

MAINBEAM



Since 1973 the Newsletter of Manchester Group of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders
www.safedriversandrider.org.uk MANCHESTER GROUP is a registered charity No 1083564

ISSUE TWO

FEBRUARY 08

We are Sociable! — Lee Davies

You may recall that from the results of the Members Questionnaire published in the last edition of MAINBEAM members have shown they are keen to stay involved with the Group. The obvious way to do that is to become Observer – but if that's not for you then get involved with one of our social events planned throughout the year. Some members also asked for a diary of dates for the year – these are always in MAINBEAM so please note the dates now:

The first is our **AGM** on Tuesday 11 March, Woodley at 7.30pm (See Page 4). Put the date in your diary as this year's is to be a first! Instead of a usual guest speaker, this year we are laying on a free buffet for all members who attend so we can 'socialise'. We have many new members and some new Observers so this would be an ideal opportunity to meet new people.

The Group is also organising a **St John's Basic First Aid Course** for Observers but there will be a few spare places for other Group Members on a first come basis. It is to be held on Sunday 6 April, 10am-1pm at Woodley

and costs just £18 for Group Members. If you're interested please email or call me (see back page for contact details).

Alan Yates' famous **Group Walks** are now an established event in our annual calendar! His first this year is on Sunday 20 April – see elsewhere in this edition for more information. The walks are easy going and made especially interesting and often include a surprise somewhere along the route!

Our scheduled quarterly **Social Evenings** bring a range of interesting guest speakers throughout the year (see page 9 for details) but this August sees another first – our **Summer Quiz Night** is arranged for Tuesday 12 August with yours truly as Quiz Master! But as you might expect... this will be a Quiz with a difference especially aimed at RoADAR members with a round on completely useless facts!

I hope to see as many of you as possible at all the events the committee have organised for you!

FIFTY - FIFTY DRAW, January

First: No 24, Larry Dunne, drawn by Matt Coles
Second: No 22, Geoff Hibbert, drawn by Tony Richardson

FIFTY - FIFTY DRAW, February

First: No 15, Brian Dyson, drawn by Ray Whittaker
Second: No 2, Syd Hinks, drawn by Rebecca McCabe

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The Group has recently learned of the sad and untimely death of Dee Mawdsley on 1st November 2007. Dee, from Wigan, was one of our Bike Members and a motorcycle instructor. She had been a Group Member for one year. Our thoughts go out to her family.

From the Chair — Lee Davies

Increased mobile phone penalties "ineffective" say road safety experts

Some of the UK's leading road safety experts have called current laws banning drivers from using hand-held mobile phones ineffective. They also say enforcement should be beefed up to save lives on UK roads.

Last February the penalty for using a hand held mobile phone while driving rose from £30 to £60 with three penalty points added in an attempt to further discourage drivers from flaunting the law. As we approach the first anniversary of the introduction of increased penalties (27 February), a poll by road safety experts reveals:

- 100% agreed with the legislation.
- 75% did not think it has been effective.

The survey also asked what more could be done to make our roads safer by increasing the effectiveness of the ban.

- over 90% of respondents called for stricter enforcement of the current laws as crucial to making roads safer.
- 85% believed that mobile phones are the most dangerous in car distraction.

The message here is that the tougher penalties are clearly not having the intended effect. Drivers continue to flaunt the law by using mobile phones whilst driving. Using a hand-held phone behind the wheel means that you aren't concentrating 100% on the driving task and that is putting not only your own life at risk, but also the lives of other road users.

RoSPA urges drivers to switch off their mobile phones when they get in the car and make use of voicemail so they are not even tempted to answer it if it rings. Even using a phone with a hands-free

kit means you aren't paying full attention to keeping the vehicle under control and drivers are urged to take advantage of their voicemail systems and switch their phone off before starting any journey. Can you really think about everything you would mention in a commentary drive whilst undertaking a mobile phone conversation?

At the moment a significant number of drivers are choosing to ignore the ban as they consider there isn't a big enough chance of them being caught. We know that the police are working hard to enforce the legislation where they can, but the government needs to provide more resources to allow the law to be enforced.

Money can't buy you a parking space

A traffic warden was stunned to be greeted with rapturous applause instead of the usual venom when she stuck a parking ticket on a £1million Bugatti Veyron.

Crowds of shoppers clapped and whooped as the female warden placed a £60 fine on the flashy vehicle, which had been parked illegally in Manchester city centre last month.

The vehicle, which does 0-60 mph in 2.5 seconds, was also ticketed last year in Alderley Edge, Cheshire - famous for its many footballer residents.



Just the Ticket!

This, That and T'other — John Holland

Bumper to bumper | Do you ever, like me, marvel at the lack of collisions in car parks? I have in mind a typical supermarket where a vast area is covered with a hundred or more cars, some parked nose in, others nose out, some occupying more space than the man who laid the paint upon the ground intended. Of course there are circumstances which dictate which way a car will be parked, whereby a thoughtful driver on arrival decides which choice to make, rather than turning nose-in in order to grab a space.

It's the departure process that fascinates me in that again, given the huge collection of vehicles those collisions don't occur more often. Steamed up windows, poor rear vision even in the best of weather due to the pillar arrangement on some models all add to the hazard of moving the car into the mainstream of traffic. Then what about the varying height of various models, with the 4x4's glaring down at their more modest neighbours? That now takes us into the realms of ground clearance and the respective heights of the bumpers on each breed of motor vehicle.

I raise this point because a new report claims that motorists are paying up to £2 billion each year for what are euphemistically called 'unnecessary crashes.' Expensive though it seems, the ten top-selling cars were crash tested at the front and the rear to assess their bumper effectiveness. Of the 20 bumpers only one was deemed to be 'good', one was 'acceptable', seven were 'marginal' and 11 were 'poor'.

Eighty five percent of all motor insurance claims arise from slow speed collisions, but research shows that a collision at only 6mph can be enough to write off a car. Thatcham, the insurance company for whom the research was conducted say that the tests were carried out under a new international protocol design by RCAR (The Research Council for Automobile Repairs). Says Matthew Avery, the research manager at Thatcham, "The lack of agreed international design and production protocols means bumpers are set at different heights and widths – causing chronic override and under ride in collisions."

Open Minded | My first car was a 1937 Austin 7 (no, no, I didn't get it from new!), and it had a tonneau top, that is a rubberised fabric which could fold down behind the rear seats. That was the original design, although by the time I got the car the top was in several shreds and was only used in the full position in really extreme weather, and then patched up with masking tape wherever the rain

came in. There was no doubt about it, I was the bee-knees in my own lunchtime as I drove around in full view of all and sundry.

Now it seems, it is women drivers more than men who favour the open-topped look, and not without reason, sexist though it may seem. For in a list of cars that men would be most impressed to see being driven by a woman was the Mercedes SL Roadster which was in production from 1955 to 1963, and which gained so much publicity when driven by Grace Kelly in the film High Society.

Next in the list was the Porsche 911 followed by the Mitsubishi Eve in third place. Following on was the Land Rover Defender driven by another women's champion, the Queen herself.

Continuing the full list from the women's car website evencars.com 5th is the Subaru Impreza; 6th Rolls Royce Phantom; 7th Range Rover Sport; 8th Fiat 500; VW Golf R32, and lastly the Caterham.

The editor of the website, Alex Jenner-Fust said, "The men we polled love the idea of a woman at the wheels of a high-performance car, but only if she knows how to handle it. That's why the idea of a Land Rover Defender driven by the Queen is far more appealing than a modern Mercedes convertible."

Do I detect, hidden in that statement a true example of sexism? Remember I'm only the messenger – any barbs, comments or writs should go directly to that editor.

Blind-spot Remover | Far be it for me to say that an item in the last edition of MAINBEAM has had such a far-reaching effect! Purely by coincidence following that piece about the blind-spot when driving, I see that the Department for Transport are handing out, free of charge, 90,000 Fresnel lenses to drivers of foreign lorries arriving at our ports.

This initiative is being aimed at left-hand-drive goods vehicles in a real effort to cut sideswiping crashes, which occur when the driver of a foreign vehicle collides with a car that could not be seen in the standard wing-mirrors. All trucks have a blind spot on the passenger side, and this is a particular problem for left-hand-drive vehicles if an overtaking vehicle is not seen on the approach, for a collision can occur when the lorry driver changes lanes.

This brings to mind that sticker we sometimes see on the back of a lorry, 'If you can't see my Mirrors, I can't see you', and whilst these hand-outs must be in the interest of road safety, car drivers too, can play their part in avoiding these collisions.

MANCHESTER GROUP *of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders*

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

11 March 2008, 7.30pm for 7.45pm

WOODLEY CIVIC HALL HYDE ROAD WOODLEY SK6 1QG

A G E N D A

PRESIDENT OPENS MEETING

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

MINUTES of the AGM 13th March 2007 and MATTERS ARISING

GROUP CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

TREASURER

ASSOCIATE TRAINING

SOCIAL EVENTS

NEWSLETTER

ELECTION of GROUP COMMITTEE

SPECIAL BUSINESS

TROPHIES

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGM business only)

DATE of AGM 2009

PRESIDENT CLOSSES MEETING

FINGER BUFFET and Refreshments

Bits 'n' Bobs – Alan Yates

Why oh why? | John, why do you do this?

Why do you keep bringing those memories back? Bus driving last month, this month hitch-hiking from camp. Whatever next? Oh one more question, did we ever “tip” our lift-givers?

Yes I have given lifts to hitch-hikers in the past, but not any more. So another *why* due here I think. If you were to be involved in an accident what would the insurer have to say? Would the injured passenger say he was a friend? Would they say they had been hitch-hiking? Paranoid I may be, but can you take chances these days when as you say, common sense is in short supply.

My experiences of getting lifts were coming out of RAF camp at Wellsbourne Mountford near to Gaydon in Warwickshire in 1956 / 57 and climbing into a removal van – Hadfields – from Ashton -U – Lyne whose depot is only 2½ miles from my home. I was dropped off at my home. The second having a fellow

serviceman give me a lift on the back of his Indian Brave motor cycle from Warrington Railway Station to Lichfield. We were due back to take part in a Battle of Britain memorial parade.

We almost did not make it on a lonely country road due to a farm hand exiting a field on our left without looking, just a quick shimmy by my driver prevented us from a crash. Yes we did have helmets on but little else.

Like you John, I never took the risk of hitching back to camp. Our mode of transport was by coach from Chorlton Street Bus Station at 2345hrs on the Sunday evening. Only once did we have a panic when there was dense fog around the Birmingham area, causing us to disembark at the time we should have been on parade. I suspect the camp commander didn't make it either 'cos we did not parade that morning, straight to work. Happy days? Yes on the whole they were, plenty of laughs.

Another Walk in the Park!



Different park, same guide. **Alan Yates** will lead the next Group walk on Sunday 20th April through Tatton Park with its 1,000 acres of deer park, Mansion, Gardens, Old Hall and rare breeds farm. The park dates back to the Bronze Age and has been home to herds of deer since the 13th century. The walk will be around 4 to 4½ miles of flat parkland.

For full details, phone Alan on 0161 336 4747 or email him at:

setay01@googlemail.com

Help the Mountain Rescue Teams — Get Lost! **

John Holland

You know how you can stand at a bus stop for an hour, then two come along together? Well last month was a bit like that for me.

For the Group's January Social we had Peter Hyde of the Oldham Mountain Rescue Team as our Speaker. Peter was due to come later in the year, but kindly stepped in at short notice when our arranged event was cancelled at short notice. The following morning I attended another talk which had been in the diary for 9 months – this one given by John Mottram of the Hayfield Mountain Rescue Team!

Two talks on the same subject within 18 hours of each other might seem to be a bit much even for an interesting subject, but such was the difference between the two Speakers and the roles of their respective Teams that that was far from the case.

As I write this, just two hours after the second talk, I am looking at a snow covered Kinder Scout – from the comfort of my own kitchen, I should add, and having had close encounters with Kinder over many years I could appreciate even more the work of the MR teams

Whilst John's talk dealt with the more traditional image of Mountain Rescue, based as it is in the heart of the Peak District, Peter's was extremely interesting due to the diversity of work that they do – all, of course, as volunteers. For instance, the tower cranes dominating the skyline of our cities are often the focus of revellers, particularly at the turn of a new year. Climbing up the inside of the tower is relatively easy, but it's the coming down that can be difficult, and surprisingly the Oldham team have been involved in such rescue work on more than one occasion. Rescue from water demands extreme care and skill, and traditionally we expect the fire service to do this. Nowadays though Health and Safety issues predominate and we were told by Peter that fire personnel are not allowed within 2 metres of 'live' water without life jackets on, so the Oldham team have been involved here too, albeit satisfying their own safety checks by team members being suitably roped. Understandably there have been occasions when there has been tension between the volunteer rescuers and the professionals in the fire service, but an incident at Newhey, near Rochdale changed all that. Two boys had been playing at a quarry and became trapped on the loosely surfaced face. Quite correctly the police were the first to be informed, and arrived on the scene to then send for the fire brigade. Four appliances responded and a fireman in a rope harness went down to the boys to reassure them and make them safe. Unfortunately he was unable to return to the top because of the convex face creating an overhang. More fire appliances arrived and, said Peter, because that made the numbers up to 8 this was now deemed to be a 'major incident', and so the fire chief was alerted. Then somebody asked if Mountain Rescue had been contacted; no, they hadn't but soon were. A team was quickly assembled and carried out the rescue of all 3 within 20 minutes of arrival. That led to a "Can we talk?" call from the authorities and so the credentials of the part-timers were well and truly cemented.

In my other life I have met up with Mountain Rescue teams several times in their working environment, and the first time was in March 1959, at Castleton in Derbyshire when the Hayfield team were deployed. Twenty year old Neil Moss had become trapped in the Peak Cavern, and despite strenuous efforts over several days he died within touching distance of his would-be rescuers. That particular crevice was cemented over at the request of his family, and his remains are there to this day. My last contact with them was at the Lockerbie Air crash where, I learned over the two talks, that both teams were involved, together with many others from around the country as there was a huge area of that part of Scotland and Northumberland to be searched.

Funding, as ever with voluntary organisations, is a nightmare, and so it is with MR teams nationally. Radios are supplied by the police, but it would appear that little else is forthcoming from any official source, and yet with an emergency (and it doesn't have to be on top of a mountain), these teams are automatically included in the list of sources of assistance. Peter told us that the Oldham team were even involved in the hunt for a murderer, who had escaped from prison, and was in wasteland on the outskirts of Oldham.

A brief history was the introduction to Peter's talk, and he told us that MR was born from an incident at Laddow Rocks above Crowden in the Longdendale Valley of the Peak District. A climber had fallen and broken his femur. Rescuers were assembled and brought the man down, but he died in hospital. That was in 1928, and incredible progress has been made since then, and Peter told us that although this injury can prove to be fatal without proper attention, nowadays MR teams are so well equipped and so sophisticated that even serious injuries can be dealt with at the scene. Many MR teams have doctors amongst their ranks, and with the radio facilities available, and now the more easily summoned air ambulances, injured parties can be quickly dealt with. One of Peter's slides showed us the entrance to the A&E department of a hospital, and Peter said, "If you're going to have an accident, have it here!" meaning right on the doorstep, where there is immediate attention available. We were also told of 'The Golden Hour', the 'Silver Hour' and the 'Bronze Hour', where the ideal objective would be to get the patient to the A&E ward within the first, Golden, hour, an impossible task when a climber has been reported missing, teams alerted, routes planned, searches instigated, and then, the walker having been found, an assessment has to be made and then plans decided upon for his or her removal to hospital.

Can it really be that such teams as these, like the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and the air ambulances, are purely voluntarily-funded organisations? People put to sea in the most ridiculous and un-seaworthy of crafts; 'townies' head for the hills in adverse weather in the skimpiest of clothing and wearing only trainers for footwear, but when they get into difficulties somebody has to rescue them, and this task falls squarely on the shoulders of the volunteer units.

** Seen on the rear window of a car – outside an MR HQ.

Updated *Roadcraft* — Now appearing at a Bookshop Near You

John Holland

The long-delayed new edition of 'Roadcraft' has just about arrived with us, and although I have yet to read it thoroughly at the time of writing, I see that 'The System' has been reduced to 4 Phases (elements) instead of the previous 5 of Information, Position, Speed, Gear and Acceleration. The view, quite rightly in my opinion, is that Information was not a phase, but a rolling requirement throughout the whole task of driving to The System. For the January Course the Group Committee decided to abandon the old 'Roadcraft' and go with the then unseen new version. Therefore The System now consisting of Position, Speed, Gear and Acceleration is punctuated with Information sliced in between the other Phases.

Keith Bamford of the West Yorkshire Group had an early sight of the new edition and has produced some notes, and I acknowledge these as I pass some of them on to you. There are several references to 'information processing', which is defined as 'taking, using and giving information., which is the TUG element in our own first theory evening for Associates. The previous edition first appeared in 1994, and since then vehicle technology has moved on, especially in the electronics side of the business, and so this is reflected in the new edition. Drivers are urged to consult their vehicle handbooks regarding the skid-avoidance technology which might be in-built, with one section dealing with 'skid control with electronics' being an example. However, those with simple pedal power are still catered for under the heading 'Correcting a skid in a vehicle without active safety features.'

Chapter 1 is headed 'mental skills for better driving' a title which, in the previous edition, gave scant regard to the subject, encompassing the whole subject in 3 paragraphs. Now, a more psychological approach is made, and a good thing too, for driving a motor vehicle is a relatively easy task once the controls have been part-mastered. The mental attitude is something else though, and is dealt with comprehensively in this first chapter. However, I am perturbed to see a page headed 'Skills for police driving', and my concern goes back over many years. 'Roadcraft' was produced for the police force, originally in the 1930's and

was not intended for, nor available to, the general public. Then in the mid-1950's the books qualities were seen as being worthy of a wider audience, and so it was released for general sale – but with some police driving techniques removed. Too often civilian advanced drivers claim that the one-off test they undertook to achieve their standing makes them equal to a police traffic officer. This is nonsense given the weeks and quality of training that police officers undergo to pass the high mark required.

'The System' doesn't appear until Chapter 3 now, following a comprehensive one on observation and anticipation with hints on improving basic observation.

I was interested to read a reference, in Chapter 6 'Drivers Signals' to the use of brake lights, where there is advice given to 'avoid dabbing the brakes; if your brake lights flash on and off repeatedly but you don't slow down, you will confuse the drivers behind you'. I agree with Keith in his personal observation that readers will form their own opinions about this. Arm signals are back – or at least acknowledged as having a real use with courtesy signals, slowing down and right turning manoeuvres – and a timely warning that younger drivers may not know what they mean, which makes me beg the question if they are not understood should they be given? Earlier references to the use of the horn have been reduced probably because they are now considered to be out of date. Certainly on fast moving roads they are superfluous, but I would have thought that the use of the horn should, at least, still be a valuable tool elsewhere.

The illustrations, both drawn and photographic, with a new section (and this could have been included with our own Associates in mind) of how to carry out stationary and moving brake tests.

This has only been a flavour of the new edition, and I am hopeful that my own copy is well-thumbed, by the time you read this. If you too, devour yours with the same intent perhaps you would like to join me in the next edition for further comments.

Letter from John Lepine, MBE

Motor Schools Association,
101 Wellington Road North,
Stockport,
CHESHIRE,
SK4 2LP

Dear John,

I read with interest your comments about the eye sight test that learners have to undergo when they report for test. The distance requirement for the eyesight test using old style number plates is 20.5 metres if the new-style number plate is used. New-style number plates were introduced on 1 September 2001 and as you know are easily identifiable, as they start with two letters ie AB51 ABC.

The procedure is quite thorough before the practical driving test; the driving examiner asks the candidate to read the number plate on a stationary vehicle considerably further away than the require distance. If the candidate cannot read the first number plate correctly, they will be asked to read a second number plate.

If they still cannot read the number plate correctly, the examiner will ask them to read a third number plate and will measure the precise distance from this number plate. The distance will be 20.5 metres if it is an old-style number plate or 20 metres if they are asked to read a new-style number plate.

I am a little surprised that the advanced test only require the minimum legal distance. The distance required on a Driving Standards Agency Approved Driving Instructor, driving test is 26.5 metres for the new style 79 millimetres high and 50 millimetres wide letters and a distance of 27.5 metres for the old style letters 79 millimetres high and 57 millimetres wide.

Regarding more stringent eyesight tests I am reminded of events at the MSA Golden Jubilee Conference (Coventry 1985) during the day a motion calling for more stringent eyesight tests had been carried amongst the delegates.

The guest of honour at the banquet that followed the conference was Lynda Chalker, then a transport minister,. Responding to the calls for better eyesight testing she told delegates that to introduce a more stringent test on new drivers most of whom are young and have excellent eyesight would be an unnecessary burden. To introduce a test for middle aged drivers, forty to fifty years of age is reported to be the time when many peoples eyesight starts to decline, would also be waste of time as this was the age group with the lowest accident rate.

She suggested we should not worry so much about the few, young or old, that can not see but concentrate on getting all drivers to look properly and act on what they observe.

Yours sincerely,

John R. Lepine MBE
General Manager
Motor Schools Association

Tony's Quiz – Tony Richardson

Tony's Quiz, February 2008

1. What is meant by Advanced Stop Lines at traffic lights?
2. What extra precautions should you take before overtaking a long vehicle?
3. How often should you check tyre pressures?
4. Vehicle & Operator Services Agency Officers have powers to stop vehicles on all roads, including motorways and trunk roads in England & Wales. How will they attract your attention?
5. What must you do before giving a signal prior to a manoeuvre?

Answers to January 2008 Quiz

1. You are travelling at 60mph on the left-hand lane of a slip road about to join a motorway. A vehicle on the slip road has just overtaken you. What problems could this cause you?
The vehicle could block your entry to the motorway and could collide with you if unable to move immediately to lane 2.
2. Highway Agency Traffic Officers have powers to stop vehicles on most motorways and some 'A' roads. How is this action taken?

They will where possible attract your attention by:

- *Flashing amber lights – usually from behind their vehicle.*
- *Direct you to pull over to the side by pointing and/or by using left indicator. It is an offence not to comply with their directions.*

(See page 105 of the latest edition of the Highway Code)

3. What effect has acceleration on vehicle balance?
Alters the distribution of weight between the wheels of the car. When a vehicle accelerates the weight is lifted from the front and is pushed down on the back wheels. During deceleration the opposite happens. This alters the relative grip of the front and rear tyres.
4. If you break down and have a warning triangle, how far behind your vehicle should it be placed when on an ORDINARY ROAD?
*45 metres (147ft)
Never use on a motorway – (page 71 – Highway Code)*
5. What is the maximum speed on a motorway when towing a caravan or trailer?
60 miles per hour.

Dates for your Diary, 2008

The remaining dates for Manchester Group Evening Social Events in 2008 are as follows:

Tuesday 11th March - Group AGM

Tuesday 8th April: Simon Protano, Head of Driver & Fleet Solutions at RoSPA will talk about his work.

Tuesday 8th July: Details to follow

Tuesday 12th August: Quiz Night

Tuesday 14th October: Details to follow

Unless stated otherwise, social events will be held quarterly at **Woodley Civic Hall**, Hyde Road, Woodley, Stockport, SK6 1QG. The meetings will be held on the dates shown, starting at 8pm and finishing around 9.30pm. The Committee welcome Group members, Associates and their friends to come along in support of these social events.

Group Walk

Sunday 20th April: Alan Yates will lead a walk of approximately 4 ½ miles through Tatton Park on Sunday 20th April. If you'd like to know more, give Alan a ring on 0161 336 4747.

Group Observers

Car Observers

Martin Robinson, Observer Trainer
 Mike Beavan
 Damian Boland
 Lee Davies
 Jean Farmer
 Peter Hesketh
 John Holland
 Glyn Jones
 Hugh McAdam
 Kris Newton
 Tony Richardson
 Mike Singleton
 Simon Smart

In Training:

Rebecca McCabe
 Debbie McNamara
 Samantha Exton

Bike Observers

Terry Dodd, Observer Trainer
 Simon Mitchell
 Alan Tainsh
 David Timmins

Car Course Dates

Manchester Group Car Section January Course Dates			
Session 1	6 January	Session 5	2 March
Session 2	20 January	Session 6	16 March
Session 3	3 February	Session 7	30 March
Session 4	17 February	Session 8	13 April
Classroom Sessions			
21 February		3 April	

All classroom sessions are held at Woodley Civic Hall starting at 7:45pm and last about 1½ hours



MANCHESTER GROUP

RoSPA ADVANCED DRIVERS AND RIDERS

www.safedriversandrider.org.uk



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Contributions to **MAINBEAM** are welcome and should be sent to Simon Smart.

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