

Sefton Advanced Motorists

Issue: 269

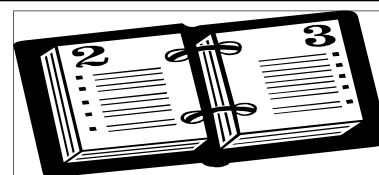
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Forthcoming Attractions



Monday, 8th January; New Associates Meeting; the January course starts tonight. So, if you know of anyone who is interested they will be very welcome to come along, and even enrol on the night.

Monday, 15th January; a Southport resident, **Rachael Kilpatrick**, will be telling us about the **Work of a Forensic Scientist**.

Monday, 12th February; Mid-Course Theory meeting to iron out any potential problems.

Monday, 19th February; Tony Foster an **Accident Investigator and Reconstruction Officer** will be the speaker this evening.

Please make a note of these events in your diary and try to come along and support our guest speakers who give up their free time to come and speak to us. All meetings are at the Royal Clifton Hotel, Southport, unless otherwise stated, and start at 8 pm.

Chairman Writes



Hello again,

Firstly I must wish you all a Happy New Year. I hope 2007 brings you all you wish of it.

Well! What a good night we had! That is to say, the Christmas Dinner night at the Bold Hotel on Lord Street was a success, once again.

As last year, the food was excellent and the service was spot on. Everyone I spoke to enjoyed the food. The room is just right for us so the atmosphere was great.

Paulette supplied here feely packages with two nearly beating everyone. After some timely clues, one turned out to be lemon segment squeezers, Val Carr getting the disc of dress making pins finished them off. Thanks Paulette it must take a bit of thought and effort to prepare them.

But biggest thanks go to Ann & Frank Thomas (I am sure hubby helped) for planning an excellent evening. Unfortunately, Ann was not feeling great on the night and after all her work was unable to make it. I hope you are feeling better and look forward to seeing you soon.

I look forward to doing the same at the end of this year.

The Motorbike Section had it's Christmas Party at Elaine and Tony's; about 28 of us turning up on the night. Many thanks to Elaine and Tony for letting us invade their house once again. Karen delivered excellent food as usual and one of our members, Ian Pye, serenaded us on his guitar. Although serenade might not be the word for some of the Hard Rock numbers.

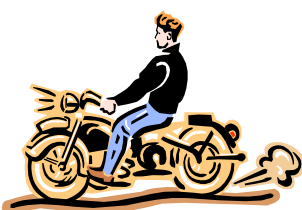
I was very impressed with Ian's playing and his rendition of Brothers in Arms was superb. Well done Ian.

The party games arranged by our hosts were a great laugh, although one put back sex discrimination at least 10 years.

Elaine and Tony ran a raffle and asked for donations in aid of the Northwest Air Ambulance raising £302 on the night.

Alan Filson

New Motorcycle Membership Secretary Appointed



The Motorcycle Section of Sefton Advanced Motorists recently held it's AGM and appointed **Stewart Gaukroger** as Motorcycle Membership Secretary. Congratulations Stewart!

Stewart's contact details are now included in the panel on page 7.

Test Passes

Hearty congratulations go to

Carolyn Carr observed by Kathleen Tattersall



Training Team Strengthened!

In footballing terms the January transfer window may be open but Sefton Advanced Motorists Group has been able to bring two more Senior Observers into the squad by way of it's "youth academy".

Earlier this year Richard Hardie and Jon Taylor were both Qualified Observers who embarked on a programme of Coaching to become Senior Observers. Their mentor in all of this was Peter Comfort, an existing Senior Observer on the Training Team who got them to this higher plane of observing.



Peter

In early December they were tested by an IAM Examiner, Martin Greenwood, after which both Richard and Jon were officially registered with Head Office as Senior Observers.



Richard



Jon

Congratulations to you both!

Thanks, also, to Peter for his coaching skills.

Speeding fines pushing up female insurance costs.

By Henry Biggs, December 08 2006 (www.cars.uk.msn.com)

Other than irritating us with TV jingles, a number of insurance companies have sprung up in recent years to cater exclusively for female motorists as they are seen as less of a risk than their male counterparts.

However, according to online price comparison service Confused.com, the gender gap is narrowing, thanks mainly to the rising number of women with speeding convictions. A survey of more than five and a half million drivers by Confused.com revealed that nearly 10% now have points on their licences, more than double the amount three years ago. This has meant the disparity between insurance premiums has shrunk by 3% in the past nine months. However women are still seen as a better bet and they tend to have less serious accidents, leading to lower claims.

The study also reveals that insurance companies dealing exclusively with women may not in fact offer the best deals. When it questioned 177,643 women, Confused.com found that just over one in 10 received the lowest premium from an insurer specialising in female motorists.

So, we are looking to the girls of Sefton Group to continue setting high driving standards and to recruit more ladies to our courses. Maybe, those insurance costs will, then, remain low.

Getting in a Spin,but safely.

By Tom O'Malley

December 3rd saw an intrepid group of six Sefton members brave gale force winds to meet at the Liverpool Marriott Hotel. The hotel is built on the old Speke Aerodrome with the control tower as a central feature. After a coffee break, to warm up, a short theory session ensued where a general course overview was outlined.

The group then split into two groups and made our way to the rear, the old aircraft apron. A seemingly random arrangement of cones greeted us and the wind was if anything stronger still. The first group Gillian, Tim and Carolyn climbed aboard the cradled Sierra and spun off round the course with the instructor at the wheel.

Meanwhile the second group cowardly retired to the warmth of Miles' Volvo. The wait seemed to take an eternity as we watched the flashes of a swooping vehicle trundle round cones. The regular spins and spills much appreciated by an impatient audience. Finally after a few long disappearances to the other end of the run, we were beckoned across.

The exiting team had grins approaching manic proportions and would not be drawn on the experience. So with some trepidation we hopped aboard. The vehicle itself was surrounded by 4 caster like wheels on a seemingly crude arrangement. The instructor later explained this Swiss designed contraption cost £25,000 a throw. Maybe not so crude after all. The safety brief consisted of don't trip over the outriggers, after a couple of near misses I could see the point of this one (I blame dizziness, what sort I'm not sure).

After the instructor gave us a quick demo spinning and sliding all the while, Matthew bravely took the wheel first. The initial part of the course was to simply recognise when a skid had gone too far to be corrected or saved. When the car begins to spin out of control the length of skid can be dramatically reduced by braking hard and declutching. When the brakes were left off the car would spin round a few times often ending up on the opposite side of the road stalled. With the firm application of brakes the skid would be reduced in length and the car finishing on the same lane usually with engine running. This may seem like common sense but recognising the point at which the skid becomes unrecoverable was the key and later in the course this simple lesson was easily forgotten whilst you wrestled with the wheel.

The next part of the course was the fun bit. Dealing with oversteer. We started with a simple two cone circuit and progressed to figure of eight. On the bends the rear of the car would step out and if uncorrected end in a spin.

The simplest and most effective advice here was to keep looking in the direction you wanted to travel. If this meant looking out of the side window so be it. Whenever anyone slipped up, it was usually because they had succumbed to looking at the cone they were about to flatten. After a few good circuits each we got to the point where the vehicle could be slid around the bends. Even dealing with a change of road camber became part of the fun.

Next came the dreaded understeer. To illustrate this, we all drove in a straight line to about 30mph and at the last cone launched the car into a tight right turn... Nothing happens so you hit the brakes and slide and slide and slide. The straight lines we travelled in were depressingly long and an airfield is perhaps the only place we wouldn't have hit something.

To combat this natural reaction of braking and losing all steering control, we had to force ourselves to take both feet off the controls and tuck them under the seat. The wheel could

then be moved repeatedly; straight ,turn, straight, turn. This achieved a small amount of steering. Black ice is to be avoided unless you're hooked on adrenaline and trips to the body shop.

After this we each did a few laps of the full circuit with hairpins and slaloms. When everyone was satisfied they knew the course we each had a two lap timed run. With pride at stake the mistakes came thick and fast. Even the eventual winner Matthew Brown managed to just clip a cone with an outrigger. This meant a very respectable time was marred with a 5 second penalty to land a narrow victory. The fastest lady of the day ,Carolyn Carr, was mere tenths of second adrift.

To finish the instructor gave an impressive demo of steering under ABS. While zooming up to a cone wall, first in Miles' Volvo then Carolyn's Prius, he braked solidly and at the last moment steering round the obstacle. After all the previous fun and games it was nice to be in a car that responded so well.

Trophies accepted (much too windy for champagne) we gingerly made our way home. Many thanks to Paulette for organising a very enjoyable day, she assures me her time knocked all of ours into a cocked hat. Roll or slide on next time.

Those participating in this exciting day out were Matthew Brown, Gillian McKenna, Miles Stevenson, Tim Starkey, Carolyn Carr and Tom O'Malley.

*A valued contribution from Frank Bennett, respected Senior Observer of Sefton Group, on the subject of **"Inappropriate Speed and Commentary"**?*

A middle aged man bought himself a brand new Aston Martin. He drove off down the road and (not being IAM qualified!), accelerated it up to 80 mph.

Enjoying the wind blowing through his (thinning) hair, he thought : "This is great" and pushed it up to an even higher speed. Then he looked in his rear-view mirror, and there was a Police car behind him, with blue lights flashing.

"No problem. I can get away from him" the man thought to himself, and pushed the accelerator to the floor. His speed was over 130 mph to escape being stopped.

Then he thought: "What am I doing? I'm far too old for this type of thing". So he braked and pulled over to the side of the road, to wait for the Police car to catch up with him.

The Police Officer pulled in and walked up to the driver's side. "Sir, my duty shift ends in five minutes and today is Friday 13th. If you can give me a good reason why you were speeding that I have never heard before, I'll let you go".

The man looked at the Policeman and said: "Last week, my wife ran off with a Policeman, and I thought that you were bringing her back". As the Officer turned away, he said "Have a nice day".

(We have an assurance that this piece is not drawn from personal experience!!)

It's Behind You!

(.....oh, yes it is!)



Driving Tip No. 49

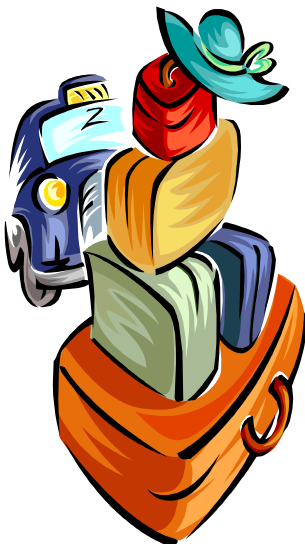
Christmas may have passed and the pantomime season be still in full swing but the following advice on the IAM website urges us not to load our cars in such a frivolous and slapstick manner. There could be some seriously unfunny consequences.

This time of year we have seen plenty of cars on motorways, packed to the gunnels with gifts *en route* for relatives. There is a lot to be said for packing the car with care – even if it means delaying the journey by twenty minutes or so. One of the main problem areas is the so called parcel shelf in many saloons. Drivers who actually use the parcel shelf for parcels, particularly on a long motorway journey, may not realise that they are storing up potential trouble.

Firstly, you are restricting your rear view by obstructing the rear windscreen. On a motorway, where use of all your mirrors is so important, this is potentially a problem as you will be reducing your all-round visibility. It's not insurmountable (many vans have no rear windows at all) but if you are used to driving with the rear mirror, and that is your usual driving style, you won't be able to see as much as you usually do.

Secondly, in the event that you have to brake sharply, anything unsecured on the back parcel shelf will fly forward. Parcels turn into missiles when they are travelling at 70 mph or so, and you and your passengers do not want to be struck on the head by a flying gift, no matter how carefully it's wrapped.

Actually the worst culprits for this are not seasonal – it is the drivers who store a “handy” umbrella on the back parcel shelf in case it rains. In a crash, that loose umbrella could injure a passenger or driver in the car, regardless of any other injuries caused.



All heavy, loose items are better stored in the boot. The added advantage is that gifts are less obvious in the car, and so less likely to attract potential thieves.

Families transporting pets should also ensure they are properly secured and comfortable for the journey – it is potentially very dangerous to let a large dog simply take a passenger seat, not least because the seat belt is totally inadequate.

The drivers of HGVs and LGVs have to take particular care when they are securing the load, but the principle applies to car drivers too.

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GROUP No. 5143

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