

EDITORIAL – Alan Yates

At last, what I have been saying for years has been accepted, in some quarters, at least. The heading, “Best car safety gadget: a careful driver”, leapt out at me from the pages of the Times supplement, Body & Soul. (October 7th 2006).

Although the research comes from America, the Purdue University, Indiana, the message applies world-wide. Forget anti-lock braking systems and airbags, the driver is the most important safety component in any car. Vehicle accident data from Washington state, suggested that, “Inbuilt safety features did nothing to contribute to reducing the likelihood of an accident or injury”.

Professor Fred Mannering, a civil engineer at the university suggests that putting more safety gadgets in cars has an opposite effect in that it induces a feeling of *laissez-faire* in some drivers, making them less attentive to safety. This could introduce a sense of immortality and therefore a more aggressive driving attitude. The Professor calls this, “offset hypothesis”, where drivers always adapt to the safety devices. I had to smile at the last paragraph, “So, time to ditch the 4 x 4 and buy a Ford Anglia.”

Having had two of these fine models all under 1000 cc, and travelling with a small family to holiday destinations on the south coast, you needed to think about safety first and foremost. Safety gadgets? No. Seat belts? Yes. Brakes? Sometimes, (not always going down hill at speed!). Airbags? What? The mantra, “Correct gear for the speed”, always applied.

Braking was kept to a minimum so that they did not overheat when you needed them, acceleration sense quickly developed and your

right foot kept well away from the middle pedal. 2 adults 3 kids and holiday luggage nearly always meant that speed and observations were primary in getting to the destination. Remember the days of the A30 and around 10 hours plus to get there? Yes, a heavy right foot was not an essential requirement in those days.

And so I feel vindicated when I go on about cars and their gadgets not improving the lives and safety of the drivers. Of course they help to protect when confronted with a dangerous situation, and it is not always our fault when we are confronted with one. Better training would perhaps negate the need to activate such devices.

Related Links

[The Times](#)

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Malcolm Millington – Obituary by Simon Smart

It is with great sadness that the Group announces the sudden and untimely death, on Sunday 8th October, of Group Bike Observer Malcolm Millington at the age of 59.

Malcolm's first encounter with Manchester Group was one Sunday in December 1999, when with examiner Roger Taylor and Group Member Geoff Thompson, the formation of the Manchester Group Bike Section was discussed and agreed.

Malcolm had already passed the RoSPA advanced motorcycle test and it was decided that Roger would train him to be an Observer.

Thanks to Malcolm's energy and enthusiasm the bike section became established within a very short time. Malcolm's efforts were recognised by the Group when he became the first recipient of the Bob



Graham Shield, now awarded annually to the most outstanding newcomer, at the Group AGM in March 2001.

Despite his demanding business commitments as the owner of Grainger School of Motoring in Warrington, Malcolm gladly gave up valuable time to train Associates.

Malcolm was buried on 19th October having been given a send-off he would have loved – a cavalcade of bikers accompanying his coffin from his home in Lymm to the Church at Dunham Town.

Instead of flowers, his family asked that donations be given to Manchester Group Bike Section.

Manchester Group sends sincere sympathy to Malcolm's wife Christine and family.

Snippets – Alan Yates

Motor Racing | I am not a fan of Formula One motor racing but you have to give credit to the German Ace Michael Schumacher.

His record speaks for itself; he has spent some 16 years racing in Formula One, getting 7 Driver's titles. He has had 91 victories out of some 249 starts, and not always on the front row, these amounted to 68. His greatest number of wins in a season was 13 - unlucky!! I don't think so.

Not always the most popular bloke on the circuit, he certainly showed determination and grit to win the events, even at times upsetting team-mates and sponsors. Not many lurid headlines splashed across the pages of the tabloid press, yet his name was always to the forefront of the racing.

Yes, I have a sneaking regard for the dedication the guy put into his day job. Paid to do a job and made sure it was the best he could do. Will anyone follow him? It will take someone special.

Related Links

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[Formula 1](#)

New emergency phones to benefit drivers | The installation of 6,500 new emergency roadside phones is set to provide a better service to drivers.

Drivers are set to benefit from the installation of 6,500 new emergency roadside phones that will enhance current motorist services. These phones will be installed on motorways and trunk roads across England in a £20 million project spanning three years.

The new phones will be more advanced than the current facilities, boasting the ability to reduce background traffic noise and a loud siren and flashing light to signal that the phone is ringing, benefiting those with hearing impairments. Drivers with hearing difficulties will also be able to take advantage of a text display and questions that can be answered using tick and cross buttons, with a choice of languages also available.

Other benefits of the new phones include easy maintenance, cost-effectiveness in terms of repairs and visible design. In addition, they will use solar energy alongside more traditional sources, helping to maintain energy efficiency.

"Emergency roadside telephones are a vital connection between people experiencing problems on the motorway and the Highways Agency staff who can help them," commented roads minister Dr Steve Ladyman. "The new emergency phones will use the latest technology to improve communication to provide support to people who need help."

Several new phones have already been installed on roads in Kent, Essex and Nottinghamshire. The project will continue from Kent along the motorways towards Bristol and then up to Manchester, working its way around England.

Related Links

[Highways Agency](#)

[Government News Network](#)

This, That and T'other – John Holland

BM WOMB WITH A VIEW | When I first started doing Fleet training in the late '80's-early '90's, I secured a contract with a software firm with offices in Wilmslow and Watford. On alternate Tuesdays I was based at these locations, and the Wilmslow staff was quite envious of their London colleagues because the southerners had just taken on a new fleet of Audi cars - the '4' if I remember rightly.

Now, at that time, I was prejudiced against BMW's, Mercedes, and Audi's. I perceived these vehicles as the ones which attempted to carve a swathe down the third lane of motorways, intimidating other drivers to step back into Lane 2 to allow them to progress unhindered at speeds above the posted limits. Stereotyping? Me? Well, maybe, but I was very much aware of mutterings from the masses which seemed to support my own conclusions, but which, uncoordinated, thankfully didn't escalate into peace-keeping forces being shipped to Germany.

With the passage of the years, tolerance on my part (yes, OK, and age), I am not in the least perturbed when one of these selfish drivers, sorry (there I go again), when one of these persons driving one of a select marque of vehicles sweeps up behind me, intimating that perhaps I would consider getting out of 'their' way (no sexism here).

Now though, I am concerned to learn that there are at least 5,000 motorists who are absolutely seething at the drivers of one of these products. For in a poll conducted by 'The Myway Code' (no, I don't know of it, either), it has been revealed that BMW drivers have been named as the worst drivers in Britain.

Says Ian Vince, co-author of the book (?), "Those drivers seem unable to use signals, expecting others on the road to have psychic powers. We were really surprised that BMW drivers got so many votes. We expected Chelsea Tractors and 'White Van Man' to come in higher."

Vince goes on, "The BMW is a smug car and perhaps there is some envy towards the drivers from those of using our Fiestas." Whew! He's got far more nerve than me, saying that!

In the same survey, 4x4's drew the disapproval of about 35 percent, and poor old, often misunderstood, WVM came in third.

Perhaps hastily, Ian Vince goes on, "BMW's are solidly and beautifully built cars and, as a result, their drivers seem detached from the rest of the world.

"They seem to be insulated by all this teutonic engineering. It is like travelling in a womb."

A fine after-thought, I fear, for I wouldn't be too surprised to find flotillas of Fiestas crowding the ports of southern England, with sealed orders to cross Citroenland at a moments notice, to display their displeasure at the very factory gates of the foreign johnnies.

TALKING OF SMUG..... | We can all remember the jokes being made about Skodas, can't we? And we all now know that those jokes are dated and totally irrelevant. Nevertheless, when I bought my Octavia about 18 months ago, I was impressed at the restraint shown by several of my friends and ex-colleagues on hearing the news. True, there was the occasional smirk, and, to be honest, three recorded Guffaws, but the general ambience was of kindness. So with the fullness of time, I permitted myself a private smugness, as the reputation of the Octavia and its little sister, the Fabia, gained in stature.

Now I see that Skoda have brought out the 'Roomster' to challenge for the title of the leading MPV. I trust that the person who is in charge of creating the names of the various brands isn't a top-salary earner (Roomster, I ask you!), but to be fair, the name reflects the ambitions of the vehicle. Having the high specification now expected of Skoda, it is claimed that the vehicle can be loaded with estate car proportions, but contained in a body only slightly bigger than a conventional supermini.

Skoda say that their design team have created, what is in effect, 2 cabin areas in the vehicle. One is the 'driving room' (for the driver,) and a 'living room' which is spacious and which offers VarioFlex seating which can be configured for either 2 or three passengers, and the seats can be moved forward and backwards, and even sideways to give 2 passengers more shoulder room.

The car was launched at the Frankfurt Motor Show 3 years ago, but only arrived here in September. Now, as an added incentive the Roomster has now been classified by insurance companies as being one of the most secure cars in the market, and also one the most affordable to run.

TAX-DODGERS CAUSING CONCERN | **A Government watchdog reports that the number of road users evading Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) is increasing.** In 2004 there were 3.4 percent VED evasions and 3.6 percent in 2005. Not very significant, you may think, but this represents a loss to the Treasury of £147 million, says the National Audit Office.

The same survey shows that the worst offenders are motorcyclists, and so this class of road user is being targeted in road side operations.

Edward Leigh MP is the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee Chairman, and he says, "The vast majority of drivers pay their road tax on time, but there is a persistent hard-core who believe they can get away without paying. Sadly, the evidence shows that they are right."

Of course the real repercussions to the general public occur when these drivers are involved in collisions.

At the start of all our Associate Courses (three each year), visual checks are made on the documentation of all newcomers

Keep Space!

Bits and Bobs – Alan Yates

SatNav System Leads Driver to Sand | An 80-year-old German driver ended up in a pile of sand after following instructions from his new car's satellite navigation system.

Volker Heinmann ignored the diversion signs on the busy A24 near Hamburg when all the other motorists on the road were turning off.

He said: "I thought the navigation system knew a shortcut and it seemed to be a good one, there was no other traffic on the road, so I sped up - and hit a pile of sand in the middle of the road."

The sand had been put on the road by construction workers who were upgrading the section of motorway near Reinbek, Germany.

Police spokesman Jan Kalisch said: "We had a call from the elderly man and found him half a mile along the closed section of road standing with his wife beside the car that was wedged firmly in the sand."

Both were unhurt, but the car had to be towed to a garage.

Related Links
Scotsman.com

Crash victim saved by breast implants | A Bulgarian car crash victim was saved by her huge breast implants, which acted as airbags to absorb the impact. Elena Marinova, 24, from Sofia, was involved in a full frontal crash with another car in the northern city of Ruse.

Despite both cars being written off and the other driver being badly hurt Marinova escaped serious injury thanks to her breast implants, according to the local newspaper. A police expert explained that the 40DD silicone implants absorbed the impact of the crash. "They worked just like airbags - protecting the victim's ribs and vital organs from damage," he added. "However they are not as safe as the real thing because they exploded, which airbags are not supposed to do."

Smoother ride and quieter surface as concrete section of M60 is resurfaced | A major maintenance scheme on the M60 at Stockport will give motorists a smoother ride, reduce road noise and improve safety. Work has been planned to take place mainly at night, to keep disruption for drivers to a minimum.

The work includes resurfacing the final concrete section of the motorway and replacing the existing steel safety barrier in the central reservation. A new continuous concrete barrier will be installed to help prevent 'cross-over' accidents and reduce maintenance. Additional work includes improvements to the drainage system and upgraded lighting.

The section, between Junctions 1 and 2 at Stockport, is one of the busiest sections of the M60, used by over 126,000 vehicles a day. Work started on Friday 13 October will continue until April 2007. To create a safe working environment with minimum disruption the Highways Agency is:

- Keeping three lanes open in each direction during the day
- Restricting the motorway to one lane between 9.00pm and 5.00am
- Introducing a contra flow system
- Ensuring clear signs are in place and an alternative route is signed, using the North West section of the M60.
- Introducing a temporary 40mph speed limit enforced by safety cameras.
- Ensuring slip road closures are signed in advance and clear diversions are marked.

John Mather, Highways Agency project sponsor, said: "This project will see the replacement of the final section of concrete motorway on the M60 Outer Ring Road. Drivers will benefit from a smoother ride and reduced road noise, which also benefits people who live alongside the motorway. Every effort has been made to keep delays to a minimum and road users are urged to keep to the 40mph speed limit for their own safety and the safety of road workers."

Related Links
Highways Agency

Watch Out, Teenager about !! | A snippet at the bottom of my daily paper quotes the following. As of January 2006 there were 213,194 18 - year olds and 276,501 19 - year olds in possession of a full UK driving licence.

Alan Yates Reports on the September Social Evening

MYTHS, MYSTERIES AND MISCONCEPTIONS | "Keep taking the Tablets", was the title of the talk by Stephen Freeborn, and my misconceptions were that this could be a bit boring with a capital B.

Questions like, why take with water? How do slow release tablets work? How do they know? etc, were around in my mind. There was also a possibility of Chemistry entering into it. But what a surprise I got, this man Stephen should have a spot on the comedy shows on TV. As good as Les Dawson, Mike Harding, and better than Dr. Hill, he of the big shirt collars.

Stephen began by relating his background, 39 years in the NHS, Senior Chemist / Dispenser at Bolton General Hospital, and now a Director of an IT company specialising in IT to the NHS. Impressive stuff.

His brief-case was placed on the table with most unable to see its contents, and then like some magician proceeded to bring everyday items of medication out of the case, all with an anecdote. For example, an old lady he visited who had all her medicine tablets in bottles on top of the gas fire, and all stood on their tops. She warned him to be careful as he lifted the bottles up. Only to reveal that each bottle had been sawn in half. To his question, why? "Well I can't open the tops can I", was the plaintive response. The child proof tops are only a problem to adults as we all know. But did you know you can ask the doctor or the chemist for ordinary bottle tops that are easier to open.

Many more details of amusing incidents had me almost in tears with laughter. The tales coming mostly non-stop, and so relevant to some of my experiences with older members of my family. Stephen also mentioned the fact that as patients we should take a greater interest in the medication prescribed to us. It is all too easy to accept the doctor's script, collect the tablets and continue to take them for the next 10 to 15 years without question. There is also a danger of medication producing side effects which then demand another tablet to counteract the first one, this then descending into a spiral of drug and counter drug. A relative of mine is on 18 tablets a day, something that on the face of it surely excessive.

The evening closed with a discussion on how the NHS is developing a paperless prescription service. Patients will be able to go on – line to their surgeries and order the prescription via the Internet. This could then be sent to the participating chemist to be made up and probably delivered direct to your front door. My own doctors are trying to offer this service by Christmas and then patients will be able to view their medical records on – line with the use of a password. It would also enable any computer in the world to access these records from the patients given password. Instant access to all the patient information.

This was a superb evening and I have to say the best one yet.

Road Safety Officers Call for a Time Change to Save Lives

LARSOA, the Local Authority Road Safety Officers' Association, along with RoSPA, are calling on the government to stop changing the clocks back an hour at the end of October as lighter evenings would save around 450 deaths and serious injuries on the roads.

The last Sunday in October is traditionally when the clocks are turned back an hour but LARSOA says the most recent government research shows that every autumn the road casualty rate rises especially for the most vulnerable road users such as children, pedestrians and cyclists.

Simon Ettinghausen, chair of LARSOA, explains: "Research shows lighter evenings would result in around 450 fewer deaths and serious injuries including between 104 and 138 fewer deaths. "There are more collisions in the afternoon rush hour than in the morning peak time. Motorists are more tired after they have been at work so their concentration levels are lower. Children usually go straight to school in the morning but may have a club or after-school activity to go to which increases their exposure to the road environment. Social trips are also generally made in the afternoons and evenings. Extra evening daylight would protect vulnerable road users by making them more visible to motorists."

LARSOA is championing the change to single/double summertime (SDST) which would mean the clocks do not go back an hour in the autumn. Time would remain at GMT plus one hour and in the spring the clocks would go forward one hour taking us to GMT plus two hours. The Association is seeking a two to three year trial of SDST so all the

implications can be assessed properly. A similar experiment was conducted in 1968-71 but the road environment, the amount of cars and people's travel habits have changed enormously since then. LARSOA spokesman David Frost says: "The government says it is committed to reducing deaths and serious injuries on the roads by 40% by 2010. Introducing double British summertime could go a long way towards reaching this target. "The government repeatedly fails to accept this, despite the fact it could have an immediate impact on the pain, grief and suffering of a significant number of families and communities throughout the country."

While there has been some opposition to this move, particularly in Scotland, there are several other important benefits:

- Major savings in energy and fuel costs
- Reduction of UK's energy consumption so helping achieve carbon targets for reducing emissions
- Increased opportunities for outdoor activities promoting fitness and health improvement
- A major advantage to vulnerable groups who are apprehensive about going out after dark.

Simon adds: "A reduction in burglaries and assault carried out in the evenings could be expected. The sports and leisure industries favour lighter evenings. More people would have the opportunity to participate, and moving an hour of daylight from morning to afternoon would benefit the tourism industry with an extension of the tourist season and a boost in tourist-related earning."

Think! - Be Seen!

Appeal for bright kids in Greater Manchester this winter | With clocks having gone back an hour on Sunday 29 October, the THINK! road safety campaign is reminding parents and children in Greater Manchester to Be Safe Be Seen as the nights draw in.

The clock change means brighter mornings but darker evenings and, in 2005, more than half of the accidents involving child pedestrians in the North West happened between 3pm and 6pm. Last year 149 child pedestrians were killed and seriously injured on roads in Greater Manchester. The Be Safe Be Seen campaign, which was launched by Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander, is urging children to be safer by being more visible. Douglas Alexander said:

"The number of children killed or seriously injured on our roads is falling every year but we do need to be extra careful in winter months. Over three quarters of children involved in traffic accidents last year were cycling or on foot so we need to help them stay visible in the dark and bad weather. At the same time, drivers also need to take extra care and look out for children."

The chairman of the North West branch of the local authority road safety officers association (LARSOA), Steven Whitehouse, said:

"Younger children love wearing bright clothes and reflective badges and strips and many of them will really enjoy getting dressed up in a way that will keep them safe from traffic and make them stand out to motorists. The advert is a brilliant way of getting children to understand the safety advice and it can be easily downloaded for parents who want to use it at home. Far too many of our children are hurt on the roads and we must all play our part in ensuring that they make it safely through the winter."

The THINK! campaign has produced the following top tips for children on how to stay safe when out and about this winter:

Be Safe Be Seen - Top Tips

- Make sure you can be easily seen, especially at night, on dark days and in bad weather.
- Bright or fluorescent clothes show up best by day, even in dull or misty weather.
- In the dark, reflective material is best and shows up in car headlights - remember fluorescent clothing doesn't work after dark. You can put reflective tape on your coat or school bag to help you be seen by drivers.
- It is against the law to cycle at night without a white front light, a red back light and a red reflector at the back, so make sure that your bike is properly equipped and working.
- Cross the road at the safest place possible e.g. zebra, pelican and patrolled crossings. Remember to use the Green Cross Code: Stop, Look, Listen, Live.
- If you're out at night, choose routes that are well-lit by streetlights and cross the road at well-lit places.
- If there is no pavement and you have to walk on the road, always face the oncoming traffic - this is particularly important in poor light or in the dark.
- Find out about 'walking buses' where children walk in groups and are more visible by contacting your child's school or your local council.

Related Links

[Stop, Look, Listen, Live](#)
[Think! Road Safety](#)

Group Regalia

The Group is offering Members the following quality garments for sale, to both promote the Group and so that we look the part at Group events:

- T-Shirt - £7.00
- Polo-Shirt - £8.50
- Sweatshirt - £12.50
- Fleece - £20.00

The garments will be stylishly embroidered with the RoADAR circular logo plus the words 'Manchester Group' in gold on the left breast. All items are available in bottle green or black, plus a white option for the T - or Polo-shirts. However the RoADAR (bottle) green is the preferred colour although green may not suit everyone! In addition, you may want your garments personalised with

your name discreetly embroidered under the logo for just £2.30 per item.

Order Forms are available on our web site: www.safedriversandrider.org.uk.

If you would like to place an order please complete and return to Lee Davies. Please make cheques payable to 'Manchester Group'.

Alternatively, please e-mail Lee if you would like an e-order form to complete!

Lee Davies
Vice-Chairman
leedavies1@ntlworld.com

Tony's Quiz – Tony Richardson

TONY'S QUIZ, NOVEMBER 2006

1. What action should you take when you find a following vehicle driving very close behind you on a motorway?
2. Give one example where speed can affect your vision?
3. When should you generally avoid overtaking on a motorway?
4. When are you permitted to cross or straddle a double white line?
5. When CAN you enter a box junction?

ANSWERS TO TONY'S QUIZ, OCTOBER 2006

1. **Q** | Give an example where speed can affect your vision.
A | Your ability to take in foreground detail decreases with speed and increases as you slow down. In areas of high traffic density, such as town centres, you must slow down to be able to take in all the information necessary to drive safely.

2. **Q** | What is the range of signals you can give to other road users?
A | Indicators – brakelights – headlights – hazard warning lights – arm signals – courtesy signals (raising a hand to thank other drivers).
3. **Q** | If your car has anti-lock braking (ABS) apart from slowing the vehicle to the desired speed, what is the other advantage of the system?
A | The ABS will ensure that steering control should be maintained
4. **Q** | What is the national speed limit on a dual carriageway?
A | 70mph
5. **Q** | What is meant by the two-second rule?
A | Allow at least a two-second gap between you and the vehicle in front on roads carrying fast traffic. The gap should be at least double on wet roads and increased still further on icy roads. **Remember that the only space you control when driving is the space in front of your vehicle.**

Social Calendar 2006 & 2007

Forthcoming Manchester Group Evening Social Events during 2006 and 2007 include:

Tuesday 14th November 2006. **Adrian Farrow**, a barrister on Manchester's Northern Circuit, will give a light-hearted and entertaining presentation on "Lifting the Wig - a glimpse into a barrister's life in crime".

VENUE | The talk starts at **8:00pm** and will last about an hour. We meet at the **Automobile Association, Old Road, Off Stockport Road, Cheadle**,

close to the Junction 2 slip road of the M60, known locally as Roscoe's Roundabout.

This is a limited access slip road with no access from the Stockport direction. If there are any location difficulties please ring John Holland on 0161 449 7757 for further directions.

2007 EVENTS

Next year all social events will be held quarterly at **Woodley Civic Hall**, Hyde Road, Woodley, Stockport, SK6 1QG. The meetings will continue to

be held on the second Tuesday of the month starting at 8pm and finishing at or before 9.30pm.

Tuesday 9th January 2007. Stuart Lovatt, Road Safety Action Plan Coordinator at the Highways Agency will give an insight into his work.

Tuesday 10th April 2007. Speaker to be arranged.

Tuesday 10th July 2007. Speaker to be arranged.

Tuesday 9th October 2007. Speaker to be arranged.

Skid Pan Training, December 9th 2006

The Group have booked a skid pan training session at Staffordshire Police Skid Pan, New Road, Hixon, for Saturday 9th December 2006. There are only 12 places available at £42.50 each on this training event, so book early. If you are interested, please contact Simon Smart on 01565 654267. If there is no reply at this number, leave a message, a contact number and your name.

Alternatively you can email him at: 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, October

First: Number 2, **Doris Barnes**, drawn by Tony Richardson.

Second: Number 15, **Geoff Hibbert**, drawn by Peter Hesketh.

TEST SUCCESSES

Congratulations go to **Stuart Cummings**, who attained SILVER. Well done.



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

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