



NEWSLETTER 2020

Issue 34

GROUP NEWS

DUE TO THE CONTINUING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS & SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIREMENTS, OUR PROGRAMME OF MEMBERS' MEETINGS IS SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. MEMBERS ARE ADVISED TO KEEP UP-TO-DATE BY FREQUENTLY FOLLOWING NATIONAL & LOCAL NEWS BULLETINS, AND FOLLOW OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR GROUP UPDATES.

AGM – ORIGINALLY DUE TO BE HELD ON 7 MAY IN STIRLING AS EVERY YEAR,

WE WILL ASSESS HOW / WHEN THE LOCK-DOWN EASES BEFORE DECIDING IF WE CAN HAVE A NORMAL AGM OR A VIRTUAL AGM (BOTH ARE PERMITTED BY THE SCOTTISH CHARITY REGULATORY BOARD – OSCR)

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES!

This edition of the newsletter is of extra length to accommodate a Quiz to further engage your brain! The quiz questions mainly relate to the Highway Code which we should all know well. Why not try doing the quiz without the Highway Code to hand and then referring to the Highway Code if you get stuck. Watch out for the couple of trick questions designed to get you thinking.

Some members attended our local group meeting (prior to lockdown) and will already have seen the questions but may wish to put your memory and road safety knowledge to the test again. Find the quiz questions on the final pages (skip to the end if you really must get started on the quiz!) Answers to be revealed in the next newsletter.

CAR / MOTORCYCLE SECTION

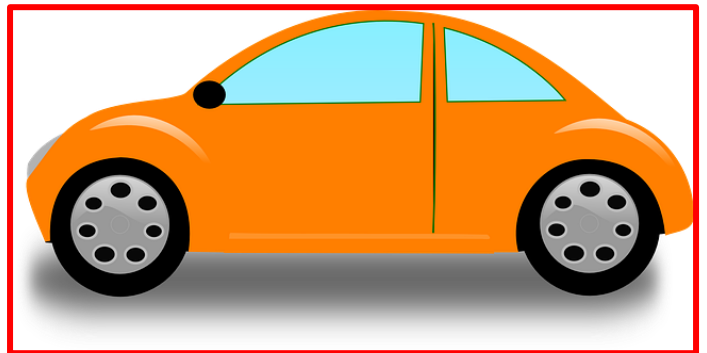
Driving a semiautonomous car

We have family living in Mallorca building their own property, so we make the journey there often. A few weeks ago, on our most recent trip, I had booked a hire car, in advance, through the airline with a major hire car company. It was to be an automatic Smart car for the week. Small cars are so much easier to drive around the narrow winding streets and mountain roads. What I had not anticipated was that it was a busy holiday week and they had no Smart cars left, but a free upgrade was available.

I chose an automatic in bright orange! It did look spectacular! The car had a slightly higher ride and plenty of space. There was no warning whatsoever about the vehicle being semiautonomous. There was a driver manual in the glovebox, but I never made the time to look at it because everything worked smoothly until the drive to the airport at the end of our stay! And by then it was no longer a priority.

The driver controls and dashboard information instructions were all in German so a quick consultation with a sales and service assistant was required to get them put into English. Easy enough when you know how. Then we were ready for the off, I thought.

On the hour-long journey to my daughter's house, mostly on the motorway standard spine road, when safe to do so, I pushed switches and touched various things, but I never managed to get the automatic transmission system to engage. However, it was a delight to drive.



Driving along the next day, I continued to press a few switches, buttons, and - wow! - the fully automatic system engaged! I was working on the assumption that it had to be intuitive and so it was. All I had to do was select the required cruising speed and from then on, for the next 5 days, it was one touch action every time!

At first, rather timidly I became aware that the car was steering itself! It was very strange, but having attended a Forth Valley Institute of Advanced Motorist IAM talk about the development of autonomous vehicles I was comfortable enough. In addition, our own 2014 Ford Mondeo has basic lane assist, but this was much more engaging!

There was a green light on the dashboard that indicated that the lane assist was automatic and fully functioning. I assumed that the automatic system was in control of the steering, gearbox and engine management. However, be warned the instrument panel green light can and often did drop out unpredictably and intermittently to orange. When the orange lane assist is on display, you are at some level in control. There did appear to be different levels of this lack of functionality, but time did not allow for further investigation.

I experimented by flicking the indicator to see what would happen – the car appeared to steer itself and changed lanes smoothly!

I found that if I was in a line of traffic the car sat at a good distance behind the car in front. It was clear that someone had previously set the distance and as it was at least the 2-second rule, I was comfortable enough.

Just to see what happened, I changed lanes in order to move in between vehicles in a line of slower traffic and the car, in total control, adapted to that lane and continued the journey without any further intervention from me!



I decided to leave the slower lane of traffic and make progress; I was aware that I had pre-set the speed to 120kph so having flicked the indicator the car moved out and accelerated rapidly to cruising speed! Nice!

The car's satellite navigation was working well, but I am not entirely sure to what extent it was adaptive and connected to the vehicle's control systems! Whenever necessary, and that was often, I took control, moving us into the most

suitable lane, but as and when required the car slowed down gradually and smoothly to a stop! In stop start, crawling traffic the autonomous controls allowed the driver to be lulled into a false sense of security.

I noted two interesting issues:

Firstly, the turnouts (exit lanes from auto routes) can be severe and when the front sensors lost contact with traffic directly ahead the system would immediately accelerate to apparently return to the set cruising speed of 120kph. On a tight exit road leading into an urban area this was not safe so I had to take over control rather than allow the car its head, accelerating heavily on the tight corner towards a potentially busy junction was simply unacceptable. The car accepted any intervention I made without dispute, which was reassuring. The only resistance I felt was when the lane assist caused me to have to correct the steering wheel forcefully at times.

Secondly, in a small town the car had controlled the drive into the urban area decelerating from 90kph as we followed other traffic into a restricted speed limit and then came to a halt behind a tailback of traffic at a T-junction. All good so far. The car managed the stop start crawl to the T-junction seamlessly. Then we arrived at the STOP line. The car became aware that we now had an open road and it was off! I did not wait to find out how fast it was going to go, but the cruising speed was set at 90kph and it was time for me to take control again. The car did not appear to be aware that we were now in a small town with very restricted room to manoeuvre.

The car was larger than ideal for the narrow Mallorcan roads, which is why it had not been my first choice. However, the proactive all-round sensors automatically activated warning of the close proximity of other cars as well as walls, pedestrians and other road obstacles. Very impressive! Slower moving traffic, joining at motorway junctions, overtaking traffic and undertaking impatient drivers, all cut in front at times and this did, of course, reduce the 2-second rule safety margin. I was surprised by how relatively relaxed the system was about these interventions. It was reassuring to know that yes, we were now too close to the car in front, but that the system was aware of the danger and was taking gradual appropriate action, which was not too violent to correct. I read in the autumn edition of Road Smart the article on the last page entitled "Don't Switch Off" which said that this is not always the case and autonomous cars do over-react and slow down excessively which can be a nuisance as well as potentially dangerous.

Whilst I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, it did seem to me that the technology was not yet ready for the average driver. On many occasions, I found that it was necessary to take control in order to ensure the safety of the vehicle occupants and everyone else!

NATIONAL NEWS

COVID-19 cuts car crashes — but what about crash rates?

With nearly every country around the world either battling to cope with outbreaks of the COVID-19 virus or preparing and monitoring in anticipation, people's lives have changed dramatically in the last month. It has implications for nearly every area of our lives and our work.

http://www.roadsafetyngos.org/sh_events/covid-19-mean-road-safety/

Automated systems need strong safeguards to keep drivers focused on the road

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has issued a set of research-based safety recommendations on the design of partially automated driving systems. The guidelines emphasize how to keep drivers focused on the road even as the vehicle does more of the work.

<https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/automated-systems-need-stronger-safeguards-to-keep-drivers-focused-on-the-road>

Your Committee 2019/20

Acting Chair	Mark Elder	0797 3217256	chair@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Secretary	David Allan		secretary@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Treasurer	Lindsay Pyall		treasurer@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Membership/Liaison Secretary	Mark Elder	0797 3217256	membership@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Kenneth Grant	01324228126	newsletter@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Motorcycle Chief Observer	Fiona Robertson		chief_observer_bikes@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Car Chief Observer	Derek Buchanan		chief_observer_cars@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Committee Member	Amanda Aikman		
Committee Member	Andrew Dougall		
Committee Member	David McCall		

QUIZ QUESTIONS

Highway Code

Q1. There is an exception to the rule that the rider and pillion passenger on a motorcycle, scooter or moped MUST wear a protective helmet. What is that exception in full?

Q2. Within two years of passing their test new drivers can have their licence revoked if they get how many penalty points on their licence?

Q3. What is the only reason you may flash your headlights?

Q4. It is safer not to ride a horse at night or in poor visibility, but if you do where should a light showing white to the front and red to the rear be affixed? There are three options, one will do as an answer.

Q5. You are driving along and the amber light comes on at a controlled crossing across a railway line. What should you do if you have crossed the white line when the amber light comes on?

Q6. After satisfactorily completing a Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) motorcycle course up to what cc with what maximum power output can you ride unaccompanied for up to two years with L plates? Two parts, half point each.

Q7. Between what hours must a horn not be used, unless another road user poses a danger, when driving in a built-up area?

Q8. You are stopped at a red traffic light when an emergency vehicle comes from behind you. How far across the white line can you drive to allow it to pass?

Q9. There is one exception to the rule that you must use headlights at night (ie during the period between half an hour after sunset and half an hour before sunrise). What is that exception?

Q10. You must use headlights when visibility is seriously reduced, and must not use fog lights unless visibility is seriously reduced. What is the distance given for when visibility is considered to be seriously reduced?

Q11. If you have to stop in a tunnel, how much of a gap should you leave between you and the vehicle in front?

Q12. The rules on smoking in vehicles differ in Scotland and England. In Scotland if the private motor vehicle is in a public place and not being used as living accommodation it is an offence for anyone aged 18 or over to smoke in a vehicle when there is someone under what age in the vehicle?

Q13. If you breakdown you should put a warning triangle how far behind your vehicle on the motorway and how far on a non-motorway road? Two part question. Half point each

Q14. You must not park opposite or within how many metres/feet of a junction, except in an authorised parking space?

What Year?

Q1. What year was the Highway Code introduced?

Q2. In what year was the first UK car driving test taken?

Q3. What year were seatbelts made compulsory for driver and front seat passenger?

Q4. In what year was demonstration of hand signals removed from the driving test?

Q5. In what year were safety helmets made compulsory for moped and motorcycle riders?

Q6. In what year was the written theory test introduced?

Q7. From what year were learners allowed to take motorway driving lessons?



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW YOUR ROAD SIGNS?



