Welcome to the March/April Newsletter.

Are you able to give some time to support the work of CECAM?

The AGM will soon be due (13 May) and, as always at this time, we consider committee membership and roles.

Are you in a position to give a few hours each month to support the work of your local IAM group (CECAM)? If so, we would like to hear from you.

If you are interested in becoming involved and would like to discuss the opportunities then please contact the chair (Terry Wales) on 07960 015147 or email him at chairman@cecam.org.uk

Test Pass

Congratulations to

Colin Dixon and Maureen Madill

on passing the IAM Advanced Driving Test. Thanks to their observers Robert Jones and Gordon Betteley, respectively. Congratulations also to Chris Moore on becoming our first Observer to pass the new National Observer Assessment.

From the Chair, Terry Wales

The AGM will soon be due and I hope that as many of you as possible will attend on May 13. If you are able to make a contribution to the work of the committee then please let me know.

Why not contribute something to the newsletter? Have you some interesting photographs with a motoring flavour? A memorable holiday drive to tell us about? Or something to say on an aspect of motoring? If so, then please let our newsletter editor (Jayne) know. Perhaps you have contacts with some venue that would welcome a visit from a group interested in motoring. Or is there some meeting that you would like us to put on? Whatever your motoring interest, we are always looking for new ideas. Please share your ideas with us.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

After this one, newsletters will no longer be sent to your email inbox. Instead they will go straight onto the CECAM website where they can be viewed. The address of the website is www.cecam.org.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

15 Apr Committee meeting, Nercwys, 7.30pm
13 May CECAM AGM, Hawarden, 7.30pm
Examiner Talk

On Thursday 21 February, fifteen group members (including almost all of the observer team) attended a talk by Paul Griffiths, one of our examiners, who spoke about the IAM test.

Introduction

Paul, from the Widnes area, served in the Liverpool and Bootle and Merseyside Police Forces up to 2006, spending most of that time in the Traffic Division. He gained a Police Class One Driving Certificate in 1978 and patrolled in the Liverpool area as well as on Merseyside motorways and in the video car. He came into contact with the IAM while in Traffic ten years ago and became an Examiner for them. He tests all classes of vehicle with four or more wheels. He likes it because he gets to travel in some unusual cars. The Staff Examiner, Chris Givvons, quality assures all Examiners every 2 years.

What happens on the test?

When a test is applied for, Paul receives an email from London head office with the name and contact details of the candidate. He contacts the candidate promptly (usually by email), introducing himself and detailing his availability and suggesting a date and time are set. In case of bad weather tests may be cancelled and be re-arranged for a future date, even if, as happens very rarely, the test is half way through. It is the Examiners decision whether a test is postponed or abandoned.

Meeting the candidate

People are inevitably nervous when they meet for the test so Paul has a friendly chat to settle nerves. He goes through all necessary documents (Driving Licence, insurance and MOT certificate if required) and carries out an eyesight test.

On the test – what are the expectations?

Paul advises that if a candidate is unsure of the directions given by the Examiner they should just ask for clarity. Candidates are tested on everything according for a pass; 4 or 5 being unsatisfactory (apart from eco driving and commentary). A commentary is not compulsory as people began dropping out because of it. If you don't like it, he encourages you to try but otherwise to say what you see, what you are going to do about it and why you are doing it. For example, 'I've just seen a cyclist, I am slowing down'. The advice and guidance of the Highway Code must be followed and put into practice. There will be questions on it as you go along unless you give out such knowledge that demonstrates that you know it.

Where can it go wrong?

Not adhering to speed limits is one of the main causes of failure. If Paul can't see the speedometer he will ask you, just once, to let him know when you are doing 30mph and will check the position of speedometer as he can see it. A candidate should be up to the speed limit if it is safe but never over it (eg 70mph on a motorway). Safety is paramount. If you wouldn't normally overtake at a particular spot - don't; but don't miss an opportunity to either. Don't frighten the Examiner. The examiner may get there early and watch you do a nice reverse park – a tick in the slow manoeuvring box. (The Highway Code says if possible try and reverse into a space – some call it nosey parking!) This shows him you know how to control your vehicle.

Cockpit check?

This is not part of the test but it is good to demonstrate an overview of your car and the controls – to show that you know your car and what the switches and dials in the cockpit do.

Routes

Paul has different routes planned in his head and may take a detour if a route is blocked or there are road-works etc. He will have planned a route with approximately 10 left turns, 10 right turns, several junctions varying in layout; the candidate will be put in every possible driving situation. The drive will last between 45 minutes and an hour – after that an associate may start to get tired due to the effort put in.
to the competencies set out and need to score 1, 2 or 3. Candidates are encouraged to try to keep switched on right to the end of the test, even if they are tiring and wondering if they have passed. A variety of speed limits will be encountered. Paul tries to avoid speed bumps but advises to take them slowly. Children may run out, which is why they are there. Imagine having a full set of the family’s crockery on the back seat.

A candidate is expected to drive to the System and should approach the test as if it is another observed drive to help quell their nerves. A Senior Observer has already said a candidate is good enough for test - so they are. Nerves may let people down or they may do something horrid on the day. If they can put it right and it is not horrendous there is still a good chance of passing. Paul has seen it all before. He says sometimes it helps to think to yourself that you will show the Examiner you are good enough.

On returning to the start point Paul will tell you the news straight away ie passed or not recommended at this time. If someone is not successful they may just need to go and do some more work and come back for another test. People who do not meet the standard first time usually demonstrate a better drive second time round.

If you pass thank yourself and your observer so that they get the recognition for the effort that they have put in free of charge. Paul says don’t thank him – he gets to go in some nice cars and gets paid for it!

Indicators

These will be right if the associate is from a good group. If you indicate for everything you’ll never miss one, but are you doing it automatically? If there is no-one around sometimes it can be good to pop an indicator on if someone as yet unseen might benefit ie left turn on right-hand bend. Remember that indicators are for the benefit of other road users which includes pedestrians.

Horn

Don’t sound the horn when going through the cockpit check; it is enough just to say that to your knowledge it is working but do sound it if needed on test.

General

Be polite. Don’t be afraid of the test; it is there to be enjoyed. The Examiner is there to help you through it. The report is done in triplicate and you get a copy including any comments made. The report is confidential; some candidates choose to show it to the group. It is nice to have the certificate presented to you in a social environment but it can just be sent to you if you prefer.

The F1RST pass has been around for a couple of years. This is awarded to people who give an extremely good drive. It means that 1s are scored in most categories. If anyone got all ones before this came in it can be backdated, you just need to apply to IAM House. People should aim for a F1RST.

Paul also spoke about the new observer scheme. When asked why we need a new scheme he explained; “Observers are doing a good job but are not really getting the recognition, and they are working free of charge. Change is inevitable. With the new scheme IAM observers are required by the IMI (Institute of the Motor Industry) to meet the various competencies set down.

“The application form requires group approval. Applicants also need a driving licence and must be medically fit. They need to be legal and a full member of the IAM and a group for insurance purposes. For local observer status you will need a good working knowledge of The Highway Code and How to be a Better Driver and to complete the relevant sections in the new Observer handbook. Local observer is equivalent to qualified observer now; national observers are equivalent to senior observers. The hardest part is the driving skills. National observers also need to have a good working knowledge of Roadcraft.”

The new scheme is not daunting at all, just a slightly different approach. Chris Moore relayed his experience of national observer training and assessment. Competencies are going to happen but won’t be as much of a shock as people think. Everything learned will be put into practice. Chris Moore thinks it is a step up in terms of standard. Much emphasis is still on interpersonal skills in keeping candidates relaxed and moving on and learning. There is more structure to the national observer assessment than the old senior observer test. The requirements for local observers have been set, but there is currently no timetable for their introduction, nor details of exactly how.
The 2-Second Rule – Further Advantages by Michael Downes, chief observer

All Advanced Drivers are (I hope) aware of the 2-second rule (part of Highway Code Rule 126) which advises that a gap of at least 2 seconds should be left between vehicles under good road conditions, more as conditions worsen. As we know, this is so that we can pull up safely if the vehicle in front suddenly slows or stops.

However, there are several other advantages in keeping to at least that distance which allow us to use advanced techniques such as planning ahead, driving smoothly, improving observation, etc.

- We have time to brake more smoothly if necessary, or to simply reduce power instead and save fuel (part of eco-driving, now in the IAM Test)
- We have time to read directions on the road after the vehicle ahead has gone over them
- We can see better past the vehicle ahead
- We can avoid the pothole or ironworks which the vehicle ahead just ran over
- If something drops off the vehicle ahead or off its load, there is more time to react
- We get much less spray from the vehicle ahead in wet weather (at which time we should be more than 2 seconds away, of course) and can thus see better
- The stones and other debris inevitably thrown up by the vehicle ahead will cause less damage to the front of our car (fewer chips) and the likelihood of a chipped windscreen is reduced.

Lots of extra advantages!

Mavis’s Pitstop

A simple meal of soup and a snack to take with you on a cold winter drive. Much nicer and quicker (and cheaper!) than most motorway service station fare.

**GOLDEN SOUP**

Roughly chop a peeled onion, a carrot and a potato – any size that you happen to have handy. Sweat gently in a little butter or oil until soft but not coloured. Tip in a tin / carton of chopped tomatoes and top up with water to just cover the vegetables. Simmer for around 20 minutes until everything is cooked. Blend or sieve and add a little salt and pepper to taste. Thin with water, milk or single cream if you want it thinner and add parsley if you have some. Carry in a Thermos flask.

**CHEESE BISCUITS**

Rub 50g butter or marg into 70g plain flour. Crush 25g rice cereal (an individual serving pack) in a plastic bag using a rolling pin or a handy tin and add to the mix with 115 g grated Cheddar cheese and a pinch of paprika or cayenne pepper. Mix, then take large teaspoons of the mix and squash into balls in your hands – it is a dry mix so this takes a little effort. Put on greased baking tins and flatten each ball with a fork. Bake at 190°C for 10-12 minutes until golden.

Cars in Movies

A quick quiz - match the car to a film:

1. 1948 Ford Convertible
2. Mustang GT
3. Mercedes/Maybach
4. Aston Martin DB5
5. VW Beetle
6. Rolls Royce Corniche
7. Mercedes 190SL
8. Mini Cooper
9. Pontiac Le Mans
10. Aston Martin DBS

Answers on page 7
Andrew Pratt, Cheshire West and Chester Council's photographer & his 20-year-old son, Matthew, have started an Institute of Advanced Motormen course organised by the council. Here they talk about their experiences so far...

Andrew’s Story:

I wanted to do the course to improve my driving skills as I spend a lot of time in my car travelling to various photographic jobs around the borough. It’s organised by the council as part of a nationwide scheme that is recognised by the Police and the Department of Transport.

To be honest, I half expected the instructors to be ex-RAF types with handle-bar moustaches, tweed jackets (with leather patches on the elbows) and probably all 100 years old! But, as they say ‘never judge a book by its cover’ the observers are of various ages - nowhere near 100! - both male and female. They made me feel extremely welcome. My observer’s name is Andrew Mayfield and to start with we chatted about the course over cups of tea and biscuits.

Then came the introductory drive. This is where your observer gives you a route to follow while he observes your driving. Andrew didn’t say much which was a bit unnerving to be honest; it made it feel like my first driving test!

After the drive, which was about 40 minutes, we sat in the car and just generally chatted about my driving; the idea of this first drive is to get a starting point on areas to improve. We also organised which days/times suited us both for the drives.

The first drive under instruction started off with exterior car checks then you moved inside the vehicle to carry out interior checks. The observer sits with a driving assessment form on his lap. The driving standards you are checked against are extremely comprehensive and I’m pleased to be getting good results so far.

Matthew’s Story:

My name is Matthew Pratt, I’m 20 years old and I’m a qualified outdoor adventure activities instructor. I was very keen to do the course to improve my driving skills with the added bonus of hopefully lowering my car insurance.

My observer’s name is Paul Consterdine and the driving is much more intense than I imagined. I’m learning to read the road and road conditions in much more detail. So far we’ve covered positioning the car on the road and how to get into the correct position when taking bends on all types of road. I’m constantly scanning the road ahead and adjusting my driving to suit the road and the area I’m driving in. You need to plan for every scenario while driving along.

The sessions are between one and one and a half hours long. At first I would get home and feel exhausted after concentrating so hard but now it’s beginning to get easier.

I’ve really enjoyed the course so far and I’m looking forward to improving my driving even more and taking my test.
Cool cars by John Gruffydd

When I bought my first car in 1963 many did not even have a heater (or screen wash) let alone air conditioning! You only got these on the “high end” models and even then the heaters were quite crude and often only recirculated “cabin air”. Demisting was accomplished with the back of the hand or a cloth – special ones were impregnated with a “wetting agent” that prevented mist from forming – for a while. (Folklore recommended a potato!).

For the last decade or so, almost all cars have had air conditioning as standard. So how does it work?

Air conditioners and refrigerators are classed as heat pumps. They rely on the fact that when a liquid evaporates, heat is taken from the surroundings to supply what is known as the latent heat of evaporation. That will be familiar to us all – it’s what happens when we sweat and the sweat evaporates, keeping us cool. But of course, sweating is a “total loss” affair and we have to replace the sweat by drinking more. That sweat is now in the form of a gas (water vapour) in the atmosphere – can we turn it back into liquid?

This is what we do in a heat pump. The work fluid (usually referred to as refrigerant) is contained in a closed system that has five elements:

- Evaporator
- Compressor
- Condenser
- Receiver/drier
- Expansion device

We could really start anywhere in the system, but let’s start with the evaporator. In a car, it is in the air circuit inside the “heater” system and resembles a small radiator with fins to help transfer heat from the air to the evaporator. In it, the refrigerant is allowed to expand from liquid droplets into gas, taking heat from the air whilst doing so.

Next, we have to change that gas back into liquid – this is the job of the compressor. It takes in the gas from the evaporator, compresses it until it is hot gas which then flows into the condenser (mounted at the front of the car behind the grille) and that, too, resembles a small radiator. Its job is to cool the gas down so that it turns to liquid before it enters the receiver/drier that removes any moisture from the refrigerant.

From the receiver, the liquid refrigerant enters the expansion device. This is essentially a “throttle” which causes a large pressure drop, so that when the refrigerant leaves the expansion device its pressure is low and it enters the evaporator and turns back to gas by taking heat from the air – which is where we came in!

Although your car’s air conditioning system operates on the same principle as a refrigerator, there are some important differences:

Firstly the evaporator temperature must not fall below freezing, otherwise it would ice up and clog. This is achieved by using a different refrigerant from that in a refrigerator.

The compressor is almost invariably driven from a pulley and belt from the engine (unlike that in a refrigerator which uses a hermetic compressor which is totally sealed with the electric motor inside). This means that there has to be a shaft seal between the high pressure inside the compressor and the outside world. This is a potential source of leakage (failure). The compressor is driven through a magnetic clutch that is controlled by the car’s electronic control unit (ECU) that “tells” the compressor when to turn on. Also incorporated are two pressure switches: a high pressure switch on the outlet side of the compressor that stops the system if the pressure is too high, and a low pressure switch on the outlet side of the evaporator that stops it if the pressure is too low. These conditions could occur if, for example, the system has too much or too little refrigerant, or is too hot or too cold.

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The compressor needs lubrication – especially that shaft seal! Special oil is part of the refrigerant mix and is carried around the system with it. If the air conditioning is not used for some time this oil settles out – which is why it is recommended that the air conditioning should be switched on regularly even during the cooler months.

Air conditioning has brought about a new dimension in comfort and safety. Safety is enhanced not only because the driver is more comfortable, but also demisting is much more effective since the air is dried (its moisture condenses out on the evaporator, resulting in a small puddle under the car).

The price you pay is slightly increased fuel consumption, but the choice is yours! And one last thing – keep all windows closed when the air conditioning is on and, in general, use recirculation rather than fresh air. Enjoy your summer driving (if we ever get another summer!)

The First Mile of my IAM Journey, by James May (19)

It hardly feels as though I passed my driving test just over two years ago. I was fortunate enough to be taught to drive by an instructor who also taught police and ambulance drivers. This afforded me an insight into the world of advanced driving, and from my first lesson I was encouraged to drive in a professional and courteous manner.

Having gained around 18 months of driving experience by summer last year, I felt I’d like to revisit the advanced principles my instructor had illustrated. This led me to the Institute of Advanced Motorists, and to the “Momentum” and “Skill for Life” courses. The Momentum course offered me an assessment of my then current driving standard, and also highlighted my areas for improvement. David Richards, my observer (and although I didn’t yet know it, my final examiner!), was knowledgeable, helpful and offered me the reassurance my nerves needed to settle.

Shortly after this, I began the next step of my journey, and was lucky enough to meet Paul Consterdine. David had mentioned Paul shared another passion of mine along with driving, and that was flying. Following my first observed run with Paul, I began to feel more confident behind the wheel, while at all times being aware of the potential for a hazard developing. A key skill I learned during this time was effective observation, and how critical this was to becoming a successful advanced motorist. This skill is also of great benefit to me as a pilot when flying. I’ve learned to endeavor to be constantly aware of my surroundings, and of the position and movement of other road (and runway!) users.

I can now thoroughly recommend others to take part in an advanced driving course, especially drivers of my age. I feel other young drivers will find the experience invaluable, and will hopefully improve not only the often negative reputation that precedes them, but critically road safety as a whole.

Having passed my advanced driving assessment on 20 December last year, I am hugely grateful to all members of CECAM who assisted me with my journey, for their time and goodwill. Special thanks are due to Paul Consterdine, who made each journey thoroughly beneficial and enjoyable. I hope to continue to develop my advanced driving skills for many years to come, and look forward to sharing the road ahead with CECAM and the IAM.

See page 9 for a photo of James being presented with his certificate.

Answers to quick quiz

1. Grease (the car was called Greased Lightnin)
2. Bullit
3. Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
4. Goldfinger
5. Herbie (series)
6. Dirty Rotten Scoundrels
7. High Society
8. The Italian Job
9. The French Connection
10. Quantum of Solace
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Notes

All items of general correspondence should be sent to the Secretary, John Gruffydd.

All queries, corrections or amendments to Membership Records should be sent to the Membership Secretary, Robert Jones.

It is especially important to tell your Observer when you have passed the Advanced Test. The Group is NOT informed automatically by the Institute.

Items for the Newsletter can be sent to any Committee Member.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual correspondents and do not necessarily reflect policies or opinions of the IAM or of Chester and East Clwyd Advanced Motorists.

Website: www.cecam.org.uk

James May is presented with his certificate by Michael Downes, chief observer.