

## Sussex Advanced Drivers – Newsletter

February 2024

### From the Editor

Hi Everybody,

It is almost too late for good wishes for the new year, but then again it is never too late for good wishes; I hope that you will have a happy and healthy 2024.

There are some sad news to report this time: one of the founder members of this group, Douglas Wragg, has passed away early in January. A few years ago he volunteered to join us on to the committee yet again and we were grateful for his contributions. But he had been ill for some time and there were times when you could see how much of an effort it was for him. You will also know him as the author of the story at the end of the newsletters, tales from his practice as a consulting engineer. There is one more tale at the end of this one, sadly that is the last one which I happened to have on file.

On a brighter note: Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March we will have Steve O'Connor from the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership as our speaker. SSRP are another arm of the police force, and they work to reduce casualties across East and West Sussex with education, engagement, enforcement, and engineering (including speed cameras). We have at times joined them at various car / bike events promoting road safety.

I am very happy to point out that this time we have several newsletter articles from Group members: Duncan Hauser suggested the piece about road rage, Nigel Lofting reports about his recent re-test and Peter Luck tells us about his favourite car. Thank you to you all. Next time – might we have an article from you? Maybe about your favourite car or your favourite drive? How about your pet hate?

Very shortly you will receive an email from me as Membership Secretary: we are coming to the end of our financial year (31 March) and membership subscriptions will be due. We have once again managed to hold it at the previous level, £18. Please look out for the email which will give details of how and where to pay.

All the best, keep safe,  
Margret

## **From our Chairman**

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to our new calendar of events 2024 that Kevin has kindly put together. All has been posted on our web site ([www.sussexadvanceddrivers.co.uk](http://www.sussexadvanceddrivers.co.uk)). We are sorry for the quick change of speakers for the January meeting, but we wanted Katie Bourne as a speaker as early as possible, so thank you to everyone for facilitating the quick change, I hope you all got the notification of the change in time. We had quite a good turnout for what was a very interesting evening.

Duncan is trying to put together another training day, all are welcome; so if you would like a refresher drive or you are still training for your Advanced Test please let Duncan know as soon as possible so that everyone can be accommodated. Remember these are free as part of your membership.

Our request for ideas as to what you, the membership, would like to see included in our program of events so far has been non-existent, so I hope you will support Kevin's efforts and over the next few months some suggestions might be forthcoming. I know we as a group are spread over a large area, and the distance traveling to some of the venues might be too far for some. This is why we picked Scaynes Hill for our meetings, to be as central as possible for everyone.

We hope to attend the Bexhill 100 car show again this year and Rustington Street Fayre and would appreciate some help manning the stalls and help us recruit some new members.

Have a good year everyone, safe driving.

Paul Purdy

## **RoSPA 3 yearly re-test.** (Nigel Lofting)

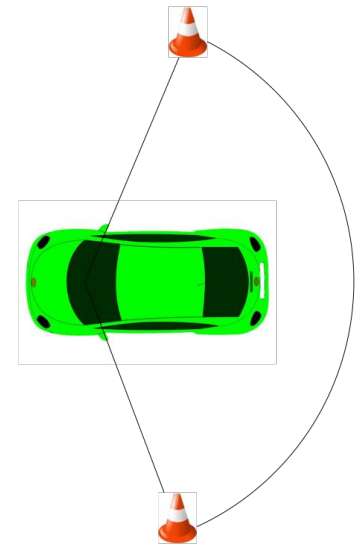
My 3 yearly RoSPA re-test became due in early September. I had noticed this and applied for a re-test before the reminder arrived from RoSPA, which came a month before the expiry date. Despite this I did not get a test date before my 3 yearly validity expired. RoSPA are tolerant of this for my observing role, up to rather arbitrary 3-week extension of validity, which I stayed within.

My examiner was Paul Marshall and the test took place at Pirbright. This is clearly a long way from where I live in West Chiltington and I was totally unfamiliar with the area. Having said that, Paul found a route with a great variety of roads, encompassing rural areas, single track roads accessed through a very tight pair of bollards, a dual carriageway which had single becoming a 2-lane carriageway (National speed limit change!) and a motorway.

Paul put me at ease, and I enjoyed the drive.

A couple of interesting feedback points arose, which gave me food for thought.

While on a dual carriageway with multiple lanes I carried out a mirror and shoulder check before changing lanes. Paul pointed out that I should trust my mirrors more. By that he meant that I should limit the rotation of my head to ONLY check the blind spot. He suggested that I park the car in a car park and place something at the limits of what I can see in my rear mirrors. Assuming that both wing mirrors and the rear-view mirror are correctly adjusted I should have an uninterrupted view around the arc shown. When doing a shoulder check it is only necessary to look as far as the rear limit of my blind spot. This means that I turn my head less, reducing the chance of introducing unwanted steering inputs. I think this is a good idea and I have already started using it.



When driving down a narrow road with a line of parked cars with barely enough space to allow two cars to pass I adopted a wide position well away from the cars. I was taught this by Chris Gilbert, who said that I could always give up this position should an oncoming car appear. Paul suggested that if an oncoming car should appear they would perceive me as driving selfishly. He used the acronym SLAP.

Is it.....**S**afe

Is it.....**L**egal

Will it.....**A**chieve anything?

What will people's ....**P**erception be?

The perception in this case would be "why is that car right on my side of the road? I have to say that I tend to still favour Chris's view because I am minimising the hazard while I pass the cars and I can always slow down and get tight to the parked cars if another car appears coming towards me.

When approaching a multi lane roundabout with multiple lanes, approaching it I needed to take an exit past 12 o'clock on the roundabout. The signs on the road meant that I had to transfer from lane 1 to lane 3 while approaching the roundabout. I did this and entered the roundabout with a constant right turn signal. Paul suggested that I should put in a deliberate pause with the signal after I had transferred lanes on the approach and reapply the signal on entering the roundabout, which would show following vehicles that I had not forgotten to cancel the signal (which would not be self-cancelling on a straight road). I can see the value of this and will try to apply it.

Paul pointed out that he saw a couple of instances of what he called "shuffling" using the pull push method of steering when for small inputs rotational steering would be better controlled as I could keep two hands on the wheel. I am normally in the habit of using rotational steering for such small inputs but perhaps I missed one. I certainly think that using rotational steering up to the limit of crossing your arms is a good way of retaining maximum control of the wheel. This covers most normal driving situations apart from sharp 90° turns.

My overriding view is that I saw the re-test as a positive experience. It ensures that I keep my skills up to date and gave me a couple of extra tools in my toolbox.

## **Can road rage be stamped out?** (from BBC website)

Have you experienced aggressive drivers on the road? Have you been an aggressive or angry driver?

A study by Compare the Market in 2022 found that almost two in three drivers (62%) experience road rage with almost one in three reporting they had experienced a face-to-face confrontation with another driver.

Dr Ruth Tully, a consultant forensic psychologist who works with people with a history of violent behaviour, defines road rage as “any behaviour committed by the driver with the intention of dominating the road or with the potential of causing harm either physical or psychological to other vehicle users”.

So, why does it happen and how can we stop it from escalating?

We can control our own behaviour; other’s people’s behaviour is outside of our control. Dr Ruth Tully described a common finding of road aggression as “perception of goal impediment. We’re on our way to work, taking a child to nursery or doing our shopping - if somebody tries to impede that, or if we perceive that they are doing that, people get more frustrated or more likely to act on that with aggression.”

She explains the importance of self-reflection to avoid confrontation on the road.

“We do need to think about what might increase that risk and some of those things might include thinking about who’s in the car with you.”

“Other people’s behaviour is outside of our control, but we can control how we respond to it,” Ruth added.

It’s about recognising what influences our decision.

Dr Ruth says: “I’ve worked with many people who have committed offences like death by dangerous driving and death by careless driving.”

“We need to remember that this has a real-world impact for the other person. It can not only ruin the other person’s life if an accident happens but also your own.”

“Anger and frustration are normal, but it’s how we deal with that and whether or not, we respond in a way we may later regret.”

Looking at how you can avoid these incidents from taking place, she explains if you’re prone to being hot-headed, then **“it’s about using strategies to try and remain calm... take a deep breath and so on”**.

## **My Favourite Car.** (Peter Luck)

My favourite car is the Volkswagen Golf. It has been a very successful design over nearly fifty years and undergone a continuing process of gradual evolution. It is just the right size for my needs, is easy to drive and has a commanding ‘presence’ on the road.

My first Golf was a manual Diesel 2.0 tdi; a fabulous vehicle for eating up the motorway miles, doing only 2000 rpm at 80 mph in top gear. However, because some of my journeys are rather too short for a Diesel and because traffic so often proceeds only at a crawl, I opted to change to a petrol-engine Golf with an automatic gearbox and with LED headlights. The engine is a 1.5 litre turbocharged unit.

Both the Golfs I have owned have been from the 7<sup>th</sup> evolution, the latter one being a ‘facelifted’ version introduced in 2017, although production continued until 2020, which was when mine was first registered.

The dashboard and analogue instrument design are particularly pleasing, incorporating a very accurate and useful fuel gauge. The hatchback concept is a brilliant idea for increasing the loading potential, by facilitating conversion to a van with windows when the need arises. It is also very comfortable and stable on the road.

In terms of fuel economy, my Diesel car could achieve 68 mpg on the motorway, given favourable conditions. The petrol engine on my current car can, remarkably, achieve nearly as much. Facilitating this is the engine's ability to 'freewheel' in Drive, in conjunction with a 7-speed gearbox on the overrun along gentle downhill gradients.

A couple of features not found on every car are the automatic handbrake, and an 'auto-hold' which makes hill starts on even the steepest hills a cinch.

There is no model of car currently on the market that could tempt me to change. In my opinion, the time is not yet right for electric vehicles in terms of range and nationwide charging facilities. This guy hopes to remain a happy VW customer.

### **Stress Levels Higher on a Friday (Graham Feest Newsletter)**

Research by Lightfoot - *The green tech company committed to making fleets safer, cleaner, and more cost-effective* - suggests that Friday is the most hazardous day of the week for drivers with the most incidents, speeding events and examples of aggressive driving.

The company analysed more than 5,000 drivers taking part in blind trials before they had Lightfoot's driver coaching and telematics system installed and operational.

The data showed that Friday at 9am is the most common time for a collision to take place – based on the number of FNOL (first notification of loss) alerts the company receives.

Friday is also the worst day of the week for aggressive driving, with more incidences of harsh braking, cornering, speeding and sudden turns.

Lightfoot says that tiredness at the end of the working week, which leads to mistakes and inattentiveness, could be to blame.

By contrast Monday is the day when there are the lowest incidences of speeding, harsh driving and insurance claims.

### **Motorway Breakdowns (RAC newsletter)**

Three-quarters of drivers unknowingly put themselves in danger during motorway breakdowns according to research by the RAC

Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) drivers would unknowingly put themselves in danger after breaking down on the motorway and stopping on the hard shoulder.

Only a fifth (22%) of the 1,900 drivers surveyed would do the right thing after breaking down on one of the UK's fastest roads on a cold and wet winter's night by standing to the rear of their vehicle and as far as possible from traffic, ideally behind a barrier if there

was one. 1-in-10 (11%) said they would stay in their vehicle, leaving them at great risk of being seriously injured or killed if another vehicle were to hit them.

Two-thirds (65%) would also unwittingly put themselves at risk by standing either in front of or next to their car, where they could be hit in the event of another driver colliding with their broken-down vehicle.

The analysis corresponds with reports from nearly 200 RAC patrols, who found 78% of drivers they have attended who had broken down on motorways were still in their vehicles when they arrive.

## **Report reveals that half of all new vehicles are too wide for on street parking.** (Graham Feest newsletter)



Research by motoring campaign group Transport & Environment (T&E) has found that new cars across Europe, on average, are getting 1 cm wider every two years.

The data states that the trend will continue due to the rising sales of SUVs – both in the UK and across the continent.

In fact, around half of new cars sold are already too wide for the minimum on-street parking space in many countries, including the UK.

T&E's research into new vehicles found that the average width of new cars expanded to 180.3 cm in the first half of 2023, up from 177.8 cm in 2018.

Among the top 100 new cars sold in the EU in 2023, 52% of them were too wide for the minimum specified on-street parking space (180 cm) in major cities, including London, Paris and Rome.

Also, off-street parking is a growing problem for even the average new car (180 cm wide), while large luxury SUVs no longer fit in many circumstances. Measuring around 200 cm wide, large luxury SUVs leave space for drivers and passengers to get in and out of vehicles in typical off-street spaces – as they measure an average of around 240 cm.

When comparing to previous data from the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), the results suggest the same trend has happened consistently over the two decades up to 2020.

As a result, T&E stated that unless width limits for cars are introduced soon, and cities impose higher parking charges for larger vehicles, then it could result in safety issues. James Nix, Vehicles Policy Manager at T&E, said: “Cars have been getting wider for decades and that trend will continue until we set a stricter limit.

“Currently the law allows new cars to be as wide as trucks. The result has been big SUVs and American style pick-up trucks parking on our footpaths and endangering pedestrians, cyclists, and everyone else on the road.”

The report particularly targets large luxury SUVs as the biggest culprits for being too big for on-street parking.

In fact, according to T&E, the wider designs have also enabled the height of vehicles to be further raised, despite crash data showing a 10 cm increase in the height of vehicle fronts carries a 30% higher risk of fatalities in collisions with pedestrians and cyclists.

Barbara Stoll, Director of the Clean Cities Campaign, said: “Monster SUVs are a threat to the urban fabric of our cities. Unless we act now, more and more of our precious public space will be taken away from people by ever larger cars – this is not the cleaner, brighter and greener future that citizens want. On 4 February, Parisians have a unique opportunity to lead the way and say no to these polluting and dangerous giants taking over our streets.”

### **POP GOES THE DIESEL.** (by Douglas Wragg)

Some of the cases which come my way seem quite bizarre when you read them at a later date. A case in point is that of Alvara Valesquez.

I was contacted by a large Vauxhall main dealer who wanted my help. The story was that about eighteen months previously Ms. Valesquez had purchased a second-hand 4 x 4 diesel vehicle from them. It was supplied with a twelve months parts and labour warranty.

In the following year it came in for a number of relatively minor repairs to be carried out under the warranty, but there was no record of the vehicle coming in for a service, and so it was assumed that Ms. Valesquez was taking the vehicle to another garage for servicing – presumably because the other garage would have been cheaper than the main dealer.

Ten days before they contacted me they had an anguished and somewhat heated telephone message from Ms. Valesquez saying that the vehicle had “blown up”.

It is interesting to hear the emotive phrases which people use to describe the ailments of motor vehicles – in reality; I suppose there is still an air of mystery for some drivers when it comes to the internal workings of the motor car and its constituent parts. Why, for example, do we describe a battery as being “flat”? The shape has not changed; it is merely the chemical composition of the liquid inside it which has altered.

Anyway, to return to Ms. Valesquez, the vehicle was recovered to the main dealership and examined. The engine had not “blown up” but had run a big-end bearing. Readers who know the sound of a failed big-end bearing will readily agree that it is a sound that goes right to the heart of an engineer, and also produces a sinking feeling in the stomach.

The Service Manager had a talk with Ms. Valesquez and told her that the engine would have to be removed for further examination, and that the solution may well involve the fitting of a factory replacement engine.



He also told her that the vehicle was now out of warranty, and therefore she would have to pay the cost of the repairs involved. He had prepared an estimate for her consideration; however, I do not think that he was prepared for what followed; Ms. Valesquez went into what can only be described as “nuclear meltdown”. What transpired was apparently clearly audible throughout the whole of the premises and for a good distance down the road!

In the immortal words of Marriot Edgar (Albert and the lion) “... the manager had to be sent for, he came and said “what’s to do?””

Eventually, they managed to calm Ms. Valesquez down so that the matter could be discussed in a rational manner. She was adamant that the fault with the vehicle was their responsibility, and therefore they should put it right at their expense and not hers. They politely, but firmly, declined to do this pointing out, yet again, that the warranty had expired on the vehicle nearly six months previously.

Eventually, it was agreed that the vehicle should be taken to a firm that Ms. Valesquez knew who would repair the vehicle for her, and in her own words “properly”. It always amuses me that so often phrases like “...who really know about cars...!” are so often employed in these situations.

She still insisted that when the repairs had been completed she would hold them responsible for settling the invoice.

It was at this point that I was asked to investigate the cause of the failure.

The first, and most obvious, port of call was with the firm who were “repairing” the engine.

Please do not think that I am a snob, but I greatly mistrust workshops that are situated under railway bridge arches. I am perfectly certain that there must be some truly splendid firms in such locations – it is just that I have never found one. This place was no exception; it was in a tiny road just off the most horrendously busy roundabout in north London.

Entering the premises was to a set formula for this type of workshop; you can move three feet inside the door, then you have to jump! The floor was sticky with years of oil and grease, people were working on engines on the floor in all the muck imaginable and tools and equipment were neatly stored wherever they had fallen on the floor!!

All right, I have changed my mind - I am a snob!

The owner was a friendly and amiable sort of chap called Reg. I shared the obligatory cup of coffee with him – a nice elegantly chipped mug with no handle and a large greasy handprint on the side. The very best coffee is the one with the drop of oil floating on the surface!!

We chatted about the engine – which had indeed run a big end bearing. I looked at the parts which had been removed and discarded from the engine. I took a number of photographs for my report. However hard I looked, I could not find the old oil pump.

I should at this point explain for the benefit of any reader who is not in the habit of rebuilding their engine on a regular basis that fitting a new oil pump – particularly after a bearing failure - is of paramount importance. This is not some academic affectation but good and basic workshop practice.

Oil pump there was not, so I asked Reg of its whereabouts.

“Strange you should ask that.” he said. “We fitted it back into the engine, and when we started it up there was no oil pressure.”

“How long did you run the engine?” I asked with as much innocence as I could muster.

“Not long”, he replied “Once we realised that there was no pressure we stopped the engine. It couldn’t have been more than five minutes.” (!!)



I was starting to feel sorry for Alvera Valesquez; as this was all going to end in tears before bedtime.

Reg was inclined to fit a new oil pump to the engine, and I agreed that this would be a jolly good idea. He promised that he would send the old one to me for examination.

This he duly did some days later, and I dismantled it to have a good look at it.

The reason for the bearing failure became immediately obvious - the drive splines had worn down to the point where they no longer engaged with the drive. Therefore the pump would not deliver any oil to the engine, therefore the bearing failed. Logical really. But why had the pump splines failed? It is one thing to diagnose what has happened - it is quite another thing to be able to say why the failure occurred.

In this case it was not too hard to see why. All the moving parts were heavily scored and pitted, indicating a lack of adequate lubrication over a considerable period of time. The pitting in the gears was consistent with oil that has lost its lubricity, most typically where it has not been changed at the prescribed service intervals.

When the repairs had been completed, Ms. Valesquez sent the invoice to the main dealer - they declined to pay it, and so she sent them a summons to appear in the Small Claims Court. The action was beginning to hot up.

Those readers who have attended a Small Claims Court will know the proceedings. For those who have yet to savour this experience, let me set the scene for you.

On the appointed day, both parties congregate in a waiting room and studiously ignore each other. Then they are ushered into a room and sit either side of a long table and glare across it. The judge or registrar will ask each party in turn to make their case, and then he will sum up and deliver a binding judgement. It is intended that whilst one party is giving their evidence the other party will remain silent; at least that is the intention.

I had at least four attempts at delivering my evidence – any point that Ms. Valesquez did not agree with was hotly contested. The judge eventually persuaded her to remain silent by the simple expedient of telling her that if she interrupted one more time he would have her removed from the room! Brave man!

One of the questions which had to be addressed was the servicing of the vehicle, and, most particularly, the changing of the engine oil.

It was at this point that Ms. Valesquez announced that she had never had the vehicle serviced or the oil changed, as she assumed that this would have been done as a matter of course when the vehicle went in for the work which was being done under the warranty!

There followed what can only be described as a stunned silence.

Not surprisingly, when the judge summed up he found for the defendants, whereupon Ms. Valesquez flew into a rage – it was extremely embarrassing actually. The judge was clearly embarrassed and would not permit us to leave the room until after she had left – he obviously had no wish to be left alone in the room with her in that state!!!

Case finished with a fair and satisfactory outcome. “Tell us” I hear you say, “Just how far had the vehicle travelled without an oil change?”

For those of you who have this model of vehicle, and wish to try an interesting experiment, I can now tell you that it is possible to travel 27.000 miles before “pop goes the diesel”.

## 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 - Future Events

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

20 March 2024: Steve O'Connell – Sussex Safer Roads Partnership  
15 May 2024: AGM. Speaker - David Washington, East Sussex Fire and Rescue  
17 July 2024: Elizabeth Greenfield - CPR and Defibrillator Training

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