GLOUCESTERSHIRE
ADVANCED MOTORISTS

Group Newsletter

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December 2025

Chairman's Chat

In my last Chat I highlighted that some car dealers under report the tread left on tyres by just stating "tread Depth" where the figure given is actually the amount of tread left above the legal limit of 1.6mm tread depth. So the tyres has more life left than stated. Klim Seabright, one of the group's observers, contacted me to point out that some car dealers and tyre replacement retailers do not set the tyres to the correct pressures for the car and drivers should always check for themselves. Most tyre replacement places have charts or booklets that state the correct pressures for most cars, but they don't always consult them. The correct tyre pressures for your car are often in the owner's manual or somewhere on the car itself. Common places are on a door pillar, door edge or inside the fuel filler flap.

At a recent Saturday morning "Introduction to Advanced Driving" seminar the subject of yellow tinted night driving glasses' was raised. These are NOT recommended as, although they can reduce dazzle, this type of glasses do so by reducing the amount of light entering the eye and hence reduce all vision. This is dangerous at night when all possible vision is required.
A number of years ago a local optician gave the group a talk on the type of glasses suitable for driving. For driving in all conditions, except bright sunlight, he recommended ZEISS DriveSafe lenses. These are available as clear lens and prescription lens including bifocal and varifocal. I and the group's Associate Coordinator, Rod Harrison, subsequently purchased glasses with ZEISS DriveSafe lenses and found them effective at reducing dazzle at night without reducing vision. Available in glasses from many opticians including Boots and SpecSavers.

Further tips to achieve the best night vision possible:

- Keep headlamps clean. This also prevents light from your headlamps being scattered by dirt, etc. dazzling other drivers.
- Keep the outside AND inside of the windscreen absolutely clean
- If you wear glasses also keep outside AND inside of your glasses absolutely clean.

I can recommend Zeiss Lens Wipes for cleaning glasses. Each is in a sealed package and, in my case, one wipe will clean 6 pairs of glasses, 2 smartphone screens and a tablet. Pack of 200 from Amazon for £14.14 – share them around the family (if any of them wear glasses)! I keep a few in the car.
For driving in bright sunlight the optician recommended sunglasses with polarised lens in the darkest tint legally allowed for driving. Polarised glasses reduce reflected glare off puddles and other reflecting surfaces.

Quiz Night

Due to the cold weather ,and hence the likelihood of a low turnout, the quiz night scheduled for 20th November was cancelled. The Quiz Evening, in a shortened form, will now follow on from the 2026 AGM and buffet on 26th March 2026.

Committee 2025

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Membership News

Welcome to our new members

Dr Simon Fox	Rhys Herschell-Burns
John Brunsdon	Jeffry Hall
Susan Hughes	Edwaard Horton
Janice Mockford	Lewis Wright
Ian Jackson	Marten Ager
Tina Jackson	Tom Wilmot
Wendy Morris	Christopher Stoker

Group members: 205
which includes
Associates: 30
Fellows: 3
Observers: 27

A very warm welcome to all our new members who have recently joined the Gloucestershire branch of the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM). We're thrilled to have you on board!

You're now part of a passionate community dedicated to improving road safety, enhancing driving skills, and enjoying the many benefits of advanced motoring. Whether you're here to sharpen your technique, meet like-minded drivers, or simply enjoy the drive, you've made a great choice.

Keep an eye on our upcoming events — there's plenty ahead!

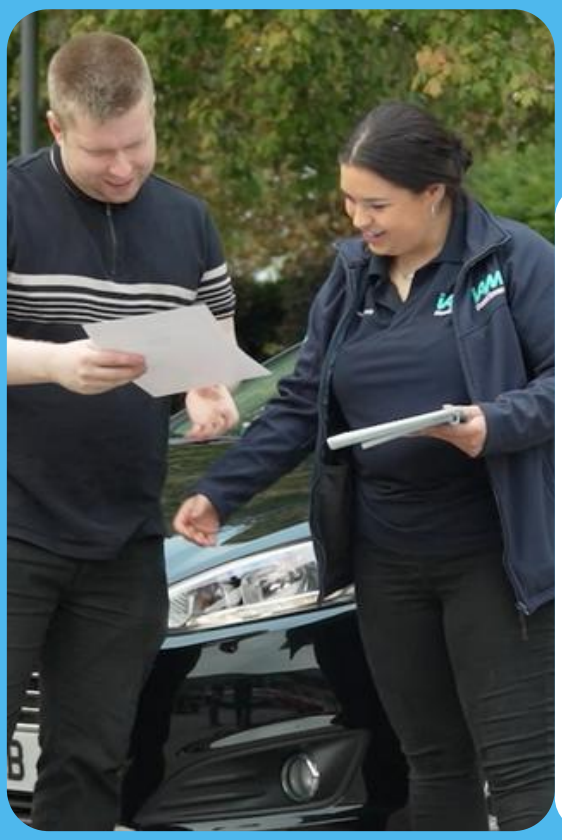
If you have any questions or just want to say hello, don't hesitate to reach out.

We're here to support you every step of the way.

Drive well. Drive safe. Enjoy the journey.

— The IAM Gloucestershire Team

Congratulations on passing the test!



An "IAM F1RST" designation from IAM RoadSmart signifies achieving the highest level of advanced driving or riding skill recognition. It's awarded to those who pass their advanced test and score a "1" in nearly every category, demonstrating exceptional skill and safe driving habits.

Member	Observer
Ann Timney	Gary Smith
Harry Ingles	Aron Mockford

An IAM 'Pass' is granted to candidates who demonstrate a solid understanding of advanced driving principles and the ability to apply them. While their observations and anticipation are generally good, they may not maintain this standard consistently throughout the test. Nonetheless, they drive in a manner that is both safe and legal, and clearly exceeds the standard required to pass the relevant DVSA driving test.

Member	Observer
Amelia Nunn	Rod Harrison
Alan Greer	Klim Seabright
Glynne Tobin	Colin Hooker
Luke Davis	Andrew Bowden
Ian Pickup	Nigel Garbutt
Tina Jackson	Rod Harrison

Congratulations to Richard Bradley on achieving his Masters qualification

Statistics

Total Associates in 2025 so far:	57
Total in Training	29
Total Passes	16
Total F1RST	5
Young Drivers	13

Spotlight on our Chief Observer - Gary Smith

I took on the role of Chief Observer in 2023 after joining the group in 2022 having moved from West Sussex in December 2021.

The role of Chief Observer carries a broad range of responsibilities, all aimed at maintaining excellence within the group's training and assessment programmes. These include:

- Ensuring all Observers are, and remain, fully qualified
- Overseeing effective training at every stage of Observer development
- Monitoring ongoing performance to ensure standards are upheld
- Identifying and nurturing new Observers
- Maintaining consistent observing standards across the group
- Ensuring all training follows IAM RoadSmart Advanced Driver course materials

In practice, this means advising the committee on potential new Observers, arranging their training, liaising with IAM RoadSmart where needed, and keeping track of results and statistics to drive continuous improvement.

Supporting a Strong Team

I currently look after our team of 24 Observers, working closely with our Associate Coordinator to ensure seamless communication and support for both Observers and their Associates.

Our Observers play a vital role in helping Associates become test-ready — but their work doesn't stop there. They also provide Free Taster Drives, Pre-Test Drives, and Young Driver Assessments, all of which contribute to improving road safety and developing confident, skilled drivers in our community.

I'm proud to be part of such a committed team, and I look forward to continuing our work together to uphold the highest standards of advanced driving.

Become an IAM Observer – Help others drive with confidence

Are you a skilled and passionate driver who wants to make a real difference on the roads? We are always looking for experienced drivers like you to become Observers – volunteers who mentor and guide others on their journey to becoming safer, more confident motorists.

As an Observer, you'll be part of a proud tradition of peer-to-peer learning, sharing your knowledge, enthusiasm, and support with Associates working towards their advanced driving qualification. It's a rewarding way to give back, stay sharp behind the wheel, and help create a culture of safety and respect on our roads.

Caffeine and Driving: Helpful Boost or False Friend?

Caffeine is the most widely used stimulant in the world and a familiar companion for many drivers, particularly on long journeys or late-night trips. While caffeine can improve alertness in the short term, its effects on driving performance are often misunderstood.

The Benefits

Caffeine works by blocking adenosine, a chemical that promotes sleep. In moderate amounts, it can improve reaction times, concentration, and vigilance — all valuable for drivers feeling tired. A cup of coffee or similar caffeinated drink can take effect within 15–30 minutes and may provide a temporary lift in alertness.

The Limitations

Caffeine does not remove fatigue; it merely masks its symptoms. As its effects wear off, drivers may experience a sudden drop in alertness, sometimes referred to as a "caffeine crash". Over-reliance on caffeine can also lead to jitteriness, reduced fine motor control, and impaired judgement — none of which support smooth, progressive driving.

Individual responses vary widely. Age, body weight, tolerance, and timing all influence how caffeine affects performance. Consuming caffeine late in the day may also disrupt sleep, increasing fatigue on subsequent journeys.

Driving Considerations

Caffeine is not a substitute for rest. If you feel tired, the most effective response is to stop in a safe place and take a proper break. A short nap combined with caffeine can be helpful, but only as a short-term measure. Advanced drivers should plan journeys to avoid fatigue, build in regular breaks, and recognise early warning signs such as frequent yawning, wandering thoughts, or inconsistent speed control.

Caffeine consumption by drink and how many Brits are exceeding the safe limits

Popular caffeinated drink	Average mg of caffeine per drink	Number of drinks that could lead to caffeine toxicity	Brits consuming at least this amount daily
Barista coffee	182mg per medium takeaway cup*	2.2 medium cups	10%
Instant coffee	109mg per medium takeaway cup*	3.7 medium cups	9%
English breakfast tea	83.7mg per medium takeaway cup*	4.8 medium cups	9%

The Bottom Line

Used sensibly, caffeine can support alertness, but it should never be relied upon to "push through" tiredness. For safe, controlled driving, rest, hydration, and good journey planning remain the most effective tools.

Richard Bradley

My journey with IAM Roadsmart Pt.1

My name is Richard Bradley and I am 75 years old. I passed my driving test first time in 1967 at the age of 17.

Since then I have driven a lot of miles for both business and pleasure in many countries throughout the World. All of that was accident free of my own making and like most people with that experience considered myself to be a reasonably good driver.

I started off with an old Morris Minor and then throughout my working life drove basic family cars like a Vauxhall Astra, Vauxhall Cavalier and a Ford Mondeo estate. I also drove many Company cars from the usual Ford range.

From about 2005 I took an interest in classic cars and restored 2 Morris Minors and played an active role in running classic car clubs and organising events.

I currently own a very original 1955 Standard 10 and a 1984 classic Mini Sprite.

After I retired I fancied something completely different and bought a Ford Mustang 2.3 Ecoboost coupe in early 2017. I drove that everywhere, including an epic drive to the Costa Del Sol in Spain and the Portuguese Algarve in early 2020.

Then came the pandemic and I sold my Mustang in July 2021, blaming lack of use. I very soon missed it and the active club scene that goes with it. Therefore 7 weeks later I bought my current Ford Mustang GT convertible with a roaring 5 litre V8 engine.

Yes, I am an out and out petrolhead and apart from my Mustang, I do all of the servicing and repairs on my cars myself.

My black Mustang convertible shown here is the car that the IAM members in Gloucestershire will know me for.

Richard Bradley

My journey with IAM Roadsmart Pt.1

My Mature Drivers Review

Back in April this year (2025), I saw out of the blue on Facebook an advert from IAM RoadSmart for a Mature Drivers Review. This immediately caught my interest, as I often wondered if my driving was still up to scratch and in line with modern traffic conditions. To me driving is far more challenging than it was back in 1967 and I felt that driving standards in general have deteriorated and many drivers are in a rush and less patient.

I therefore booked my review online and nervously awaited Gareth Zimmerman to take me on my test. I need not have worried as Gareth immediately put me at ease and I passed my test with excellent results.He agreed with me that my weak point was being over hesitant on entering roundabouts, but the main thing was that my driving was very safe.

Gareth suggested that I would greatly benefit from taking an Advanced Driving Course which although I had not remotely considered before, I immediately applied for.

My Advanced Driving Course

I was very pleased that Gareth Zimmerman had been allocated as my Observer for my Advanced Driving Course, as I now knew him and we could work on improving my driving straight away. Over 2 sessions with Gareth, we worked together on getting me used to driving to the System (IPSGA) and helping to overcome the weak points that he found on my Mature Drivers Review.

The next session was a Mock Test, after which he considered me to be very near to being Test Ready.

Therefore about a week later, James Baker took me on a second Mock Test. James was very helpful and informative and was generally impressed by my driving. He sent me a detailed report by email afterwards, with details of things that I could improve upon.

One of the things that he mentioned was that I needed to put a bit more “zip” into my driving and to drive it a bit more like a Mustang was expected to be driven! (But in accordance with the speed limits, of course).

About a week later I had another “brush up” session with Gareth, after which he said that I was Test Ready.

Very soon after that Carolyn Menteith, the examiner contacted me by email and we agreed that my test would be on 20th June 2025, starting from the Jolly Nice farm shop.

That was about 2 weeks away and during that time I got in as much practice as possible, both in my automatic Mustang and my old manual Mondeo Estate that I then used as a daily runner. I also read throughall of the course documentation again and also Roadcraft, which I found very useful. Another great source of information was the YouTube videos produced by Reg Local. I also read the Highway Code and Know your traffic signs again.

I was now as ready for my test as I was going to be and although I was quietly confident, I was naturally worried about how I would perform due to being a bit nervous.

As soon as I met Carolyn, she put me at ease and my test drive went smoothly and without any incidents. I was not too impressed by some of the narrow roads that she took me down as the Mustang is a wide car, but I coped.

At the end of the test I thought that I may have passed, but I was pleasantly surprised when Carolyn awarded me a F1rst with very good marks. In fact I got a 1 for Commended in every category apart from a 2 for Satisfactory in Restraint /Progress. But that was always my weakest point.

pt 2. where you will found out how Richard challenged himself further will be published in the next Newsletter

What your tyres are telling you

Your tyres are the only part of the car in contact with the road, and they constantly provide feedback — if you know how to read it. For advanced drivers, tyre condition offers valuable insight into both vehicle health and driving style.

Uneven Wear Patterns

Excessive wear on one edge of a tyre often points to incorrect wheel alignment or prolonged cornering forces. Wear in the centre usually suggests over-inflation, while wear on both outer edges can indicate under-inflation. These patterns affect grip, braking performance, and steering accuracy.

Tread Depth and Grip

Legal tread depth is a minimum, not a target. As tread reduces, performance in wet conditions declines rapidly. Advanced drivers recognise that good tyres maintain safety margins, especially during heavy braking or emergency manoeuvres.

Tyre Pressures

Incorrect pressures alter the tyre's contact patch and can dull steering feel or increase stopping distances. Regular checks — particularly before long journeys — help maintain predictable handling and even wear.

Road Feel and Feedback

Vibration, pulling to one side, or increased road noise can indicate imbalance, alignment issues, or internal damage. These early warnings should never be ignored.

Driving Style Clues

Frequent heavy braking, sharp acceleration, and aggressive cornering all leave their mark. Smooth, progressive driving promotes even wear, better grip, and improved fuel efficiency.

A multi-award-winning tyre & vehicle safety advocate, Founder of Fresh Drivers UK, and a prominent content creator & campaigner, Sophie brings an unparalleled level of expertise to the conversation. As the Depot Manager at Westgate Tyres in Morecambe, Lancashire, she sees first-hand the alarming state of tyres on our roads every single day. This tyre 'wall of shame' is a stark reminder of the genuinely appalling tyres Sophie has come across. Each image represents a serious risk – a tyre that's bald, cracked, damaged, or dangerously underinflated. These aren't just minor issues; they're accidents waiting to happen, putting lives at risk.

TyreSafe
SAFE TYRES SAVE LIVES

Photo: Sophie Lyden

Motherhood in Motion: The Taxi mum

As children grow older and their worlds get bigger, many mums suddenly find themselves taking on an additional role — the Taxi Mum. From school commitments to sports clubs, birthday parties, rehearsals, and weekend adventures, the family car often becomes a second home. But with this new role comes a new set of driving challenges.

Taxi Mums regularly find themselves navigating a wide range of environments, sometimes at short notice, often under time pressure, and usually with a lively audience in the back seat! Common driving scenarios include:

Motorways

Longer journeys to competitions, events, or university open days may require motorway driving. Maintaining concentration, managing high-speed traffic, dealing with lane discipline, and planning safe stops are all key skills — especially when juggling conversations, questions, and snack requests from the back seat.

Country Roads

Not every activity takes place in town. Many mums end up travelling along winding, narrow country roads with limited visibility, sharp bends, and unexpected hazards such as farm vehicles or wildlife. Staying alert and adjusting speed appropriately can make these journeys much more comfortable and safe.

Unfamiliar Towns

Driving somewhere new — often with the pressure of arriving on time — can be stressful. From confusing one-way systems to tricky parking, navigating unfamiliar towns requires good observation, patience, and sometimes the ability to make quick, safe decisions.

Why This Matters

Being a Taxi Mum is about more than just transport — it's about keeping families safe while managing busy modern lifestyles. The IAM RoadSmart Advanced Driver Course can help mums develop confidence, improve hazard perception, and handle these varied environments with ease.

Future Events

AGM, Buffet & Quiz

26th March 2026

Churchdown Community Centre meeting room

Upcoming Presentation: Gloucestershire Police Chief Driving Instructor - Byron Chandler

We are pleased to confirm that Chief Driving Instructor Byron Chandler from Gloucestershire Police will be delivering a presentation to members at an upcoming meeting.

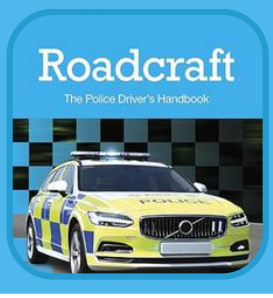
This session will offer a valuable opportunity to hear directly from an expert operating at the highest level of driver training. Drawing on extensive operational experience, the presentation will explore advanced driving principles as applied in real-world policing, with practical insights that translate directly to everyday road driving.

Topics are expected to include observation, anticipation, speed management, positioning, and decision-making under pressure — all core elements of advanced driving.

Further details, including the date and time will be shared shortly. We encourage members to attend what promises to be an informative and engaging evening.

When did you last read yours?

Recommended books, apps & online



E-learning - Roadcraft

If reading is challenging, like with dyslexia, or if you prefer to learn by listening, a voiceover feature is available.

Developed in collaboration with the police, the emergency services, and driving instructors, the Roadcraft e-learning course is essential learning for emergency responders preparing for the demands of operational driving and anyone looking to become a better, safer driver.

Featuring a digital version of the best-selling Roadcraft book, the course is supplemented with end-of-chapter assessments, mock tests, and exclusive video content.

https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/roadcraft-elearning

Test your knowledge

Highway code and Roadcraft - let us know how you get on! Answers at the end of the newsletter

1.At an incident, someone is suffering from severe burns. How could you help them?
a. Apply lotions to the injury
b. Burst any blisters
c. Remove anything sticking to the burns
d. Douse the burns with clean, cool water

2. What would you expect to find at a contraflow system on a motorway?
a. Temporary traffic lights
b. Lower speed limits
c. Wider lanes than normal
d. Road humps

3. What does fuel-efficient driving achieve?
a. Increased fuel consumption
b. Improved road safety
c. Damage to the environment
d. Increased exhaust emissions

4. What should you never sacrifice for a better position?
a. Speed
b. Comfort
c. Safety
d. View

5. How far does a car travel every second at 70mph?
a. 29 metres per second
b. 30 metres per second
c. 31 metres per second
d. 32 metres per second

6 When exiting on the motorway at which point should you indicate?
a. 100 yd marker
b. 200 yd marker
c. 300 yd marker
d. ½ mile before the junction

7. What does 'ABS' stand for?
a. Air bag supplied
b. Automatic brake shutoff
c. Air brake system
d. Anti-lock braking system

8. If more than one road sign appears on the same pole, how would you read them generally?
a. From top to bottom
b. From bottom to top
c. Both together
d. Wait and see

9. The flashing of headlamps means:
a. I intend to come through
b. To let another road user know you are there
c. On the motorway to ask the driver in front to move to the left

That’s all for now folks

🎄 Christmas Driving Reminder 🎄

The festive season brings busier roads, poor weather, low sun and tired or distracted drivers. Even with advanced skills, extra care is essential.

Plan ahead, allow more time, adjust your speed to the conditions and keep your distance. Remember — calm, considered driving gets everyone home safely.

Have a great Christmas and stay safe on the roads.

Quiz answers

1. d
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. c
6. c
7. d
8. a
9. b

MERRY

Christmas

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR