

## EDITORIAL – Alan Yates

### A HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE COMMITTEE

**A BRIGHT START** | One of the earliest reports on the TV and radio this year (2007), was to announce that the year was to be one of the hottest ever!!

And so to follow on from our last issue, should we now be packing the boot of our cars with extra water for boiling radiators?

Will car manufacturers introduce air conditioning on all models? Is a simple solution to wind down the window, and will those “wind-deflectors” that were all the rage in the 50’s make a come back? I really don’t know, or very much care. All the hullabaloo about pollution, being green, conserving energy etc all seems at the moment to be directed at the bottom end of society.

In an effort to control road congestion there seems to be a move towards “Road-Pricing” as a means to curtail traffic. Quite a number of people seem to think this is inevitable, and coming into being within the next 10 years. A chap has set up a web-site for people to register their disapproval, and at the last count had over 97,000 signatures. I still believe that the easiest way and also the cheapest to operate is to put all the taxes onto the price of petrol. If you travel you pay it!!

**SOCIAL EVENING** | Our first social evening at Woodley Civic Hall proved to be a success in terms of comfort, ambience, and attendance. Our speaker Stuart Lovatt from The Highways Agency gave a quite impressive talk on the function of the group he represents. The fact the Agency has a £2 billion budget really surprised me. See also page 5.

**CABBIE BREAKS LAND SPEED RECORD** | A Welsh cab driver was shocked when he was accused of speeding at 420 mph.

Tom Matthews was driving his 12-year-old Vauxhall Cavalier in Newport when he was caught by a safety camera. When the £60 fine and three

penalty points arrived, the recorded speed was 420 mph - in a 30 mph zone.

"I drive an old Cavalier - not a jumbo jet," he said. "According to this, I've broken the land speed record. There has been a printing error. If they insist I was going that fast I should be a Grand Prix driver - I'm wasted in taxis."

Mid and South Wales Safety Camera Partnership apologised and blamed an employee processing error.

#### Related Links

[BBC News](#)

[The Register](#)

**NEW ASSOCIATES** | A warm welcome to the following new Associates:

Helen Booth of Compstall; Bob McGrouther (Romiley); Malcolm Williams (Bramhall); Christopher Eaton (Stoke-on-Trent); Geoff Williams (Gatley); John Lohan (Bramhall); Mohammed Shakeel (Rochdale) and brothers Christopher and Michael Hesketh of Prestwich.

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# **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

13 March 2007

**WOODLEY CIVIC HALL HYDE ROAD WOODLEY**

## ***A G E N D A***

PRESIDENT OPENS MEETING

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

MINUTES of the AGM 16<sup>th</sup> March 2006 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)

### ***INTERVAL***

The Chairman invites you to take coffee and biscuits

### **GUEST SPEAKER**

**Gordon Robinson, Greater Manchester Police Force Road Safety Officer**

DATE of AGM 2008

PRESIDENT CLOSES MEETING

**Our AGM starts at 8.00pm and is open to all Members, Associates and their guests, who will be made most welcome. Only full Group Members, however, have voting rights.**

# This, That and T'other – John Holland

**DOES YOUR ROAD FORGIVE YOU? | Plans are afoot to classify more than 11,000 miles of UK motorways, major roads and country lanes.** And the purpose of this classification? Why, to tell drivers how dangerous those roads are!

The Road Protection Scoring (RPS) Scheme has been devised by the European Road Assessment Programme and is backed by the Automobile Association and the Highways Agency. A statement delivered by Bert Morris, director of the AA Motoring Trust says, "The primary function of the Road Protection Scoring is not to safeguard extreme drivers who go hell for leather regardless of conditions, although their chances of survival will be enhanced by subsequent improvements. The scheme sets the benchmark at the level of average drivers who follow the rules of the road but make mistakes, perhaps because of bad weather or through not knowing the route. RPS shows how well a road will 'forgive' or how badly it will punish an ordinary driver's error."

It gets better; roads which have few head-on crashes will attract more stars, along with those which have bollards or painted lines to discourage overtaking manoeuvres. If there are measures in place to prevent drivers from hitting trees or posts or there are barriers in place to stop vehicles rolling down embankments, then these roads will go to the top of the class, with four stars. Junctions which have been improved to reduce the number of 'turning' crashes will also meet with top approval. Once this grading system is in place the information will then be displayed on road signs and maps! I must point out that all exclamation marks are mine alone.

I'm sure, that like me, you will ask about changing conditions of weather, traffic and daylight/ night-time variations. In addition if we, as drivers as a breed, can ignore 'Slow' markings on the road surface and signs warning of bends, then surely it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a star rating will give us (again, as a breed), the confidence to go quicker than we normally would?

By all means, let us continue improving the engineering of our roads, surely the finest in Europe, but not to the point where we are inviting the motoring public to put those improvements to the maximum test?

**PHOTO-OPPORTUNITY? | I really do believe that our roads are the finest in Europe - until you get to the level of local councils, and I read a story in a weekly paper local to the Greater Manchester area this week which highlights one of the greatest problems - that of potholes.**

This particular story was about such a road condemned as a risk because of the potholes and poor road markings. One resident had complained because, having hit a pothole, a tyre on her new car was shredded beyond repair, and as well as facing a bill for £70 for a new one, she had had to have the car inspected for any damage underneath. Nothing new in the

story so far, as it is repeated throughout the GM area, and indeed, the whole country.

What further attracted my attention to this story though was the picture which accompanied it. It showed two local councillors posing by the obviously badly-pitted road. In the background, adjacent to a bend were four parked cars. Am I being unduly sceptical in suggesting that three of the cars were driven to the scene by the councillors and the photographer?

No stars for them then!

**DRIVING FOR WORK |** According to statistics from the Department of Transport, 850 people were killed and 6,102 seriously injured in 2005 (the latest figures available), in work-related crashes - this is about 25% of all road deaths.

Because of the changes made in 2005 in statistic-gathering at crashes, police now record the journey purpose of vehicles involved in such incidents.

Now Brake, the road safety charity is urging companies to use the statistics as a wake-up call to put risk-management practices in place, a move pioneered a decade ago by RoSPA. Go into a factory or similar premises and the safety guidelines are immediately obvious; painted lines to confine pedestrian traffic, guards and shields on machinery and other equipment, and training for staff using fork lift and similar vehicles around the workspace.

I recall several years ago being at a Friday luncheon given by a small pharmaceutical company in the south of England, which was being held to welcome eight new salespersons to the staff. The newcomers had had a week of induction training, starting on the Monday with the correct method of opening their briefcases to display the selection inside. The chairman of the company, at that lunch, then placed a box on the table which contained car keys. He took out the keys one by one, and with some degree of showmanship called forward each of the new staff members and handed them a set of keys - which were to their chosen vehicle, waiting for them on the company car park. A very convivial lunchtime indeed, with a very happy new intake of staff rounding off the week by being presented with the keys of their car, as yet unsighted, and which started by having training in opening a briefcase!

At our recent Social evening Stuart Lovatt of the Highways Agency was our Speaker, and his presentation was packed with information, including showing us DVDs which the HA have produced. One of these is very much work-related and aimed at LGV drivers, with short clips using 'Stickman', (modelled on 'The Saint' character), which, for the market intended, I think is absolutely spot-on, getting the message over quickly and simply.

With funding from the Government, Brake have also produced a DVD for distribution to fleet managers. Keep Space!

## Bits and Bobs – Alan Yates

**MEMORIES** | Oh John, how could you? Why did you revive those early memories of driving in the 50's & 60's? String-backed gloves? Loafers? Cloth caps, obligatory in my case, a relic of my days as a cyclist, no crash helmets then, that is, unless you rode on the track at Fallowfield, home of the great Reg Harris, world sprint champion.

It was de-rigour to "dress the part" when you went out in the motor car in those days wasn't it? I never got around to having the best gloves or a decent pair of shoes, but I certainly had the cloth cap. Sadly I still wear one at times. Why? Well I don't like to get my head wet. And I mean when I exit the car. I did once purchase a steering wheel cover for my Ford Anglia, but was not a great success because the steering wheels on Anglia's were ever so thin, and so the material was a tad too big and wouldn't tighten up properly.

And yes one of these items is still on sale at Poundstretchers. A steering wheel cover!! Now there's a thought, can you get them in different colours? I also remember having to pack newspaper into gaps between the control pedals in one of my early cars. No MOT in those days to worry about. If you could find someone to weld a strip of metal onto whatever was still left of the car you could drive on forever, or at least till another hole appeared. Cars must have been proper death traps in those days.

I do have a pair of driving shoes that are looking a little tired these days, but the soles are wafer thin and I can "feel" the pedals better. When I became a bus inspector in the late 70's, one of the training modules was "Accidents". We were taken to mock-ups and had to write reports about what we saw, and take statements from "Witnesses", "Drivers" and "Passengers". One canny older inspector always advised us to, "Look at their shoes", this was an obvious pointer to the driver having control over the vehicle. My step-daughter received whip-lash injuries from a car driver wearing carpet slippers at the time of the accident. I sometimes wonder how drivers manage when I see 4 to 5 inch heels and at times slip-ons on feet. Can there really be control of the pedals?

Thanks for the memories, John.

**FROM TELETEXT | Cheshire Police say they have a "significant problem" with drink /drug driving in the county.**

During the festive season there were 273 drivers over the drink / drive limit, 48 more than in 2005.

Police vowed to continue to check at all times and also round the clock.

## Letters

Dear Mainbeam Editor (aka Dad ),

Whilst reading your recent editorial and mopping the tears of laughter from my eyes at the thought of snow, I began to think of the last time we in the south of this wonderful country of ours had a downfall of the shovelling stuff !

Here in sunny Weymouth, the only extras I carry are an extra blanket - for sitting on the beach and a mobile phone - to call for more beer. The spade is always in the car for just such an event as going to

make sand castles, and the flask has always got cold water - to stop the car overheating. We are more likely to find daisy chains than snow chains and as for pothole drivers, the only pothole you will see is on the M5 Junction 25 Taunton.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year with lots of trouble free motoring.

Derek. (By email)

(That's my boy, irreverent as ever !!)

## Group Hike, 25 March 2007

Alan Yates will lead a 5 to 6 mile walk around Marbury Park on Sunday 25 March 2007. The walk will include a visit to Great Budworth Church.

All Members, Associates and guests are welcome, but no young children or dogs please.

In view of the terrain and the vagaries of the weather, suitable footwear and outerwear are advised.

If you are interested, please give Alan a ring on 0161 336 4747 or contact him by [email](#).

## Sheila Entwistle Reports on the January Social Evening

We kicked off the year with a speaker from The Highways Agency, Stuart Lovatt, his full title being 'Road Safety Action Plan Coordinator', who gave us an insight into his work. He described himself as a rare breed for the job; usually Highways Agency people have done engineering in one capacity or another. After living in London for 17 years as a Customs Officer, he wanted to get back to his home town of Preston and joined The Highways Agency.

Stuart spoke about how by 2010, a Strategic Safety Action Plan for their Core Trunk Road Network, that he himself has been working on for 4 years, is planning to reduce 'accidents' or 'collisions'. The targets for these roads are:

- 33% reduction of people being killed or seriously injured;
- 10% reduction of slight casualties;
- a contribution to the national target of a 50% reduction in child casualties;
- a contribution to tackling the significantly higher incidence of road casualties in disadvantaged communities.

The 14 Highways Agency regions have been working closely to identify a framework for improving road safety under 10 main themes: Safer for Children, Safer Drivers – Training and Testing, Safer Drivers - Drugs and Drowsiness, Safer Infrastructure, Safer Speeds, Safer Vehicles, Safer Motorcycling, Safer Pedestrian Cyclists and Horse Riders, Better Enforcement, and Promoting Safer Road Use.

With seven main partners (local authorities, police forces, voluntary group road users, motor manufacturers, individual drivers, road users and pedestrians), they have gathered all the data from the last 12 years on all road users - this includes pedestrians to lorry drivers to see how best they can cut deaths and serious casualties. The only data they couldn't find, was on People With Reduced Mobility, this group includes people with shopping to people who are disabled pursuing independent mobility.

The Highways Agency launched a DVD in September 2006 Bike Magazine which is called 'Great Roads Great Bikes' aimed at all Motorcyclists this is a very informative DVD from the learner to the skilled biker, with footage of the top rider Tommy Hill. There is also a website: [www.handleitorloseit.com](http://www.handleitorloseit.com)

A second DVD was launched in November last year to educate young drivers without being patronising. It's called 'Now That's What I Call Worst Hits' and is narrated by Tom Baker (Little Britain) - it is an interactive game which is very informative and is to be shown in schools by Road Safety Officers. There is also a website for lorry drivers of any type, [www.heavygoodvehicle.com](http://www.heavygoodvehicle.com), which shows the stick man doing good things and being the saint!

Stuart referred to all road user groups as 'customers' to the amazement of the questionable John Holland!

Stuart left us a copy of his Strategic Safety Action Plan 2006 - if anyone would like to read the full Plan it is going round the group. Another interesting evening – if you weren't there will you be at the next one?

Sheila Entwistle

## Take Me Home! — John Holland

She didn't exactly fold her arms and sulk, nor did she say "I told you so!" However, I did detect a change in her attitude to me when, after ignoring her request to leave the A34 at the next junction, she then said, "Follow the road ahead."

Yes, I've joined the SatNav Brigade! I hadn't bothered up to Christmas, but I was appalled to see an advert on television on Christmas Eve, offering Tom-Tom models with 20% off – hardly likely to endear Halfords to the thousands who must have bought units as seasonal presents.

I visited the store after Christmas and found an even better offer; that of a more superior model selling at half price, and only marginally dearer than the one I had intended to buy.

As Marie and I were going to Bournemouth for the New Year week-end, this presented a good opportunity to test it out. 'Home' is installed as a default setting, and I have the choice of going by heavy goods vehicle or car or as a pedestrian. Having chosen the mode of transport I could then select 'Fastest' or 'Shortest'. From Marple, and knowing the route I wished to take, I added Ashbourne, and Sutton Scotney (for an overnight stop), to the route, electing 'Shortest' as my preference, and we were off.

Very impressive too! Speed cameras were well signed and well ahead of their location – I only tell you this for purely documentary reasons of course. Even motorway gantries, with their directional signs pop up too.

Of course you will know that those quotes at the head of this piece are from the voice instructions, and my unit, unlike others, gives no choice of male or female, but I find my guide to be quite soothing and pleasant. She only speaks when it's necessary too! Usually 500 yards before a change of direction she will inform me of the hazard, and then follow this up as we get nearer to it.

There is a choice of picture display of the road ahead. This can be in map form, as though looking at a conventional road map or it can be in 3-dimensional mode, when the view is as it might be if you were flying 20 feet or so off the ground. Of course, much of this will be known to many of you, but I include them just in case you are nibbling at the idea of buying such a device.

One oddity that we discovered was that in putting in 'shortest route', it took the instruction quite literally. Imagine the road ahead (in my case the A34 in Oxfordshire), a dual carriageway, bearing in a gentle curve to the left. You are 500 yards from an off-slip, and 'she' (don't know her name), tells me, "At the next junction take the road left." Puzzled, and knowing where I was going anyway, I carried

on with the A34. She alerted me again to make the turn, and when I didn't she told me that she was 're-calculating' and within seconds she told me to follow the road ahead. I soon discovered that the shortest route would have taken me down the slip road, around a roundabout and back onto the A34, probably saving something like 25 yards, so some contribution from the driver is advisable.

Whilst we were having dinner in our coastal hotel, we started a conversation with a couple at the next table. They had travelled all of 5 miles to spend the evening and night at the hotel, and the subject turned to routes. Satellite navigation came into the conversation and David at the other table said that he would have no use for it and indeed did not ever need maps. I'm sure that you would have been intrigued as I certainly was! He claimed that he could find his way "from anywhere to anywhere" without the use of cartographers.

Now, for a mapophile like me that is quite a challenge! I have always loved maps since I was a small child, and have quite an extensive collection to this day, which may seem strange considering that I have just gone digital. So, David needed testing! An easy one to start with; "From Norwich, how would you get to Pwhelli?" I asked, for no particular reason, having no connection whatsoever with either place. Immediately he reeled off road numbers, only some of which I recognized, ending up at that north Wales town. Okay: Ashington to Camborne then? No greater problem for this music teacher (who incidentally was born in Denton, Manchester), and who again gave me a route which sounded very plausible indeed.

By now I was mentally searching for my SatNav receipt.

I appreciate that David might be the best confidence trickster in Bournemouth on that night, but he certainly convinced me of his superior knowledge of routes and roads of the UK.

We have friends in Christchurch and Ian recommended a route round the back of Salisbury across the Plain to join the M5 at J 11A. I had already requested (I'm still deferential to her, so note 'requested' and not 'instructed'), a route home, and gratifyingly, the SatNav came up with the identical route.

Other plusses are that it gives the distance of the journey, the time it will take, adjusting this en-route, and giving the arrival time. I've yet to try it out as a pedestrian, but the maps appear to be very accurate, and I can see their use being invaluable when walking around a strange town or city.

I also appreciate that they will be a magnet to thieves, but then I wouldn't put it beyond her to shout for help.

## Tony's Quiz – Tony Richardson

### TONY'S QUIZ, February 2007

1. There are 5 phases of the ROADCRAFT system – which phase runs through every other phase?
2. What is “red mist”?
3. When can you legally switch on your rear fog lights?
4. What is meant by the two-second rule?
5. Some traffic lights have an advanced stop line ahead of the normal stop line – what is the reason for this?

### ANSWERS TO TONY'S QUIZ, DECEMBER 2006

1. **Q** What is the difference between yellow lines:
  - a) along the edge of the kerb?
  - b) those across the kerb?**A** a) Yellow lines along the edge of the carriage-way or close to the gutter denote restrictions on WAITING.  
(b) Those across the kerb denote restrictions on LOADING AND UNLOADING.

2. **Q** If you see someone about to cross the road in front of you carrying a white stick with two red bands on it, what does this signify?  
**A** It means that the person is both BLIND and DEAF and therefore oblivious to both visual and audible warnings.
3. **Q** If you break down and have a warning triangle, how far behind your vehicle should it be placed when on an:
  - a) Ordinary road?
  - b) Motorway?**A** a) 45 metres (147 ft.).  
b) Never on a motorway (para. 248 H/C)
4. **Q** What is the MINIMUM tread depth required on all the tyres fitted to a car, light van, or light trailer?  
**A** (a) 1.6 mm across the central  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the breadth of the tyre and around the entire circumference.
5. **Q** What is the most likely cause of excessive wear to the outside edge of a tyre?  
**A** Under inflation. All tyres should be checked for correct pressures at regular intervals.

## Social Calendar 2007

### Forthcoming Manchester Group Evening Social Events, 2007

All social events are 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.

**Tuesday 10th April 2007.** Speaker to be arranged.

**Tuesday 10th July 2007.** Our Guest Speaker on 10th July will be **Beverley Bell**, the North West Area Traffic Commissioner, who will give a light-hearted overview of her work. As the only female Traffic Commissioner in the UK, Mrs Bell will explain her daily dealings within the male orientated LGV and PSV transport industry, with some serious and humorous tales of her experiences .

**Tuesday 9th October 2007.** Speaker to be arranged.

### Skid Pan Training, Saturday April 7th & Saturday June 16th 2007

The Group have booked a skid pan training session at Staffordshire Police Skid Pan, New Road, Hixon, for **Saturday 7th April 2007**. There is only 1 place left at £47.50 on this training event, so book as soon as possible. There will be another chance to take part on **Saturday 16th June** with 12 places to fill.

If you are interested in either, please email me at: [treasurer@safedriversandrider.com](mailto:treasurer@safedriversandrider.com).

Candidates will be allocated on a first-come first-serve basis. Each candidate will be required to sign an indemnity form before being taken out on the skid pan.

### 50/50 DRAW, January

- First: Number 15, Roger Clark - drawn by Bob McGrouther.
- Second: Number 5, Phil Harrison - drawn by Mohammed Shakeel.

### TEST SUCCESSES

Go to **Martin Nealon** who passed his RoSPA test to GOLD standard.

**Doreen Hulme** passed with a SILVER pass and **Peter Hesketh** also passed with SILVER. Peter has expressed a wish to become an observer. Well done to all.



## HONOURS AND COMMITTEE

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Contributions to **MAINBEAM** are welcome and should be sent to the editor, Alan Yates.

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