Sussex Advanced Drivers
Newsletter

August 2024

From your Editor, (Margret Preece)

Hello,

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter, this time the sun is shining, and the world looks a lot more cheerful. Summer at last.

I have been lucky when putting together this newsletter as I have contributions from some of our members, in particular from Zoe Deeley about her very first advanced driving test. There are quite a few associates wondering what it will be like; this will give them a very good idea. And if you are about to take the test or have just taken it – would you also be willing to write a brief account about what it was like and your thoughts about it. Every test is different, and we would all like to hear about your experience. We can all learn from your event. And please send it to me at margretp@clara.co.uk for inclusion in a future newsletter.

This time we also have an article from Tony Humphries about his first long trip in his newish all-electric car. Who has not wondered how the car's range will work out and will there be sufficient charging points of the right type etc? Read all about it …Thank you Tony, your article has answered many of my questions.

Does anybody else have an uncommon car, maybe a classic car, that they would like to tell us about it? You could even include some pictures.

Everywhere we go we hear about AI; how does AI affect us as drivers? On Page 5 you can read about AI speed cameras now being introduced on UK roads. Are you for or against?

Until next time, all the best, drive safely,
Margret

FACTOID
Always remember that your safety depends on the actions of others,
and their safety depends on your actions.

From our Chairman, (Paul Purdy)

Welcome to our August newsletter. I hope you are all enjoying our summer and getting out and about.

For those of you who managed to take part in our Hills driver experience, I hope it gave you a better perspective of what it's like to drive larger vehicles and appreciate their various blind spots. This will be another valuable skill to add to your bag of driving knowledge. Our next event coming up is on 26th August at the Bexhill 100. We are still looking for people to help us man the stall and speak to anyone that might be interested in further driver improvement. The Address is Polegrove Recreation ground, Brockley Road, Bexhill. If you could spare some time on the day it would be very much appreciated, and you would be able to look around the car show. Could you let me, Kevin or Margret know so we can plan the day, many thanks.

We will be holding another training day at Hickstead Services in the near future so keep an eye on the web site for further details. With regard to future events we would still like more suggestions to come from the membership. We are still working on previous suggestions, but these are taking time to arrange.

I look forward to meeting some of you at our next members meeting on18th September

Safe driving
Paul Purdy

From our Training Officer, (Duncan Hauser)

If you buy a recent Mercedes model with reasonable luxury, you will have a list of driver aids and electronic features that would compare to your 200-page holiday novella! And most of us would simply scan this or use it in an emergency, much like the T&C's of our eBay purchases. We clearly need to prioritize the features that will benefit us for safety and comfort and be aware of those features that may issue an audible warning (or worse, intervene while we are driving!).

So getting to know a car like this can take a while and involves a lot of "what happens if I press this button" …which opens up another can of worms: where is the button for that (a lot of the switches are hidden in commands within the software)? There are small buttons on the steering wheel that with a gentle stroke do one thing, and full pressure causes all sorts of other things to happen!!

Thankfully for most of us, the cars we drive are much more user friendly. But let's look at one of the first driver aids ever incorporated into the engineering of the motor car: the automatic gearbox. We start the engine, push the gear selector into "Drive" (or "Reverse" if we are pointing at our house!), make the necessary observations and shoulder checks, and drive off with no need to consider the gears (?).

The system of car control includes gear changes, so should we ignore this? Generally, the "Drive" selection covers most of our needs. However, with an Auto Gearbox, it is good to change the setting to find out if the effect is an advantage – do I get better response on the accelerator, will I be able to brake less on a steep hill, giving a more

stable drive; is there a setting that works better than the “kick-down” acceleration for overtaking? Getting familiar with these features is essential if we are to convince an examiner that our adjustments, if we make them, produce the best results.

All cars are different. Diesel engines characteristically produce power at low revs but with more torque (giving less refined handling), although developments in engineering mean that petrol engines also require less revs than before. And that is before we add the assistance of an electric motor (hybrid drives also vary according to whether the electric assists, takes over, or a bit of both!!) On top of that, your Auto gearbox may go through 5 or 6 gears, or be a CVT (Continuously Variable Transmission – does what it says on the tin!).

So, even the simplest cars being produced nowadays need some familiarization. The most important thing to find out is how the vehicle responds to the controls. How much braking (some cars have almost no response to “acceleration sense” and will not slow until brakes are applied)? How much gas do I need? Should I be in “sport” mode – and how does that affect my use of the controls?

Know your vehicle, and it’s capability; it will give you the confidence to develop and grow as a driver, a process that never ends.

FACTOID (Graham Feest)

Always remember that drivers crash not cars.

We are great at identifying pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, horse riders, and yet we always say the car / lorry / bus collided with a pedestrian.

No, the driver collided with the pedestrian, not the car.

My first ROADAR test journey. (Zoe Deeley)

It took me a few weeks to apply for my advanced test after Nigel told me he thought I was ready. For a start I didn’t agree with him. Whilst I agreed that he had probably told me everything I needed to know and I think I understood it, I knew that I wasn’t consistently applying all the knowledge. The next step I took was to have a pre-test assessment with Duncan. This was an eye opener in itself as he grilled me throughout the session, and I realised I needed to do more studying and practice to be able to answer his questions while still driving to an advanced standard. Duncan pointed out quite a bit that I could do better and also gave me a demonstration drive including commentary which was an incredibly valuable activity. After that experience and encouragement from Duncan I applied for my test but still didn’t feel ready. I got a message a few days later from my examiner and panicked - I felt a few more weeks practice was in order and decided to delay the test until after my driving trip to the Peak District - I planned to make full use of the opportunity to practise on the lovely roads I had heard so much about.

Test day arrived and I spent the morning preparing my car - full POWDER check plus thorough clean inside and out. I arrived early (very unusual for me!) at Broadbridge Heath Tesco car park and met with Richard Mansfield. He tried to put me at ease but I

go quiet when I'm nervous so he got 1 word responses. He asked about why I was doing this and what preparation I'd done including how I felt about doing commentary. When I said I could do it but not confidently he explained that he was interested in evidence that I am looking ahead of the end of my car, making and using decent plans and that he'd only be asking for 5 minutes at some point into the drive.

The test began and he asked me about my pre-drive checks, and we had some discussion about whether to use POWDER, POWDERY or POWDERS. We did a static brake and then a dynamic brake check in the car park and then off to the open road. The route covered roads I'd driven on before with Nigel (A24, A272, Petworth, Pulborough) which helped however there were some speed limit changes and temporary traffic lights which added an element of surprise as well as a talking point when there were conflicting speed limit signs. I realised that I'd missed a speed limit sign at one point considering the road design and other cars pulling away in front. Richard confirmed that I was doing 40 in a national so that gave me an opportunity to use the clear road ahead and play with the accelerator a bit as he rapidly wrote something on his notepad. I must have had stealth mode engaged since there were a number of points where cars just pulled out in front of me - which fortunately I'd spotted in advance and mentioned as I accommodated them - possibly a hazard of driving a small black car but something I am used to having previously been a motorcyclist.

Very soon after he asked me to start my 5-minute commentary we were held at temporary traffic lights. I talked about everything I could think of and then had to joke about how good it would be for me if we were stuck there for another 4 minutes. He later explained in debrief that I could have talked about what was going on inside the car e.g. dashboard lights, how I would deal with a warning light coming on etc.. We were about ¾ of the way round when he said he'd run out of paper at which point I'd decided the drive must have been bad that he had so much to write.

At the end of the drive we had a cup of tea and debrief in the leisure centre cafe. Richard told me I'd passed before we left the car but said he was still considering what grade to give me. The debrief was really thorough and went in detail through the whole drive - most of which I'd forgotten at that point. I was amazed at how much detail he managed to notice, retain and pass back to me including what words I mouthed when I was driving. He suggested that my gear changes seemed a little rushed and I could be more relaxed about the way I handle the gear stick - something which both Nigel and Duncan also picked up so obviously a theme. We also talked about block changes. It was really a discussion about the drive with input from both of us rather than a one-sided analysis. One thing I'm keen to explore with others is: he didn't like the way I took my hands off the steering wheel once stopped at lights with the handbrake on and in neutral. He thought I should keep them on the steering wheel to maintain control whereas I see it as a safe opportunity to relax my arms because the handbrake is on.

After all the feedback he had given I was immensely surprised that he awarded me a gold as there was so much I could improve on however he explained that he felt that I would hold my own on a police pursuit training course and that was the benchmark he'd been told to use.

This was an incredibly useful experience and I'm really grateful to Nigel and Duncan for helping me prepare; Ed and Kevin for some valuable feedback during a tutor gathering as well as Richard for being such a generous examiner. Now I need to focus on not becoming complacent and continue to pay attention at the same level.

AI speed cameras – all you need to know (RAC Newsletter)

As technology evolves, police and local authorities will introduce new ways to catch offenders behind the wheel. One of the biggest trends within the tech space in recent years has been the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) – and it has started to impact speed cameras and police investigations in the UK.
This guide looks at what these new cameras will do, how they differ from the current ones in operation, and whether they are already being introduced across the country.

What are AI speed cameras?
Artificial intelligence speed cameras are devices placed at the roadside that can determine if a driver is using a mobile phone – or if anyone in the vehicle is not wearing their seatbelt.

They can also be used to detect how fast someone is travelling and send a report on the make, model, and number plate of a vehicle.

The images the AI speed camera captures can be processed to give police a full picture of the passengers and interior of a car, van, or cab of a truck.

AI speed cameras in the UK are linked to all UK police and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) databases, so checks on car tax and insurance can also be carried out.

They are now starting to be introduced to nations around the world and could lead to more road traffic being captured on camera – and more police action taken on offenders.

Are there AI speed cameras in the UK?
Yes, there have been a series of pilots and tests carried out on UK roads involving AI speed cameras in the last few years. In fact, a new AI speed camera with 4D technology that can scan drivers inside a vehicle was introduced to the A23 road in Lambeth, London in early 2023.

Following the trial, RAC road safety spokesman Simon Williams said: “While some drivers may criticise these cameras for unwanted snooping, the reality is that these days the police increasingly rely on technology to catch drivers breaking the law – after all, it’s impossible to have a police officer stationed on every street corner.

“Having said that, given the increasing sophistication of cameras and the potential for AI to play a role in the future, it’s absolutely vital these cameras are set up correctly and there’s an easy means of drivers challenging penalties and fines which they think are unwarranted.”

Also, in August 2023, the UK’s first free-standing AI road safety camera caught almost 300 drivers in first three days it was in operation. The testing ground on a stretch of road between Devon and Cornwall detected 117 mobile phone offences and 180 people not wearing their seatbelts.

Adrian Leisk, Head of Road Safety for Devon & Cornwall Police, said: “We are employing this new technology to send a clear message to anyone who continues to use their phone behind the wheel – you will get caught.”

Graham Feest . (musings on 50 years as road safety consultant)

In the last few months, I have been looking at some of the things which have happened in my 50 years in the work of road safety and now I am going to share some of my thoughts in the remaining few months of the year - I guess from my point of view and some of the frustrations I experience.

I ASK: ARE YOU ON THE SIDE OF LUCK TODAY?

I have always thought that we are obsessed with the number of people who are killed on our roads and whilst understandably we all strive for that not to be the case – I really think we ought to be concerned about all road users who are injured.

Equally I am frustrated every time someone says that we have been stuck in the region of 1,700 deaths (per year) for more than a decade. Is that an indicator of how we are doing in road safety? – well, I don't know, for the number of deaths may have remained somewhat the same but what is the relationship between the number of deaths and the number of crashes and is it more deaths in fewer crashes as there are more occupants. Whatever the answer we don't seem to look at it in this way.

Whilst we continue to make every effort to reduce the harm which is caused in the event of a crash it seems to me that we need a greater emphasis on preventing crashes as that is the root cause of any level of injury. There is a very thin and somewhat unpredictable line once a crash happens between it being a dented vehicle and hurt pride to ending up with an injury be it slight, serious, or fatal.

How many casualties we have in crashes is not a real predictor of how well or otherwise we are doing, since one incident can result in any number of people being injured. For me that means we need to stop the crash happening in the first place. We must gather better data on crashes including time, day, date, location and all the other factors whether people are injured or NOT and that for me means that it should be a legal requirement to report any crash irrespective of whether it is a single vehicle incident or an impact with another road user.

This leads me to say that perhaps our targets should be about reducing crashes and not so much based on casualties, since a casualty is the outcome of the crash.

There is much we ought to be doing to deal with the root cause and just in the same way that we talk about drinking and driving being a problem, I would start from the point that it is not drinking and driving it is alcohol, with drunk drivers being an outcome.

Why do we have such an issue with people using a mobile device whilst driving when the root cause is that you can and so we should make it impossible. In the last three cars I have purchased the first thing that the salesperson has said to me is if you give me your phone, I will set it up for you.

I do question at times with all the efforts made by many as to whether we are approaching things in the right way or could we do better. Maybe the solutions to our road safety problems exist in other dimensions.

Experiences with an EV ! (Tony Humphries)

So I thought I'd put a few words together for ROSPA to convey the reality of owning and running an electric vehicle (EV), particularly at the conclusion of our first long distance trip, some 1600 miles covering the length and breadth of Britain, from England to Scotland and Wales!

But firstly the experience of the car itself. The EV in question is a BMW i4 eDrive40, that we acquired last December. To me this is the sweet spot of the i4 range having more performance and range than the i4 eDrive35, but sacrifices little in the way of performance to the more powerful i4 M50, while still having the better range. It's published range is around 350 miles, and while (like mpg figures) this is an ideal range, we experienced an actual projected range of up to 320 miles when long distance cruising at 60-70 mph.

As to be expected from BMW the car drives well and in fact we found it a better ride than our previous 330e hybrid. This is probably due to the extra battery weight but nonetheless the car still cruises and handles very well. In general we have found the car to be quiet, very quick with instant power when needed and relatively cheap to run. One significant advantage of the electric powertrain was found to be the use of regenerative braking. This is the use of the electric motor to slow the car when the driver lifts off the accelerator and can be adjusted in the car settings. At first it can give rise to an uneven lumpy progress but when got used to, it is perfect for driving country roads with the ability to fine tune the speed and balance of the car with just the one pedal. It also reduces wear on the brakes and improves the range.

With regards to costs, apart from a high initial price (that can be reduced by buying ex demonstrator models) the running costs are lower. Tax is, at the moment, zero (but for how long?) and with a home charger using overnight cheap rate electricity we can fully charge the battery for approximately £8.50. Much less than a tank of petrol! Also, of course congestion charges don't apply. Using a typical 7kW home charger the car can be fully charged from zero to 100% in approx. 12 hours. Chargers can cost approx. £1,000 but many EV suppliers have deals that subsidise this cost. I'd recommend the acquisition of a 7Kw home charger, as although you <u>can</u> charge an EV via an ordinary 13-amp socket, this typically takes 35 to 40 hours!

We had the car last December, and for local or medium distance journeys it has proved ideal. With a practical range of around 300 miles and charging overnight at home it quickly proved cheaper and more convenient to run than a conventional vehicle. Aha though, I hear you say, what about charging on longer journeys away from home! Well, on being invited to a friend's wedding in Scotland, we thought we'd turn it into a road trip, visiting other friends and relatives in various parts of the UK, and see how the car performed.

As this was the first long road trip we had done I spent some time planning and researching charge points. An invaluable aid to this is the "ZapMap" app that gives the location of all the charge points in the UK, their type, what payment method and other info. However it's worth noting that a large number of charge points now take contactless payment from credit/debit cards, some still rely on their own proprietary payment cards or an app.

If your journey relies on these, try to equip yourself with the appropriate payment cards well beforehand, as the apps can be unreliable (see my experience later with Chargeplace Scotland). You don't want to discover this when trying to charge from the only charge point for miles with a nearly dead battery and no phone or internet service! In fact I built in a safety margin of at least 100 miles reserve range when planning a stop at a charge point in case of any problems.

First leg was Solihull near Birmingham, well within the cars range, although we did stop for a coffee and a quick top up charge at Beaconsfield services on the M40. However the charger cut out after only 14 minutes thus we didn't get much of a charge. I think this illustrates some of the drawbacks of using a popular, heavily used charge plaza, as I suspect that if the total current draw from all the chargers exceeds the capacity of the local power supply grid, then some chargers can be cut out to shed the load.

We then pressed on to Solihull, visiting a friend and on this occasion we did "refuel" from their 13A plug. Took some time (21 hrs) and of course we paid them the going rate for power used.

Onward then to our next stop at Bishops Auckland near Durham. I'd chosen this stop as I was keen to visit Durham Cathedral, and the hotel we chose had a charger. In fact it had four chargers, provided by Mer UK. These worked well using their app on my phone but were relatively slow chargers and were among the more expensive at around 75p per kWH. As Durham Cathedral proved to be closed for a University event, we spent a most interesting day at Beamish open air museum with rebuilt miners cottages and a complete 1950's town centre, many buildings having been translocated from elsewhere. Thoroughly recommended.

So we then headed for Scotland along the A68 to Edinburgh, a lovely road for keen drivers with beautiful scenery, and testing switchbacks and bends. Although we could have arrived at our final destination just within the cars range, we thought we'd break the journey just outside Edinburgh, at a Dobbies garden centre, to top up on power and have a meal. These had a fast high power Gridshare charger that allowed us to fully charge in 56 minutes with simple payment by a contactless credit card. Only drawback was the food wasn't very good!

So then to our final destination at Banchory a small town southwest of Aberdeen. We met up with our friends at a barbecue, attended the wedding the following day, and passed a fabulous evening at the local town hall where they had arranged a Ceilidh with traditional Scottish band and caller who did sterling work guiding the guests through the Highland reels. A great time was had by all.
We were told that the best EV charger in the town was at the local Tesco, so we parked up in their car park, connected to the high power Pod Point charger and fully charged the car, while doing a bit of shopping and having a coffee at a local café. In this case we paid using a contactless credit card – all good. However in other parts of the UK we have since discovered that Pod Point have a slightly odd payment method in that you have to download their app, register a credit card with them, and then preload enough credit into the app to cover the power being taken. A bit like the old "shilling in the slot" prepayment meters.

So, having enjoyed the wedding, we set out on the Sunday for Ceres a village not far from Dundee, where we enjoyed a terrific lunch with our niece and family. Having

established there was a charger in the village car park we went there later in the afternoon, plugged into the Chargeplace Scotland charger and fired up the app to start charging. Here we hit our first real snag. Remember what I said about apps? Well although I'd set the app up earlier at home, I couldn't log in. I entered my username & password numerous times but no go. Eventually I dialed the helpline number to be greeted with the dreaded "Due to the current difficulties with our app and website we are experiencing a high volume of calls and it may be some time before we can answer you" Well "some time" turned out to be half an hour! To be fair the agent did get a charge going pretty promptly once we got through. And Chargeplace Scotland did work out as the cheapest public charger at 19p per kW hour! An interesting footnote to this is that although I had sent off for their payment card a few days before starting on our road trip, it finally arrived on 18th July, some four weeks after I'd sent off for it. So be prepared.

The following day we set off for Malton in West Yorkshire. As it was a journey of over 250 miles I had planned a stop at Alnwick on the A1, at services that offered a pub lunch and fast chargers. Found the services, a fast IONITY charger, and the pub. Full charge took 44 minutes, and the lunch was decent. Although the charger would accept contactless credit cards, on this occasion I used a BMW card that gave me a slight discount. All good.

Finally arrived in Malton, North Yorkshire, a delightful town. We had chosen our hotel (The Talbot) on the basis of high scores on various accommodation websites and that it had an EV charger. Well upon arriving, the hotel exceeded expectations, but the EV charger was in use. No matter, we settled down to an excellent meal and an early night having been assured that the charger would be free in the morning. And so it was! So having plugged in the car we had a great breakfast and went for a walk and a light lunch in Malton. Returning to hotel, car was fully charged and off we set. And best of all the charge was free! As a comment, had the charger not been available there were a number of other fast chargers available in Malton we could have fallen back on.

So next stop Newcastle under Lyme, my home town to visit some old friends. Here we found the only issue with Zapmap, which up to then had been faultless in identifying chargers. According to Zapmap, there was a charger in a small park almost round the corner from where we were staying. Well we went to the park, but there was no access for cars and of course no charger. So Plan B – our friends recommended Trentham Gardens Outlet village as having some fast chargers. As this was only some 15 minutes drive away off we went. And indeed there were several rows of Tesla fast chargers. I had previously thought that the Tesla chargers worked only with Tesla cars, but not the case with these. Plugged the car in, waved a credit card at the charger and charging started. We spent the next hour or so having a coffee, and shopping. The charge took 52 minutes and was priced reasonably at 39p per kW hour.

The following day we left after breakfast (stocked up with North Staffordshire Oatcakes, a local delicacy, unique to the Potteries) to visit a friend in Wales for lunch. His cottage is literally on the Welsh border, with a stream in the garden marking the border. We met for lunch, had a long chat then made for our final hotel, the Hare and Hounds in Westonbirt, a delightful hotel in the Cotswolds. The hotel had a Pod Point charger, and although the receptionist was a little unsure as to it's reliability, we found it to be OK, plugged in and all was good. It was at this Pod Point charge point however we experienced the requirement to preload credit to cover the charge, as previously mentioned.

So finally back home! We had covered approximately 1500 miles in our road trip, at a cost of £206 for power. A cost of approximately 13.75 pence per mile. My previous petrol 3 series BMW worked out at around 22 pence a mile when using the petrol engine. So a significant saving even when using expensive chargers.

So what conclusions can we draw from the above. From this limited exercise, running costs seem lower than an i/c engine car, but in planning a long distance route location and type of chargers do need to be taken into account, so some planning is necessary. Google maps and Zapmap are invaluable for this. During the journey we planned a break every 150 miles or so and as a fast charger takes between 45 to 50 minutes to charge to 100% this was just enough time for a comfort break, and a meal or coffee. We only had to wait for a vehicle to vacate a charge point once at the Talbot Hotel in Malton, and apart from the one Chargeplace Scotland point in Ceres, never had a problem getting any charge point to work. However, should these circumstances arise make sure you have sufficient range to get to other charge points. All the fast ones we came across took contactless payment but do look into equipping yourself with the relevant card if you are going to be dependent on a provider that doesn't offer this service. A car with a good range is essential, at least 250 to 300 miles.

So I'd tackle a long journey now with a great deal more confidence than before. The car performed perfectly, and I will be replacing it with another EV when the time comes. Hope this account of our road trip has proved useful.

ELECTRIC CARS AND CAR PARKS (Graham Feest)

There is growing concern about Multi-storey car parks and the like which are not built to take the additional weight load of electric vehicles (EVs).

The warning comes from experts looking at the changing face of personal transport and how it fits into the current infrastructures, regulations and planning as electric cars are roughly twice as heavy as standard models.

Planning and architecture modelling works on old data, but the realities of the electric age will have repercussions not previously considered.

For car parks, the weight difference could cause serious damage to floors and weight tolerance levels. This is even more serious for older, unloved structures, which are most at risk of buckling.

Many multi storey parking systems were designed and built in previous decades. Add to this the fact that austerity policies over the last decade have seen local authorities cut back on many maintenance programmes. It is similar in the private sector, simply adding to potential and previously unrealised issues.

New guidance is now being developed recommending higher load bearing weights to accommodate the heavier vehicles.

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.susssexadvanceddrivers@outlook.com) or Margret Preece (Membership Secretary – margretp@clara.co.uk)

Future Events

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

26 August 2024	Bexhill 100 Classic and Custom Car Show
18 September 2024	Members Meeting – Talk by Sussex Safer Roads Partnership
20 November 2024	Members Meeting – Talk by Police Chief Executive
Date TBC	Potholing for Beginners (Road Maintenance)

Sussex RoSPA