



FORTH VALLEY GROUP
OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS



IAM Group 6168

Scottish Charity SC023512

NEWSLETTER 2018- Issue 27

Chairman's Chat

Dear Members

Firstly I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and hope that 2018 is good for you and your families and friends.

We have had to endure some awful wet/cold weather this winter and speaking today from a cold and frosty Falkirk it seems spring is still some way off.

I am pleased to report that two members (Amanda Aikman & Gordon McNeill) successfully completed their Observer training in the autumn and are now fully fledged and busy working with associates.

I hope to commence some further observer training soon as we have some new interest from members who wish to share their enthusiasm and knowledge of advanced driving.

Meantime we still have a waiting list of associates ready and keen to get started on their courses.

Angus Maciver
Chairman



GROUP NEWS

Dates for your Diary:-

Group meetings - 7.30pm

<p>8th February 2018</p> <p>Winter Driving – talk presented by Angus Maciver</p> <p>This is beneficial for all levels of experience in both our driver and rider groups; an overview of key aspects of driving during the winter months and how to try and remain safe during this time.</p>	<p>Falkirk Fire Station, Westfield, FK2 9AH</p>
<p>8th March 2018</p> <p>Autonomy and “Advanced” Driving and Riding – talk presented by Richard Harris</p> <p>Richard Harris works in artificial intelligence and augmented reality and regularly spends time doing his best to break Tesla's state of the art Autopilot. He's also been an IAM member or Observer for more than thirty years. In this talk, he'll not only be talking about the mechanics of self-driving systems but will be examining the implications for society as a whole, and for those of us who regard ourselves as 'keen' drivers.</p>	<p>Smith Museum, Dumbarton Road, Stirling, FK8 2RQ</p>

Congratulations to the following people who have passed their IAM Test:

Associate	Observer
Mark McComiskie (bike) 05/09/2017	Ian Macdonald
Jim Mcaulay (bike) 12/09/2017 F1rst!	Dave Allan
Steve Kelly (bike) 30/09/2017	John Hill
Steven Ferguson (car) 11/12/2017	Amanda Aikman

CAR / MOTORCYCLE SECTION

Big Data on Driving Skills

Black boxes for insurance have been available since about 2010 and now over 6 billion miles have been driven by British drivers with a black box in their car recording their driving habits.

A "black box" is a device that uses GPS and inertia sensors to record how the car is being driven. Do you always accelerate and brake like a racing driver? Are you smooth through the gears? Do you anticipate (don't need to use brakes much)? How often are you speeding and on what types of road?

The black box automatically sends this recorded data to the insurance company. The incentive for the driver is they can have cheaper insurance if the black box determines they are a "safe" driver. The incentive for the insurance company is they can give discounts (and penalties) to the right people and not discriminating on arbitrary factors like age, sex or job title.

"Big Data" is the use of massive amounts of data from millions of occurrences of events to draw interesting conclusions. So what have the insurance companies learned from these 6 billion miles of data?

- Some of the safest drivers are people who tick "play computer games" as a hobby.
- NHS employees seem to be the safest group of workers.
- Seventeen year olds are better drivers than 18/19 year olds.
- Country roads are death traps for young drivers (which we all knew) but the data shows this is partly because they use country roads more in an effort to avoid motorways, of which they appear to be scared.
- The same driver can behave differently on different days and it's the "erratic" driving days that tend to lead to accidents.
- On average men apparently *do* drive faster than women, and have more accidents, although that bit was already known!



Now that the technology (the black box) has matured and become cheaper it is becoming cost effective to use them for older drivers. Initially the boxes cost several hundred pounds each meaning they were only worth using where the driver was spending £1000s on insurance (i.e. young drivers) but cheaper boxes means the option is spreading to insurance companies who want to discriminate (without discriminating arbitrarily!).

For more detail see <https://goo.gl/mxiqE8>

Mark Elder

A PHYSICIST WRITES . . .

(March 2017)

I remember hearing a short radio programme last year on the history of the bicycle. It made such an impression on me that I have just now searched it out on iPlayer and listened to it again. The 'safe-to-ride' machine that we know today dates from around 1885, when the penny-farthing design was superseded: the two wheels became the same size, and the rider was able to reach the ground with his or her feet.



I ought to emphasize the 'her', because cycling became liberating for women, in particular causing their customary attire to change from a long skirt and petticoat to a jacket and pantaloons! And it's arguable that the female adoption of the bicycle gave strength later to the rise of the suffragette movement and all that followed...

In the 1890s there were significant consequences for everyone, in fact, when the price of a bicycle dropped enough for most people to be able to afford one. Barriers of class and gender broke down, between people finding themselves alongside each other on bicycles. Those seeking work could go much further (relatively speaking) for it, than they could on foot. And our country's gene-pool was similarly given a revitalizing stir, since you might well now encounter your life-partner at a greater distance from home than before! All this history I learned from cyclist-historian Rob Penn who was interviewed in the programme.

But what impressed me most was a recent medical story: in 2003, an American lady who suffered quite severely from Parkinson's disease was encouraged by her neuro-surgeon – a keen cyclist – to join, with her husband, a cycling group who were setting out to ride across their home state, Iowa (to raise awareness of Parkinson's).

This lady was not a regular rider herself, and so she took the rear seat of a tandem and her husband the front. But he wasn't used to tandems, and apparently when they first stopped he got off quite forgetting his wife was still on! She took a tumble, and so the surgeon suggested that he occupy the front seat for the day. And he favoured a rather high rate of pedalling...

Extraordinarily, by the end of the day her Parkinson's symptoms had noticeably reduced, and by the end of the week-long ride (with the surgeon still leading) they had almost totally disappeared.

And the improvement was not at all limited to her legs. Thus it was discovered that fairly high-intensive repetitive 'assisted' exercise could be of great benefit to some Parkinson's patients at least, with effects that lasted for days or even weeks after a series of sessions. The mechanism seems to be that the exercise sends signals to the brain that cause it actually to restore the full connectivity between its different regions.

Which only adds to my astonishment at the brain's capabilities and its ways of working. This is a feeling that I've tried to reflect ever since I started writing these columns. Very early on (14 years ago now!) I pointed out that riding a bicycle – unlike almost any other skill I can think of – is an entirely automatic thing, from when you start to learn to after you've finally got the hang of it: if at any stage you try to think about it, you will very likely come off. I doubt if more than a small fraction of cyclists are aware that when they want to turn left, for example, they must momentarily steer to the right (in order to tilt left and then stay balanced on the curve). Yet their subconscious brains know exactly what to do.

The question in my mind is how long this knowledge is retained, because it must be at least 40 years since I last rode a bike, and I am increasingly being urged (see below) to try the saddle again. Though while half of me is keen to know the answer to my question, the other half fears the embarrassment of falling off...



Looking at pictures of bicycles from 130 years ago, I am amazed at how little the basic design has changed, even with all the technical advances and options added to it now. One of the most recent of these is battery power, which has surely brought the liberation of open-air, day-trip journeying to yet more people.

Which leads me to a good-news tale about my daughter, who recently married a cycling enthusiast. She had not ridden a bicycle for twenty years or more (mostly for reasons of back trouble) – until last year, when she decided to invest in an electric bike. This has given her wonderful freedom to explore cycle (and cyclable) routes in town and country, not least all around N London where they live. The

pair of them can now ride together anywhere (having fitted a rack for the two bikes to their car). And as I hinted above, I have been under gentle pressure to try the machine myself! I'll let you know the outcome, maybe.

Peter Soul, Thames Valley Group of Advanced Motorists

NATIONAL NEWS

Young and Novice-Driver Safety – Developing a systems-based approach.

The RAC Foundation has published a new paper "Addressing Young and Novice-Driver Safety in Great Britain – Developing a 'systems-based approach'".

The paper advocates looking again at the successes achieved by different forms of graduated licensing introduced around the world. Encouraging young people to use public transport at night and greater parental support during the early years of license-holding, for example, are ways to indirectly reduce young driver crash rates.

<http://www.roadsafe.com/theracfoundationpublishesnewpaper>

Cutting the cost of dangerous roads: Road Safety Foundation Annual Tracking Report

In a major innovation last year, the government allocated a £175m Safer Roads Fund to tackle a portfolio of the 50 most dangerous local A roads in England – roads posing the highest risk of death and serious injury to users. These roads have been inspected, remedial proposals prepared and the first findings will be reported in 2018.

<http://www.roadsafe.com/cuttingthecostofdangerousroadsroadsafetyfoundationannualtrackingreport>



Your Committee 2017/18

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