



# RoADAR CHAT

The Sussex Group of Advanced Car Drivers

Group Newsletter

February 2007

Vol 2 Issue 4

In the last week, I have been working with the Police and The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) at various locations around Sussex.

Each day, during the morning we were positioned at different locations with the Police stopping any vehicles with occupants that were not wearing seat belts, on the telephone, or looked like they had other problems.

Our Road Safety team were there to advise parents and children of the new laws regarding child restraints and we found quite a few parents that had not put their children on booster seats and some were issued fixed penalty fines from the Police.

The VOSA engineers have the power to impound vehicles that are unsafe or commercial vehicles that do not have the correct paperwork. We found vehicles that were up to two years out of road tax, drivers with no insurance, and three cars were impounded until drivers removed tinting film from their front windows. Some vehicles had dangerous mechanical faults and were impounded and taken away on low loaders. At times there were six vehicles queued up with drivers receiving tickets for various offences.

It was just a snapshot of the problems out there on the roads and the state of the vehicles and drivers that are passing us out on the road during our journey each day. Most of them just do not give a damn whether they or their vehicles are safe or legal.

**David Bradley**  
Chairman



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## POSITION VACANT

At a recent committee meeting, it was decided that we need a committee member dedicated to the publicity and promotion of the group.

This new committee member would work in conjunction with both the membership and group secretaries to promote the group, build the membership, plan events and attract new types of member.

Applications should be made in the first instance in writing or e-mail to the group secretary

Newsletter address: 30 Cabot Close, Eastbourne, East Sussex. BN23 6RT



## MEMBER BENEFITS

### 10% DISCOUNT ON BULBS AND WIPER BLADES

The member discounts just keep on coming and this month is no exception!

Autobulbsdirect.co.uk are one of the leading suppliers of car bulbs and wiper blades in the UK.

I've used them for a number of years and found them to be very competitive on branded car bulbs and wiper blades.

If you go to their website at [www.autobulbsdirect.co.uk](http://www.autobulbsdirect.co.uk) and order the items you want, use the discount code **sussexrospa** to receive 10% off your entire order.

There is no expiry date for this offer so you can use the code every time you purchase something.

They also have a handy tool on their website that lets you find exactly the bulbs you need by inputting the make and model of your car.

If there are any other products or services that you think other group members would benefit from (discounted or otherwise), please drop me an e-mail or give me a call and let me know.

Adam Field

## SECRETARY'S CORNER

Apologies for the delay in getting the December newsletter out but I had a hectic Christmas and had to fit newsletter production around existing work commitments. I've now set a new schedule in place to ensure that the newsletter is produced on time from now on. Thanks for bearing with us ☺.



On the 21<sup>st</sup> of this month, I'll be giving a presentation on Advanced Driving to the East Sussex branch of the Saab Owners Club at The Horseshoe Inn in Herstmonceux. Details of the meeting are on their website at <http://www.eastsussexsaab.co.uk> and anyone is welcome to come along.

Our speaker for the meeting in March is Dr Graham Hole. Graham is a senior lecturer in Psychology at Sussex University and has recently written a book on the subject of The Psychology of Driving.

We will shortly be redesigning the group website to make it consistent with the newsletter so if anyone has any suggestions, my contact details are on the front of the newsletter.

Adam Field

## JANUARY MEETING REPORT

At the November meeting, the speaker was Dr Hal Sosabowski on the subject of Alcohol and Drugs, their effect on the body and how, in turn they affect your driving.

At first, I have to admit that the prospect of a chemistry lecture didn't thrill me but it was fantastic. We moved to the lecture theatre so that Hal could use his PowerPoint slide deck. The entire audience were captivated for near on an hour and a half and everyone got involved and asked questions.

Hal has promised part two at some point in the future and, personally, I can't wait.

Now where did I put that broomstick...?



## NEXT MEETING DATE

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> March 2007 (Thursday)  
**Venue:** Sussex Police HQ, Lewes  
**Time:** 7.30pm-9.30pm

**Details:** The 2007 AGM will take place this evening, together with a presentation on 'The Psychology of Driving by Dr Graham Hole.

**Directions:** Sussex Police HQ is situated just off the A26 in Lewes.

**Address:** Malling House, Church Lane, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2DZ

## UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Date	Details
31/05/2007	Steve Mims from Surrey Police
26/07/2007	Speaker from a2om
27/09/2007	Speaker TBC
29/11/2007	Speaker TBC
December 2007	Christmas Social



## LATEST NEWS

### Member participating in Modified Car Road Rally

Toby Field, a Sussex Advanced Drivers member and Secretary of the East Sussex Branch of the Saab Owners Club, is entering the 2007 Modball Rally to raise money for charity.

Many people will be familiar with the famous Gumball Rally that takes place each year for teams to drive across Europe and the world.

A new event for 2007, Modball Rally Europe, will be taking place in June for 150 teams.

The event starts in London and lasts 7 days and almost 3,000 miles travelling through France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria and Italy. He has a crew of 3 fellow Saab Club members, and is taking his own car.

Toby said "Obviously it will be lots of fun driving all day and partying all night, but our mission is to make as much money as possible along the way for our chosen charity, Cancer Research UK".

Companies have been kind enough to sponsor the team by providing vehicle spares and supplies.

If you are interested in sponsoring Toby and his team, either by supplying car sponsorship or donating to his charity fund, please visit his website at [www.team.saabclub.co.uk](http://www.team.saabclub.co.uk) or call him on 07989 236373.

Adam Field

## TRAINING OFFICER'S NEWS

The theory sessions of our tutor training course have now been successfully completed. All went well and although there is room for improvement in the course, Robin and I were satisfied with the way it has gone so far. There is no doubt that 'learning took place'. A date has been set in early March for the in-vehicle training. It might be good for us all to blow the dust off our copies of 'Roadcraft' and the good old 'Highway Code' because I had the task of putting together some questions on 'Roadcraft', and all I can say is that I was glad I didn't have to answer them! We are planning to give some short presentations on the subjects covered in the book at our bi-monthly meetings so we can keep up to date and be reminded of what we should be doing to keep up our skills up-to-date.

One of the topics discussed on the course was 'Observation Links'. This is covered in 'Roadcraft' Chapter 3 pages 52 - 53 where there are some examples listed. I am sure that within the group we could come up with many more so please let me have your favourites so that I can compile a list for the benefit of everyone. You can e-mail them to me or give them to me at the AGM.

The Secretary of State for Transport was recently asked in Parliament to assess the merits of (a) raising and (b) abolishing the national speed limit on motorways. Dr Ladyman replied 'The last assessment into the possible effects of raising the motorway speed limit would increase the risk of accidents and casualties and would also increase carbon emissions. For these reasons it was decided that the motorway speed limit should remain at 70mph. There are no current plans to conduct a further assessment into either increasing or abolishing the motorway speed limit'. When asked for advice on selecting the most appropriate gear for a given situation when training, I advise the driver to try them all and see which works best! As we have never tried a different speed limit since the present limit was introduced I fail to see how Dr Ladyman can predict with such accuracy that there would be an increase in accidents. Dare I suggest that by increasing the limit we might actually experience a reduction in the accident rate? Surely it must be at least worth trying for a year just to see what will happen? Perhaps the practice of allowing people to drive on motorways without any training at all might be more likely to be the cause of the accident rate increasing rather than a higher speed and that might just be a matter for his attention. As a well known broadcaster would say 'Is it me?'.  
**David Raine**

## NEWSLETTER FORMAT

At a recent meeting, several members expressed a wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail instead of a printed copy by post.

If you would like to receive future copies of the newsletter by e-mail, please complete and return the form below.

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**POSTAL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to: Adam Field, 30 Cabot Close, Eastbourne, East Sussex. BN23 6RT



## LATEST NEWS

### Young Drivers Need Their Brains Examined!

Road crashes are the single biggest killer of young people in the UK.

The a2om driving academy believes that a major cause of these crashes is the immaturity of the drivers' brain, which is not fully mature until they reach 25 years old.

Poor judgement when linked with inexperience creates the conditions that result in too many needless deaths and injuries amongst young drivers.

A2om are pioneering a new approach among young drivers with Britain's first university-affiliated safe driving course that targets young drivers' brains and attitudes.

Managing director of the a<sup>2</sup>om academy is Gary Austin, who was chief executive of the government's Driving Standards Agency for six years until 2005.

This innovative scheme involves almost double the number of hours typically undertaken by young drivers before taking their test. Key to improving the safety of young drivers, says a<sup>2</sup>om, is the recognition that the frontal lobe of the brain - the clever part of the brain responsible for decision-making can be improved by exercises before it is fully mature.

The full text of this article will be available shortly on the group website. We also hope to get Gary Austin as a speaker at a group meeting in the near future.

Adam Field

To anyone who thinks psychology is something practised by bearded elderly men with German accents and a couch, seeing the words "psychology" and "driving" paired together might come as a surprise. However, psychologists study processes such as visual perception, attention and decision-making - all vital aspects of driving. Since the vast majority of road accidents stem from human error rather than mechanical failure, understanding how drivers manage to achieve the remarkable feat of driving - and maybe more importantly, understanding why sometimes they fail - is very much a task for psychologists to tackle. I've recently written a book that reviews psychological research on driving, and looks at the hard evidence behind some of the popular assertions that are made about driving - claims such as "hand-held mobile phones are safer than hands-free phones", "drivers pull out in front of motorcyclists and cyclists because they are hard to see", "elderly drivers are a danger to themselves and everyone around them, and it's mainly because of their poor eyesight", "risk compensation means that it's futile introducing anti-lock brakes and other devices to increase road safety", and "technology is going to make driving safer". When you actually look at the research on all of these issues, you find that none of these statements is true.

Space precludes a detailed discussion of these issues (it would require a book to cover them!) so I'll just deal with one that's attracted some media coverage recently: mobile phone use. Until relatively recently, mobile phone use was too uncommon to make much impact on the accident statistics, but that's beginning to change now. Experiments have also been performed, in driving simulators and on the roads (using instrumented cars). These consistently show that driving performance is impaired when drivers are using a phone, and that it makes no difference at all whether the phone is hands-free or hand-held. Drivers are slower to react to other road-users' behaviours such as sudden braking. In our own research at Sussex, we've found that sometimes they missed major hazards (such as cars parked in their lane) altogether.

In order to drive and phone at the same time, drivers try to ease the demands of driving by driving a little slower, leaving a little more room between themselves and the car in front, and by ignoring their mirrors. However, this does not produce enough of a safety margin if something unexpected happens. Holding a phone certainly isn't conducive to vehicle control, but the really dangerous effects of phone use stem from the way that it distracts drivers' *attention* away from their surroundings. Phone-using drivers are less aware of what's going on around them. Information-processing resources that should be being used for hazard detection end up being shared between driving and conversing. This is true whether or not the phone is being physically held. Using a phone is more distracting than talking to a passenger because passengers regulate their conversation according to the traffic conditions: for example, they might stop talking to the driver while the car is at a busy junction, to allow the driver to concentrate. This kind of regulation is much harder to do over a phone.

Mobile phone use is particularly dangerous because of this social element. However, as companies like Microsoft continue in their attempts to turn the car into a mobile office, the opportunity for driver distraction is going to become even greater. Frankly, I think that unless this process is carefully regulated, the future for road safety looks rather bleak. Sadly, most of the public seem to consider driving as a boring waste of time rather than as a serious social responsibility, and so they are likely to jump at the chance to occupy themselves with something more "productive". At the moment, this consists mainly of using the phone. Very soon, they will be able to check their emails, make hotel reservations and find out the opening times of theme parks and zoos. Mobile phone TV has just become available, and it's now just a matter of time before the media report the first serious accident involving someone watching it while driving. Why someone can seriously consider doing something as stupid as this, is also the subject-matter of psychology!

Dr Graham Hole