

Newsletter

October 2011



Kent RoADAR

Kent ROSPA Advanced Drivers

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From the Editor

In 1966, my parents made their first visit to the UK on holiday. As my father enjoyed driving, though more common now than 45 years ago, one of the things they did was hire a car and drive up the M1 to spend several days in Scotland.

Nearly thirty years later, some years after my wife and I moved to live in London, my parents came to visit and we took them to Cornwall, driving there on the M4 and M5 and returning on the A303.

For much of the journey my father, who by then had Parkinson's Disease and could no longer drive, was silent. Then, shortly after I had completed a fairly tricky swift acceleration overtaking manoeuvre on the single carriageway part of the A303, he asked me: "What would the top speed of your car be?" I answered "When we drove in Germany on the autobahn, I

managed about 110mph, and was not happy when a stream of BMWs, Porsche's and other posh cars overtook our humble Nissan... but why do you ask?"

"Well," he replied, "When I was here in 1966, the speed limit was 70mph, and seat belts were the only real safety measure. Now we have seat belts with tensioners, ABS, reinforced cages, better tyres and brakes, and more. But the speed limit is still 70 mph. In those days, if you managed to get your car up to 70 mph, you were proud of yourself, perhaps similar to your feelings at 110 mph on the Autobahn."

Reading about the government's plans to have a consultation to increase the motorway speed limit to 80 mph by 2013 reminded me of this conversation in 1996.



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Those of us who live in Kent have the advantage of being able to drive in France relatively easily. Driving in France on a holiday this summer, there are a few things that I think we should consider adapting from the French:

1. **Less congested motorways:** I'm not sure whether this is because of the charges or that traffic density is less. However, when leaving the terminal at Calais, my wife asked me "Where did all the cars go" and I really did not know!
2. **Driving markers:** A few sections of motorway in England (notably the M1 just outside London, but also the M6 and M11) have chevrons on the road, cautioning drivers to ensure that they have two chevrons between them and the car in front. Cars with less than two chevrons between them are too close (with less than a 2

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second gap). In France, almost every section of motorway has a similar system, except there are no chevrons on the road. Instead, the rumble strip has gaps in it at distances similar to the chevrons. If you have less than two rumble strip gaps between you and the car in front, you are driving too close. At this time of austerity, importing this idea will not only make our motorways safer, it will even reduce the cost of paint and rumble strip required.

3. **Variable Speed limits:** The speed limit of 130 reduces to 110 kmph in the rain. We could do 80 and 70mph!

Finally, as Advanced Drivers, we know that education prevents accidents. Any plans to increase the motorway speed limits must include more education.

Safe driving, *Ravi Savur*



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From the Chairman

Dear Kent Group members, Welcome to our new newsletter

Although we have not had a newsletter for a while I see them as a stepping stone to where we are now.

I would like to welcome Ravi Savur as our new newsletter editor. Ravi has a lot of experience in producing and editing newsletters, I am confident that he will do a great job.

As part of my preparation for this part of the newsletter I have been reflecting on how far the group has come since I first joined as an associate in 2000. Back in 2000 there were around 30 members, a very small, but dedicated committee, and if I remember correctly, only 8 or 10 observers (now tutors).

I first got involved with the committee when I attended my first AGM after joining and volunteered (or was I pushed?) into helping organise the monthly meetings.

Two AGM's later the group was threatened with closure as the then chairman was standing down due to family commitments and no one wanted the job. So I volunteered. Little did I know then how far the group would progress to where we the group is now.

So I am still here as your chairman with only a 1 year break as deputy chairman.

We now have a very strong, professional and hard working training team. The training team are the backbone of the group; they are very qualified and strive for continuous improvement. We now have 20 approved tutors and 6 Advanced Tutors who give up their own time to help our associates

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improve their driving skills to pass the RoSPA Advanced Driving test. The results are also impressive which is credit not only to the tutors but also to you the members who work hard to achieve the high standards laid down.

We now have 139 members in the Group which back in 2000 was just a dream.

We have our own website www.kentrospa.org.uk which I would urge you to look at regularly as there is the latest information about upcoming Group events, Group discounts, Group Clothing Web Shop, where you can buy logo items direct from the supplier and the Group get a small commission, and lots of useful links to other web sites, plus lots of useful information on advanced driving

We have also introduced a membership database to streamline our recordkeeping

and membership administration, it also enable us to e-mail all members with event details and other news.

We are a growing group and remember it is your group, your input is important, all contributions are valued, however small. This will help the group thrive and survive.

I hope you enjoy our new newsletter and if you wish to contribute just contact our editor

John Corcoran



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From the Training Team

As this is the first article from the Training Team, I thought I would introduce ourselves to you and give you a brief history why we were set up.

When we did not have Advanced Tutors the Group could not train Tutors in-house and relied on neighbouring Groups to train and examine Members to become Approved Tutors. In fact, two of the team, Steve and I, went to The Thames Valley Group for our training.

The full Training Team consists of four Advanced Tutors and 2 Approved Tutors:

- Charles Green
- George Chandler
- Peter Glenn
- Phil Plant
- Ray Davies

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- Steve Buchanan

Five years ago Phil and I joined the committee and became the training team. Then four years ago, a group of us managed to pass the Advanced Tutors Test. Charles, George, Peter and Steve then came on board to make up the team we now have.

At the time, 4 years ago, we had :

- 15 Tutors
- 6 of the original Tutors have since left the Group
- We currently have 25 Tutors
- 4 are on a sabbatical for personal reasons
- The team has trained 16 Tutors (1 has left)

We have 5 trainees at present with a further 6 Member waiting to start the course .

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Since the present Team was formed, we have had:

- no test failures,
- 1 Bronze, and
- the rest Silver and Gold passes
- (and the Member who got Bronze re-tested straight away and got a Silver) .

This is a testament to the skill and knowledge of our Tutors and the commitment of our Associates.

Another decision we made was that an Associate will not be assigned a Tutor until they attend an Induction Seminar. These are held on the second Sunday in the month at my home.

If you have passed your test and have either Silver or Gold and you would like to become a Tutor please let me know.

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Finally if you are coming up for retest or you would just like to have a drive with a Tutor please let me know

Safe and Happy Driving

Ray Davies

Training Officer



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Consultation on Fees for Digging Up Roads during Rush Hour

Responses due by 31 October 2011

The government purpose of this consultation is to invite views on proposals to allow local highway authorities in England to implement “lane rental” schemes, under which they would charge a daily fee for the duration of works carried out in the street at the busiest times.

These works are a necessary fact of life. They are needed to provide and maintain the essential utility and transport services on which individuals and businesses depend. However, these works also cause significant disruption to road users and local communities. By some estimates, 1.2 million street works contribute to congestion that costs the economy over £4 billion a year,

and a broadly similar number of highway works also take place each year.

The Government considers that, in addition to the existing tools available to highway authorities, well designed and carefully targeted “lane rental” schemes could encourage those carrying out works to reduce the disruption caused on the most critical parts of their local road networks. A lane rental scheme would involve a daily charge for the duration of work though with exemptions if work is carried out at less disruptive times.

Lane rental pilot schemes were operated in Camden and Middlesbrough between 2002 and 2004, but no further schemes have since been implemented. As a result of subsequent changes to various aspects of street works legislation, the existing lane rental regulations are now out of date and, in effect, inoperable.

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In drawing up its new proposals, the Government has considered what lessons might be learned from the experience of the previous pilot schemes, and is now proposing a significantly different approach to that tested in those pilots. In particular, any future schemes will need to target just the specific streets or parts of streets where works cause the greatest level of disruption, and will apply charges only in respect of works that occupy the highway at the busiest times.

However, given that lane rental is not yet proven as a successful model for tackling disruption caused by works, the Government is at this stage contemplating lane rental schemes in just one or two places – one major urban area and one non-metropolitan area. Early evidence from such schemes would inform decisions on whether lane rental could usefully be applied more widely.

More information is at

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2011-25>

Dartford Tunnel Charges to Increase

While the existing subsidy for local residents will remain, the charges for cars is proposed to increase from £1.50 to £2.00 in November 2011 and to £2.50 in 2012. DART Card charges will increase from £1.00 to £1.33 in November 2011 and to £1.67 in 2012.



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Weird, new tyres...

At the Philadelphia car show, Michelin displayed a radical new design of tyres to be made at their South Carolina plant.

Yes, those are "spoke" like connections to the inner part of the tire from the outside tread "wrap!" The next picture shows how odd it looks in motion....



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Makes you wonder how the ride feels doesn't it?

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Courtesy: *Peter Hunt*



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JUST ANOTHER TEST DAY?

So what's going on here then? Why am I sitting in my car, in an empty car park belonging to a well known restaurant chain, at 9.00 in the morning on All-Hallows Eve (scariest night of the year!) As I ponder this question, the passenger door opens and a man, who I have only met once before, slips into the seat beside me. I take a glance at him and wonder "What have I let myself in for now?"

After a brief conversation I start the engine and we move off, my sweaty palms gripping the steering wheel and my heart beating so hard I can hear it! For the next hour or so I follow his instructions, driving along country lanes and on dual carriageways, through towns

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and villages, turning left or right as and when he directs. He makes a few notes as I drive and I wonder what he is thinking.

Eventually his directions bring us right back to the car park we started from and as I bring the car to a stop and turn off the engine I heave a great sigh of relief; so ends my first training session for the RoSPA Advanced Drivers Test.

At the end of that first session my tutor asked me what I wanted from the training so I rather glibly said I wanted nothing less than a gold pass (I have this ego you see, that always wants to do the best possible). I went on to say that if he thought I was not able to do it then it would be better to tell me straight away and we could call it a day right now and not waste any more of his time. I also told him that I would listen to all he said and

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do exactly as I was told but he was not to shout at me! He replied that I had the potential to train and to pass the test, and that shouting was not his style.

The fact that it most certainly was not his 'style' was borne out several weeks later when I ploughed straight through a flock of seagulls (in the middle of the road I might add), who were enjoying a fish and chip lunch thoughtfully provided by a careless driver dumping it from his car window just a few moments before we arrived at that stretch of road. From beside me came a quiet but firm voice "Susan, don't add to the road-kill." Far more effective than shouting. A quick glance in the rear-view mirror assured me that none were lying dead in the road but being of a tender turn of tummy I suffered for days thinking I had decimated the seagull population of Sheerness.

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And so we went on. I progressed through the gathering and processing of information, positioning the vehicle for the best view and the use of the limit point for greater control round bends, judging and adjusting speed for smooth and appropriate handling of hazards in the correct gear, and sensitive use of acceleration for all situations. I was firmly instructed NOT to swerve round pot-holes and gently taught the benefits of forward planning. In amongst all the learning and the making of mistakes was a lot of laughter, the sessions really were fun. It took me weeks to start anything remotely resembling commentary. How embarrassed I was and how stupid I felt, wondering what my tutor thought of the pathetic attempts on my part to talk about what was happening as I drove along, how often my mouth went dry and I fell silent for long periods of time before being gently prompted to begin again. But

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oh how we both fell about laughing when I described the road ahead as ‘upsy downsy’ because I couldn’t think of the appropriate word. Now, whatever words I use, I feel as though there is something missing if I don’t do commentary!

Eventually the day came when, at the end of a session, I was handed the form and told to apply for my test. I was also told it would take between six and eight weeks to arrange. How I panicked when just a couple of weeks later I received a call from the Examiner and the test was booked for just five days hence, so much so that I told no-one but my tutor and on the actual day of the test my family thought I was happily engaged in digging my garden. I had five sleepless nights and two more training drives before ‘T’ Day arrived.

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The test was not until 2pm so I had a nerve-racking morning to get through first. My tender turn of tummy could not stomach breakfast so off I went to the gym and gave myself a gruelling two hour work-out. Lunch was out of the question so out came the shampoo, cleaning cloths and wax and ‘baby’ was washed, waxed and polished until she gleamed. Eventually it was time to head on out and collect my Examiner. As he sat in the car beside me one of the first things he said was that the commentary was no longer obligatory and if I chose not to do it that would be fine. Well I looked at him with indignation and suddenly heard myself saying “but I have worked really hard at the commentary and I want to do it now” he laughed and any ice was immediately broken. Amazingly, once the test drive began gone was the girl with the sweaty palms, the beating heart and the dry mouth and there in her place was a calm,

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quietly confident woman who knew she had been expertly coached and was ready to be tested (not sure who she was but she had the same name as me).

Whilst on the test I encountered a giant horse transporter which pulled out and stretched itself across the road just as I came around the bend, how glad I was that I had taken on board all that stuff about being in the correct position at the correct speed and with the correct gear engaged – all at the same time. There was a meticulously planned overtake of a Land Rover that had to be aborted in the face of fresh oncoming traffic. Also, a youngster in a baseball cap decided to “under take” me on a busy city ring road in the middle of rush hour traffic, without looking far enough ahead to see a minibus heading for the same bit of road space that he needed so he was *cut up* at the roundabout. The ‘system’ certainly

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stood me in good stead at this point and I was able to avoid the situation as it developed. On the other hand, the memory of my attempt at reversing round a corner will shame me till my dying day!

All-in-all it was probably just another test day for the Examiner but for me it made all the coaching, all the practice and all the swotting up of ‘Roadcraft’ worth every single moment when, at the end of the test, I heard the Examiner say “your tutor has done a fine job, you are definitely a Gold pass.”

Thank you to Ray for organising my Induction, to my tutor for the many hours of coaching, to the Examiner and to RoSPA generally for making it all possible for me.

Susan