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Group and Membership Correspondence

All Group correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary:
Val Power,

For queries regarding membership please contact the group Membership Secretary
Sue Hayes at membership-secretary@kentiam.org.uk

Useful Information

Further useful information can be found by visiting the main IAM website at www.iamroadsmart.com or the Kent Group Website at www.kentiam.org.uk

Registered charity: no.1051416

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From The Chair

Welcome everyone to the April 2024 edition of our Magazine – hopefully you have survived all the recent monsoons and no longer need wellies to go out into your gardens! Sadly the weeds in mine are looking amazingly large and healthy but unfortunately many established plants just didn't survive..... plenty of work is needed now to get it back into some sort of shape. Fingers crossed for lots of sunshine from now on!



In the last magazine I mentioned to you that our social evenings, held at 8pm on the third Tuesday of each month at Grove Green, were back for your enjoyment and since then we have had some really excellent and interesting speakers. However, the cost of putting on these evenings is continuing to spiral and I must say it is more than a little disappointing when out of nearly 500 members less than 20 people turn up. If you look on page 18 you will see there is a full program for the rest of the year so please do come along and see what you've been missing.

Our December Quiz evening was a great success and included visiting teams from RoSPA, EKAM and the KAMG. My thanks to all those who worked so hard to make it happen. Quiz Master Andy Wyles did a great job along with his better half Elaine as did Paul & Janet Fletcher. Christine produced some mouthwatering mince pies, sausage rolls and Christmas cake which everyone present thoroughly enjoyed.

On page 5 there is a great article by Andy Wyles about the February social evening when Richard Griffin the ex-Queen's Police Officer paid a visit to Grove Green, what an interesting evening that turned out to be!

Hot off the press, a Group Sunday Lunch is being planned for September. More details will be available shortly so how about coming to that? Perhaps you could kindly let me know if you might be interested please? I'll look forward to hearing from you.

Associate numbers are slowly on the increase but many more are needed for our team of fully trained Observers. So, if you know of anyone that would like to do the Advanced Driving Course please put them in touch with Terry Nunn our Associate Coordinator on associates@kentiam.org.uk thank you.

Referring to Daren's Treasurers report on page 13 please note that this edition of the magazine will be the last sent by post due to the horrendous cost of printing and postage.

In future it will be sent out via email but
For members who have no email address we will continue to post a paper magazine.
For members who have an email address a pdf copy will be sent by email
For members who specifically ask to continue to receive a paper magazine we will continue to post a paper magazine.

The above makes it very important that we have your current email address. So,



Email Addresses Update

Do we have your up-to-date email address? If not can you please provide it by simply emailing us your name from that email address by August 1st 2024 to Sue Hayes on:-

membership-secretary@kentiam.org.uk

Thank you

if you do not have an email address or wish to retain a magazine paper copy please kindly let me know by 1st August 2024.
Many thanks.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those members who kindly took the trouble to email, send a text, telephone or personally congratulate me when news of the IAM RoadSmart Volunteer Driver of the Year Award was published. My comment that when I learned about the award "I was speechless and believe me that rarely happens" was genuine but I would like to reiterate that here at the Kent Group of Advanced Motorists we are a Team where everyone plays their part and I do feel that this award recognises the selfless contributions of everyone in this Group so I accepted it accordingly!

As for those who nominated me remember I know where you live!!

Finally as Chairman it is my pleasure to formally notify all members that:

the Kent Group of Advanced Motorists 46th Annual General Meeting will take place at
The Grove Green Community Centre, Penhurst Close, Maidstone, ME14 5BT on
Tuesday May 21st 2024 at 8pm

I look forward to seeing you all there.

Best wishes

Linda

Linda Davies
chairman@kentiam.org.uk



Test passes – congratulations everyone!



Allin-Jones	Richard		Matharu	Philip	F1rst
Ansell	Richard		McDowell	Cheryl	
Brooks	Steve	F1rst	Newgreen	David	F1rst
Butcher	Philip	F1rst	Pettitt	Richard	
Chitty	Alan	F1rst	Powell	Babs	
Chung	M. H. Henry		Quarendon	Susan	
Daniels	Richard		Ross	John	F1rst
Fletcher	Matt		Scantlebury	Rod	
Ford	Peter	F1rst	Sibley	Catherine	
Goddard	Clive	F1rst	Stokes	Geoff	F1rst
Goodyear	Tom	F1rst	Stuart	Neil	F1rst
Hinds	Richard		Tanton	Susan	F1rst
Jacques	Julia		Todd	Colin	
Kirchell	Steve		Venables	Bill	F1rst
Knight	Martin		Watson	Mark	F1rst

Another hilarious Highways Agency Faux Pas

This sign in Maidstone was captured by passing member John Lover who immediately leapt into action to memorialise it for our amusement – thank you John!



Tuesday 20th February saw us gather at Grove Green for another social evening, this month the speaker was Richard Griffin LVO (The Queen's Police Officer)



After Linda welcomed Richard to the Group he started by giving us a bit of background as to how he ended up in the role of The Queen's Police Officer. He was offered a role as a Royal Protection Officer after he was involved in carrying out a full security review of Buckingham Palace following the incident that saw Michael Fagan break into the Palace and into the Queen's bedroom.

Thinking he would be travelling around in posh cars his first role was looking after Prince Edward at university, so riding on a bicycle with him, then joining the Royal Marines saw them out in the jungle. After that he moved on to The Duke of Edinburgh and again thought here comes travelling in Rolls Royce's, but no, it found him sat alongside the Duke whilst carriage driving, with the only instruction being "Don't you dare fall out or I'll be disqualified....".

Eventually Richard became The Queen's Police Officer and finally got to ride in that Rolls!!!

A varied role involving travelling the world, both alongside the Queen, but also being part of a team that went ahead to plan for upcoming trips and ensuring the Queen's safety.



He also got to spend time with her at her favourite place, Balmoral, recalling the day whilst out walking with her they met two American tourists, who stood chatting for a while. Neither recognised the Queen and got talking about the area and asked if they had ever met the Queen, as quick as a flash Her Majesty replied "I haven't, but Dick here meets her all the time."



Before they knew what was happening one of the Americans had passed his camera to The Queen and asked her to take a photo of himself and Richard which she did. Richard then insisted that he took a photo of them with The Queen, which, still not realising who she was, they agreed to.

As they said their goodbyes and carried on walking the Queen turned to Richard and said "Oh, to be a fly on the wall when they show that photo and someone recognises me....."

This excellent evening finished with a quick question and answer session, still giving us all the chance to look at some of the interesting memorabilia that Richard had kindly brought along for us to see.

T'was on a Monday Morning that the Gas Man came to call"

The opening line above is of course the title and quote from a song from the satirical duo Flanders and Swan. It sort of reflects the problems I recently had in getting a charging point installed at my house having signed up to buying a full electric car (EV). The actual purchase was in fact quite painless. It was when I got involved with outside contractors to come and install the charging point.

First off, they wanted a whole ream of information from me, photos of the outside of the house showing the gas and electric meters, front door, position of the fuse box, relative to the above and driveway. The earth bonding under the kitchen sink, a video showing the positions from the outside to the fuse box and in their words, a simple sketch of the ground floor of the house etc etc.

Having spent over 50 years in the construction industry I was fine with the sketch and me being me I actually produced a full floor plan to a 1:50 scale and fully dimensioned. We managed to send off everything with the exception of the video which for some reason just wouldn't send. In a subsequent phone call, I pointed out the close proximity between the meters and the fuse box and the fact they had my fully dimensioned drawing that gave them every bit of information they could possibly need. All to no avail as they must have the video.

In the end they agreed that they would send someone from the (other) contractors who were actually coming to do the actually work. An appointment was duly made but was going to cause about a month's delay. A date was booked! He would come between 12.00 noon and 5.00 o'clock. On that morning Nicky and I decided to pop out to do a quick bit of shopping, but making sure we were back home by 12.00. As we were coming through the checkouts my phone rang, still at least an hour to go before 12.00. No reception. I couldn't hear him and he couldn't hear me. I had a bad feeling. This must be the chap coming to do this survey that was so important, and the job couldn't go ahead without it. We dashed home and I called him back. He had no idea he wasn't due to be with us until after 12.00!!! However, he was quite cheerful and told me that he had taken photos of the outside of the house and was quite happy. But what about the video I said! Oh, we don't need that he said, from what I've seen this will be one of the easiest installations we have ever done. But the other company said they must have it I (almost) screamed down the phone. Oh, don't worry about them he replied we're doing the job and I'm happy we have all the information we need. I'll tell them it's not required; I've seen all the other stuff you've sent, blooming great, we don't normally get anything as good as that!

Then the lady from his company rang me to make the appointment. Yet more time to go by (they are very busy you know). I took the first appointment that was convenient to me and was told the man would be coming between 1.00pm and 5.00pm to install the charger. As it happens, we were looking after our little granddaughter that day so we thought to save her having to be indoors all day we would take her out in the morning, making sure of course that we were back home well before 1.00pm. By good fortune getting out of the house with a 21month old child takes a bit of time and as we were more or less ready at about 9.15am I was surprised to see a van pull up on my drive. A young man got out "Hello", he said I'm here to install your new charging point. Oh, I said I wasn't expecting you until after 1.00pm. Oh, nobody told me that he said. "Well now your here you'd better get on with it" I said (I didn't want to risk him going away)! Apparently, they allow about 4 hours to do these installations but mine was so easy he was done in 2!!

Honestly dear reader, you will now know that this is NOT a work of fiction. I couldn't possibly make it up!

We all rely heavily on our eyes while driving but do we pay enough attention to our eyesight? A couple of things led me to write this article. I had Uveitis in one eye for a few months last year and I remember taking part in an online survey about headlight glare from IAM RoadSmart.

We often speak about the 'reading a number plate at 20m' as though that is the be all and end all of eyesight requirements (driving instructors must be able to read it at 26.5m). But in fact, there is more. Visual acuity (the Snellen test) requires at least 0.5 (6/12) when reading letters on an eye chart using whatever contact lenses or glasses are prescribed. There is also a requirement to have an 'adequate' field of vision (there are actual numbers of at least 160 degrees with at least 70° left and right and 30° up and down for lorry and bus drivers). There have been surveys by opticians' chains that have estimated that 3.5 million don't meet even the basic requirement and some drivers who have corrective lenses don't always wear them when driving.

We have to meet that minimum requirement when we take our driving tests (perhaps 17-25 years of age). Our eyesight deteriorates after about age 40 as our eye's lenses lose flexibility which increases the time to refocus from say a speedometer or navigation screen to the road ahead. So, unless you take another test (such as I did to qualify as an ADI) there is no more asked until renewing a licence at age 70 – and that is a self-certification. We are all entitled to a free NHS eye test when over 60 or over 40 if there is glaucoma in the family.

Of course, the number plate test must be done in daylight. But our eyesight at night is less effective as it limits peripheral vision and depth perception and then there is the time to recover from glare. DVSA have been looking at this, their examiners were unable to conduct eyesight tests before dawn or after dusk or during any (subjectively) dark periods of daylight. Will we see them getting light meters like cricket umpires? Many years ago I took a driving test in California. The eyesight test there is free of such judgements as you are required to read / see images in a machine.

The survey I mentioned earlier was asking about the brightness of vehicle lights, but I think that this is a red herring. More light on the road is good for everyone as it gets us closer to daylight when we can see most hazards far better. It is the improperly aligned lights (mainly older vehicles) and the increasing number mounted relatively high up such as the 'SUV craze' that cause most of the glare. The old teaching about where to look (down and to the left) while easing off the speed still works.

Glare recovery time may be 2 seconds when we are 17 and 9 seconds as we age: a car can go a long way in 9 seconds ! That's over four times the '2 second rule'. And glare can affect us in bright sunlight too. There is a road with an uphill near where I used to live in Walderslade where I avoided driving up it during sunny winter afternoons as the sun's angle placed the light parallel to the road surface ahead, so visors were no use. It is also worth having polarised glasses (prescription if necessary) which cut out the reflected light glare from wet roads in bright sunlight. When I was an ADI, I took a course with Queen Elizabeth Foundation on teaching people with disabilities to drive and I was able to see and indeed try out machines that can actually test glare recovery. Places like South East Driveability at Aylesford who carry out assessments for the DVSA, Motability and Dept. for Transport would I am sure have or can access such capability.

If you are concerned about glare recovery for night driving initially contact your own optician as many now have access to such equipment.

Outside Events Team Vacancy - can you help?

After 10+ dedicated years sadly Phil Mason has decided to hang up his hat as leader of the Outside Events Team.

So, the group is seeking a replacement..... could that person be you?

The Team spread the IAM/KGAM word at such events as the Police Open Day, various Classic Car Shows and the Kent County Show in an attempt to recruit new Associates.

There are approximately 6 – 10 such events each year mainly in the summer months.

Briefly you would need storage for the Group's equipment ie Gazebo, table, chairs etc and also a vehicle able to transport it to the various venues when required. The gazebo measures 1.6m x 0.3m x 0.3m when folded down.

If you are interested in the position, please would you kindly contact Phil on philipmason@talktalk.net who will be pleased to discuss with you exactly what is involved.

Speed Bumps

Daren Bubb

Last year we wished a happy 40th Birthday to speed bumps in the UK.

While they originate back to early 1900s America, the first one was installed on a British road as a traffic calming measure in 1983 covered by the original Highways (Road Hump) Regulations 1983 (not exactly an epic read). As more appeared on roads in the eighties, drivers began to refer to them as 'sleeping policemen' due to their ability to remind motorists they need to be aware of their speed.

Today, there are believed to be over 42,000 of them across the UK's road network.

The latest iteration of the Highways (Road humps) Regulations 1999 dictates that:

- all speed bumps must be at least 900mm in length and with a height between 25mm and 100mm at its tallest point.
- No vertical face or material forming the speed hump may exceed 6mm and the gradient of a speed bump must be no more than 1:10.
- They also must always be placed at a right angle to an imaginary line which runs down the centre of a road and can only be installed on roads where the speed limit is lower than 30mph.
- They cannot be fitted within 30 meters of a Zebra, Pelican and Puffin Pedestrian Crossings and within 20 meters of a railway track at a crossing if the speed limit is greater than 20mph.
- They also cannot be placed within 25 metres of a bridge or tunnel where the structure crosses the path of a highway.
- If the speed limit is over 20mph, speed bumps cannot be used in areas where there is no street lighting.
- There must be at least three street lamps distanced no further than 38 metres apart to the next one along to ensure drivers can see the obstruction ahead.
- This is because traffic signs are only compulsory on roads where the speed limit exceeds 20mph.

Now let me go find some fresh paint to watch dry!

Kent Group of Advanced Motorists

(Registered Charity No. 1051416)

Notice of our 46th Annual General Meeting

which will be held at the Grove Green Community Centre
Penhurst Close Maidstone ME14 5BT

on Tuesday 21st of May 2024 at 8.00pm

Agenda

- 1 Welcome to Guests and apologies for absence**
- 2 Minutes of Previous AGM**
- 3 Chairman's Report**
- 4 Treasurer's Report**
- 5 Elections -**
 - Chairman**
 - Vice-Chairman**
 - Secretary**
 - Treasurer**
 - Committee**
- 6 Presentations**
- 7 A O B**
- 8 Refreshments**
- 9 Guest Speaker - Mr Daren Bubb – The Loves and Lusts of an IAM
Treasurer Part 2**



Kent Group of Advanced Motorists (KGAM)
Charity No: 1051416 Form of Proxy

I (name)

of (address)

.....

.....

hereby appoint (name of appointee)

to vote for me and on my behalf at the
Annual General Meeting of the
Kent Group of Advanced Motorists
to be held on the **21st May 2024**
8pm at The Grove Green Community Centre
and at every adjournment thereof

This form of proxy to be used in respect of
all resolutions put to the meeting

As witness my hand this day of 2024

Signature

KGAM Membership Number

This is the only form which will be accepted and must be returned to
The Group Secretary Mrs V Power
before 8pm on the 12th of May 2024
or be disallowed

Kent Group of Advanced Motorists - Nomination Form

46TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 21st MAY 2024

(Registered Charity No. 1051416)

Name

**Kent Group
Membership no.**

Signature

CHAIRMAN

Nominee			
Proposer			
Seconder			

VICE CHAIRMAN

Nominee			
Proposer			
Seconder			

SECRETARY

Nominee			
Proposer			
Seconder			

TREASURER

Nominee			
Proposer			
Seconder			

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Nominee			
Proposer			
Seconder			

Members disqualified by law from acting as a Charity Trustee are not eligible to serve on the Group Committee (Rule 3.3).

This is the only form which will be accepted and must be returned by post before 8pm on the 12th May 2024 to the Group Secretary Mrs V Power or be disallowed

**Kent Group of Advanced Motorists
Accounts for the year ended 31 March
2024**

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS	12 months to 31 March 2024	12 months to 31 March 2023
Receipts	£	£
Subscriptions - Full	1,645	1,690
Subscriptions - Associates	1,570	1,860
	<u>3,215</u>	<u>3,550</u>
Gift Aid	221	223
Bank interest	780	419
Other income	347	374
Total receipts	<u>4,563</u>	<u>4,566</u>
Payments		
Hall hire	1,239	1,692
Magazine	510	490
Postage	372	376
Stationery and printing	61	49
IT costs	16	66
Insurance	204	177
Training/training books	797	1,361
Travel	190	276
Refreshments	174	148
Events and publicity	1,275	1,898
Other expenses	90	223
Sub-total	<u>4,928</u>	<u>6,756</u>
Asset purchases during the year		
None	0	0
Sub-total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total payments	<u>4,928</u>	<u>6,756</u>
Net payments for the year	(365)	(2,190)
Cash funds last year end	21,481	23,671
Cash funds this year end	<u>21,116</u>	<u>21,481</u>

Kent Group of Advanced Motorists Statement of Assets and Liabilities	As at 31 March 2024	As at 31 March 2023
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Cash funds	£	£
Deposit account	18,633	20,854
Bank current account	2,413	557
Cash floats	70	70
Total cash funds	21,116	21,481

Assets retained for the charity's own use	Original Cost	31 March 2024 Current value
Details of assets still in use	£	£
Projector for The Barn	312	0
Cabinet for The Barn	151	0
Laptop for The Barn	384	0
Laptop for Grove Green	434	0
Cupboard for The Barn	171	0
Laptop for The Barn	369	76
DVD player and cables	80	28
Projector for Grove Green	549	385
	2,450	489

Kent Group of Advanced Motorists – Committee Meeting 26th March 2024

Treasurers' Report to Members

Please find above our group accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024. These accounts were adopted by committee in their March 24 meeting who recommended they go to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be ratified by the members. As in previous years, I will provide below a short commentary explaining these figures for those of you unable to attend the AGM.

Although it may seem like a standing comment, it is important that I once again take time to thank Neil Oliver for his diligent review of our accounts. It remains a key check for all of us to have another set of professional and qualified financial eyes look over our results and confirm that the accounts I have submitted to you have been prepared in accordance with our books and records.

Last year I reported that 22/23 was our first full year free of covid restrictions whereby we incurred higher than normal levels of outgoings as we “stocked ourselves back up for business”, resulting in a deficit for last year of £2,190. At the 2023 AGM I assured members that committee would undertake a thorough review of our outgoings which duly took place at our May 24 meeting. I want to thank my fellow committee members for their diligence in undertaking that review. Committee established a robust plan to control our costs for 23/24 which you will see clearly reflected in our above accounts.

One of the remaining cost control plans was considered and agreed by committee at their March 2024 meeting regarding the future distribution of our magazine. I draw your attention to the proposal that was agreed by committee:

- For members where we have no email address – continue to post a paper magazine.
- For members where we have an email address – email a pdf copy of our magazine.
- For members who specifically ask to continue to receive a paper magazine – continue to post a paper magazine.

Additionally, regarding the independent review of our accounts, committee confirmed that:

- *The Treasurer should continue to confirm in their AGM report that our accounts have been independently reviewed and prepared in accordance with our books and records rather than reproduce the certification wording in full.*

Results for 2023/24

Our financial results for the last 2 years are summarised as follows:

	31 March 2024	31 March 2023
Receipts	£4,563	£4,566
Payments	(£4,928)	(£6,756)
Deficit	(£365)	(£2,190)

Considering **receipts** first, I previously noted the ongoing economic crisis was likely going to make it increasingly difficult to attract new Associates in the short term. Despite a sluggish start to 23/24, our Associate numbers picked up markedly in the 2nd half of the year with receipts for Associate training at £1,570. Interest rates have remained high returning us interest for the year of £780.

Receipts from full members was £1,645 which remains comparable to last year and I thank you all for your continued support to our group. Gift aid and other income are comparable with last year.

Turning to **payments**, the group cheque book had a very frugal work out this year as committee proactively reduced our outgoings. Although the analysis of payments above is relatively self-explanatory, I wanted to draw out a few specific things:

- Total payments for the year were £4,928 down £1,828 on last year.
- The majority of our costs have reduced from 22/23 except the cost of the magazine, stationery, group insurance and refreshments which show very modest increases.
- We have purchased no new assets for the last two years.

When I stood before you at the 2023 AGM, I noted committee would undertake a thorough review of our outgoings, and as a result of that hard work I am pleased to present the substantially improved financial results for the year with a reduction in our deficit from £2,190 in 22/23 to £365 in 23/24.

I note that as of 31 March 2024 our cash funds stand at just over £21k which represents a considerable buffer for a group of our size and allows us to be able to make appropriate future investment as and when potential opportunities arise.

That's all from me. I hope to see you at the AGM if you can make it.

Daren Bubb FCA – Treasurer

Not so much a fear of flying ...

Air travel is one of the safest modes of transport, although I expect we are all apprehensive before a flight. It is only the very few ending in disaster that hit the headlines. In my early days I was obsessed about aircraft, buying aviation books and magazines. As a Cadet in the Air Training Corps (16F Squadron) I was hoping for a career in the RAF. My first flight was a birthday present in de Havilland Dragon Rapide at Heathrow – I often wonder if it's the same one that is still flying – and my second in an RAF Chipmunk from Hendon.



Strangely fate wasn't to be in the air as my working life would be involved with seafaring where I would undertake many flights (and a few sea voyages). My work was in the Marine Department of a ship-owners responsible for manning the company's ships, requiring regular visits to the Royal Docks, ironically now an airport! Frequently in those days the London dockers went on strike. To keep the ships operational they would be diverted to the continent. So the officers and crews could have their leave we would muster a crew to fly to relieve them which we did by chartering an aircraft at Southend Airport. By chartering provided an opportunity to send over spares and other stores. My job was to oversee the expedition.

A Carvair of British Air Ferries was frequently used for the short flight across to Rotterdam. With their front loading and space for carrying cars they were ideal for transporting stores, etc, with up to 55 passengers in a cabin at the rear.



Propellor driven, with a fixed undercarriage and non-pressurised cabin they didn't fly very high, meant you could often be in for a bumpy ride. On one occasion while approaching Southend on a very stormy day, we dropped when we hit an air pocket causing a mild experience of weightlessness as we rose out of our seats and fell back into them.

For destinations a bit further afield we used a Viscount from Channel Airways, also based at Southend. These lovely aircraft had nice big windows giving super views of the ground beneath. One trip took us to Billund on the Baltic coast of Denmark. (You fly there these days if you are going to Legoland.) As we approached the airport out of the window I could see a military airfield not far away.

A few years later we were going to Billund again. As the Viscount was descending it was obvious to me that the pilot was heading for the runway at the military airfield. Two things crossed my mind; either we landed there and probably got arrested by the Danes or try to tell our pilot and possibly be accused of being a hi-jacker. I decided to draw attention by telling the cabin crew to advise the pilot. Needless to say their attitude was the pilot knew what he was doing. Short of becoming a hi-jacker there was not much else I could do.

Getting lower nearer the runway, suddenly full power was applied and we started to climb, with a sharp left turn. We then landed at Billund Airport, without problems, although there was a smirk on my face and an embarrassed pilot.



On rare occasions we went further by chartering a de Havilland Comet from Dan Air or Dan Dare as it was usually called. This took us to Dubai, before it became the tourist destination it now is. There was not much airline security at that time so on the journey it was OK to visit the flight deck which gave some spectacular views of the Alps and other landscapes.

There were many other flights all without any incident. In later years in another company and rising to managerial positions for a time required regular trips to Houston, Texas. I chose to fly with Continental Airlines out of Gatwick. Once airborne there would be an announcement that our flight time would be 10 hours, 23 minutes and 20 seconds. Sure enough 10 hours, 23 minutes and 20 seconds later we would land in Houston.

Out of all those flights perhaps the scariest was in Saudi Arabia on a short 20 minute flight from Jeddah to Yanbu, further up the Red Sea coast. My seat was the aisle seat on the opposite side of the aircraft to the entrance door. As we took off there was a hissing sound from the door such as one gets when air is escaping. The Arabian gentleman sitting next to me both looked at each other and tightened our seat belts as he drew the noise to the attention of the cabin crew.

They called the flight deck so one of the pilots came to investigate. He looked and felt round the door before deciding to give it a shove with his elbow. As he did that both I and my companion instantly grabbed the armrest between the two seats very, very tightly while looking at each other and then giving a huge sigh of relief that the door hadn't blown open and the pilot said everything was OK.

... more a dread of airports

Why is it that it always seems that the flight you are taking is at the gate at the extreme end of the terminal? All airports are ghastly places – security checks – essential I know, but these days you get asked to remove shoes before going through the scanner, then nowhere to sit down to put them back on. Stony faced immigration officers, particularly in the US. And many other annoyances.

Last year my wife and I travelled by air for the first time in many years. This was from and return to Heathrow which has never been my favourite airport. The outward journey went OK - we allowed plenty of time to get to LHR (via the M25), time to prepare in the lounge for a flight that departed on time. The return flight after landing on time parked at the gate. As is usual everybody was up in the aisle waiting to disembark. We waited and waited for the door to be opened when the captain announced there was a problem with the airbridge, airbridge repair man had been summoned and would be about ten minutes.

Meantime all the passengers were either still seated or standing in aisle.

Needless to say after about twenty minutes there was no sign of airbridge repair man so disembarkation would be at the rear of the plane. This meant sending for a set of stairs and coaches to take us to the terminal. Everybody about faced ready to get off when the required transport arrived. After another twenty minutes or so just as the transport arrived guess what? Airbridge repair man had turned up, fixed the problem so we could disembark at the front after all. About face again.

After the long trek from the plane to immigration we came up against my first encounter with latest technology where the passport scanner would not let me through. I admit that it was my fault as I was not holding it flat enough for the scan! I had to join a long queue to see a human Border Control person sitting in a booth who kindly let me back into the UK.

We then met up with our limo driver who had taken us to the airport ready for the drive home. He was most helpful, taking care of our trolley full of luggage and headed towards the multi storey car park. There were four lifts, but one was out of order. For the three lifts that were operating there were masses of people with trolleys waiting to get in and inevitably when a lift arrived there were masses of people with trolleys trying to get off. After waiting for a lift to return three times we eventually got in and up to the car for a pleasant drive home.

Overall, from landing to getting in the car took two hours - the same time as the duration of our flight.

It confirmed my dread of airports!

Forthcoming Social Events 8pm at Grove Green Maidstone

Apr 16th	Andy Wyles	My Life on the Road
May 21st	AGM	46th Annual General Meeting with Speaker Daren Bubb The Loves an IAM treasurer Part 2
Jun18th	Keith Kolsteren	A Journey into the World of Transfusion
July 16th	Lester Parsons	IAM Examiner
Aug 20th	Guy in the Sky	Flying Past - Aviation History of Kent
Sept 17th	Phil Lennard	BT Global Challenge - the World's Toughest Yacht Race delivering the technology to make it happen
Oct 15th	Steve Hookins	Historical Presenter – We didn't start the Fire
Nov 19th	Lester Parsons	IAM Examiner
Dec 17th	Quiz Night with soft drinks, mince pies & sausage rolls	

News from the DVLA & the Post Office

April 1st will be a busy day for drivers if they need to renew any of their motoring documents, with the DVLA giving reassurance to people looking to refresh their licence.

From the start of the month, a new contract between the DVLA and Post Office Ltd will begin, allowing motorists to visit their branches around the UK to carry out certain services.

Under the new contract, customers can choose to visit relevant Post Office branches to tax a vehicle or renew a 10-year photocard driving licence.

Information for Blue Badge Holders

The Blue Badge enables a vehicle to park in many places where other motorists cannot, such as on-street parking meter spaces, on-street pay-and-display spaces, disabled person's parking spaces and over single or double yellow lines.

While Blue Badge privileges can be extremely helpful, holders of the pass still need to consider other restrictions that could apply to them.

First of all, however, the holders of the pass need to ensure that the Blue Badge is displayed correctly to ensure they are not fined. When using a Blue Badge it should be placed on top of the dashboard where it can be easily seen through the front windscreen. The front of the badge should face upwards and the photo side should not be visible from outside the car. There are indicators on either side of the badge to help you remember how to place it.



But beware even with a Blue Badge you cannot park in the following places:

- In loading/unloading bays unless signs specify time limits for badge holders
- On double or single red lines during their hours of operation
- Where there are one or two yellow markings on the kerb
- Where there are double white lines in the centre of the road, even if one of the lines is broken
- Parking places reserved for specific users such as residents or taxis
- Pedestrian crossings and zigzag lines
- Clearways (no stopping) including urban and bus stop clearways, during their hours of operation
- School "keep clear" markings during the hours shown on yellow no-stopping plate
- Bus, tram or cycle lanes (Badge holders are not entitled to drive in bus lanes)
- Suspended meter bays or when use of the meter is not allowed
- Where temporary parking restrictions are in force - such as roadworks or no-waiting cones

