

Newsletter

3rd Quarter, 2026

Upcoming Members' Event:
Thruxton 4x4 Experience.
Wednesday 22nd July.
5 places now taken.

GROUP NEWS:

2026 is now halfway through! So far this year our Group has allocated 20 Associates to an Observer and started them on their development path to becoming the best driver they can be. 12 new Associates have joined our Group, having signed up for the course through IAM RoadSmart. 7 have taken the Advanced Driving assessment, resulting in 6 passes, one F1RST, and one fail – who is determined to try again for a pass having thoroughly enjoyed the course and valued the learnings from it.

Our Chair, **Nigel Mason**, comments that "many of you will have seen the continuing awareness campaigns and lobbying that IAM RoadSmart conducts, covering diverse Road Safety-related matters from potholes to sat-navs diverting unwary drivers onto more dangerous roads. With so many hazards out there, we really do need the relevant authorities to step up and play their part in making the road infrastructure and vehicle technologies fit for the modern-day driving challenges – taking into account traffic volumes, and sizes".

Nigel adds, "just a thought – many of our members will have started driving in what are now termed 'Classic Cars' – with a starting choke, manual gear box (maybe even column-mounted!) and manual or foot-operated parking brake. As technology has advanced in all those areas, the modern controls are more efficient, but they alienate the driver from the function being performed, to the extent that the actual activity of 'driving' a vehicle takes a lot less mindful focus and physical action. Combined with the hermetic seals of the doors and windows, unlike the noisy and draughty cars of the 1960's and 70's, the result is that today's typical driver is often totally insulated from their surroundings, and I would suggest much less engaged in the activities of driving their vehicle in the prevailing conditions. Perhaps everyone should get back in a 'Classic Car' for a while to be reminded of the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of truly driving. But then I am biased!"

MEET ANOTHER OF OUR OBSERVERS:



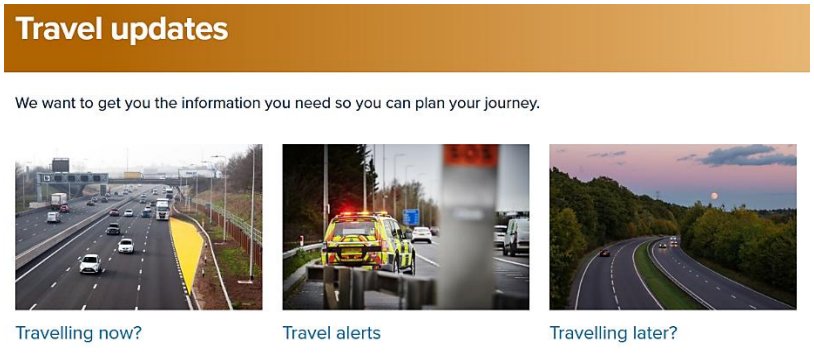
Mark Powell is an IAM National Observer for cars and motorcycles. He is also a **Trustee of IAM RoadSmart**. *(Trustees are responsible for the overall strategy and governance of the organisation, but do not get involved in day-to-day operations for which there is a Senior Leadership Team based at IAM RoadSmart HQ, supported by a team of Area Service Delivery Managers who look after the IAM RoadSmart Groups.)*

Mark was on powered two wheelers from the age of 16, but like many motorcyclists, family and mortgages come along meaning people dip in and out of motorcycle ownership. Skills get rusty, and old habits get engrained. On retiring five years ago, Mark decided that if he was to live to be 100 and keep riding motorcycles then some coaching might be useful. Mark previously had nothing to do with IAM RoadSmart, but a friend recommended them so he signed up as an Associate. Having passed the Advanced Rider Test, he then qualified as a bike National Observer. Around this time, he became a Trustee and decided he should find out what the experience was like for the car members of IAM. He joined our Group as an Associate, achieved a F1RST in his Test assessment, and subsequently qualifying as a car National Observer. Mark likes to tinker with mechanical things. He has several motorcycles including a small Scrambler, a Commando, a BMW GS and a Rocket 3. He also has a number of old Lotus cars, some of which can move on their own! Although retired, Mark can be found at Bletchley Park a few days a week where he teaches WW2 history, cryptography and cyber security.

COMMITTEE:

Chair	Nigel Mason	Treasurer	Tim Nicholson
Chief Observer	Bern Warr	Deputy Treasurer	Tara Ridgeway
Membership Secretary	Margaret Gordon (interim)	Group Secretary	Margaret Gordon
IT Admin	Sean Pearce	Without portfolio	Bob Hill

TRAVEL PLANNING:



(Photo Source: National Highways)

Before setting off on a journey, whether on **holiday** or to Heathrow/Gatwick airports, it is good to be aware of the potential traffic issues ahead. National Highways provides the information needed to plan your journey. Traffic alerts plus road works updates, are especially important for journeys to and from Gatwick/Heathrow and other London Airports. Navigate via the National Highways.gov link you will discover detailed information. (There are other sites, such as AA/RAC, also available.)

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL – Facts and Tips:

One unit of alcohol (for example, **half a pint of beer**) will produce a concentration of roughly **20mg/100ml** in the blood of an average adult. **One 1.75ml glass of wine** is approximately **2 units** of alcohol, or roughly **40mg/100ml**. It takes 1 hour for one unit to be filtered out of the liver, **BUT** alcohol remains detectable on your breath for roughly **12–24 hours**.

The proposed **new Drink Drive** regulation is **50mg/100ml** (currently in force in Scotland) and reduced from 80mg/100ml.



To stay safe (Source IAM RoadSmart) :

- "None for the road" is the safest advice.
- Know how much you are drinking when drinks are not measured.
- Pre-arrange your journey home.
- Do not bow to peer pressure to drive.
- Be careful "the morning after" that you are not over the limit.
- Invest in an accurate and reliable in-car breathalyser.

(Photo source: IAM RoadSmart)

AA CALLS FOR LANE DISCIPLINE CAMPAIGN:



New AA research shows that eight out of 10 drivers regularly see **risky lane moves** on motorways. The main issues in order of ranking:

- middle lane hogging
- undertaking
- changing lanes without signalling
- last-minute "swooping" across lanes to make an exit.
- frequent lane changes.

Good lane discipline leads to safer driving.

The basic principle stated in the Highway Code is drivers should "keep to the left unless overtaking". Middle lane hogging is not a specified offence, **but** police can issue a £100 fine and three penalty points for careless driving. Whilst not illegal, **undertaking (when not in slow moving traffic) is discouraged** as it can be unexpected by other road users, is potentially dangerous, and may result in prosecution for careless driving if a collision is caused. The AA says "drivers require clarity on when lane discipline becomes careless driving". **(Photo and Information source AA. For more information on this AA report follow this link to the AA)**

Please note **Highway Code Paragraphs 160, and 264** (Motorways and other high-speed roads). Also of interest is a visual piece on undertaking by Big Jobber, and if necessary "hit" the X on the top right of the Facebook sub-screen to view.

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT:



The earliest pedestrian crossing was erected in London's Westminster in December 1868. It was a manually operated semaphore arm system controlled by a police constable, and topped with a gas illuminated light. In January 1869 the gas light exploded, injuring the duty constable, and ending the experiment. In the late 1920's metal studs started to appear marking pedestrian crossing points, but for motorists these were difficult to see. In the 1934, Minister of Transport, Leslie Hore-Belisha, suggested marking these crossing points with black and white striped poles topped with an unlit orange globe, rapidly becoming known as Belisha Beacons. It was not until 1953 that the flashing Belishas were introduced. In 1949 white stripes were added to the crossings, and named Zebra Crossings by future Prime Minister James Callaghan.

(Photo Source: Tim Nicholson High Wycombe Group IAM)