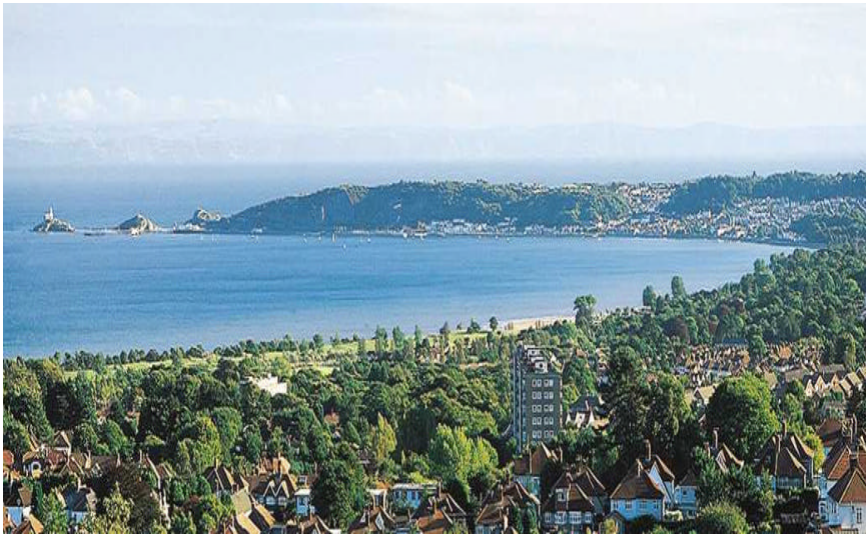




Swansea Bay Group of Advanced Motorists

Quarterly Newsletter



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' Overdrive '

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Hello again fellow advanced motorists,

Spring is in the air, the garden centres are a hive of activity, once it used to be pushchairs that would leave your legs black and blue, now its seems to be trolleys laden with turf, plants and the like.

It is also the time to give your car a thorough spring clean after the long winter months, what with the effects of rain, snow, ice ,etc. etc. - but what about going back over all those advanced driving techniques you learned.

Each season brings its own challenges to drivers, for some they wouldn't notice if it hit them between the eyes, but for you advanced drivers, this is an ideal time to go over the finer points of advanced driving.

Like what ? I hear you say - well lets try long range observation skills for a starter. All those lovely views you had during the winter months when you were out and about in your car, are now probably festooned with spring foliage. Road signs suddenly become obscure in hedgerows, and this can occur in some town areas as well. All the skills you have can be gone over again and again until they become custom and practice.

If you are an Observer currently advising a new Associate, think about giving some evening runs in addition to your usual arrangements. It never fails to amaze me how various times of the day affect the perceptions of drivers in general. Something a driver would see quite clearly in the day becomes an oblivion to them at sunset. It all comes with training in the end and Observers are the front line.

So you see, springtime is a time of renewal not only for gardeners - but also for advanced drivers.

Safe driving

Editor

MOTOR SHOW ON THE MOVE

THE British International Motor Show will no longer be held at Birmingham's NEC centre following a decision by organisers to host it in London.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), which promotes the show, has chosen the ExCel centre at London Docklands as the next venue. The news is a blow to Birmingham which has hosted the show for almost 30 years.

SMMT, chief executive, Christopher Macgowan, said: 'While we understand this decision will come as a disappointment to the Midlands, the reality is that ExCeL presented a very strong bid while the NEC was unable to deliver a proposal that responded to market demands.'

TAIL GATORS

A man moving home in America from California to Georgia faces possible charges after a traffic stop led to the discovery of 32 alligators crammed into a trailer along with all his belonging. The man who was pulled over by police in Arizona, told officers that the alligators were his pets.

Arizona Game and Fish officials seized the alligators, including a 9ft gator which weighed in at 400 pounds

IRISH SPEED LIMITS CHANGE

For those of you who travel across the water to Ireland should know that the Ireland has gone metric. Speed limits have now gone from Mph to Kph and as a result of these changes the speed limits across Ireland have changed, falling on 91% of its roads and increasing on the remaining 9%.

The current general speed limit of 60mph has been abolished and in its place the limit on national roads (N) which includes most carriageways will increase to 100kph (62 mph). The limit on rural regional and local roads (L) roads will change from 60mph to 80Kph (50 mph). Limits in built up towns and cities will change from 30mph to 50kph(31mph) and motorways from 70mph to 120 kph (74mph).

ROVER GROUP

As we go to press the Rover Cars debacle is hitting the news. It is sad To see the possibility of these cars no longer being produced in the Uk.

The potential loss of a major manufacturer will not be good news for the Midlands area in shape or form.

RECRUITING DRIVE

Saturday 16th April saw our Group hold a recruiting drive at the Asda store in Llansamlet. The day was a success with around 20 people expressing an interest in joining the Group. The success of this event was due to the efforts put in by Mark Whalley, Tom Harry, John Evans – thank you all and a special thanks to Sian Sullivan who arranged the event with Asda.

The new Group polo shirts worn by all, together with the new Banner certainly made everybody aware the Swansea Bay Group of Advanced Motorists were in town. Lets hope that all those who expressed an interest results in SBGAM memberships.

Finally a very special thanks to the Management at Asda for providing the space required on the day.

HUMOROUS CLAIMS

I know making an insurance claim is a serious matter, but one can't resist a chuckle when one sees what people put down on paper when asked what they thought caused the accident. Here we reveal a few more recent ones.

"I started to slow down but the traffic was more stationary than I thought."

"I started to turn and it was at this point I noticed a camel and an elephant tethered at the verge. This distraction caused me to lose concentration and hit a bollard."

"Coming home I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have."

"I was going at about 70 or 80 mph when my girlfriend on the pillion reached over and grabbed my testicles so I lost control."

"A car drove away at speed catching our client who went up in the air and his head went through the windscreen and then rolled off at the traffic lights a good few feet away. The car then sped off and miraculously our client remained conscious and managed to cross the road."

"I am responsible for the accident as I was miles away at the time."

"I pulled into a lay-by with smoke coming from under the bonnet. I realised the car was on fire so took my dog and smothered it with a blanket."

"I didn't think the speed limit applied after midnight."

HUMOUR

Police in America had the last laugh with a motorist who thought he could avoid a speeding ticket by using humour. The driver had received a photo of his car illegally speeding past a camera, together with a \$50 fine.

However instead of payment the motorist sent the police a photograph of a \$50 bill. A few days later he received back a letter from the police containing another picture, this time of a set of handcuffs. The motorist promptly paid up.

PERSONALISED NUMBER PLATE CLAMP DOWN

The Police and the DVLA are clamping down on those motorists who flout the law by fitting their vehicles with illegal number plates. These include personal number plates with numbers or letters that are incorrectly spaced or the wrong size, as well as those where the mounting bolts have been altered to make them appear to spell a name.

On top of the usual fines, the worst offenders now also run the risk of having their car's registration number confiscated and replaced with a standard one.

DEADLINE FOR PUBLICATION

The deadline for the July edition of the newsletter will be July 20th. All articles for publication must be received by that date.

HUMOUR CORNER

A man driving like Michael Schumacher was arrested and thrown into jail after it was feared he might cause an accident.

Speedy 32 year old David Honan was held in cells for two and a half hours, searched and released following an official caution. Fine, except that Honan hadn't actually been driving.

According to reports he was dressed from head to toe in Ferrari clothing, holding a steering wheel and making engine noises as he weaved amongst shoppers in York to advertise a Formula 1 shop.

The police claimed he had run out into traffic but Honan said : ' What's the world coming to if you can get arrested in a shopping precinct for pretending to be car?'

CAR THEFTS

Modern sophisticated car alarms have driven thieves to a new method of getting their hands on your car - by stealing the keys from inside your home.

Research by Scotland Yard has found that gangs are sticking magnets to bamboo canes or fishing rods and fishing for your keys through your letterbox. Apparently this method works, because so many leave their keys on a table or hook near to the front door.

In a six months period it was found that 550 cars were stolen in London alone, using keys removed in this way. Also in the same period 1500 cars were taken as a result of people leaving keys in the ignition, or leaving them in pubs.

A Scotland Yard spokesperson said that motorists needed to be more aware about where they left their keys. Many Insurance Companies will not cover this kind of theft, because they consider the owners to have been careless.

People need to be aware that their keys are worth as much as their keys.

REPORT

Into force with effect from 3rd March comes the End of Life Vehicles (Producer Responsibility) regulations.

The Directive aims to reduce the amount of waste from vehicles when they are finally scrapped.

In future car manufacturers will have to take back cars from consumers and ensure that more of the waste from scrap cars and light vans is recycled rather than to be disposed of through landfill.

The End of Life Vehicles(ELV) Regulations 2005, establish new responsibilities for vehicle manufacturers and professional importers.

By 2006 they must have put into place collection networks to take back their own brands of vehicles, when those vehicles reach the end of their lives. Also by 2006 manufacturers must ensure that value is recovered from 85% of the weight of their ELV's. This percentage will increase to 95% by the year 2015.

From 2007, manufacturers must provide 'free take back' to last owners, who present their ELV's for scrapping at collection networks.

ANOTHER FINE MESS

An unemployed flower seller from South London has declared himself bankrupt after receiving over 180 parking fines amounting to some seventy thousand pounds, which included bailiffs fees

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 16th July - Evening Post Motor Show at Recreation
& Ground, Swansea.
Sunday 17th July

CAR REVIEWS

Any member who would like to carry out one of our quarterly car reviews and write up a report on that review, please contact the Editor



CAR REVIEW

This quarter we review the favourite mini from the Nissan range. On test in this newsletter is the Nissan Micra Hatchback 1.2 SE.

HANDLING

The handling was fairly firm around town although not excessively so. On the open road the Micra performed extremely well, although we did feel that the lack of feedback from the front wheels a little disturbing.

Out on the local country roads the Nissan Micra handled particularly well, and showed a surprising amount of grip in most of the road conditions we threw at it.

PERFORMANCE

There are 5 engines in the micra range, here we tested the petrol 1.2 which in most terms not that less powerful than the 1.4. Accelerating from a standing start to 60 mph seemed to take an age and we timed it out at nearly 16 seconds despite the manufacturers claims of 13.9 seconds.

INTERIOR

The internal dials were fairly well sited. The one niggling point appeared to be the seats - we never seemed to get comfortable, both of us being nearly 6feet tall.

We have certainly seen better interiors, it seems that the Micra has much to do against some of its competitors.

Overall the Nissan Micra did most things well, but for those of you considering buying one for the first time, in our view there are quite a few worthy contenders in the marketplace to be looked at as an alternative. We came to the conclusion that if you had owned the previous model Micra then you would not be overly disappointed with its successor.

RATING

* = POOR

*** = AVERAGE

***** = EXCELLENT

Overdrive's overall rating

* * * * *

TECHNICAL

Body Type	Hatchback	Top Speed (Mph)	
Engine	1240	104	
Transmission	Manual	0 - 62 mph	
Power (BHP)	80	13.9	
Torque	81 @	Consumption combined	
600rpm		47.9	
		OTR price	£
		9,450	
		Standard equipment	

REPORT

Motor insurance premiums could be cut after a new law allowing the police to confiscate uninsured vehicles was passed. Under provisions in the Serious Organised Crime Act, the police will gain access to the industry's Motor Insurance Database to allow them to detect uninsured drivers.

The new rules, passed by both Houses of Parliament, will give the police the power to seize, and in some cases destroy, uninsured cars.

The UK has one of the highest levels of uninsured driving in Europe, with one in 20 motorists at one time driving without insurance.

The Association of British Insurers claims the new laws should result in a reduction in claims, leading to cheaper premiums for consumers.

ABI director of general insurance Nick Starling said: 'We are pleased that the Government has seized the opportunity to act on what the industry has been calling for - better detection of and stiffer penalties for illegal and dangerous motorists who drive uninsured.'

'This Act will send out a clear message: driving without insurance is a serious and dangerous crime, which the Government, in partnership with the insurance industry and police, is determined to reduce.'

The ABI said that a third of motorists believe confiscation of vehicles is the strongest deterrent against not insuring your vehicle, but 90% believe under existing rules that they more likely to get caught for speeding than driving uninsured.

The organisation now wants the next Government to commit to making owning an uninsured vehicle which is kept on the road a criminal offence, even if it is not used. It claims the move would save the industry £100m a year.

AMERICANISMS

You know how it is when you go abroad on holiday or whatever and the country you visit has their own little language idiosyncrasies

Well our Mark Whalley has sent in some American versions of these little beauties which you may run into should you have reason to visit the USA.

AMERICAN WORD

Pavement
Sidewalk
Lights
Parkway
Freeway
Backing Up
Citation
Crossing

BRITISH EQUIVALENT

Road surface
Pavement
Traffic Lights
Road
Motorway or equivalent
Reversing
Being booked by Police
Pedestrian Crossing

BOOZE CRUISE COVER

Many motorists popping across to France for a one-day wrongly believe that it isn't necessary to take out extra cover, insurer Touchline warns. Most people do have problem free trips but a whole lot of things can and do go wrong, including breaking down or losing important documents such as passports and travel tickets. Touchline recommends people check their policies and take out extra cover where it is needed.

FORMULA 1 CALENDAR

For all those F1 aficionados amongst you this seasons (2005) F1 Grand Prix race calendar has just been released. 19 Grand Prix's in all.

March 6 th	Australian	July 10 th	British
March 20 th	Malaysian	July 24 th	German
April 3 rd	Bahrain	July 31 st	Hungarian
April 24 th	San Marino	Aug 21 st	Turkey
May 8 th	Spanish	Sept 4 th	Italian
May 22 nd	Monaco	Sept 11 th	Belgium
May 29 th	European	Sept 25 th	Brazilian
June 12 th	Canadian	Oct 9 th	Japanese
June 19 th	United States	Oct 16 th	Chinese
July 3 rd	French		

COMPETITION

The first member of our Group to email the editor with the correct answers to both the following questions will win a tenner (£10), when the final positions are announced at the end of this F1 season. Editors decision is final

- Q1. Name this seasons Championship Driver?
- Q2. Name this seasons Championship Team?

Entries by email only please to Editor@sbqam.org

Final date for entries is: 10st May 2005

Good Luck !

WHITE VAN MAN OR WHAT

Studies of young drivers in America and Japan have revealed that females are now just as aggressive as males and display similar levels of competitiveness and sensations seeking behind the wheel.

According to the latest edition of Advanced Driving, the magazine of the IAM, this trend is beginning to affect UK roads too. Advanced Driving quotes latest Home Office figures stating that although men still account for the vast majority of motoring offences, the number of women getting traffic convictions, particularly speeding, has risen by 50 per cent in the last eight years.

Commentators attribute the rise in female lawlessness to women's changing social roles and greater independence, as well as the fact that more women are driving big, powerful cars which give them an exaggerated feeling of personal security and lead to a less cautious approach on the road.

"Bad driving by either sex is a cause for concern. We don't need the lad-ette culture putting our safety at risk. I know that 'White Van Woman' may not actually be in a Transit but she could have attitudes that can create problems for the rest of us on the road," said Christopher Bullock, IAM Chief Executive.

OBSERVERS IN THE MAKING

Are you an Associate who thinks their advanced driving standards are good enough to pass on your skills to other Associates joining the Group? Then don't hesitate, Swansea Bay Group are always looking for people like yourself to maintain the already high standards we set ourselves.

If you are that person - Contact David Phillips now for more information.

Increase the motorway speed limit to 80mph? A good idea or a recipe for more road deaths. When the 70 mph motorway speed limit was first introduced in 1965, it was probably a fair reflection of motorway speed limit for the time., although those of us who can remember those days would now say they it was too high - given the braking systems on cars at that time.

If any of you had had the opportunity to drive a Ford Capri 3.0 litre in excess of the speed limit, you might well agree!

Notwithstanding the traffic volumes on our motorways much has changed particularly in the areas of internal car safety, vastly improved braking and anti lock systems.

Should we therefore look to increase the motorway speed limit - well *Overdrive* opinion suggests that it is well overdue in this country. Statistics suggest that contrary to all the speeding and accidents hype, motorways are actually the safest of roads in the UK, given the volumes of traffic on them.

The government, albeit via the Traffic Partnerships, is spending enormous amounts in implementing the latest speed technologies, eg. specs camera et al.

Overdrive opinion suggest that at the very least the national speed limit on motorways be increased to 80 mph, and this be supplemented by variable speed limits depending on traffic volumes and weather conditions, similar to those in France and other countries. The technology is there, of that there is no question.

Some of the major motoring organisations have been asking the Government to increase the speed limit for some time now, with no real effect - despite the numbers of road users these organisations represent.

Will the Government relent? - not in the short term, it won't because as they say in the car trade, 'speeding fines revenue has become a nice little earner', for them, and why would anyone in their right mind want to change the status quo.

REVIEW OF ROAD TRAFFIC OFFENCES

The Government has produced a consultative document with proposals for A review of the penalties issued by the Courts where deaths through dangerous driving has been involved.

It attempts to bring in a new offences to the statute book :

- a new offence of causing death by careless driving, with a maximum 5 years imprisonment sentence.
- a new offence of dealing with death from illegal (disqualified and unlicensed) driving with a maximum 5 years imprisonment sentence.
- a requirement for the Courts to take serious injuries into account when sentencing.
- Allowing Courts to find defendants guilty of statutory bad driving offences as an alternative to manslaughter so as to ensure that those found not guilty of manslaughter do not escape the law.

The full consultative doc can be found at :

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs4/consult_roadtraffic.htm

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

I am sure that there are many of you out there have views or news on topics relating to motoring, etc and would like to see your work in print.

If you would like to contribute an article to the newsletter you can submit it using the following formats, letter, disk, email to the Editor..

EU DIRECTIVE

The UK has won exemption from a European Commission proposal that would have made car insurance more expensive for many women drivers.

Under the new legislation currently being proposed no account of gender would be applied in calculating insurance premiums. This legislation would predominantly have hit women under 30, had it come into force.

The UK has won exemption from a European Commission proposal that would have made car insurance more expensive for many women drivers.

Instead, insurers can now continue to take gender into account when setting premiums. Typically, young women drivers pay much less for car insurance as they have fewer accidents than young men.

Jaqui Smith, Deputy Minister for Women and Equality, said: 'The rights we've enjoyed in the UK for nearly 30 years will now be enshrined in this directive.'

EVENT - TREASURE HUNT

A Treasure Hunt took place on Sunday 17th April, organised by Pennard Primary School and Swansea Bay Group. Mark Whalley again did a lot of the organising and we await Marks report on how the event actually went on the day. More news as it comes in.

HUMOUR

When a woman reported her car stolen, she happened to mention that she had left her mobile phone in the car. A quick thinking constable duly dialled the woman's mobile telling the man who answered that he had seen the car in the local paper and that he was interested in buying the car. They duly arranged to meet and the thief was arrested when he turned up for the appointment.

Ed - absolutely brilliant!

STANDARDISED EU LICENCE GETS GREEN LIGHT

The European Parliament transport committee has confirmed that it is pushing for a firm 10 year deadline for the complete introduction of plastic driving licences across the European Union(EU).

The plastic licence will have a chip implanted inside it, which could be used to hold biometric data about the licence holder, such as pictures of their face or identifying data about their eyes or fingerprints.

The new card will be valid for 10 years and old licences will be replaced as they expire.

There are presently about 110 different styles of driving licence across 25 countries.

It said that legislation harmonising the design of licences should insist credit card models be used within 10 years in all member states instead of paper based documents. It proposed that within 20 years, a single common EU driving licence should be mandatory

TRAINING INSTEAD OF POINTS - IS IT THE WAY FORWARD?

A scheme that offers speeding drivers an alternative to receiving penalty Points and a fine has been a resounding success. More than 25,000 drivers Caught speeding in the Thames Valley region in the last 18 months have opted for a Speed Awareness Scheme(SAS) run by DriveTech. Malcolm Collis, part of Thames Valley Police, roads policing department said 'It is clear that from the attendee feedback that the SAS is playing a major role in changing the attitude and behaviour of drivers towards speed and driving.'

Two courses are being run, one for those marginally over the 30mph limit and one for those speeding excessively. Drivers do have to meet certain criteria before they can attend the course.

ELECTED OFFICERS

Honorary President	Gethin Williams, Stadium Garage Group
Honorary Chief Observer	Peter Shopland
Chairperson	David Phillips
Vice Chairperson	Paul Harrison
Secretary	John Evans
Treasurer & Membership Sec	Viv Harrison
Events & Observer	
Coordinator	David Phillips
Minute Secretary	Rhian Knuszka
Publicity Officer	Sian Sullivan
Senior Observer	Tom Harry

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Derek Evans	Lloyd Phillips
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DISCLAIMER

The aim of this newsletter is to inform, entertain, enrich and create a platform for discussion - any views expressed herein may not necessarily be that of the Committee of the Swansea Bay Group or of the IAM governing body .

The Editor's decision to allow or edit any article for publication in this newsletter is final.

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Swansea Group Website <http://www.sbgam.org>

IAM main Website <http://www.iam.org.uk>