer I received.

(I did not change a word):

My prompt: Give me 6 Points to recommend advanced driving.

The answer:

1. **Enhanced Safety:** Advanced driving courses focus on defensive driving and risk management, reducing the likelihood of accidents.
2. **Improved Skills:** Advanced training covers vehicle control, precision driving, and emergency manoeuvres, making drivers more confident and capable.
3. **Better Decision-Making:** Advanced drivers are trained to make informed and strategic decisions, contributing to safer road behaviour.
4. **Increased Awareness:** Advanced courses emphasize constant awareness of surroundings, helping drivers anticipate and react to potential hazards.
5. **Reduced Insurance Costs:** Completion of advanced driving courses may lead to insurance discounts, reflecting lower risk for well-trained drivers.
6. **Positive Driving Attitude:** Advanced driving education promotes a considerate attitude on the road, contributing to a more cooperative driving environment.

What do you think about these answers, has AI got it about right? I put a similar question 3 times and each time the answer was differently worded but in content about the same.

Finally, and much much too early, I wish everyone a very happy Christmas and my best wishes for 2024.

All the best,
Margret

From the chairman

Welcome to the autumn newsletter, and welcome to our new members and associates. We are almost at the end of the year and are already planning for next year's events and meetings. Keep an eye on our web site www.sussexadvanceddrivers.co.uk for updated information. If anyone has any ideas that they would like to see included into the calendar, please let someone on the committee know. We would especially like to hear of some ideas from our lady members, what would you like to see included?

We attended the Bexhill 100 car show in August. The weather was kind to us and we managed to interest a number of people to sign up for a free assessed drive. It was quite a large show with plenty of vehicles on display. We hope to attend the show next year so will be looking for more volunteers to help man the stall.

We are looking at replacing the existing gazebo as our one has developed some structural faults, so we are looking for one with a stronger frame.

We are sending out another request for someone to volunteer to take over the Treasurer's position at the next AGM. If anyone can spare some time Matt would be willing to introduce you to the system. We really do need someone and time is running out.

Finally, as the temperature drops remember so does your tyre pressure, so don't forget to top them up.

Also remember our next meeting at Scaynes Hill Millennium Hall, RH17 7PGI on Wednesday 22nd November. We have Katy Bourne, the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner giving us a talk.

So stay safe and Happy Motoring

Paul Purdy.



Our Stand at Bexhill 100

From our Group Secretary.

Continuing as your group secretary I have been enjoying the role and have introduced some new ideas including our new Facebook Group which is exclusive to our own Sussex Advanced Drivers (RoSPA) members. With enough people joining, these groups can become quite interesting. Ours can be used for advertising our meetings and events; sharing driving related news that we deem appropriate to our group; dash-cam video clips for discussion; advanced driving questions and answers; the possibilities are endless, so please do join if you are able, and wish to do so.

The bookings for the hall where we meet at Scaynes Hill are all now secured for 2024, our website usually shows the next two or three meetings in advance so do check regularly for updates. I send out meeting reminders either one or two weeks in advance but I'm open to feedback on how this works for you. i.e. too many or too few emails, sent with too much or too little notice, I'm still feeling my way with this really.

Edward

The Basics vs Automatic driver aids

At the end of September, 8 of us arrived at the Blacklands Farm Adventure Centre for a four-wheel drive experience, and it was a really interesting experience. We drove two Landrover Defenders and a specially built buggy over different terrains accompanied by two very good instructors. The vehicles were extremely basic apart from their drive choices which included four-wheel, two wheel and low gear. We were in low gear most of the time and the engine was engaged almost continuously. We were constantly encouraged to keep our feet flat on the floor (no braking, no clutch) apart from the need for well-timed acceleration on the steep bits so that the engine could control all four wheels. It was a great effort to keep the driving so simple, and not give in to the temptation to dip the clutch or brake – the motor did all the work.

What a difference to get back into a modern vehicle with so much equipment to manage that most of us work out what we need to drive safely and forget about the rest. Power-assisted steering, for example; who remembers a time when we needed to have some movement in the vehicle before it was possible to turn the steering wheel without having a hernia! Now I simply check that the "auto lights" function is lit when darkness starts to fall, and rarely notice that it has started to rain because the wipers clear the screen for me.

Most of the automatic and safety features are a bonus, but we should be aware of what is available to us, and which features may not be an advantage. I personally don't like the "lane assist" feature that makes the vehicle fight for control when I want to go near a white line of any kind (I fully understand that other people like to have it switched on). I am also wary of the dashboard sign that picks up on changing speed limits – it is often fooled and makes me aware that I need to be observant enough to know what the legal limit is at any time or place.

And what about the futuristic electric cars now growing in number on our roads. Is there any need for driver training when you have very few moving parts and the vehicle starts to brake as soon as you lift your foot off the accelerator?

Well, what about your road position? Everything we learn from Roadcraft about the best position for dealing with hazards is still relevant. Will the car be able to judge the safe speed

to negotiate any given hazard? Bearing in mind the nature of hazards; how they change and are unique to any given moment, I would like to keep my wits about me and some control of my speed.

“We should always be able to stop in the distance that we see to be clear” – rule number 1. Active Cruise Control will probably put the brakes on in time to stop you being involved in a rear-end shunt, but if you are gathering information from far enough, you may be able to avoid heavy braking, and possible skidding.

So the vehicles may change, but there is a fundamental attitude to good driving practice that we all need to foster and develop if we are to remain as safe as possible and continue to enjoy driving – that’s what it’s all about for me, anyway.

Happy motoring

Duncan

STRATEGIC ROADS USER SURVEY. (Graham Fest)

The Strategic Roads User Survey helps National Highways develop initiatives and target investments that will improve the driver experience. The survey is the formal measurement in the government’s second Road Investment Strategy as part of holding National Highways to account for delivering good customer experience. More than 9000 road users took part in the watchdog’s survey about their last journey on a motorway or major ‘A’ road managed by National Highways.

The M5 motorway between the Midlands and the South West had the highest overall satisfaction at 82 per cent. The M5 motorway has improved both its overall satisfaction rating (74 per cent last year) and its position in the rankings.

Coming second was the M40 at 82 per cent overall satisfaction, doing well again after being the most highly rated road last year (79 per cent).

Journeys on smart motorways had lower levels of satisfaction with road users than those that did not include a smart section (smart 69 per cent; not smart 76 per cent).

Overall, 73 per cent of road users were satisfied with their last motorway or major ‘A’ road journey, an improvement on last year’s 69%.

The A303 was rated the best ‘A’ road in England. The road which connects the M3 and the A30 from London to Devon and Cornwall had the highest overall satisfaction at 85%.

The M6 was rated the least popular motorway with the lowest level of satisfaction (66%).

The A27 receives the lowest level of overall satisfaction (59 per cent), followed by the A12 (61 per cent).

71 per cent of users were satisfied with the time their journey took.

The management of roadworks is the lowest performing area, just 48 per cent of those surveyed were satisfied.

**Should I buy winter tyres?
(RAC)**



Winter tyres can improve traction in slippery conditions. We explain how winter tyres work, and whether it's worth replacing your summer or all-season tyres.

What are winter tyres? Winter tyres are designed specifically to remain supple in colder temperatures and maximise traction when driving on snow and ice.

The key differences between winter tyres and summer tyres are:

- Winter tyres use a softer rubber compound (usually by including more natural rubber in the mix), which stays softer in low temperatures.
- The surface of the tread blocks is covered with small jagged slits – called sipes. These increase the tyre's surface area against the road and improve traction.
- To more effectively displace water, winter tyres generally have deeper-tread grooves than conventional summer tyres.
- The tread pattern is also designed to collect snow, further improving traction on snow and ice.

Most UK cars are fitted with summer tyres. There's no legal requirement to fit winter tyres during colder months, but in some countries on the European continent winter or all-weather tyres are compulsory in certain weather conditions.

As with regular tyres, winter rubber sells at a wide range of prices. Budget models in a common size suitable for a family hatchback are available for around £70 per wheel.

A comparable winter tyre from a premium manufacturer can cost roughly £100. But, as with their summer counterparts, they are likely to offer greater levels of grip and braking performance.

As demand for winter tyres has grown, some premium tyre manufacturers – such as Michelin and Pirelli – have even released high-end models aimed at sports car owners. These claim to offer sufficiently high grip and traction to use a powerful car that would otherwise be almost undrivable in slippery conditions. These sit at the top end of the range, price wise, and can cost around £250 per tyre, depending on model.

Winter tyres do make a difference if the weather is cold enough. Winter tyres offer greater traction, grip and braking performance than summer tyres in temperatures below 7°C. Provided the temperature is low enough, their special tread patterns mean they will perform better in the wet, as well as on snow and ice,

The key to their improved grip on wet and ice-covered surfaces is the 'sipes', which provide hundreds of small extra edges to grip the road as the tyre rotates. The sipes help not only because of their edges, but also because they enable localised movement of the rubber as the soft compound clings to the road.

A larger single solid-tread block, like the ones you see on summer tyres, would stay rigid in such conditions and be unable to maintain grip as effectively.



Winter tyres are also designed to gather a snowy 'in-fill' in the tread grooves and in the sipes to help with grip on packed snow. Nothing grips snow better than snow itself, and winter tyres exploit this by gathering and holding as much of it as possible.

The extra-deep tread grooves also help the tyres to disperse surface water and usually increase resistance to aquaplaning - this is where the tyre passes on top of the water rather than through it, and it increases the risk of losing control of the car.

At temperatures above 7°C, winter tyres offer significantly poorer performance in dry conditions than summer tyres. This can mean a marked increase in braking distances and poorer grip on bends.

Winter tyres suffer from increased wear rates if used in warmer temperatures.

Drivers may also notice increased road noise and a slight difference in ride quality when switching to winter tyres.

Winter tyres are designed for use in all winter conditions, not just snow and ice. Tyre manufacturers claim this means any weather conditions with temperatures below 7°C.

To save hassle and expense when changing tyres, you may want to buy a second set of wheels which you fit your winter tyres on. In many countries where winter-tyre use is mandatory, drivers often opt for steel rims - these are less likely to corrode after exposure to winter grit. They are also less expensive to repair or replace if you accidentally slide into a kerb.

If you're fitting winter tyres, it's worth carrying a winter spare as well. Fitting a summer spare tyre alongside three winter ones could make your car's handling more unpredictable, due to different levels of grip at each corner.

Unless you have room in your garage or shed, you'll probably also need to pay to store your 'out-of-season' wheels. Several fast-fit centres, car dealers and even removal companies offer this service, although prices vary.

Could this be the beginning of the end of the UK's pothole nightmare? (RAC)

The Government has announced **important motoring news**, with a £8.3 billion funding boost to tackle the ongoing issues with roads across the country.

According to today's announcement (17 November 2023), millions of drivers could be able to enjoy smoother, safer, and faster road journeys thanks to the 'biggest ever road resurfacing programme to improve local roads.'



As a part of the funding announcement, Transport Secretary Mark Harper revealed that the plans will lead to over 5,000 miles of road across the country over the next 11 years being resurfaced.

Local highway authorities in England will receive £150 million this financial year, followed by a further £150 million for 2024/2025, with the rest of the funding allocated through to 2034.

Furthermore, the announcement stated that each local authority can use their share of the £8.3 billion to identify what local roads are in most need of repair and deliver immediate improvements.

In total, £3.3 billion will be provided to the North West, North East and Yorkshire & Humber; £2.2 billion to the West Midlands and East Midlands; and £2.8 billion will be allocated to the East of England, South East, South West, and London.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: “For too long politicians have shied away from taking the right long-term decisions to make life easier for hardworking families - tackling the scourge of potholes being a prime example.”

“Well-maintained road surfaces could save drivers up to £440 each in expensive vehicle repairs, helping motorists keep more of the cash in their pocket.”

“This unprecedented £8.3 billion investment will pave the road for better and safer journeys for millions of people across the country and put an end to the blight of nuisance potholes.”

According to RAC research, well-maintained road surfaces could save drivers up to £440 each in expensive vehicle repairs from pothole damage.

RAC head of policy Simon Williams said: “Drivers’ biggest bugbear of all is the poor condition of local roads, so the fact the Government has found a significant additional pot of revenue that should give councils the certainty of funding they need to plan proper long-term road maintenance, something we have been calling for for many years.

“We hope local authorities will use the money in the most effective way possible by resurfacing the very worst roads, keeping those in reasonable condition in better states for longer thorough surface dressing, and filling potholes as permanently as possible wherever necessary.

“This should in time go a considerable way to bringing our roads back to a fit-for-purpose state and saving drivers hundreds of pounds in the process from not having to fork out for frustrating repairs to their vehicles.”

These everyday medicines could get you fined or banned from driving. (RAC)

With the winter season upon us, it brings with it the usual unwelcome rise in coughs, sneezes and sniffles for a nation of road users.

Medicated motorists beware. Many legal medicines and widely-used painkillers could impair your driving – and it’s an offence in England, Scotland, and Wales to drive with specified limits of certain drugs in your blood. Drivers convicted for drug-driving face a minimum one-year ban and a criminal record – so it pays to be vigilant when using even common prescription drugs.

“We delivered it back to the customer just over a week ago and to-day we have recovered it from the next village. It has lost all drive.”

Alan asked me to carry out an investigation and report so that he could then go back to his customer with full details of what had gone wrong.

He was certain in his own mind that there was no fault with any of the work which he had carried out on the vehicle. All the replacement parts had been obtained from the Renault main dealer.

The customer in question was a lady of fairly advanced years who had, in her own words, “Driven any number of cars in most parts of the world.” I gathered from Alan that she had a somewhat imperious attitude, although that was not the exact word he used.

Fine, no problem, let the investigation begin. The gearbox was removed in order to gain access to the clutch. When it was removed, I could not quite believe my eyes. The shredded fabric of the clutch centre plate linings had crept out through the pressure plate release fingers.

Very delicately, all the components were removed, placed on coloured paper and photographed.

Had I not seen this with my own eyes I would have been hard pressed to believe the condition of the parts.

The flywheel was once again blue as a result of the heat generated, and the friction linings were almost non-existent.

There was little doubt that the clutch had suffered from severe slippage.

“Does your customer have three feet?” I asked Alan. “One for each pedal?”

“Not that I am aware.” was his reply.

I wrote my report and sent it in. In the report I ventured to suggest that maybe a car with automatic transmission might be a better option for the future. I had suggested to Alan that if that was not accepted as a solution, then maybe he should buy Renault clutches and flywheels in bulk!

You may imagine that the owner did not take too kindly to the report. The opinion expressed was that the garage and the Consultant Engineer were talking rubbish.

Another clutch and flywheel were fitted, and the car was returned to the customer on the Friday afternoon.

Saturday morning the telephone rang. It was Alan. “Come immediately.” was his short but imperative message. Half an hour later I was there, and guess what – so was the Renault!

“We delivered this yesterday.” Alan said, “And this morning we had a ‘phone call from the owner who was in the next village saying the car wouldn’t move!”

The clutch/gearbox casing was still too hot to touch without some discomfort.

There was only one thing for it – talk to the owner.

You may well realise that in taking this supposedly easy and simple step there is a distinct health hazard. Nobody admits to being a bad driver – certainly not someone who has “Driven any number of cars in most parts of the world.”

With a certain amount of caution we asked the owner to show us the gear lever positions for the relative gears. This she did, but not with much good grace. “First” she announced in a very clipped and terse manner, “Second and third.” she said in the same tone.

Alan and I looked at each other. Which one of us was going to speak first. It was a bit like Bernard Woolley in “Yes Minister”.

“Ah, um, er you see that was **actually** third, fourth and fifth gear.”

A deafening silence ensued.

You can almost picture the scene when the vehicle left the owner’s house up a slope to the road. It must have resembled a Boeing 747 on take-off. Goodness knows how many thousand revs. from the engine whilst the clutch must have been nearly incandescent!

Subsequently, I gather that she changed the car for an automatic, and to date all appears to be well.

So how long is a clutch? In the case of the last one fitted to the vehicle – 24 miles.

Douglas Wragg

Future Events

22 November 2023

A talk with Q & A by Katie Bourne, Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner. In June 2019 her endeavours and successes in the role were awarded with an OBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List.

17 January 2024

A talk by George Chandler from the Kent RoSPA Group. George is a retired civil engineer, having worked in local government for over 40 years, mostly on highways. His presentation is geared towards advanced drivers and he expects us to challenge him. The photos accompanying his talk raise lots of issues we encounter daily on the roads. It promises to be a lively(!) entertaining and thought-provoking evening for everyone.

15 May 2024

AGM

17 July 2024

By popular demand a repeat of last year’s demonstration and practice of CPR and the use of a defibrillator; guided by Elizabeth Greenfield.

Venue for all these events:

Scaynes Hill Millennium Hall, Lewes Road, Scaynes Hill, Haywards Heath, RH17 7PG.

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

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:

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 Margret Preece (Membership Secretary – margretp@clara.co.uk)

Sussex RoSPA

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