



Wigan Advanced Motorists

Registered Charity No. 518387

Newsletter 325

LES STRETTON

As the last newsletter was being printed the sad news came through that Les Stretton had passed away after a short illness.

Les had been a group member since 1993, and had served as the Car Co-ordinator and on the committee for many years in a variety of roles. As well as being a regular Observer on Sundays he was always willing to support any other road safety or group event we held.

There can't be many members that have not been on a drive with Les observing and will remember his jovial personality, great sense of humour, friendly nature and a laugh that could crack walnuts.

Since retiring from the painting and decorating shop he ran in Pemberton he was able to dedicate more time to his other passion of fly fishing, and he would disappear to New Zealand for most of the winter in England and return as spring was beginning. He made many friends down in Methven, and was welcomed back into their community each year; he would take great quantities of Uncle Joe's Mint Balls which were referred to as 'Les's Lollies'.

On quieter Sundays, when we had Observers spare, Les was a founder member of a sub group called BBAS (Bacon Butty Appreciation Society) and we would venture out to all points in search

of the perfect specimen, and we now have destination points in Rivington, Tockholes, Pemberton, Horwich.

These are the times I remember most fondly, with Les at his best usually with Monty Python on the CD player... looking out for cyclists in Lycra.

Gary

Welcome to the September/October 2010 edition of the group newsletter.

Further to Gary's comments, I would like to pass on the group's condolences to Les' family and friends, and to also say that he will be sorely missed on Sunday's here at the Plough and Harrow, Shevington.

The Group has seen further recruitment for the Skills for Life programme and we now have quite a few associates joining us on Sundays. The biker section is also enjoying large number turnouts, even as the cold weather approaches.

I have included a couple of articles by Gary, the first being an opportunity to access a 'skid pan' course, and the other is information that you should find invaluable if you take up Gary's offer. Other articles I've included are reflecting that time of year where the road conditions are expected to change a lot, thinking of last January, therefore some information regarding vehicle checks in preparation for winter conditions.

Simon.

Skill for Life offer

We were successful in being awarded a grant of £5000 from Grassroots Funding to hold a Road Safety Event in late June this year. The event was held on 25/26 June in the town centre and from this we signed up 20 new members to the IAM. Part of the grant was to offer a **FREE** Skid Control Course, worth £130, to anyone completing the Skill for Life course. We still have limited number of these courses on offer.

With the terrible weather we had last winter, skid control could be a very useful skill to learn. The courses are run by National Car Control Centres at venues in either Manchester or Liverpool; several members of the group have already been on the course and thoroughly recommend them for their content and being very good fun.



The itinerary is as follows:

- Classroom theory briefing
- Instructor skid demonstration
- Hands-on skid practice
- Instructor braking technique demo ABS and non-ABS
- Hands-on braking technique practice
- Timed slalom event – fun with a serious objective. A chance to put new found skills in to practice and to go up against their fellow members.

So, if you are wondering what to buy a family member for Christmas why not buy them an

Advanced Driving Course and get the benefit of the Skid Control Course, this is in addition to the IAM benefits of reduced car and home insurance, better fuel economy and being safer on the road.

The IAM currently has the Skill for Life course on offer at £125 (normally £139) to buy the course go to: www.iam.org.uk/gift

Due to the limited number of Skid Control Courses available please contact:

Gary on 07071 226693 or via gary@wiganadvancedmotorists.org.uk to reserve your place.

Gary Whittaker

Cars failing MOT on lights now 15% – report

Research suggests that motorists are performing basic checks less frequently

ONE in 15 vehicles is missing one or more brake lights increasing the risk of an accident for other road users.

Research by used car retailer, Carsite.co.uk, suggests that nearly 2.5million cars, motorcycles, vans and lorries could be classified as un-roadworthy and liable for a £60 fine and penalty points.

The data, gathered during busy rush hour periods, found that commercial vehicles made up 20 percent of the overall result. Six percent of all offenders were spotted with no brake lights working at all.

These results are in line with data from the VOSA on MOT failure rates, which show around 15% of vehicles fail the MOT test with light problems. Ron Waldock, the website's independent RAC inspector added; 'With the days shortening and the clocks about to go back, drivers will be

encountering more hazardous road conditions and motorists need to be seen by their fellow road users. Our advice would be to regularly check that all your lights are clean and working correctly to make sure you are as visible as possible.'

New research puts speeding behaviours under the spotlight



The latest road safety figures published reveal that 2,222 people were killed on UK roads in 2009, 12% fewer than in 2008.

The number of fatalities fell for almost all types of road user, with a fall of 16% for car occupants, 13% for pedestrians, 10% for pedal cyclists and 4% for motorcyclists.

It is estimated that one in every three people killed on the roads was driving for work at the time.

This puts a huge onus on company fleet managers to manage this risk – driving is the most dangerous thing most employees will do while at work.

But new research by the Department for Transport may help after it concluded that educating drivers on the implications of speed is likely to have a positive impact and enable speed limits to be enforced.

It said that using education to reinforce the message that speeding is unacceptable should be seen as prevention tool rather than punishment.

In many areas of the UK, an alternative to penalty points and paying fines comes in the shape of speed awareness courses. The courses are designed to improve drivers' skills, attitudes and behaviour.

"I've seen so many people come out of the courses with a profound difference in opinion," a spokesman from AA DriveTech explains.

"They do not always think about the consequences when speeding. These courses allow drivers to come face to face with the reality of speeding and how it can affect lives."

But speed-awareness courses do not have to be taken after an offence or as a punishment. Many companies including the AA offer courses to business drivers.

A study conducted in 2008 by the University of Reading demonstrated that the attitudes among drivers educated after committing a speeding offence shows they have much improved intentions to drive within the limit.

The evaluation was based on measuring the attitudes of drivers attending speed awareness workshops in the Thames Valley region. The report looked at the differences in attitudes between those drivers who attended a speed awareness course and those that received a fixed penalty.

It was found that after the classroom-based training, drivers are nearly five times less likely to think that it is safe to drive at 35 mph in a 30mph limit. In the months that followed the course drivers had a clearer intention not to break the 30mph limit.

Speaking for Thames Valley Police who introduced the scheme, Malcolm Collis said:

"We have provided an opportunity to over 100,000 drivers to look at the roads in a different way, helping them to examine the effects that their choice of speed could have if it all goes wrong. The evidence is clear that this approach leaves drivers with a better understanding of why speed matters, more determination to slow down

and feeling in far greater control over their choice of speed.”

The most common contributing factors of speeding are shown to be self-efficacy (drivers believing they can control the vehicle) and attitudes towards speeding.

Company car drivers also need to be aware that lower speed limits, such as 20mph zones in built-up areas, are likely to become more common. And demand for lower speed limits is strengthening.

In a recent survey by Brake and Direct Line, 60% of respondents want 20mph to be the limit around homes and built-up areas and 42% would prefer a reduction to 50mph on rural roads.

Although people support the need to have safer roads, most admitted speeding themselves, 36% at least once a week.

“Our research suggests that drivers do understand that slowing down saves lives – as they overwhelmingly support lower speed limits on both urban and rural roads. At the same time, the majority of drivers continue to break speed limits, and tell us that enforcement is the main factor that persuades them to slow down,” explained Julie Townsend, Brake’s campaigns director.

Fleet News

Accident risk trebles as councils pull the plug on street lighting



As Britain gets used to the clocks going back, a new road safety study has revealed the accident risk for pedestrians could treble as a number of local authorities consider turning off street lights.

A report from Autoglass and conducted by road safety expert Dr Nick Gkikas compared fatalities in areas with similar surroundings, but where the road lighting was either poor or where it was adequately in place. It found that switching off road lights seriously compromises road safety for motorists, with drivers struggling to see pedestrians or cyclists in the dark.

The report highlighted that the high involvement rate of pedestrians and cyclists in accidents associated with limited lighting indicates that street lighting should be compulsory, particularly as there is a low frequency of vehicle-only accidents in those surroundings.

Other findings reveal that driving in poor lighting conditions is further heightened around the time of year when the clocks change. The frequency of road accidents in the dark increases four-fold in the week after the changeover as road users take up to a week to adapt their behaviour to the new lighting conditions and with two thirds (62%) of motorists regularly driving in the dark this highlights a real and present danger.

Matthew Mycock, managing director of Autoglass, said: “The Highways Agency has already admitted there could be an increase in accident rates as a result of turning off the road lighting. There are also fears that more roads will see black-outs as councils across the country try to save money.

“We have commissioned this report as the road safety of motorists is paramount to us and we are calling for local authorities to seriously consider the locations of the blackouts and the potential use of alternative measures such as dimming the lights, turning off every alternative light or switching to low energy lamps.”

Fleet News

Keeping your car going in winter



- Advice on what to look out for in the winter months
- From checking tyres to replacing window wipers
- Vital checks could save you cash in the long run

Making sure your car is in good working order is important no matter what time of the year it is, but as we get in to winter these checks are even more vital.

With the temperature dropping and bouts of extreme weather, maintaining your car means you're less likely to experience breakdowns.

It's not just avoiding breakdowns, but doing the checks could also mean you avoid shelling out cash on something that could go wrong that you could have spotted. For happy motoring in the dark and dank days of the year, check out our winter maintenance tips.

The state of your brakes

With the onset of rain and even possibility of snow, making sure your brakes work in wet conditions is paramount. It's also a good idea to check that there is sufficient brake fluid too. If any or both of these are a problem you are best to get

it sorted sooner rather than later as it will help solve money in the long run.

Checking your tyres

Keeping an eye on your tyre tread is important all year round but like many things it has increased importance over the wet winter months. If the tread is fine, then don't forget to check the pressure is correct too. Also consider fitting winter tyres – article page 6.

Replacing windscreen wipers

If your wipers have been on for a while - most people probably don't even change them in the time of owning a car - it might be time to replace them. Not only is there the rain and possible snowfall, but with grit and muck on the road a decent set of wipers is imperative for keeping your windscreen clean.

Topping up with antifreeze

Like the majority of checks, this might seem like common sense, but antifreeze is possibly one of the most important parts of keeping your car running well in winter. You should have a 50/50 mix of water and antifreeze in your radiator and topped up. You can get a garage to check this or do it yourself.

Fill up your windshield washer fluid

Again this is something that you tend to do all-year round anyway, but like the replacing of wipers becomes even more vital at the back end of the year. With so much dirt on the road and spray, keeping your windscreen as clear as possible is essential.

Are all your lights working?

Any faulty lights - be it headlights, brake lights or even fog lights - are a problem. As the nights close in earlier and we're descended in anything from

fog to heavy rain, being seen and being able to see is the next priority after your car actually starting and moving.

Keeping the battery going

Cold winter mornings can be one of the biggest threats to your battery, especially in an older car. If your battery is ageing then it might be worth looking to replace it for a new one.

When did you last check your spare tyre... the one on your car I mean?

Be honest now, how many times do you check your spare tyre?

Think of the effort it takes - taking all the stuff out of the boot, lifting the hardboard floor panel, removing the jack and tools out of the back of the wheel, unscrewing the big bolt thing that clamps the wheel in, then lifting the wheel out to get at the valve, it's hard work and very time consuming.

Most of us would like to think that their garage has checked the spare as part of its service procedure, but in a recent survey by 'Which Magazine', where they reduced the air pressure to just 10psi in 59 cars they put in for service 68% overall missed this fault - not much use when you're stuck on the M6 on the top of Shap with a flat tyre.

A few years ago I saw an advert for a product that sorts this problem out in an instant, it's called 'Air in Your Spare' and consists of a 2ft length of pressure hose that screws on to the tyre valve and then gets threaded through the floor panel with a coloured indicator cap (specific to the PSI of your spare) the end is then held in place with a Velcro strap to the carpet on the side of the boot, the indicator gives you a yellow warning of a 10% drop in pressure then a red warning beyond that. If you need to put some air in simply unscrew the indicator and inflate from the hose end without

having to remove the tyre. I've been using one for about 4 years now and it's brilliant.

As I've recently changed my car I had to order a new indicator cap of a different PSI rating and came across the manufacturer, who has offered a very good deal of the complete kit for £8.50 to all group members. So if you're struggling for useful gift ideas... or struggling to check your spare tyre then either ring me on: 07071 226693

or email gary@wiganadvancedmotorists.org.uk to order. I do need to know the PSI rating for your car.

Gary Whittaker

PS We recently attended a Caravan Awareness event at Charnock Richard Services with the Police and AA. The biggest faults were that the caravaners hadn't checked the pressure in the caravan tyres for ages... one van had only 25% inflation which is highly dangerous. But the AA patrolman gave very common examples of flat spares and missing locking wheel nuts.

A guide to winter tyres



- Myths about winter tyres dispelled
- The low-down on how they work
- Alternative methods of driving on snow

There are many common misconceptions surrounding winter tyres, but the reality is they're not only usable in plenty of everyday situations; they also have the potential to save lives when conditions take a turn for the worse.

Many people think a winter tyre is just for snow. Although they perform very well on the white stuff, they are also perfectly fine to use during normal driving and work best when the temperature drops below 7 degree centigrade.

Why do I need winter tyres?

In many countries in the EU nowadays it's illegal to drive without snow tyres in the winter. For instance, German legislation states that a car must be able to make 'normal progress' in extreme conditions but if it cannot then the driver is liable to get an on-the-spot fine.

If the driver obstructs other road users it's possible that the fine could even be doubled. For this reason, don't be surprised to visit Germany in winter and see everyone driving on steel wheels. This isn't a style thing; Germans often have a spare set of wheels fitted with winter tyres.

However, in the UK last winter it became obvious that many people were ill prepared for cold and snowy conditions. Roads quickly clogged once the snow started falling and some people spent over 12 hours stranded in their cars. Would the situation have been different if drivers had properly prepared for winter driving?

How do winter tyres work?

Regular tyres simply stop working effectively when it snows. If you've ever been caught out in the winter without them you'll almost certainly have found yourself stuck and your wheels spinning.

So, why are winter tyres so effective?

The performance of a tyre relies on heat. A winter tyre generally has higher silica content in the rubber, meaning it can operate at lower temperatures. For this reason, it's wise to fit winter tyres as soon as the temperature outside gets into single digits.

They also have more 'sipes' - or tiny grooves in the tread of the tyre - which mean the tread can move around and generate more heat which then improves grip.

Larger gaps in the tread are there to pick up snow. This may seem odd, but snow grips onto snow a lot better than rubber does. For this reason the tyre uses the snow to its advantage, and when back on the tarmac again the heat generated by the grooves on the tarmac will soon get rid of any un-wanted snow left on the tyre.

Are there any drawbacks?

Yes; typically, winter tyres do not work at high speeds. This is because of the heat they are designed to generate at lower speeds.

What are the alternatives?

Snow chains are chain-link devices that fit over your existing tyres. They dig into the snow and act as extra tread. Although in theory they are very simple to fit, it's definitely sensible to practice at least once before the weather turns nasty. Drawbacks include a very noisy and bumpy ride - especially if you hit tarmac again - and quicker tyre degradation.

A **Snow sock** is a fabric device that you stretch over your wheel. It's a 'get you home' solution, but works very well as a temporary method of navigating over snow. The main drawback is that it shouldn't be used on tarmac, so once you find a decent gritted road you'll have to stop and take your socks off.

All-weather tyres are generally what is found on cars in the UK. They're a compromise between summer and winter tyres, and as a result they don't grip as well in the dry or handle slippery conditions quite as well.

Parker's top tip

If you're worried about buying a set of winter tyres when your summer tyres are still in perfect condition, don't fret. Many tyre-fitting companies will put your summer ones in a 'tyre hotel' for a small cost (Kwik Fit charge £40) through the winter and then re-fit them in the spring when the weather improves again.

Parkers

Rural roads in danger from spending cuts

Many councils are worried by the implications for the road network of a recent Comprehensive Spending Review, which they believe could see transport budgets reduced, as part of local government budget cuts, by up to 40%. They fear this will result in a spiral of deteriorating road conditions which could be both damaging and potentially dangerous for the UK's motorists. While this is a worry for councils in all areas, it is particularly of concern for rural councils where the road network is often the only means of transport in more remote areas.

Ten out of the 11 rural councils questioned reported that not all necessary road repairs had been carried out since the 'Big Freeze' last winter, while 75% of urban councils responding say this is the case.

The research also showed many councils had budget deficits as a result of road spending due to last winter's damage, with individual shortfalls of up to £10 million. They fear they are running out of time to make repairs before another winter, leaving the road network vulnerable to further structural weakening.

The results of this survey highlight the views of motorists from the 2010 RAC Report on Motoring3 with 88% believing their local roads are getting noticeably worse.

A spokesperson for one rural council in England said: "Two severe winters in a row have taken a severe toll on our highway network with record numbers of potholes reported and highway maintenance increasingly on the agenda.

Adrian Tink, RAC motoring strategist said: "The latest ALARM4 survey advised that £9.5 billion is needed to bring the roads up to scratch, and that is in England and Wales alone. We are in difficult times, and I appreciate that spending cuts have to be made, but the long term impact of this could be terrible for the UK's road users, particularly those in rural areas where roads are a lifeline.

"UK motorists pay an annual total of around £49 billion in motoring taxes, yet they face years of potholes and poorly maintained roads damaging their vehicles and drastically reducing road safety."

Fleet News

[Wigan Advanced Motorists](#)

We meet at the Plough and Harrow, Shevington each Sunday morning. Congregate in the car park at around 09:30am for Motorcycles and 09:45am for cars.

From the South: Leave the M6 at Junction 26 (M58) and at the Orrell exit, turn left. At the traffic lights, turn right for Shevington, the pub is a couple of miles on the left.

From the North: Leave the M6 at Junction 27 (Standish, Wigan) and turn left up the dual carriageway towards Standish. At the end, turn right for Shevington, the pub is a couple of miles on the right.

Car parking is available at the rear of the building and there is also a public car park on the other side of the road opposite the pub.

Contact details: Tel: 07071 226693

www.wiganadvancedmotorists.org.uk