

April 2026



Newsletter

Cardiff Group of Advanced Motorists
Affiliated to IAMRoadSmart

Hello fellow Advanced Drivers and Members of Cardiff IAM



Dear Members

A bit of a bumper edition this month, with some articles that Cardiff veterans may recall from a few years ago but which we are republishing for the benefit of Gwent transferees who have yet to meet some of our esteemed Committee Members. We also have some input from successful test candidates for the initial Advanced Test and from our most recent Masters candidate. I sincerely hope that their experiences will encourage you in your own efforts, and perhaps also motivate you to 'market' the Group to friends and family. I know that David Palmer keeps telling his adult kids that he would feel a lot better about the safe carriage of his beautiful grandchildren if they took the test. He also assures me that he's not paying for them.....

As summer approaches, Jazz is exploring some social events, and we hope to invite you to join us on a drink drive campaign of a slightly different type. Keep your eyes peeled.

Just a quick plea to budding authors out there – your Editor's experience in another life in respect to newsletters was that they tended to be completely written by him. This is YOUR newsletter – please take time to write or even just propose subject matter for articles. He would love to hear from you at Newsletter@cardiffiam.co.uk.

In that vein, can I ask that Associates and new passers PLEASE write something about your experiences (before, during and after the test), and submit them for the Newsletter. We have some such articles within this edition, so our thanks to all the wonderful contributors this month – they have made this bigger than HQ's magazine (if you take the ads out...) This will benefit not only the current members in terms of content but will also allow the Group to market the benefits of membership and advanced driver training. And above all this is a *social* group as well as a road safety organisation, so we'd like to know more about you as a person.

Finally, I'd just like to mention that three Cardiff Masters had a chat on the 5th of February and all concluded they'd learned more, and were enjoying their skills to a higher degree, *since* passing their Masters tests, possibly because the pressure of learning/passing has freed up their minds to truly benefit from their training.

Food for thought.

Ken Abram

Chair, Cardiff Group of Advanced Motorists

Help Required!!

Members may recall receiving a request for volunteers to resource the group's stand at the Classic Car Show at Cardiff FC on the 28th of June. To date only Committee Members have volunteered. The few of those who have volunteered cannot possibly create and run the whole day alone. Please consider whether you can volunteer just a couple of hours on that date. Let Jazz know if you can at events@cardiffiam.co.uk and she will sort out a roster for the day that suits you.

What's on?

All our regular meetings take place on the first Thursday of the month (February, April, June, October, December) at 7.30pm in Lisvane Memorial Hall, Heol Y Delyn, Cardiff.

Proposed events for 2026 are currently:

- **4th June** Sara Head (Paralympian) on her story and how it affects her motoring
- **1st October** Meet the Examiners
- **3rd Dec** Annual General Meeting

In addition

- **28th June** Cardiff Classic Car Show – we intend to have a stall there

Test Pass News!

Congratulations to our latest Master, Haydn. Haydn took his test in the new 'centre' of Moreton-in-the-Marsh, following Robbie Downing's handover to Scott Evans. He has written the following article:

Journey to Masters by Haydn



Like most people I had driven for many years and never undertaken any further training at all until, I am embarrassed to admit, I was 'invited' to attend a speed awareness course! Whilst frustrated at the prospect and not looking forward to the occasion at all, I actually found I enjoyed thinking about driving with a completely different mindset. It enabled me to view driving with a different attitude and to see it as a skill which could be continually honed and perfected. Previously it was just a chore to get me from A to B.

After the speed awareness course I Googled "further driving courses" and, at some point, came across the IAM and so I contacted the Cardiff Group. Once signed up I was swiftly put in touch with my Observer and the fun began.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Associate-to-Member process of totally re-evaluating my driving, particularly learning to get the most out of my vehicle and my experience as a driver. It improved my confidence and made me a far more progressive driver than I had been. I was conscious of the

need to keep the standard up and signed up as a Fellow, which meant I was to be retested every three years. Additionally, I was conscious of the Masters and always interested in this as a next step.

In April of 2025, the Group held a presentation by David Palmer, Ken Abram and Steve Davies regarding the Masters. It was clear to see that the three of them had got a great deal out of the process and this inspired me to go for it myself. Upon enquiring I discovered that a fellow member, Roger, was also interested and we were put in touch with each other to support each other through the process. Steve, our Chief Observer, was kind enough to accompany me on a couple of drives before I made the final decision that the Masters was something I wanted to do, and he encouraged me by sharing his thoughts regarding how it could further benefit my driving.

Once I called the IAM and actually joined the Masters program I was told I would be contacted by my assigned mentor, David Palmer, within a few days. I actually received a phone call from him in about 15 minutes and in moments we had agreed the date and time of our first run. The first thing I realised is it is a significantly higher standard of driving from my previous experience, with all knowledge and skills needing to be perfected to achieve the desired results. Over the course of six runs I was taught the principles of cornering, progress versus restraint, 'proper' commentary, overtaking practice, and studied in order to obtain a detailed knowledge of Roadcraft and the Highway Code - amongst other things.

The Masters program has definitely improved my driving further by making me a much safer and considered driver, while I get even more pleasure from driving than ever before.

I am relieved to say I passed the test in December 2025 and received a detailed report of how I can improve further. I would recommend the Masters program to anyone who has enjoyed the process of becoming an advanced driver and wishes to improve their skills further.

Update February 2026

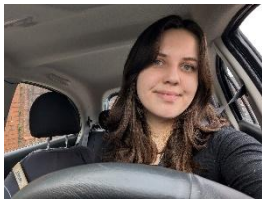
I would genuinely say that since my test in December I have actually enjoyed driving and applying the skills I have been taught a great deal more. Over recent months I have needed to undertake a number of journeys through Mid-Wales and I have had many opportunities to apply various principles of IPSGA. Some examples I have noticed are observations have improved by 'looking for the cross view' at corners, and I have been far more confident when approaching an overtake opportunity. No more needing to sit behind others on the northern stretches of the A470!

Overall, it has made my driving far more fluent, progressive and enjoyable.

Other Passes

Congratulations, too, to **Luke Morgan**, who took his test in February and achieved a Pass under the examining eyes of David Williams, Chair of Hereford and Worcester Group. Luke's test was carried out in the Usk/Raglan/Monmouth locality, which had coincidentally been the location of his last lesson although there's nothing sinister in that because he lives there. Luke writes: "It was a great experience and a valuable opportunity to develop my skills. With David's guidance, I've made significant improvements to my driving and feel much more confident going forward."

Daisy Tipping also passed, gaining a F1RST – here’s what she has to say:



“A few years ago, I was rear-ended in a traffic collision. Although I trusted my own driving, I was anxious about others driving on the road. Through the advanced driving course and thanks to my instructor Peter, I was able to learn to properly anticipate others' actions on the road, set myself up to be in the best position possible, and have full confidence in my driving abilities. I was able to get a F1RST on my test, but more importantly, I was able to feel safe driving again.”

Congratulations also to **Ali Carpenter, Adam Knapp, Harvey Swartz** and **Oliver Gidney**, all of whom have passed their tests in the first two months of 2026.

Good luck for their oncoming tests to **John Cranna** and **Matthew Wallace**.

Oh Brother! by David Palmer

I was at a family function a while ago, and while I do not specifically recall how it came up we found ourselves chatting about advanced drivers’ and Roadcraft’s (etc.) advice that one should only use indicators when someone would benefit. Naturally it was me that promoted this contention, but my brother refuted its sagacity, saying that ‘insurers’ and ‘police officers’ advised him that the best way to drive was through the development and application of the fourth level of skill, that of unconscious competence. As you know there are four levels, as follows:

- Unconscious Incompetence. You don’t know what you don’t know.
- Conscious Incompetence. You now know what you don’t know.
- Conscious Competence. You know what you know but you have to think about it while doing it.
- Unconscious Competence – the state of flow, when you can do things without thinking.

I argued that relying on unconscious competence while driving was asking for a trip to the hospital for you or A.N. Other, while he started to argue that it was the best form of skills application. I suggested that reliance on other people to do things ‘right’ while you unconsciously thought you were doing the same was fraught with danger.

In the end, I think we came to a compromise (and his sources began to change form and specificity). I suggested, as does Reg Local, that everything happening below the dashboard/eyeline is something that many of us learn to do unconsciously, but that taking, using and giving information required conscious application of thought if we weren’t going to end up in the ‘I signalled, he should have seen me even though I took no notice of his existence’ debate at the bodywork-and-body-parts strewn roadside. And ‘I *think* I signalled, and *probably* did signal, because I was relying on my unconscious to drive’ may not be the best defence to a traffic violation or accident-related charge.

The reason we are taught to signal ONLY when someone else should or may benefit is that application of that skill REQUIRES us to have looked. Front, back, scanned views all taken into consideration, rather than ‘just’ signalling because we did when we learned to drive. Arguably the same principle as NOT relying on Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) to work 100% of the time. TUG, and signalling Roadcraft-style, keep the driver in the loop. ‘Just’ signalling delegates safe passage to luck.

So even if anyone suggests I am NOT an advanced driver because I think about what I'm doing rather than switch to George, please don't mind if I carry on the way that Roadcraft – written by driving experts and not 'a copper who I met' or some liability-evading insurer – says I should.

Jazzmine Roberts – Your Events Co-ordinator

I prefer to be called Jazz rather than Jazzmine. I am the only female and the loudest one of the Committee Team. You can usually find me in the Kitchen of Lisvane Memorial Hall, making the tea/coffee on Group meetings. I did have my own business as a Complementary Therapist for seven years but gave up during COVID. I now work full time for the NHS. I am married to Kevin who is the Vicechair of the Group.

I started playing the flute when I was at the age of ten. At the age of sixteen my parents bought me a solid silver flute. When I moved to Middleborough, my flute was stolen and I never had it replaced. Fast forward thirty plus years, I was given a silver flute by my husband, for a Christmas present in 2024. I have achieved exam grades 1-3 in one year, pass, merit, and distinction. I was also able to play solo "I Dreamed A Dream" from Les Misérables at our Vows renewal event last year.

It took me six years to pass my "normal" driving test. From the age of seventeen I started to learn to drive and I did not pass my test until the age of twenty-three. I undertook my driving test in several different areas. I did not have any family members to take me out to practice driving. I was reliant on one hour lesson, once a week.

The worst place I took my test was in Cambridge. My driving instructor could sit in the back of the car in those days. On my test I went into the back of a Police car on a busy and confusing roundabout. I have never seen an examiner change colour so quickly. He shouted at me extremely loudly "Get out of the car and stand on the pavement, you stupid girl." My driving instructor, on the other hand, was excellent. He came across to me, gave me a tissue, and said to me not to worry, I will sort everything out. Are you OK? The Police Officer came across to me firstly to check that I was OK too. By which time I was sitting on the pavement crying my eyes out and shaking. The driving examiner did not check on me. From that day, I stopped driving for about two years and was terrified to get behind the wheel of a car, again.

Cambridge is not a place I would like to visit, anytime soon.

I moved from Cambridge to Wales and my Mum encouraged me to start driving lessons again with the promise of a car once I had passed my test. Eventually I passed my test and never looked back. I now love driving anywhere and everywhere. My first car was a second hand, white, old style, Nissan Micra. Registration plate H976 MNY (Honey, as I called her). Isn't it funny how come, nearly everyone, can remember their first car and its registration plate?

I joined the Cardiff IAM Group as an Associate back when "God was a boy" and passed my Advanced Driving Test, first time. My examiner was Lyndsey Williams. He made me feel so at ease whilst doing my advanced test, it did not feel that I was "on test" at all. In fact, I talked all the way through my test. Poor Lyndsey.

The following year, I was voted onto the Committee as a general committee member. I changed roles within the Committee over several years and took a break from the Group for two years. I have been Membership, Secretary, Associate Co-Ordinator, Tea/Coffee maker, Meet and Greet and everything else in-between.

I was unanimously voted in by the Committee as the Events Officer, last year.

Things I like are playing my flute, chatting, helping anyone (if I can), pub quizzes, setting out of Treasure hunts (with loads of help), being wined and dined, surprises (only nice ones) organising various things in life, dog sitting and driving.

Things I would like to do include driving a car fast on a racetrack. Going on a skid pan. Spending half a day in a Police response car chasing another car. I would absolutely love a Police car to come up to my house and put me into the back of their car. What would the neighbours think!!!! I would also like to be (only) sitting the Orchestra pit during Les Misérables or Phantom of the Opera in London.

A Visit from The Opposition

At our regular meeting in Lisvane on the 5th of February, we were entertained and educated by Gary Williams of the GoSafe Partnership, a.k.a Speed Enforcement camera Man. Gary explained how the Partnership consists of Community Roads Police Officers and PCSOs, Community Speed Watch (volunteers) and the other emergency services work together to keep our roads safer. For his own sins, he is part of the department which accepts complaints about speeding from the public and decides whether or not certain criteria justify their attendance in an enforcement capacity. In January 2026 they received 58 such complaints, and the criteria include collision rates, speeding offence rates and community factors such as the presence of schools, care homes, and so on.

They do NOT deal with, arrange, consult upon or build road calming measures. That's the remit of the local authority.

Almost as soon as that was out of the way, he was asked of the prosecution thresholds for speeders..... okay, now we know where we stand.

So you know, in 20mph zones they don't prosecute/take action until you get to 26mph, and in 30mph zones it's set at 37mph. Interestingly-and-I-wish-I'd-known-at-the-time, they did NO enforcement in such areas during the shambolic period between the imposition of the lower national limit in 2023, and 6 months after.

To give you an idea of how bad it was: in my locality they took down some speed limit signs in anticipation of fitting the new ones. So, for quite a lengthy period, depending on which direction you came from and through which you entered Llanfrechfa Way in Cwmbran, with a Boating Lake, shops and a number of other community amenities directly attached, the speed limit was 60mph, 20mph, 40 mph or 30 mph. No, I didn't. But it was tempting.

Gary also mentioned the Fatal 4, those offences/behaviours which cause or impact upon the severity of accidents, those being speeding, seat belt absence, drink and drugs, and mobile phone

usage. Which their cameras CAN see and which they WILL follow up. A myth was dealt with – for a long time, there has been NO law requiring a camera enforcement sign be placed where camera vans can sit.

Another snippet – when a road is touted for a speed limit change (such as now, when LAs are debating returns to 30mph in some places) the safety cameras will NOT enforce the speed limit in being until the decision is made. And camera vans are only operational when the window through which the camera points is OPEN. It must be open. Gary also explained that while rain CAN affect readings through refraction of the light/laser, the way the machines operate it's not all that common or reliable a defence.

Finally, for those with a nefarious plan, a Speed Awareness Course is offered to offenders with no current pointage when their speed is between 35 (or 37?) and 42 MPH.

Except in bloody Dorset, as I discovered to my cost.....

All in all it was an interesting and informative evening, and we thank Gary for telling us the unvarnished truth.

Road Safety Strategy

On the 7th of January the Government announced its latest Road Strategy, in a document that can be obtained by (right) clicking on [this link](#). The overriding objectives include achieving a 65% reduction in road deaths/serious injuries and a 70% reduction in child deaths and injuries. Noble objectives, obviously, and ones we would like to see achieved. Except.....

Two things come to mind as a goal setter, informed by the likes of Tony Robbins, Stephen Covey and Ken Abram. The first is that any goal that can be massively affected by external influences is unlikely to be achieved. If there is to be any likelihood of success in those goals, people have to change and that, I'm afraid, is unlikely to occur to the degree needed. We all travel around counting the cars speeding in 20mph limits up the chuff of the car in front, while using a mobile phone. In order for the goals to be achieved, 70% of those fools need to change their behaviours. And given how few pedestrians read the Highway Code you can see what I mean. There are too many variables to achieve these goals: similar goals have been set before and the only thing we can say for sure is that the numbers haven't changed, although the number of vehicles on the road has increased so the number of accidents per mile is probably lower. Perhaps that would be a better metric – compare the injury numbers to miles, and reduce that proportion. That way, when the numbers stay the same as they have for umpteen years you may still see an improvement – just not that big an improvement.

Secondly, if you ARE going to set a massive, unachievable goal relating to reduction of deaths, why not go for the full 100%. If you're going to fail, fail big!

There are several themes, and some of them did make me giggle a bit. The first one was 'Support Road Users' and consisted of several consultations. Ladies and Gents, consultations never saved anyone's life. The *results* might. Anyhow....

They are also considering 18 new safety technologies for mandatory fitting to vehicles: although this document doesn't make it clear if that just means new cars, that does appear to be the case.

There are suggestions on mandatory learning periods (and driving hours) for learners, who probably can't wait to spend more money on learning to drive. Which begs the question – there is no mandate to require ONLY ADIs can teach, so what happens to those who teach their kids for free? How are their hours going to be monitored? Or is this just another cash-cow designed to help ADIs earn a better living while also keeping poorer drivers on the bus?

There is a suggestion that drivers should be open to Lifelong Learning, but at no point in this document does it suggest advanced driver training. DUH! There's a bit about 'Insuring infrastructure is safe' and my first thought was 'Shouldn't that be Ensuring?' (*Our Membership Co-Ordinator Graham Booth has confirmed that they have used an Americanism! Ed.*) A cynic would read some of the suggestions as an excuse to close residential roads to traffic a la Khan in London and reduce speed limits, thus reducing the enjoyment driving brings.

There will be increased enforcement options, none of which we need concern ourselves with, unless you have a silly number plate and know it.

Of course, you and I support increased road safety and reduced casualties. But as a keen driver, I would rather that was done by focusing on improved driving and better enforcement, rather than restrictive new practices and laws that spoil things for the rest of us.

Anyway it's a big document with lots of potential discussion points, both good and bad. Enjoy!

My Experience as a Brand New Associate by Keith Ingram

Hi. I live in Penarth and I have done a grand total of two observed runs so far.

Why did I decide to do an advanced motoring course? Well, I took my driving test 50 years ago in 1976. I started driving my first car, a Ford Anglia 105E, on quiet mid Wales roads. There was a temporary blanket speed limit in place of 50mph on A roads following the 1973 oil crisis. Motorways were still 70mph, but it was years before I saw one of those. At that time there was a total of just 14 million cars on Britains roads so a quiet, relaxed, quite gentle driving experience.

Fast forward 50 years and there are 42.5 million vehicles on Britains roads, 3 times as many as when I took my test. Modern life is busy, many people live pressured, time limited lives, and this is often reflected in some quite impatient even aggressive driving.

About 15 years ago I took a role in social services. This is a profession where one of the things we encourage in our staff is reflective practice. We think about how we've approached situations and clients and discuss with colleagues and management to improve our practice. I became aware that as I approached 50 years of driving my technique behind the wheel would probably benefit from some of this reflective practice. Techniques that were dependent on the reactions and observation skills of a much younger man were beginning to let me down. I found I was starting to experience little surprises.

“Where did you come from? I didn’t realise you were behind me. Ooh, is that the speed limit on this road, when did it change? Nothing dangerous, no traffic offences or accidents, just not as safe as I once was.

So I decided to explore a course in advanced driving. Principally to become a safer driver, I also wanted to be a calm, unworried, safe driver. Yes of course I’ll take the exam, and I will make every effort to pass it especially to support my observer. But my principal objective is to become a safer driver passing the exam is just the means to evidence that.

I don’t really know what I was expecting from the course. I suppose I thought it would be a bit like a teenager’s driving lesson only to a higher standard. Of course it isn’t really like that. I can already drive, what this course does is seek to change the way I drive and so turn me into a better driver.

I won’t list all the many faults and bad habits that I came with. This is supposed to be a short article, not War and Peace.

Things I like.

I like the system of car control as a concept. I would struggle to try and memorise a different set of behaviours for all the various hazards such as a junction, a roundabout, bends, motorway etc, etc. Having a system means I can focus on the system, hopefully get that drilled in, and then it’s about how to apply it to each situation.

For me I like the emphasis and priority on safety. All the various manoeuvres are “when safe to do so”. That’s the core reason I am doing the course.

I like that it is a process. I am making slow progress, but I trust in the process and believe that it will be effective even for me. I like the little calm times at the side of the road where I have the time and concentration to talk with the observer and try and take it all in without having to think about driving a car at the same time.

I like the reflection afterwards over a coffee. Time to sit and put it all into context and see if my opinion on how well I drove and the observer’s match.

Things I am worried by at this early stage?

Thinking about everything that I need to be doing and stitching it all together. I rarely get all the phases right in one go. I will not have lifted off early enough and be braking into a roundabout. I will be changing up while still turning the wheel. My position will be too far out from the kerb. I have no clue what the last road sign I passed was. I’m at that stage where I am still anxious and nervous. I will focus on what was just said to me and make an error and then think about the error I’ve just made not the road ahead of me. The cognitive load is at or just beyond the edge of my ability to concentrate. I feel a bit like I would driving while talking on a hands-free phone, I can just about do it but it is not good. Adding in spoken thoughts lasts about 2 sentences at this stage before I have to stop and focus back on the road. I know that practice and drilling will improve all this. It is just a lot to try and do it all at once, but I am confident.

Making progress.

I am by nature quite a relaxed and gentle driver. I don't rush, I don't tend to dive into gaps, I'm okay with waiting a few seconds while a car goes round the roundabout ahead of me. I am quite happy to miss progress opportunities. For me, a speed limit is just that, a limit not a target to be attained. I don't dawdle along but the progress I want to make is sometimes a bit less than the maximum possible progress. I can be found on a dry road 4 or 5 seconds back from the car in front not 2 seconds. We are up near the speed limit, I have no plans to overtake, so I will be too far back. I will be doing 45mph in a 50 limit, no traffic behind me to hold up, but yes, I could take the opportunity to go faster.

It's something I am sure I will get over as it will be needed for the test. But I think it will have to wait a bit. For now I am still finding it all a bit of a struggle to remember and apply everything. I will be arriving at a roundabout still concentrating on waiting till the very end to decide on what gear I need and then finally changing gear. My attention is on getting that right not on looking for a gap. For now I need those extra seconds just for safety.

After what is just 2 sessions, I am in a typical place for this very early stage of learning any new skill. I feel uncomfortable because after 50 years things have changed. I'm therefore a little less confident in the car, it all feels a bit less safe as I struggle to think about all these new things and I am making lots of errors. However, this is the process, and I know that this is something thousands of drivers have done before me. So, I am determined to enjoy it and come out the other end a better safer driver.

Ed Griffith – Your Treasurer

I don't regard myself as Welsh or English, having been born in Maidstone of a Cockney mother and North Welsh father, and subsequently having lived in Northampton, Bowness on Solway (near Carlisle), Matlock, Taunton, Penarth, Haverfordwest, Norwich, Wasserburg am Inn (near Munich), Llandaff and back to Penarth again. In the early '50s I remember a Spitfire, still an operational aircraft, crashing onto the beach behind our house in Bowness, and visiting air shows at RAF Anthon each summer, which probably influenced my later career choices.

After spending 5 years at primary school in Matlock, we moved to South Wales because of the dust in the atmosphere from quarrying causing me breathing problems. I was then immediately despatched to boarding school in Taunton for 5 years, whilst my parents settled in Penarth. Subsequently, they moved to Haverfordwest, where my mother took up a post as Head of Geography at the local girls' grammar school. My abiding memory of that period was joining my mother's field trip to Austria with 60 mid-teenage girls from the school, whilst my brother, father and I were the only males on the trip... what would later become known as a "target-rich environment" in the film Top Gun! (Sadly, I was a little bit too young to appreciate my luck!)

Having learnt to play the piano whilst at primary school, and cello at Taunton, later, when a local pop group in Penarth bought an old second hand organ, I was invited to join them. A couple of years later, having bought a Hammond organ, I made it a full time job and spent much time touring in the UK and Europe, interspersed with backing the American soul singers, Johnny Johnson and the Bandwagon for 4 months on their UK tour to promote their latest single. After that, we spent 6 months in Switzerland and Germany, where I met my wife-to-be in Munich.



No face, just hair!

We hadn't made much money as musicians, and feeling that being married imposed certain responsibilities on me, I got a couple of local jobs, before I grew up and decided to join the Royal Air Force. Not having the scientific background for pilot duties, after officer training, I trained to be a Fighter Controller, where I spent much of my time playing at war games with RAF and USAF Phantoms and Lightnings over the North Sea. Our first son was born in Norwich, but in the defence cuts of 1975, I found myself out of work, so we moved to Germany. The plan was to learn German and I was offered a job in Munich with Avis car hire, on condition I was fluent in the language. I got a job in the local factory, did evening classes and watched the news on TV, with sub-titles, all the while speaking only German until 6 months later I was fluent enough to go for the job with Avis. Sadly, the manager didn't think I would learn the language in time, so the job was already taken.

Our second son was born in Wasserburg and after having an accident in work, necessitating 6 operations and 9 months in hospital to transplant a finger, we moved back to Penarth and I became a Health and Safety Adviser with British Gas, naturally with personal experience of what happens when it all goes wrong!

During this time, I joined the local Air Cadets squadron as a Civilian Instructor, was promoted to uniformed service when they found out that I had already been an officer, and soon joined 634 VGS (Volunteer Gliding School) at RAF St Athan as a supernumerary glider pilot, later instructor. This didn't go down well with my wife, who decided that divorce was the only solution to my absence at weekends at RAF St Athan.

A couple of years later, at a local Air Cadet squadron function, I met my new wife-to-be, who was related to the squadron's Treasurer. After we married, her mother died, leaving her a bungalow, so we decided to sell our 2 houses and her mother's bungalow and buy a bigger house where her son and my 2 sons, who visited on weekends, could live.

With spells travelling around England, Scotland and Wales for work with British Gas, later Transco and National Grid, I took voluntary redundancy in 2003. By this time, I had risen through the ranks in the gliding school, through Chief Flying Instructor, to Commanding Officer in 1996, with promotion to Squadron Leader rank. Shortly after taking redundancy from paid employment with

my company pension providing enough to live on, I made running the gliding school a full time job. Soon afterwards, in 2004 we were re-designated 634 VGS (Volunteer Gliding Squadron) and converted from conventional gliders to powered ones. These aircraft were single engined, side-by-side, 2 seater training aircraft with long wings, which gave you a better choice of crash location if the engine failed in flight! We frequently flew to Swansea airport, where our sister squadron, 636 VGS was based, and for 6 months operated there when the runway at St Athan was being refurbished and extended.



Swansea Airport. 634 and 634 VGS staff and aircraft, with control caravan and Land Rovers. Ed is front row, second right, with Bertie, our Squadrons mascot.

In 2014, shortly after I achieved a total of 1000 hours flying time in my 6 pilot's log books, the Queen took my aircraft off me and told me I was too old to continue flying as I'd reached retirement age. This was a catastrophe for me as flying had been my life for 32 years, with my own toys, sorry, aircraft to play with and teaching youngsters to fly. There was only one thing for it... I needed another skill to learn and teach, and another toy to substitute for my aircraft. I'd always enjoyed driving, both in this country and Europe, so the chance to train to advanced driver level would be a good substitute for flying, followed by observing as a substitute for flying instruction. The replacement toy turned out to be a 1968 model MGC GT with just over 14,000 miles recorded after a complete rebuild in the late '80s. We had downsized house after I took redundancy and I bought a smaller house in Penarth, whilst my wife bought a holiday cottage in a little village between Axminster and Honiton in Devon. Once I had bought the MG, I joined the nearest club in Devon, which turned out to be the Exeter MGOC (MG Owners Club), of which I'm still a member and regularly attend their monthly meetings and annual charity run.



Sqn Ldr Ed Griffith, 1000 hours

In between spending time in Devon, I joined the nearest MGOC to Penarth, in Bridgend, where I organised charity runs, and did charity challenges on "Drive it Day", where historic vehicle owners are encouraged to get out in their classics so the public can see them in action. Rather than go with the club to a local pub for a Sunday lunch in the MG, I decided to do a longer run... Penarth to York and back from dawn to dusk, a total of 638 miles. I raised £350 from club members for the club charity for that, so the next year, I drove to the 4 corners of Wales in one day, a total of 548 miles, to raise £2000 for Blood Bikes Wales, followed after Covid lockdowns ended with a run to the 4 helicopter sites in Wales in one day, only 402 miles this time, to raise another £2000 for Wales Air Ambulance.

Meanwhile, having trained as a Local Observer with Cardiff IAM, I started observing in early 2018, and found myself consecutively acting as Events Organiser, Newsletter Editor, Treasurer and for a short while Membership Secretary when no-one else wanted to do these jobs.



My MG CGT on display at the IAM members' meeting, Silverstone 2017. Board at rear of car shows route around Wales, with photos of charity run for Blood Bikes Wales

At the same time, when the whole committee of Bridgend MGOC retired or resigned, I took on the role of Area Secretary, temporary Treasurer and general dogsbody for the club for several months until a committee could be re-formed.

This year, when IAM RoadSmart decided that they no longer wanted local observers, I was forced to study the books and train to become a National Observer. In this respect, Steve Davies, our new Chief Observer was of immense help, by joining me for observed runs and providing me with feedback on my observing skills, until I was able to take the exam, fortunately successfully. This has led to improvements in the results for my recent trainees, the last 3 of whom achieved F1RSTs on their tests.

I still keep in touch with many of my former flying students and staff, several of whom are pilots in the armed forces and who send me pictures of their various visits around the world. Indeed, one of them, a test pilot, accompanies me as navigator on the Exeter MGOC's annual charity run each year. I don't think she'll mind me saying that although she's an exceptional pilot, her navigation skills on the road are not always 100% accurate! In between, I enjoy helping Associates train to be advanced drivers, and still keep in touch with some of them.

Finally, at my suggestion, a few of my MG-owning friends and I formed what I suggested we call the OFBC (Old Farts Breakfast Club), where we occasionally meet for breakfast, coffee, lunch or other occasion for a friendly chat and the chance to drive our MGs. I can't think of a better way of spending retirement...



Who, me or the car? My dear wife, Lynn on a charity run with the New Forest MGOC, en route to Beaulieu.

Is Simpler Better, by Ed Griffith

Some time ago the added complexity of modern car controls was brought home to me when I was out in my 1968 MG CGT with my wife. She said to me that she preferred travelling with me in the MG more than in my 2015 Ford Focus, because I spent less time fiddling with the controls, so she felt safer when my concentration was wholly on the road ahead. I couldn't argue with that point, so decided to analyse why.

As I had been adjusting the heating in the MG, I decided to compare the controls for that in both cars.



ABOVE LEFT: MG dashboard and console RIGHT: Heater controls, temp-top, direction-bottom

You can see from the photos that the two knobs for heating control in the MG are simple to operate without having to look at them. The upper knob controls temperature; from the OFF position, it's turned clockwise to increase the temperature. The lower knob controls the direction of airflow; from the OFF position, it's turned one notch anti-clockwise for heating the car interior, and two notches for screen demist. It is possible to position this knob between the two notches for a bit of heating to both screen and interior. The only other controls for heat are on the central console...

toggle switches for heated rear window and heater fan. Air conditioning is by electric window winder on the door, or quarterlight windows front and rear (remember them?!). Thus, when a change in temperature is required, it is possible to control this without taking the eyes off the road ahead as all controls can be found and operated by feel alone.

Now, let's take a look at what Ford has presented me with in the Focus...



It is immediately obvious that the controls are much more complex than those in the MG. Also, as they are all push-buttons, it is not possible to change settings without looking at the panel to identify which switch is needed. Thus, with 2 separate buttons for fan speed, 4 for window heating, 3 for direction of airflow, 2 for left and right side temperature control, 2 for aircon, 2 for seat heating and one for auto control, any adjustments made on the move involve taking the eyes off the road.

Much comment has been made in recent times about the complexity of infotainment in modern cars and manufacturers have been castigated for adding driving distractions by pandering to the desires of younger drivers who insist on being internet-connected whilst on the road. However, in my opinion, they have made the controls of cars much more complicated too, and made them so bland and similar to each other that drivers have to look at them in order to adjust them, thus adding to the distractions.

Recently, I discovered another reason why simpler is better. Both cars developed electrical problems, resulting in failure of the n/s headlamp, indicator, windscreen wiper and warning captions appearing on the instrument panel telling me that there was low oil level and low brake fluid in the Ford Focus. Around the same time, I was on a trip to Exeter in the MG, when the interior ceiling light and dashboard courtesy light came on and wouldn't go off. On the return journey, the right indicator ceased to work.

Both cars were taken to the local garage, where the electrician conducted tests. In the MG he found that the courtesy light switch on the A pillar which switches on when the door is opened had leaked water onto the wiring, causing rusting of the connection and failure of the circuit controlling the right indicator and courtesy lights. Replacement of the switch and cleaning up the wiring attached to it fixed the problem and cost £40 for a replacement switch and labour. I had the car back 3 days after I took it to the workshop.

On the other hand, in the Focus a module under the headlight was replaced, then, when that didn't fix the problem, the headlight unit was replaced too. Then it was discovered that another module under the dashboard behind the glove box had to be replaced. When the engine then refused to

start it was decided that another module connected with the starter unit also needed to be replaced. However, by this time, the local garage electrician reported that his laptop was unable to diagnose any other faults, so the car had to be sent to the main dealer for full investigation and repair. Costs mounted up and exceeded £2,000 by the time the car came back from the main dealer. I had the car back over 2 months after I took it to the workshop.

As a result of these experiences, I am tempted to exchange the 2015 model Focus for a late 1960s model MG BGT as my “daily driver”. The 3 litre, straight 6 engined CGT would be kept for “best” and free time fun runs, whilst the 1800cc, 4 cylinder BGT would take over as the workhorse for my daily driving needs. The added benefit of a BGT is that it would have nil rated VED as an historic vehicle, insurance would be around £120 per year and it would be MoT exempt, although I would always have it checked annually to ensure it was safe to drive.

Cardiff IAM Group Committee

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Chair..... | Ken Abram | chair@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Secretary..... | David Palmer | secretary@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Vice Chair, GDPR & Website..... | Kevin Roberts | vicechair@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Vice Chair 2..... | Peter Cartwright | vicechair2@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Associate Co-ordinator..... | Jonathan Coldman | associatecoord@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Chief Observer..... | Stephen Davies | chiefobserver@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Treasurer..... | Ed Griffith | treasurer@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Membership Co-ordinator..... | Graham Booth | membership@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Events Co-ordinator..... | Jazz Roberts | events@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Gift Aid..... | Barri Williams | giftaid@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Social Media..... | Dee Bolt | socialmedia@cardiffiam.co.uk |
| Newsletter..... | David Palmer | newsletter@cardiffiam.co.uk |

Continual Development

Suggested further reading:

Highway Code <https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code-road-safety>

Know your traffic signs..... <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/know-your-traffic-signs>

Traffic Signs Manual..... <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual>

Roadcraft: The Police Drivers Handbook

Suggested Videos:

RegLocal <https://www.youtube.com/@RegLocal>

Driving on Unfamiliar Roads <https://youtu.be/iWQl46-Y8Tc?si=zIZlIV3Edgl7XAhc>

Limit Points..... <https://youtu.be/OWD7SNU4eXs?si=oyMmSIBuLdUry664>

Tips to Pass your Advanced Driving Test .. <https://youtu.be/H9boDxN3KRM?si=6iMMUSIV2YYBaubi>

The System of Car Control <https://youtu.be/PcmHRCGxa0Y?si=TTgKFNmL9XRHddjH>

How to Drive Like a Driving Instructor | Rural Roads, Including Overtaking
..... https://youtu.be/8_BnV3SPatI?si=PPBbsb5CEq9yVFW7

Further Driver Development

IAM Roadsmart further development <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/courses>

IAM Fellows.....
..... <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/campaign-pages/end-customer-campaigns/fellow-membership>

IAM Masters..... <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/masters>

IAM Skills Day..... <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/events/skills-days>

Website and Social Media

Website

Our www.cardiffiam.co.uk website gives further information on Group activities, and links to IAM Roadsmart.

Social Media Links

Our Facebook page is another way to keep up to date on what's on within the Group.



Find us as Cardiff IAM on Facebook.

Cardiff Advanced Motorists Complaints Procedure

Here in South Wales at Cardiff Advance Motorists we like to have satisfied customers and it's nice to know you are out there so please feel free to email the Chair at chair@cardiffiam.co.uk or secretary at secretary@cardiffiam.co.uk with any feedback.

We also know that sometime things can go wrong, and we want to be able to respond quickly to any concerns you may have. If you have a complaint, then email the secretary at secretary@cardiffiam.co.uk. We aim to resolve issues as close to the event as quickly as possible coming to mutually acceptable outcomes. If your complaint is about the secretary, then email chair@cardiffiam.co.uk.

The secretary will initially respond and register your complaint and will then pass your concern to the most appropriate member of the Cardiff Advanced Motorists Committee to look into and give a considered response usually within 2 weeks.

If you are not happy with the outcome, you may appeal and a different committee member will review your appeal, again usually responding within 2 weeks.

If you are still not happy with the outcome you may at this point escalate your concern to the Area Service Delivery Manager at IAM RoadSmart.

Information You Need to Provide:

When making a complaint, you should provide as much detail as reasonably possible, including:

- Your full name, address, telephone number, and email address.
- Any relevant reference numbers.
- Specific details of your complaint, including times, dates, events, and people involved.
- Copies of any documents or other evidence to support your complaint.
- What you would like as a resolution to your complaint.

If your complaint is about IAM Roadsmart and not your local branch then you can find details here. <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/contact/complaints> and make your complaint through their contacts page here. <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/contact>.