

# **NEWSLETTER 2017- Issue 26**

## **Chairman's Chat**

It has been another busy summer season for all of our group observers. It has been particularly pleasing to hear of the exploits of our trainee observers and their associates striving together to achieve the required standard for their car/bike tests. It still seems to be difficult on some tests to please our local examiners and we need to identify why this is occurring.

On another theme of road safety I have seen a few road accidents recently in and around Falkirk and on each occasions many people have got out of vehicles to help at the scene. It is rare to see a 'high vis' vest being worn on such occasions and I wish we would follow the Europeans by insisting everyone carries them in their vehicle for use on such occasions. It may just save a life.



**Angus Maciver**

## GROUP NEWS



Congratulations to local Observer Gerry Smyth on 25 year's service to our group. Here is Gerry pictured with Hon President, Fiona Robertson, after receiving a Certificate of Appreciation at our May AGM. We wish Gerry all the best in the new chapter of his life as he moves to Bishopton near Glasgow.

### Dates for your Diary:-

Group meetings - 7.30pm

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>12<sup>th</sup> October 2017</b><br>TBA  | <b>Falkirk Fire Station,<br/>Westfield, FK2 9AH</b>        |
| <b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b><br>Brenda Mitchell, Solicitor<br>Motorcycle Law Scotland | <b>Smith Museum, Dumbarton<br/>Road, Stirling, FK8 2RQ</b> |

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

| <b>Associate</b>                 |            | <b>Observer</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| En Hsun Choi (car)               | 13/06/2017 | Gerry Smyth     |
| Joe Cairney (bike) <b>F1rst!</b> | 10/08/2017 | Dave Allan      |
| Julian Schad (bike)              | 14/08/2017 | John Hill       |

## CAR / MOTORCYCLE SECTION

### ICE IN JULY

Unlike some folk I really enjoy driving the A82 up the west side of Loch Lomond. I suspect readers of this newsletter, mostly living east of the loch, don't have much reason to drive the road, but I live on the south-west end of the Forth Valley IAM region (in Blanefield) so, if I need to get to Fort William (and all it has to offer), the A82 is on the quickest route. It is also scenic, and a fantastic drive if you like practising your steering, limit point observation, gear shifting, braking and sometimes some overtaking.

How easily can you control your car on ice? (or any very slippery surface?). A few years ago I went on a car driving skills day that included driving on simulated ice (actually a huge area tiled with what looked like glossy bathroom tiles with small jets of water emerging from underground keeping the tiles so slippery it was very tough to stand upright!).



I learned a lot, partly because the event used each driver's own car. So I now know what it feels like as my car starts to "break away" if I try to go around a bend a little too forcefully for the limit of friction between my tyres and the road. The day allowed us to build up a little skill in how to feel for and to some extent correct sideways skids on ice.

In early July I was enjoying an evening drive south down the A82 on the edge of the loch in my RAV4. I don't dawdle about but on the other hand I wasn't treating it as an opportunity to practise "making progress" either. It was 9pm so much quieter than it might be with all the tourists tucked up in their B&Bs. It was a wet evening (but those of you who know the road will know it is wet all the time with water running off the hills and across the road into the loch). It had been raining for several days so this was not going to be a drive with the "fresh rain on dried oil" problem.

I noticed a slight sideways movement as I rounded one tight bend and thought: "Strange, why did I think the car slid then? I wasn't pushing it . . .". I consciously waited for the next bend to see if I was perhaps expecting too much of this car. Wow – I had to correct that slide. Maybe I have a soft tyre. I glanced at TPMS and the front two were a little low (27 vs 29 psi) but unlikely to be the cause; I wondered if someone had split oil, but there was no sign of classic rainbow swirls on the road. Maybe I have a suspension problem? (At the MOT earlier in the year one of my springs had to be replaced because it was broken and I had not been aware of different handling, so I wondered if maybe another spring had gone). There is nowhere safe to stop on this stretch of the A82 so I did not stop to visually check the car at this stage. I touched the brakes to see how well they slowed the car and immediately the ABS started, there was almost no friction between the car and the road. I was quickly realizing how close this apparently perfect piece of tarmac was to those wet tiles on the skidpan. I slowed right down to 15-20 mph. There is a short stretch of this road where the Highland railway is high up on a viaduct immediately to the west of the road where there are maybe 10 tight bends with rock to your right under the railway and dry stone wall to your left (with the loch beyond). The wall always has new holes in it with cones positioned until the council can repair it. It was pretty scary that evening. Even at 10 mph it was tough to prevent the car hitting rocks or wall. It was slipping about just like I was on ice.

I stopped a little later to check the car over. Nothing visually wrong and springs in each corner all seemed about the same as each other (pushing down on each corner of the car). So I gingerly travelled on. There were several cars and motorcycles and police cars stopped in places dealing with minor bumps. I did not find the cause. At the junction of the A82 and A83 I found a police car had stopped a van so I wonder if the van was leaking some slippery fluid. Certainly the slipperiness vanished from that point on but it was maybe just that the increased volume of traffic after that junction had dispersed the cause.



I'm pleased I'd been on that skidpan training!

As an aside: I've looked for skidpan training that we could book for the group but I've not been able to find any in Scotland that looks useful. Those advertised in Scotland are, in my view, far too small to risk ones' own car on (you need space so there is no risk associated with getting it wrong) and they are also insufficiently slippery (in Scotland we all know how to drive on wet tarmac!). The skidpan I mentioned above is in Warwickshire (The first minute of this: [youtu.be/PUcQiyf6pvw](https://youtu.be/PUcQiyf6pvw)).

Aside two: I've since heard that diesel on a wet road does not make the characteristic rainbow patterns that petrol makes – so maybe it was a diesel spill.

**Mark Elder**

# NATIONAL NEWS

## UK businesses are being left exposed by a lack of road safety policy

The study by TomTom Telematics of UK companies whose employees drive for work purposes found more than a fifth (21%) have no road safety policy in place while a further 4% didn't actually know whether their organisation had a defined policy.

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



## The technology and psychology that can help you become a safer driver

More than 1 million people worldwide are killed on roads each year. Psychologists such as Lisa Dorn, associate professor of driver behaviour at Cranfield University, are working on ways to nudge drivers towards being safer.

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

## Biker Down training course

The Biker Down course offers people the opportunity to train in essential life skills and knowledge to help them cope should they encounter or be involved in a road traffic collision.

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



## Your Committee 2017/18

|                                       |               |             |                                  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| Chairman                              | Angus Maciver | 07801951508 | chairman@forthvalleyiam.org.uk   |
| Secretary                             | David Allan   |             | secretary@forthvalleyiam.org.uk  |
| Treasurer / Motorcycle Chief Observer | Lindsay Pyall |             |                                  |
| Membership/Liaison Secretary          | Mark Elder    | 07973217256 | membership@forthvalleyiam.org.uk |
| Newsletter Editor                     | Kenneth Grant | 01324228126 | newsletter@forthvalleyiam.org.uk |
| Committee member                      | David McCall  |             |                                  |

Forth Valley Group website: [www.forthvalleyiam.org.uk/](http://www.forthvalleyiam.org.uk/)  
Enquiries to Membership tel: 07973217256