

Bournemouth & Dorset Advanced Drivers



December Newsletter - 2024 (edition 115)



The Committee would like to wish
all our Members, Associates,
Observer and readers a very
Happy Christmas and
a safe New Year



December - nearly more miles than Santa!

Well, it feels like it for me. Here we are about halfway through December and my car and I seem to have been zipping about all over the place – from Cheltenham on the weekend of Storm Darragh, a trip down the M3 to Farnborough and then a few days later up the M5 to Malvern and also down to Plymouth. Not forgetting a weekend in Somerset (via Melksham), which did result in a crack appearing in my windscreen after a stone was thrown up while passing a vehicle near to some building works at a farm. I'm just hoping that the cold weather doesn't cause the crack to grow before I can get it replaced. Sadly, this windscreen is only a couple of years old, but I guess on a car which celebrated its 10th birthday earlier this year and has covered nearly 150k miles it has done me quite well!

Given the varying weather conditions, we've experienced in December so far, the worst problem for me to encounter was a closed road on my return from Malvern at Upton on Severn. For anyone not familiar with the area, this location often finds itself being flooded after periods of heavy rain (it didn't rain while I was in Malvern on the Monday & Tuesday). Maybe not that surprisingly given its name, it is close to the River Severn. Having previously been in the area when it has been flooded, I thought it prudent not to try taking too many back lanes to get back to my original route, instead a detour via Little Malvern and then to Tewkesbury offered up a change of scenery instead of driving down the M50!

I'm not sure quite what travel remains for the second half of December, but I suspect that the car won't be sitting idle in the garage for too long. Make sure your

vehicle is prepared for winter trips, clean windows both inside and out (the insides are often overlooked). Modern cars with air con often being used you will find in the inside of your windows can end up dirty which can in turn encourage moisture to gather. As always, I am sure there is no need for me to preach to the converted, but maybe you can remind your non-Advanced Driver friends (see last page)!

I'm going to keep this newsletter fairly short, but I would like to say thanks to Martyn McCarthy who has submitted numerous interesting articles over the course of 2024, and we have another one in the pipeline for 2025. If anyone else would like to put pen to paper (or fingers on a keyboard) then you are more than welcome.

On that note, I hope you all have a good break over the festive period and look forward to seeing more of you at our socials in 2025.

Stay safe & happy motoring,

Matt Ames

Membership and Newsletter Editor

Bournemouth & Dorset Advanced Drivers

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New Associate Members of the Bournemouth & Dorset Group

We welcome the following new Associate members who have recently joined the Group. Observer allocations, where known are shown below:

Andrew Prynne	-	Martyn McCarthy
Casey Cershinson Rangel-		John Graves
Daniel Constantinescu	-	Mark Bister
Henry Merewether	-	Charles Pegman
Joseph Richards	-	Charles Pegman
Lawrence Ka	-	David Groom
Mark Simes	-	Chris Ward
Pete Greenfield	-	Gordon Smith

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Membership catchup

Time to change my hat from Newsletter Editor to Membership Secretary. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to respond to my emails about membership renewal to the Group with our new membership date of the 1st December. I'll be spending a few exciting days over the Christmas break going through the Group's bank statements cross referencing Standing Order payments to members to work out either who has set up a Standing Order and not told me, or those who have allowed their membership to lapse.

One final reminder email from me will follow probably early in 2025.

As you can imagine it can be quite a challenge, but I believe that I have responded to every email which has been sent regarding membership. Hopefully going forward it will be a less of a challenging exercise – next up will be Gift Aid mandate forms, but I fancy a few months break before embarking on that task!

Forthcoming Social events

January 2025

No event is scheduled.

6th February 2025

Martin Stewarts of Stewarts Garden Centre will be here, so get your green fingered thinking caps on for a few challenging questions!

Time: 1900

6th March 2025

David Lane from Wessex National Flood Rescue will be talking to the Group about the vital work they carry out.

Drinks can be purchased from the bar from 1900, talk starts at 1930. Accessing Wimborne Town football club can be a bit of a fine art. Recommended access is to follow Lonsdale Road (from the B3073) through the new housing estate, and then turn left onto Ainsley Road, and park in the ground's carpark on the right.

As always the latest information about Group Social evenings can be found on our website at: <https://www.bdiam.org.uk/social-events/>

A Milestone

Martyn McCarthy

We all pass milestones in our lives. I had one, back in October. That milestone was having been a driver for 51-years. It was on the 12th October 1973, a damp and dank Friday in Merthyr Tydfil, that I passed my driving test. Regrettably, my excitement and my new found freedom was to be tempered by a world-wide event 3-days later, when OPEC announced its decision to raise oil prices by 70%. Overnight the price of Brent Crude oil doubled to the heady heights of \$5.11 a barrel. My new found freedom was too soon curtailed by petrol price increases and rationing at the pump. Despite Putin's attempt to strangle the West of oil supplies, the price of oil today is at around \$73 barrel of Brent Crude oil.

Before continuing with my nostalgia, I'm wondering why oil is priced in dollars, by the barrel and why is it called Brent Crude? The answer, so Google informs me, is that in 1866, oil producers met in Titusville, Florida, to agree on a standard measure to enable the trade in oil between American and the UK. They decided to base the standard measure on the 'tierce', a unit for measuring wine in medieval England. A tierce is 35 imperial gallons, or 159 litres, or 42 US gallon. When filled, a 42 US gallon barrel of oil weighs 300lbs. Before oil tankers, when oil was actually shipped in barrels, way before the days of health and safety, a barrel of this weight could be manually handled and manoeuvred by a stevedore. As for being priced in dollars, this is due to the US Dollar \$ being the world's reserve currency, worryingly with Donald Trump as President, some 60 % of all currency reserves around the globe are held in U.S. Dollars. Why then refer to Brent Crude? This is a trading classification for a type of crude oil, the particular type having been first extracted in 1976 from the Brent oilfield in the North Sea. As production from the Brent oilfield declined to zero in 2021, crude oil blends from other global oil fields with similar characteristics to Brent Crude, are now included in the trading classification.

Back to nostalgia, I'd passed my test the first time, much to my father's relief, in his Hillman Avenger, GHB222J. It was a couple of years later that I bought my first car, which wasn't a car, it was a Mini Van, AWP464H. I bought it from a policeman glad to part with it, given its apparent tendency to over-heat. I

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knew, from just a short discussion with the seller, that I would not experience the same over-heating issue. Based on a British Standard set of octane ratings, in 1967, a 'Star Grading' was introduced for petrol. Under the system, one star was the lowest grade; 2 star, was 92 octane; 3 star, was 95 octane; 4 star, was 98 octane; and, 5 star, was 101 octane. Most filling stations offered a range of two-, three-, four- and five-star grades of petrol. The lowest grade was intended for the low tuned/low compression older design of engines, the middle range for more modern higher compression engines and, five-star, was for large, fast and powerful engines. In reality, most cars run happily on three-star petrol. That said, many motorists, like the owner of the Mini Van, believed four star was 'best'. It was this belief that was, as I anticipated, the source of the Mini Van's tendency to overheat. The Mini's A series engine first incarnation was in the 1951, Austin A35, a low tuned/low compression older design of engine. Meaning, when supping the 2-star petrol I filled up with, there was never any sign of the Mini Van over-heating.

On the topic of filling up, at 71.5 pence per gallon, I could fill the Mini Van's tank for a 'fiver', which provided me with a full week's worth of motoring!! That's something that's changed over those 51 years, the switch from Imperial to Metric units when buying petrol/diesel. Yesterday, when I filled up at Tesco Branksome, it cost me £1.56 per litre. With 3.785 litres in a gallon, that works out at £5.90 a gallon... 90p more than I used to fill my tank for in 1975!

Fortunately, the road fund licence in those days had transferred with the Mini Van. This gave me nearly a year of free motoring. Of course, I needed to buy insurance. Whether I was naïve or whether that's the way it was done then, I visited a man from the Pru who lived across the road to my parents. Sat in his front room, Claude the Pru as he was known in the village, provided me with a cover note for third party fire and theft insurance. The cost of that cover for the 19-year-old me was £50. Which was a third of the price I'd paid for the Mini Van.

A year later, on renewal, I learned a lesson about insurance rates. Through an insurance broker, I bought a 13-month comprehensive policy. The logic to this being future renewals would follow, not precede by a month, my birthday, saving me money year on year.

I've a clear recollection of Claude the Pru being unimpressed with me not renewing cover through him. Which was another insurance lesson for the 19-year-old me; people make money, commission, out of selling insurance, No wonder Claude the Pru acted as he did, I'd cost him his commission.

Whilst a lot has changed for the better over those 51-years I've held a full driving licence, not least car reliability, safety and, the fact that cars don't turn to rust overnight as my second car had, and it was a car, a 1974 Fiat 128, PFK906M.

In my nostalgic mood, I wonder whether overall things have changed for the better, just look at the state of the highways and by-ways of the land these days! I remember when council's had gully suckers and a programme clearing road side drains. When did you last see a gully sucker going to work on a road side drain?

There is a change I miss, a change that may sound controversial, that's the demise of traffic wardens. Traffic wardens were introduced under the Road Traffic Act 1960, besides the stated duty of issuing penalty tickets for parking offences, their role was to, "...offer advice to motorists". It was the Road Traffic Act 1991 that put paid to traffic wardens and the yellow band around their hats. The Act allowed local authorities to decriminalise parking enforcement, resulting in the civil penalty officers that now patrol streets. Where traffic wardens would offer advice to motorists, most notably by helping the flow of traffic, civil penalty officers seem only to have one purpose in life – ticketing vehicles which, as I've found, they do so even when the vehicle is displaying a valid parking permit!

What was certain to me as a new driver was that the road is for cars and that the pavements was for pedestrians. 51 years on, many drivers patently no longer share that same certainty, most having lost the skill of parallel parking, too often leaving at least two, more often than not, all wheels on the pavement. Is this the product of the age of the Chelsea tractor, where drivers demonstrate some perverse attempt to actually use their vehicle off road... by driving on the pavement? Or is it a lack of courtesy to other road users or, an unforeseen consequence of the decriminalisation parking enforcement and the loss of traffic wardens?

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Whatever the reason, too many drivers have scant regard for the needs of pedestrians or, for that matter, the law. The Town and Police Clauses Act 1847 makes it an offence to obstruct the pavement*. Now I come to think of it, there's another thing that's changed over those 51-years, the patent lack of police officers, whether out on the beat or traffic officers enforcing the law.

Martyn McCarthy
November 2024

* The Government commenced a consultation in June 2023, 'Pavement parking: options for change'. One option for consideration is providing local authorities with civil parking enforcement powers against, 'unnecessary obstruction of the pavement'. Whether this will help pedestrians or, simply provide local authorities with income generation through ticketing vehicles, only time will tell.

Make Sure You Have a Safe Festive Journey from the IAM Blogs

With Christmas just around the corner, you might be planning to hit the road to spend the festive season with family or friends. They might be ready for you, but is your car ready for the journey?



Here are some top tips to help your trip go smoothly:

Is your vehicle ready for the journey?

Check you have plenty of fuel or charge for the journey. Your oil, brakes, gear box, clutch fluid, and power-steering fluid all need regular checks. For more information on what to do on your vehicle before a long journey, look at our road safety resources.

Don't overload your vehicle

When packing for a long journey, be mindful not to overload your car. Overloading can affect your vehicle's handling, braking, and overall safety. Ensure that all luggage and gifts are securely fastened and evenly distributed. Check your car's weight limits in the owner's manual and avoid exceeding them.

Avoid peak times

Try to avoid setting off during peak times, especially in the early afternoon on Christmas Eve when many motorists start their journeys. Remember, major routes like the M1, M25, M6, and A1M will be busier than usual, so try to set off with plenty of time to spare.

Weather the storm

If you're travelling long distances, remember that weather conditions can vary significantly between regions, so check the Met Office for the latest. Plan for the entire length of your journey and be aware of the weather closer to your destination.

Inform Loved Ones

Before you set off, let your friends and family know your destination and expected time of arrival. Be realistic to avoid unnecessary worry if you're a bit late.

Rest if Tired

If you're too tired to drive, delay your journey. Avoid driving when you would normally be asleep. If you feel tired during your trip, take a break. A coffee and a 20-minute stop can help you stay alert.

A spokesperson for IAM RoadSmart said: "With thoughtful planning and preparation, your Christmas drive home can be both safe and smooth. By allowing yourself extra time during this busy season, your journey doesn't have to be difficult.

By following these tips, you can ensure a safer and more pleasant journey home for the holidays. Safe travels and Merry Christmas!"



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