



Official Provider



ROADWORTHY

JOURNAL OF THE NORTH-EAST LONDON AND ESSEX GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

We ask two Members what achieving the Advanced Driving status has done for their career. Read all about their driving journeys inside!



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Summer 2022

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HERITAGE RANGE



The IAM RoadSmart logo does not replace the familiar red roundel which has been retained by the IAM for the use of members who have earned the right to display it by passing the Advanced Test.

Visit the IAM website, www.iam.co.uk where you will find a range of merchandise featuring the red roundel. These include metal pin badges, key fobs, cloth/iron on badges and the red chrome enamel car badge which is also available with personal engraving.

NELE Group is offering Full Members a free IAM wind-screen sticker. To claim yours, contact the Editor or collect one at the our next Group Night.

Group Nights

Face to face Group Nights have now resumed and are held on the **second Tuesday** of each month at **7.30 p.m.** **The June, July and September Group Nights will be held at the Moby Dick (Toby Carvery), Whalebone Lane North, Romford, RM6 6QU.**

Could we please ask members to ensure they are subscribed to our emails as we will need to update you as to the venue for meetings beyond September. We also send email reminders to members about upcoming meetings, and also of any changes in presentations.

For those unable to attend meetings in person, our meetings are also 'Zoomed'. The link, meeting ID and passcode remain the same each month as follows:-

Meeting ID: 840 2554 8565
Passcode: 909354

You can access the meeting from a mobile, laptop or tablet and can opt to watch and listen without having to appear on camera yourself.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Dates for your Diary - all at 7.30 p.m.

The June, July and September Group Nights will be held at the Moby Dick (Toby Carvery) as above.

14th June	Meet the Examiner, Chris Smith (Police Class 1 Driver and Driving Instructor with Dorset Police)
12th July	Summer Social (light buffet included) Diversionary Courses (Speed Awareness & Drink Driving), Part 2. Margaret Houlihan
9th August	Summer break—no Meeting
13th Sept	Pete Doherty, IAM Service Delivery Manager, t.b.c.
11th Oct	"The Routemaster Bus—A London Icon", Nick Blurton
8th Nov	Group Presentation, t.b.c.
13th Dec	Christmas Social, t.b.c.

Deadline for the next edition of RoadWorthy: 19th October 2022.

E-mail: publicity@neleiam.co.uk

Chairman's Chat



Following a successful meeting at the Moby Dick for our AGM, the Committee has agreed to continue to use it for our **JUNE, JULY and SEPTEMBER** monthly meetings, and this will be reviewed shortly. The Moby Dick is easy to find on the A12 Eastern Avenue, has an accessible room with pleasant atmosphere and adequate parking. The staff are welcoming and there is the option of refreshments for those who turn up early.

The Committee recognises that members' responses to the recent questionnaire (page 17) show a preference for the Chigwell/Loughton/Epping area, but as yet nothing suitable has been found in that area despite members investing a significant amount of time investigating several meeting locations which have all turned out to have one or more major flaws. Could I therefore ask that if you have any suggestions for a suitable venue in the area of preference and that meets our needs (modern, safe and comfortable with good accessibility (i.e. on ground floor or with suitable lift), ample parking, projector/screen and wi-fi, near to public transport) then do please let either myself or one of the Committee know.

We have always needed to ensure a full programme of presentations to fill the calendar. The Questionnaire gave us an idea of the preferred range of topics for speakers and showed that there is still significant demand for a programme of regular talks.

Any talks given - whether at the Moby Dick or - if one is subsequently found - at a more popular venue, will also be streamed over Zoom so that those who cannot make it do not miss our Group Nights. Zoom can also be used to facilitate a wider range of interesting speakers from further afield who may be unable or unwilling to attend to present in person. Use of Zoom also means we are easily able to video record the presentation and upload it onto our website. Zoom meetings are never quite the same as being able to socialise with others in the same room, however we hope to get the best of both worlds by continuing with 'hybrid' meetings.

As you may know, Jennifer MacLellan is our Press and PRO as well as Roadworthy Editor; roles which are normally sufficient to keep two separate people fully occupied. However, since the start of the pandemic, she also made time somehow to co-ordinate speakers for our social meetings. The combined workload is simply too much for one person who also has a career and a home life – she is entitled to a Home/Work/NELE balance. Therefore, if you go to the back page, you will see that the role of Speaker Co-Ordinator is now vacant.

If NELE is to continue to have a full programme of talks, we urgently need someone to take over from Jennifer. Where possible, speakers are booked six months in advance. Most of the Speaker Co-Ordinator's role should therefore not be time-critical, making it ideal for someone who likes to arrange things well beforehand. This is made easier by having details of speakers

from previous years and making friends with colleagues in neighbouring IAM Groups for ideas from their speaker programme. Good communication skills are necessary, as all speakers need to be appraised as to the hybrid nature of our meetings. Any volunteer will need to ensure the presentation is publicized prior to the meeting in consultation with the appropriate Committee member, and the speaker would need to receive joining instructions and agree the format of their presentation. The nature of the role is such that it can be carried out by one person, or by two working together. Similarly, the post-holder could choose whether to join the committee – NELE can be flexible in how we work as a team.

Jennifer is of course more than happy to explain what is involved, and has booked speakers for meetings up until October. She will also help with the hand over to a new Speaker Co-Ordinator. If you are interested in helping the NELE team by becoming our speaker coordinator, please contact either Jennifer or myself for further details. Should you decide to go ahead, be certain that you will be very welcome!

We also welcome suggestions as to possible speakers so do get in touch if you have any suggestions.

Paul Gillett

Group Associates

**A very warm welcome to the following new NELE Group Associates.
Please do join us at our Group Nights (see page 3):**

NAME	FROM
Binita Baker	Upminster
Clare Croft-White	London, N15
James Carruthers	Grays
Humza Bobat	Ilford
Simon Rose	Woodford Green
Caden Namwera	Ilford
Max Cross	Loughton
Joanna Ellis	Walthamstow
Amran Ali	Clayhall
Christine Harman	Buckhurst Hill

Congratulations

Congratulations to the following Members who passed the IAM Test recently. Also to the Observers:

NAME	OBSERVER	EXAMINER
Andrew Phipps	Paul Mandel	Paul Mostyn
Nicola Guilloux	Paul Gillett	Duncan West
Andrew Blunn	John Baxter	Duncan West
Richard Jenkin	Paul Heasmer	Duncan West
Tobias Lovell	Paul Gillett	Duncan West

Pets in the Car—a blog from the IAM

What does the Highway Code say about pets in the car?

The Highway Code was updated earlier this year to introduce a risk-based hierarchy of road users, which places more responsibility on the drivers of larger vehicles to look after more vulnerable road users. But are pet owners aware of the rule that relates to having four-legged passengers in the car?

Drivers who travel with their dog in the car can face fines of up to £5,000 for not securing their pet. Rule 57 in the Highway Code states that pets should be “suitably restrained” when travelling in the car to make sure they do not distract the driver or injure themselves in the event of the driver having to stop quickly.

It is not a legal requirement, however, to stay safe while driving and avoid the hefty fine for driving without due care and attention, ensure your dog (or any other pet) is restrained appropriately so it doesn't distract you or hurt you or itself if you suddenly come to a stop.

IAM RoadSmart is on hand to answer any questions on what you need to know about keeping your pet safe in the car.



What is a pet restraint in cars?

A pet restraint is either a harness which has an adapter plugged into a seat belt clip, carrier, or dog cage. All of these are classed as ‘restraints’ and help to keep your pets safe while travelling in the car.

Dog car harnesses are widely available to make sure your dog's safely strapped in. They help keep your dog in one part of the car and can stop them falling forward if adjusted correctly.

There is a vast range of goods to choose from which will enhance your furry passengers experience – Padded waterproof blankets that go over the backseats with an anti-slip underside are a good idea as they also help in keeping your car seats clean. You can also purchase linings for the boot of

your car, some are even specific to make and model, a great way of helping to stop any excess hair from embedding itself in the carpet in your boot lining.

What should I do when travelling with a dog or pet in the car?

Travel essentials can make any car journey feel a little less stressful and remember it is important to plan your journey so you have the option to take rest breaks when needed. Pack the travel essentials:

- Pet food and treats
- Waste disposal bags
- Pet clothes for cold/hot weather
- Toys
- Pet documents, e.g. pet insurance, phone number and chip ID
- Water and water bowls
- Any medications
- Leads (plus a spare)

Does driving with a pet in my car affect car insurance?

With a properly restrained pet you should have no problems with your insurance in the event of having to make a claim. The problem comes in when the animal is not secure and could possibly be seen by the police as a contributory factor and used against you. It is always safer to make sure your pet is restrained safely so the problem does not arise.

Rebecca Ashton, Head of Policy and Research at IAM RoadSmart, said:

“We’re surrounded by distractions in our lives but when we’re driving it is time to minimise all of them. The Highway Code states that ‘when in a vehicle make sure dogs or other animals are suitably restrained



so they cannot distract you while you are driving or injure you, or themselves, if you stop quickly’, it’s very important to make sure our pets are travelling safely when being transported in vehicles.

“The image of a dog with his head out the window with its tongue out and its ears flapping in the wind might be seen as cute by some, however it can be very dangerous for the dog and should really be avoided.”

Credit: Infinity Insurance

My last 12 month driving journey

by NELE Member Gary Milton



For thirty-two years my working life has been driving for delivery companies from small vans to 7.5t cargo or flat beds. One company I had been working for promised me they would put me through HGV class 1 training to attain the licence, but unfortunately this never materialised. I moved around driving for different companies with always the ambition of getting an H.G.V Class1 licence but sometimes life gets in the way and ambitions become a dream away.

I have also always had a sense of pride with my driving and for several years thought about taking the advanced test, but again things seem to get in the way – mainly time.

My current job involves not only driving vans for Dulux, but I also have responsibility for the vehicles at the Barking store. More recently, my work has not been quite so manic, and so my thoughts came back to the H.G.V Class

1 licence. It made sense that if I wanted to accomplish both, then the best start would be to take the advanced test first may be the best move even if it was to get rid of some bad habits that had accumulated over the years. I had been now driving professionally for thirty-two years so what could I now learn? It transpired a lot.

So, I went online, paid the fee, and before long received a friendly phone call from Steve D'Ath (my NELE Group Observer) who gave me a quick overview of the course. In a matter of days, we were at our meeting point for what Steve called a first assessment drive to see where I was with my driving and to get to know one another.

We met up for our first run and had a debrief during as well as after. Steve remarked it was a "good solid drive", proposing a few areas for improvement, and things we were going to learn in future runs. After each observed run, Steve set me tasks to practice and achieve, this would be certain habits to break, or practice a certain newly learnt driving skill.

As the runs progressed, I become very confident in all the aspects of the course. Even though I had considered my driving to of been of a good standard, I soon realised that what was being explained to me would enhance my driving skill whatever vehicle I would be driving. When Steve said he thought I was ready for the test, I went for a final run with Peter Rowles

(NELE Lead Observer) to make sure.

I met up with the examiner, and we left for over an hour's drive, I thought I had done ok, so was astonished when he told me I had achieved a F1rst. My test sheet report was very complimentary, this certainly gave me the confidence to move forward with my next goal.

At this time, the shortage of H.G.V drivers was hitting the headlines due to Brexit, so I applied for the government "Skills Boot Camp". I contacted the Co-Op, and they provided me with sponsorship with job prospects. It took five months of waiting between stages of course etc.

My week at the driving school did not start well. I had a new instructor and was his first student, and he had a mentor for the first day. The rest of the week I felt little confidence in my instructor, but not wanting to waste this chance I really concentrated and used my I.A.M experience to help me through. I even imagined Steve sitting next to me reminding me "take on as much information possible".

When I got to the school on the Friday there was a different instructor for my last day who was to also accompany me to the test centre. He pointed out some errors I made, but told me my driving was good, which helped with confidence.

My test date was booked for Friday 13th May; luckily, I am not superstitious. It was at Enfield LGV test centre with a worrying low 36% pass rate. Although nervous, I felt calm with my concentration levels high. The drive was good, and the examiner said, "that's a pass" and my body instantly relaxed into a numb feeling that I had done it.



And so, in just 11 months, I went from a standard driver to an IAM F1rst and then to a C+E HGV Class 1 Artic driver, with a new job waiting for me. It was challenging work, but with determination and dedication ambitions can eventually be achieved.

Mike (NELE Group Secretary) - thank you so much for writing this "day on the road" story. Sorry to have pressured you into writing it – I know it is not intended to be an advertisement for any well-known travel holiday brand but a description of how the advanced driver skills apply to your employment as a Chauffeur. Ed.

A Day in the Life of a chauffeur

by Mike Noel



Introduction

Having retired from work in July 2017 I went on holiday (not a cruise, which came later) with a well-known travel holiday brand. We were picked up from home and driven to Gatwick airport. During the long yet comfortable journey in a VW Caravelle, I asked the driver* "How do you get a job like this?". The chauffeur explained the proceedings, ending with "...if you go on the website, it's all there".

Once back from holiday and along with other little 'projects' (enrolling on an IAM course being one of them, although this is **not** a requirement for the job), I duly searched for the site and contacted the appropriate person: the Transport Administrator. The 'selection' process involves a practical test; a theory test (of which you must score $\geq 80\%$); a medical from your GP; a DBS

(Disclosure and Barring Service) check, and a Driving Licence vehicle check. This whole process costs and can take a minimum of eight weeks.

Early days

I was not given the luxury of accompanying an 'old hand' to see where everything is and how things are done, and so I had to learn quickly 'on the job/road'. Like any new job that you start you try to minimise the appearance of being new but sometimes this just surfaces inevitably *e.g.*, going to the wrong terminal, trying to find the exit from a terminal (with two customers and myself laden with suitcases) by taking the wrong lift. I am happy to say that Induction now incorporates a week on the road with an 'old hand'.

The Multi-Person Vehicles (MPVs) that the company use are the VW Caravelle (from 17-20 'plate'). The vehicle shown above is a 20-'plate', 6-seater (excluding driver), 2 litre, 110 kW, 4-cylinder TDI® (Turbo-charged direct injection - diesel), emission standard EU6 with a 7-speed DSG® dual clutch gearbox (making it more smooth than a more usual single clutch automatic gearbox). There are over two hundred MPVs of various specs just described in the fleet based up and down the country, with the two major bases being near Heathrow and Gatwick. There are some 200+ chauffeurs, the majority of whom are part-time (casual), like myself. Our 'start' duties require us to complete a thorough 24-point vehicle check on-line and, at the end of the day, a full interior and exterior clean with a full re-fuel of the vehicle. If there is

anything wrong with the vehicle – from any cockpit lights permanently on/flashing to no First-Aid kit on board – the MPV cannot be used and is reported back to Control.

One advantageous aspect of being a chauffeur (pre-Covid, when customers used to travel in the front seats of the MPVs - unheard of today, as we chauffeur one household per vehicle who sit at the very back wearing masks), are the many varied and interesting customers that you meet, always willing to share their knowledge of local history, for instance passing through Marton-in-Cleveland village, on the A172, just outside Middlesbrough, it was pointed out to me that Captain James Cook grew up there; the New Forest, Hampshire (a fascinating history), where trees have been felled to make ships since the 17th Century; Buckfast Abbey, on the SE perimeter of Dartmoor Forest (A38), for its sheer beauty, immaculate gardens and stained glass; or, on the crest of Bodmin Moor travelling SW on the A30, on the right there stands *Jamaica Inn*, which inspired Daphne du Maurier to write the book of the same name (later a film by Hitchcock). Or, as we travel eastwards along the A149 in Norfolk we pass Burnham Norton where, it was pointed out, one of the roads leads to Burnham Thorpe - the birthplace of Lord Nelson. Another discovery was, whilst on the A44 – just before Blenheim Palace – is the village of Bladon, where Winston Churchill is buried. In those pre-pandemic days, we carried customers from different households who were going on the same holiday or who were returning from a holiday but living in the same locality. The atmosphere in the ‘cab’ was invariably one of excitement, constant chat and joviality. (Sometimes it reminded me of taking a group of students on a daytrip). On another occasion I distinctly remember a group of six from Yorkshire, including a farmer who was sitting beside me in the front seat. When I told him I regularly listened to ‘Farming Today’ he was so thrilled that he told the rest of his party when we stopped for a break.

Acronyms

Travelling along the many different road surfaces, highways and by-ways of England and Wales there is ample opportunity for the advanced driver to practise and implement the many acronyms we have in our repertoire of skills. **OAP** is constantly present on approaching villages – **Observing** the direction of travel of poles/hedges and seeing the church steeple as I do multiple ‘cross-views’, leads me to **Anticipate** a change in the speed limit, thus meeting 30 mph “at 30 mph”, re-enforced by street lighting. I also **Plan** for increased activity near a school, pub or shops. Again, **Observing** ‘bins out’, no one at the bus stop, fresh hay or horse manure makes me **Anticipate** an obstacle(s) ahead and **Plan** for action. Limit points (simply put, a system for working out a safe speed to negotiate hazards), are very frequent on country roads and when I’m by myself I practise my commentary, particularly for junctions (right, left, finger or staggered), active or passive threatening cars, bends** in the road (positioning) or the brows of hills. The ubiquitous roundabout (from mini to mega) always presents a challenge *from* ...reading the correct exit point on the plan board, validating that with the sat nav, and finally, visually checking live action - in **all** directions -on the ground by **TUG**, that is, **T**aking, **U**sing and **G**iving **information** in a timely fashion *to* ...approaching the roundabout in the correct position (lane), speed, appropriate gear, and always “planning to stop but looking to go” – with a ‘brisk’ and ‘business like’ accelerated exit from the roundabout, if conditions permit. The approach method above incorporates the system **IPSGA**: Information, Position, Speed, Gear, Acceleration.

Motorways

You do hear (not from advanced drivers I hasten to add) that motorway driving is 'boring'. There is so much going on, on a motorway: how can it possibly be boring? From the 'two second rule' to avoid being 'stuck behind a lorry' when preparing to leave a motorway: an aspect which contributed to my failing when I first took my Advanced test: ["...you had a minute to overtake that lorry before the next exit...you could easily have done it" he said]. I am ultra-cautious when approaching HGVs on motorways, first observing the VRN (is it a left/right-hand drive vehicle?) and 'holding back' to minimise the **TED** factor (**T**ime of **E**xposure to **D**anger), particularly if the HGV is in lane 2 and an overtaking manoeuvre is being considered (speed, weather and road conditions are all information that has to be collated).

We all have our own 'favourite' stretches of motorway: mine is the M40 to Oxford. It is very picturesque in parts – particularly when it gorges through the Chilterns revealing the undulating endless fields ahead, which, during a snow-filled winter, is 'picture-postcard' material. You notice significantly fewer lorries than on other routes going 'north' [except between J9 and 10 where those coming from Oxford and the S Coast (A34) are making their way to the M1 or Northampton (via the A43)]. I like it also because the Motorway services are less 'bleak' compared with the dilapidated 1960s/70s styled Services found on most motorways. As advised in the Spring 2022 edition of RoadWorthy, we always plan our journeys with our 'breaks', avoiding the very bleak Services! [In fact, our 20-'plate' MPVs tell us when to take a break]. Oh! and if you are ever travelling on the M5 near Gloucester please stop in *Gloucester Services* between junctions 11A & 12 (going S): they sell locally produced Farm products in a pleasant environment.....without a MacDonald's *et al* in sight: how wonderful!

'Smart' motorways and road pricing are inevitable topics that are aired. Leaving the M3 whilst it was still being upgraded to 'smart', then struggling to find the correct turnoff to a remote village on the outskirts of Basingstoke at 4 a.m. in thick fog is certainly not my idea of fun. However, after several years of upgrading this particular stretch of motorway, with road works now finished, it is a vast improvement. The issue now is for more refuge areas with the very efficient installation, use and monitoring of VDUs to detect and implement the red 'X' when an incident occurs in order to make the motorway safer for all users: surely the technology is there to detect when **one** vehicle, doing less than 10 mph say, triggers off the lane closure. Having disagreed with road pricing when it was first introduced but now, having used the M6 toll a few times, it is a wonderful idea. If you have ever been caught up in the M5/M6 junction in the SW Midlands, you will be glad of the relief M6 Toll. We use it, as a rule, only when it is time critical and in exceptional circumstances. It also has the added bonus of fewer cars, hardly any lorries, a more scenic view and not once have I seen an RTC.

Other considerations...

Every edition of RoadSmart has three articles describing 'Demanding Drives' in its 'On the Road' section. As well as being demanding they are always scenic. I have a few of my own in this 'green and pleasant land', by courtesy of collecting/dropping off my customers: **1)** *The New Forest (Hants)*: -Where the M27 (W) leads into the A31, you're well into the Forest. About two miles further on take a left turn off the fast-

flowing A31 into the tranquillity of one of its C road 'tributaries' leading to Emery Down; cross the A35 (avoiding Lyndhurst) and continue to Brockenhurst, where you may like to have a break in one of its relaxing tea-rooms. You may then wish to make your way to Lymington (where some of the chauffeurs have taken the ferry to the Isle of Wight to collect customers) or make your way via the less busy B3055 to the on-sea towns of Milford, Barton, or Christchurch. **2) The Roseland Peninsula (Cornwall):** - Continue on the A30 from Bodmin, head south on the A391 to St Austell, then the A390 to Probus. All along this route 'window' glimpses of the bay 'pop up' as the road undulates further south past Probus, then on the A3078 to St Mawes. Take time to stroll in the idyllic-sounding village name of St Just-in-Roseland before driving a short way to the castle overlooking Falmouth Bay, and before descending to the 'boutique' town of St Mawes. If time allows why not take a ferry 'hop' across the bay to Falmouth. This was all in a day's work (maybe two with an 'overnight' and without the ferry ride).

The pandemic is now a major marker as the World Wars were and it has given me the opportunity to re-assess my working practices, as indeed it has forced many companies and individuals to review how things are done. No more getting up (for me) in the dead of night to collect returning holiday makers on a 6.15 a.m. flight... or the meeting/greeting of customers on a 7 p.m. flight followed by a drive to Exeter or working on consecutive days. However, a typical day from leaving home to arriving back can still easily stretch to over 12 hours. The business has now 'streamlined' with many activities being done 'in-house'. When I joined, my base was a dedicated premises: it moved, pre-pandemic, to a Heathrow hotel. Although there is less opportunity to interact with fellow chauffeurs, who mostly have either retired like myself or are doing this as supplementary work, once the pandemic has retreated sufficiently, we hope to recover the camaraderie atmosphere that was in evidence at the previous site. Security, safety and working practices have always been maintained at the highest level.

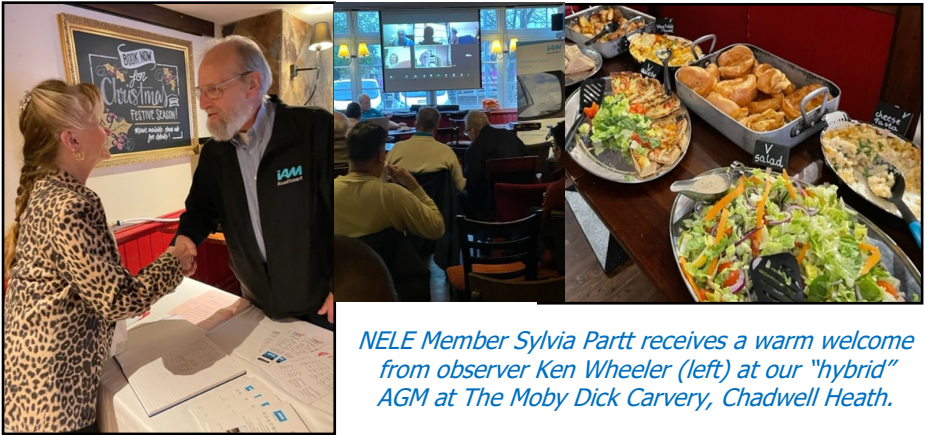
Conclusion

One cannot write an article like this without acknowledging the tremendous amount of logistics work involved, done by the Planning and Control teams (and our Driver Performance Manager) who map and track the chauffeured vehicles and assign them customers. Strict adherence also is given to the number of hours driven, worked in a day and in-between jobs, with **all** stats (including harsh braking and engine 'idling') being logged on our Tom-Toms, then analysed. Pre-pandemic we used to have a 'Driver of the Month' award, which I hope will be re-instated.

A safe, smooth, uneventful drive is the motto of the chauffeurs. A delightful couple once asked me, "...is this an electric vehicle?... it is so quiet and smooth".

I have combined my hobbies of travel, motoring and meeting interesting people into one job that is enjoyable for the vast majority of the time. Therefore, I *am* enjoying my retirement (thank you very much).

During my Induction we were told that we are not 'drivers' but 'chauffeurs' and have 'customers' not 'fares' or 'passengers'. Also, customers feel most comfortable travelling at 68 mph. [!] **Did you know there are at least fifteen aids for assessing the severity of a bend? Find out what they are by visiting Nick Fearn's presentation under **Events /Zoom meeting videos on the NELE [website](#) [at 17' 30"].*



NELE Member Sylvia Partt receives a warm welcome from observer Ken Wheeler (left) at our "hybrid" AGM at The Moby Dick Carvery, Chadwell Heath.

NORTH EAST LONDON & ESSEX GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

Registered Charity Number: 1056280

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**held at the Moby Dick (A12 junction with Whalebone Lane), RM6 6QU
(and via Zoom)**

Tuesday 12th April 2022 at 7.30pm

Before the formal business of the AGM, Members received a 45-minute presentation on Dashcams, Road Safety & the Police Portal from Elliott Blackburn (Nextbase Dash Cams—see page 21).

Minutes

The Chair, Paul Gillett introduced the AGM and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence** – Iain Wyness, John Saffer
2. **Minutes of previous AGM** (Zoom) on Tuesday 13th April 2021. Apologies for absence: Clint *Charles* should read Clint *Childs*.

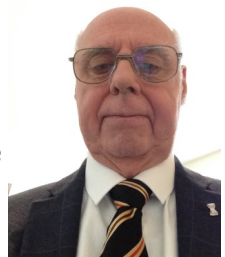
Minutes accepted as a true record. **Proposed** by Charlie McGlinchey, **second ed** by Derek Leggetter. Carried unanimously.

3. **Matters arising from the 2021 AGM Minutes**

Two matters arose from the Members' discussion (meeting location and membership subscriptions). These would be addressed during this meeting.

4. **Chairman's report**

Additional to the Chairman's report given at the meeting and posted on the NELE website under "Events," the Chair thanked Jennifer MacLellan for her outstanding efforts on publicity, not just for the AGM but for the year. The Chair also mentioned that Brian Calcutt (right) was



retiring from the Committee and thanked him for his long-serving, efficient & unobtrusive service. In accepting a plaque presented to him by the Chair, Brian thanked the Committee, especially Iain Wyness (no longer a serving Committee member), who, as his Observer many years ago, encouraged Brian to assume the role of Membership Secretary.

Resolution 1: To accept the Chairman's report.

Proposed by Martine Heasmer, **seconded** by Ricky Poon.

Carried unanimously.

5. **Treasurer's report and adoption of accounts.**

The Treasurer's Report was handed out at the meeting, included in the Spring 2022 Edition of Roadworthy (p16) and remains on the NELE website.

The Group's reserves stood at **£11,210.00** held in two current accounts. The Treasurer advised that pre-pandemic we thought we may have had to increase subscriptions. However, because we were not meeting physically, less expenses were incurred; he does not anticipate a need for subscriptions to increase next year either. The Treasurer also addressed the issue of Gift Aid, by urging everyone present [full members only] to fill in the pink form, which was available from Jen at the back of the room. Each Gift-Aided subscription gives £2.50 back to NELE once the form has been completed and handed to the Treasurer. [This is a potential 'gift' to us of £600 (£2.50 x 240) if all members have signed up]. Members need only sign up for Gift Aid once; it does not have to be renewed every year.

Asked by a member what was the most expensive item in the Report, the Treasurer answered that it was the cost of printing & postage, although the cost of printing RoadWorthy had significantly decreased from previous years.

Paul Heasmer thanked everyone in the group who had assisted him in his role as Treasurer.

Resolution 2: To accept the Treasurer's report and adopt the accounts.

Proposed by: Clint Childs, **seconded** by: Pete Minvalla.

Carried unanimously.

6. **Resolution 3:** That any monies unclaimed by Group members for over one year by the end of the AGM should be treated as a donation to Group charitable funds.

-We include this every AGM to avoid "ghost" entries in the accounts where members, for example, have moved and cancelled their membership but not a standing order, or where members have paid twice and not asked for a reimbursement.

-There were no unclaimed monies carried forward for 2020/21

Proposed by: Derek Leggetter, **seconded** by: Brian Calcutt.

Resolution carried unanimously

7. **Election of officers** (*Officers must retire annually & may offer themselves for re-election*)

Standing for re-election:

- Chairman: **Paul Gillett**
- Secretary: **Mike Noel**
- Treasurer: **Paul Heasmer**

Proposed by (*en bloc*): Grant Powell, **seconded by**: Jay Rashid. Carried unanimously.

8. **Election of committee members**

Every year one-third of Committee members must retire in rotation and may offer themselves for re-election. Committee Members retiring and not standing for re-election: Brian Calcutt

Committee Members retiring & standing for re-election: Derek Leggetter, Clint Childs

Proposed by: Charlie McGlinchey, **seconded by**: Peter Rowles. Carried unanimously.

Derek Leggetter **proposed** that we should formally thank our *Observers* who have worked continuously during the past year. **Seconded** by Charlie McGlinchey. Carried unanimously.

9. The formal part of the AGM was declared over by the Chair who then handed over to the Secretary to lead an informal discussion about future meetings, venues, and format.
- The Secretary thanked members for completing the AGM Questionnaire and urged those who had not to take the opportunity to do so now. He said that this discussion was not to give an analysis of the responses – which would appear in the next edition of RoadWorthy – but to give those who had not voiced their thoughts on the venues, format or time of meetings or any other issues, the opportunity to do so. However, the Secretary did give insight into some of the responses he had seen thus far by saying the group is a very 'social' group and are very much interested in social events e.g., a Summer BBQ and/or a Christmas Social. This prompted him to urge for someone to join the Committee as an Events and/or Speaker Co-Ordinator to 'spread the workload' of the existing Committee.
 - The Secretary continued that since October 2019 our 'time was up' at the Metropolitan Police club in Chigwell and since then we have been 'nomadic' trying different 'homes' e.g., Grange Farm in Chigwell (down the road from the Police club), Lopping Hall in Loughton and St James' Church Hall in Buckhurst Hill. Each had its advantages/disadvantages.
 - The Secretary pointed out that clear criteria had always guided our selection as well as others listed in IAM's Handbook. He applied these criteria – as did other members - in an extensive search last summer for an alternative venue following last year's AGM. We desperately

need a permanent home to re-establish our identity.

- Asked why we could not 'renew' our 'membership' of the Police Club; the answer was that cost and policy changes have regrettably made the venue unavailable.
- The majority present indicated they would be happy with attending the Moby Dick for future social evenings.

The Secretary thanked everyone and closed this section of the meeting.

10. **Any other business** – Nil

Analysis of the AGM Questionnaire returns

Thank you everyone who took part in the AGM Questionnaire whether by post, email or by phone. We received 50 returns (22% of the total sent out). All contributions and responses were valuable in helping us determine the views and interests of the membership. Below you will find a commentary analysis of the findings:

There was a strong preference, **46%** (23 returns), for Group Social Nights to be held in the Chigwell area, presumably either at the Metropolitan Police club or Grange Farm, unfortunately these venues are not available. The next preferred area was Loughton/Epping with **42%** (21).

Comment: If you are aware of any venues in these areas that you think satisfy the criteria mentioned at the AGM discussion (see minutes), please inform us and we will investigate the suitability, availability and cost.

A sizable proportion, **60%** (30), wished to retain the meeting day as Tuesday starting at 7.30 pm **52%** (26), and as Monthly meetings, **50%** (25). It was interesting to note there was a significant request **38%** (19) for a 7.00 pm start. When asked at the AGM whether this was to facilitate an earlier finish the reply was 'no: it probably fitted in with the member's schedule' e.g., coming straight from work. There was also a smaller proportion of **32%** (16) for having meetings 'every other month'.

Comment: Having meetings every other month is important for us to consider because it is difficult to obtain speakers for 10 months of the year and for them to talk solely on 'motoring related subjects'.

70% (35) of respondents have access to Zoom while **48%** (24) prefer the option of attending Social Nights in person or by Zoom. Only 14% (**7**) preferred to attend Group Nights solely by Zoom. When attending, **64%** (32) wished 'to hear presentations on motoring related subjects' while **42%** (21) liked 'to hear presentations on non-related subjects.

As commented previously, although 'to hear presentations on non-related subjects' is not the preferred option, it does seem to be the most practical option.

Attending the occasional weekend 'social event' was popular with a **66%** (33) interest. Specifically, **54%** (27) was interested in a Summer BBQ and **38%** (19) for a Christmas Social.

Comment: Concern was expressed as to how many people would attend: would we have to send out RSVP invites to ascertain numbers? Please note that our Christmas Dinners in the past have only attracted 20-30 people.

There was a wide range of interest in practical motoring events with 'learning more & driving an electric car' leading the field with **60%** (30). Other interests included 'an assessment of the member's Advanced driving skills', **32%** (16), and 'to retake the Advanced Driving Test', **10%** (5).

Comment: This is an area where Observers could play a vital role with their specialist network/knowledge e.g., are there any Tracks available where these and similar events can be held with the specialist personnel to organise & run it.

Whilst there were a variety of responses to **Question 9** ("Any other suggestions"), all of which were useful to hear, I have included a few here:-

Having 'a reduced fee' for 'couples' living at the same address – reduces postage, paper, time & effort;

Tips/reviews as to how to maintain standards in advanced driving;

"The Questionnaire was very useful; much good work done & being done; hate to see NELE collapse"

"Thank you to all those who have kept NELE going. Looking forward to attending face-to-face meetings when they re-start"

Q. Is there a 'Fast-Track' preparation for the Advanced Test? **A.** Yes. (Please refer to IAM RoadSmart website - Fast Track is a premium product overseen by Head Office).

Do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you would like to discuss any of the above points.

Mike Noel
NELE Secretary
Secretary@neleiam.co.uk

Cycling and the Motorist

by NELE Observer Barry Collins



Barry enjoying a cycling holiday in Puglia, Italy.

As a long-time U.K. cyclist, together with being a 'fairly long term' NELE Observer, I have some strong views on the new Highway Code changes. There is no good place to have a cycling accident, but some places are worse than others. And in terms of being compensated for the injuries and losses arising from such a condition, this country sits low in the European rankings.

We operate a fault-based system for civil liability in England and Wales, which means that to recover any compensation the injured cyclist has to prove evidence that the accident was caused by the negligence of The Motorised Other, and they then usually face a claim of contributory negligence, so that even if they succeed, the damages will be reduced by a percentage to reflect your/their own blameworthiness.

The problem with this approach is that it is often difficult for an injured cyclist to obtain and present the evidence to show fault and to rebut counter-claims. They will be up against motor insurers' lawyers at a time that they were injured and needing treatment and support rather than litigation. And of course, in the worst cases where the cyclist was killed, or sustained brain injury, there may be only the defendant's version of events to go on. Other European legal systems are much more protective of cyclists. They operate variations around the theme of presumed liability where it is presumed that the driver of the motorised vehicle was at fault in a collision with a forever more vulnerable cyclist.

Given the increased popularity of cycling and the government stated commitment to further growth and to infrastructure improvements, against the fact that more than 860 cyclists were killed or seriously injured on London's roads in 2020, we had hoped that the government's recent review of the highway code would yield a better deal for cyclists.

The new code, in force from January 2022 did of course make several cycling friendly rule improvements and clarifications. It establishes the Hierarchy of Road Users principle, recognising the primacy of vulnerable road users as it introduced specific guidance designed to keep cyclists safer on the roads, but this was an opportunity to really tip the balance in favour of the cyclist, to change the law and create a presumption of liability to bring us in line with European neighbours.

It would be wrong to think that any of the European liability systems automatically load liability under the motorist.... something the UK motoring

organisations continue to insist is the case. Presumed liability should not be confused with strict liability, which fixes blame irrespective of fault. Most systems are nuanced and reflect different situations.

Unsurprisingly perhaps the Dutch legal system favours the cyclist in a collision with a motorist. Where the cyclist is under fourteen the motorist is held to be at fault. Over fourteen and the motorist is only presumed to be at fault. They may counter that presumption with evidence, but the cyclist cannot be more than 50% blame unless their actions were reckless or worse.

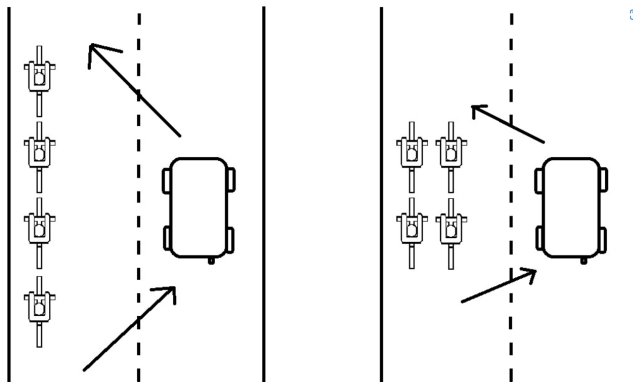
France is also cyclist friendly. There, the protection for children also extends to the over seventies and disabled people. For other adults there is a presumption of fault against the motorist and that can be rebutted, only if it can be shown that the cyclist's gross negligence was the sole cause.

In Germany, the motorist is primarily at fault in a collision though contributory negligence deduction is up to one-third against the injured cyclist, but only if they were grossly negligent.

So legal framework matters to the unfortunate enough to be injured while cycling. For cyclists to be placed near the top of the hierarchy in the highway code is some progress but only a change in the law would guarantee them the protection and redress that they deserve. An opportunity that was missed.

Another victim of Brexit, together with the GB Plate?

Cycling Two Abreast. It takes longer to pass a long line of cyclists than the same group riding two abreast.



Cycling this way can deter overtaking when it's not safe to do so,. It also makes riding with children or less experienced cyclists safer, makes conversation possible (in the same way it is when you're driving) and makes it easier to overtake when safe.

Previous Group Nights

Please note that the below presentations have been video recorded for you and can be found on the right of the "Events" page of our website: www.neleiam.co.uk/zoom-meeting-videos.

March—Cornering, hierarchy of cornering priorities, and advanced cornering techniques, Nick Fearn.

It is always good to hear from Nick Fearn who has been known to NELE for many years. There is more to good cornering than is generally recognised and Nick covered the priorities for cornering, being flexible with the rate of braking and why rev-matching really works.

April—Presentation of Dashcams, Rose Safety and the Police Portal. Elliott Blackburn, Nextbase Dash Cams.

Elliott is Marketing Coordinator for the Nextbase Dash Cams and took us through the products that they sell, the work that Nextbase had done working with the police on the police portal, and the various safety measures, including emergency SOS response.

The presentation ended with a very kind offer of a 20% discount for NELE Members only looking to purchase direct from their website www.nextbase.co.uk. The code to use is **NBIAM20**.

See also "Dashcams and SD Cards" on page 30.



522 GW The best just got better
A resolution in Dash Cam technology

4K
Image Quality
With ultra-clear 4K recording at 30fps to capture those finer details. It also has the option of 1440p at 60fps or 1080p at 120fps.

what3words Integrated
Integrated with what3words to provide your precise, global location even when you are offline, to help emergency services locate you quickly.

Extreme Weather Mode
A first for Nextbase, we are able to provide a clear image in misty conditions using defogging algorithms.

Image Stabilisation
Image stabilisation is reducing vibrations from your vehicle and improving footage clarity.

Alexa
All the features you love from Alexa, on the move. Using your Dash Cam, Ask Alexa to play music, send a text, save a video and more.

Polarising Filter
The 522GW uses an optical polarising filter to dramatically reduce windscreen glare. This helps to record clearer images in direct sunlight and produce enhanced recordings.

Emergency SOS
In the event of an accident, the Nextbase Emergency SOS can alert the emergency services to your location.

alexa built-in

Motoring & Fashion

by NELE Member John Harrison



I have a certain ambivalence to fashion. Really, it is a complete waste of money! A recent television programme highlighted how discarded "fast fashion" clothes dumped in Ghana are causing waste mountains of clothing, and one wonders how much perfectly good furniture was thrown out in response to the Ikea "Chuck out the Chintz" advertising campaign. On the other hand, if you wear clothes

which are clearly unfashionable or choose to fill your house with furniture which is not reasonably up to date (unless you are trying to create a room with a certain style such as art deco), people are likely to consider you slightly odd and this can work to your disadvantage.

Anyway, here are a few rather random thoughts on motoring and fashion. If you look at motoring magazines from around the beginning of the last century, you will see advertisements for motoring clothing. This could be well described as "heavy duty". Motoring was very much an "outdoor" activity as most cars were open and few had windscreens. One type of motorist, in the broader meaning of this term, still wears such clothing, though not of a ca 1900 style. This is the motorcyclist. Generally motorcycles don't have roofs, but there is another good reason for motorcyclists wearing heavy duty clothing – if you come up and slide along the ground, which is a risk for even the most careful rider, it is better to have to buy new clothing than have horribly scraped skin.

What inspired me to write this article was reading a piece in an old "Autocar" magazine about car styling. Up to about 1920, cars were "horseless carriages". Their form was derived from the previous century's carriages which were, of course, pulled by horses and their appearance was fairly functional. From the early 1920s car manufacturers began to realise if a car looked good it can potentially achieve more sales. Nevertheless, cars generally were relatively upright. Early postwar cars remained relatively upright, partly because some were prewar models reintroduced, perhaps with some styling changes to give them a semblance of a more modern appearance. By the mid-50s upright cars had almost disappeared – I think the last one to go was the "sit up and beg" Ford Popular. My father's first car was a 1954 E-series Vauxhall Velox (I always wonder why he had a six-cylinder car as a first car) and in 1961 he replaced it with an FB Victor, one of the first out of the showrooms. I remember at one point him commenting he perhaps should have had screen washers fitted to the Victor as it was a slightly lower car than the Velox and really needed them. Nowadays all cars have to have screen washers but at that time they were an optional extra. There are various reasons for the height of cars being reduced; they handled better, the need for separate chassis and other mechanical factors made it possible, a lower car uses slightly less materials so is slightly

cheaper to manufacture and finally, of course, lower cars became more fashionable.

Now we have a chicken and egg conundrum. Few people nowadays wear hats. I am not sure if this is because if you got into a lower car wearing a hat you had to then put it somewhere or because less people wearing hats encouraged motor manufacturers to make their cars lower. You can make your own mind up on this. I will, however, tell you a story a retired accountant friend told me. He was auditing the accounts of a particular company and noted that all the employees had the same make of company car except the boss who had an Austin Maxi. The cost of the Maxi was similar to that of the other cars, so it wasn't a case of the boss having a Rolls-Royce and everybody else a Cortina. He thought he would ask the boss the reason for his car choice. His reply was he wanted a car that he could wear his trilby hat in, so went to the Motor Show, tried all the cars and found the Maxi was the one that enabled this. This is an example of fashion, or at least clothing choice, dictating car choice.

In the early 1980s I noticed a friend, who was rather old-fashioned in many of his ways, was wearing a raincoat. I thought this looked rather odd as everybody by then wore half-length coats. Then I pondered why this change had occurred and soon realised it was a lot easier getting in a car with a half-length coat than a full-length one, so clearly in this instance motoring had dictated fashion.

My final motoring and fashion thought is some car manufacturers sell clothing bearing their name. This is invariably a "high end" manufacturer such as Ferrari or Porsche – one does not see Lada clothing or even Ford or Vauxhall clothing. A variation on this theme is "Lambretta" clothing (right).



Some years ago, a work colleague arrived at work wearing a garment emblazoned "Lambretta". I think he was in his late 20s. I asked him if he knew what a Lambretta was and I may as well have asked him what the square root of minus one was as he had no idea. The following day I had to bring in a book about scooters to work so I could show him some pictures of Lambrettas!

PUZZLE PAGE

What well known car makes can be made from these scrambled soundbites? Answers—bottom of the page.

1. A SLUG RELATION =
2. A FOUL PIT =
3. TOTALLY OOO! CAR =
4. LYNN'S MULE BEATEN =
5. COR! IN NEAT TAXI =
6. START'D ON FRI =
7. CAR HAD ON C.O.D. =
8. MAN, CAR IS SIN =
9. CHARGE 'ER CAR SPORT =
10. RAN MISTER'S PAIN =
11. WE GET BLANKS, LOVEE =
12. WENT RUING A LOT =

WANTED

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Committee is made up of 10 Members who meet monthly either on-line or face –to-face in Chigwell or the surrounding area.

We are looking for Committee Members, as follows:

Group Night Coordinator to book suitable presenters for our hybrid meetings, and to liaise as necessary.

Events Organiser. We are particularly keen to hear from one of our Observers so that we can take this forward.

- Support will be provided to people new to such roles. -

Interested? Please contact Paul Gillett (Chair) or one of the Committee (opposite) and arrange to attend our next Committee Meeting.

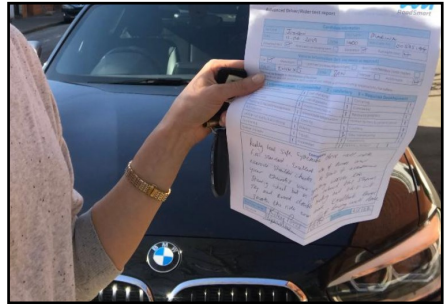


1. Austin Allegro, 2. Fiat Lupo, 3. Toyota Corolla, 4. Bentley Mulsanne, 5. Citroen Xantia, 6. Ford Transit, 7. Honda Accord, 8. Nissan Micra, 9. Porsche Carrera GT, 10. Nissan Primera, 11. Volkswagen Beetle, 12. Renault Twingo.

Our Observers:

NELE currently has 15 Observers;
9 are IMI National Observer qualified
and 6 IMI Local Observer qualified,
We also have 2 in training.

6 have passed their Masters and 3 are
Local Observer Assessors.



The Highway Code: 8 changes you need to know from 29th January 2022

- 1. Hierarchy of road users
- 2. People crossing the road at junctions
- 3. Walking, cycling or riding in shared spaces
- 4. Positioning in the road when cycling
- 5. Overtaking when driving or cycling
- 6. People cycling at junctions
- 7. People cycling, riding a horse and driving horse-drawn vehicles on roundabouts
- 8. Parking, charging and leaving vehicles

All paid-up Members and Associates will receive a copy of the new Highway Code compliments of your North East London & Essex Group of Advanced Motorists.



Time for a New Deal between Society and the Motorist?

by NELE member Tony Cater

Many choices in life have unintended consequences. Nowhere is this more apparent than in society's relationship with the motor car. Nowadays, virtually everyone who wishes to have a car already has one, and our society is built around the use of cars.

But in more recent times, the agenda around the use of cars has been seized by zealots who will brook no challenge to their world view that car = bad and cycling, walking and public transport = good. Maybe part of this has been brought upon ourselves by society's perception of the motorist's effect on life, and if we want a more balanced outcome, we need to show by our behaviour that there can be a middle way.

The root causes of the problems lie in society's choices over planning policy, and the way our working lives have changed as the economy has evolved. These factors have been in play in the decades since World War 2. Until our towns started to be "planned", they had evolved according to the needs of the people that lived and worked in them. Workshops, shops and schools were intermingled with houses, while bigger factories on the edge of towns would provide work for a majority of the townsfolk.

On the one hand, planners decided that towns should be zoned, with all the houses in residential areas; the commerce and small industry accommodated on trading estates, and out of town supermarkets and retail parks were the way forward for retail. On top of that, as the economy evolved, it became more common that businesses needed specialised skills and had to draw their staff from far and wide to get the people they needed. Husbands and wives might often have very different skills and work far from each other. I recently retired from the software industry, and the companies I worked for found that they needed to fish in regional and sometimes international pools of talent to find the people they needed.

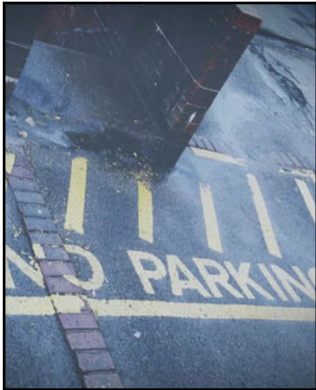
Given that we have organised our society like this over many decades, how can we be surprised that car use has exploded and as a result we have problems with traffic, parking and all sorts of driver behaviour? The reaction from government and local authorities has been to impose ever more stringent limitations on car use instead of encouraging better behaviour.

But motorists are not some alien horde of invaders, here to lay waste to our towns and cities. Traffic is the aggregate of you, me and the people who need to service our needs going about our legitimate business in a free country. It is time for a new deal between society and the motorist. Society needs to cut us some slack, while we need to show that we can earn the trust of society.

Two of the biggest issues society has with motorists are speeding and parking.



A selfish minority persist in driving at unsafe speeds in residential areas and failing to use sufficient observation skills to avoid threatening harm to other road users. No wonder speed bumps, cameras and 20 mph limits are being imposed on motorists and the measures have significant support from residents. If only drivers would start behaving in a more considerate manner, there'd be no need for any of these.



There's never going to be enough parking to go round, but selfish parking results in widespread support for heavy handed enforcement. Many drivers seem to have the mind set that they must park as close to their chosen destination as possible regardless of the nuisance their parked vehicle might impose on other road users.

You may have to drive a little farther from your destination, but sooner or later you can find somewhere to park where you won't be blocking access to premises, obstructing a narrow road or parking half on a footpath. "I pay my taxes, so I can park where I please" is not an endearing attitude.

Parents on the school runs exhibit some of the most outrageous examples of selfish parking behaviour. It does make one wonder what sort of example they think they are setting for their children.

Courtesy on the roads seems to be in very short supply these days. How often have you been in a stream of traffic and noticed some poor pedestrian waiting forlornly at the kerb, hoping for an opportunity to safely cross the road? Traffic just ploughs on oblivious. In such a situation, I'm often in a quandary: do I stop to allow the pedestrian to cross, or would I just be inviting them to step into greater danger in the middle of the road, because the opposing line of drivers lacks the anticipation and imagination to cooperate and make a safe space for them to cross?

Maybe we can reset the situation and campaign for a fairer deal for the motorist. Motorists have to start by demonstrating that they can be trusted to behave responsibly and to be worthy of the trust society placed in them when it awarded them their driving licences. Driving requires all of your attention, and you should drive using speed appropriate for the road conditions and with anticipation and courtesy.

If society starts to see that the carrot is more effective than the stick in encouraging desired behaviour on the roads, we might have a chance of achieving a more balanced approach from those making the rules.

A Motorcycle Theory Test Experience

by Clint Childs

I am a NELE Group observer and have an IAM First and an IAM Masters (Distinction) I am also the new Membership Secretary for the Group and sit on the NELE Committee. I am now driving my second electric car.



Clint, taken on a BikeSafe day earlier this year when a Police Sargeant observed him for 70 miles! That's Clint's red Honda SH125i behind

I took the motorcycle theory test on Saturday 12th February 2022. I had a comfortable pass on both the Theory and Hazard perception test, but what follows details the preparation for it and the experience of the test itself.

Two months ago, I purchased a DVSA motorcycle test at Watford, it is the only place that does them on a Saturday. I then purchased a DVSA sanctioned motorcycle theory app. I practiced the 648 questions and half of the fifty hazard perception tests. To be fair my Highway Code has always been good, and I was scoring

between 85% and 95% when I started using the app. I also had a paperback book I bought a year ago which covers the car theory test but had not looked at until two weeks ago. The hardest part of the test was finding the test Centre in effectively 1.5-mile industrial crescent. The post code was not sufficient, unit number referred to the part of the building not the unit numbers in relation to their position on the industrial estate.

Anyway, after being 20 minutes early, and entered the building at 09:01. The staff were still registering the candidates, so I was ok timewise. I took a seat, I was then called up to the registration desk, I then presented my driving licence, confirmed my details, and sat back down. Then was called up to clear my pockets, they check my phone is switched off and all my pockets are empty. Not even a tissue is allowed at this point. All belongings, phone, wallet everything except my driving licence goes into a locker. I sit in a queue of different seats and await to be called up again. There are twelve people already in the test room. But before that is a final security check room. This is where I prove all my pockets are empty. Roll up my shirt sleeves to prove that I am hiding nothing. Lift the collar of my shirt. Roll down my socks, they check my shoes and finally I put my glasses on the table where they are inspected and turn them over for them to be further scrutinised.

And then there is another check, of my ears for listening and communications devices. So, this obviously demonstrates some of the methods people are prepared to take to pass a DVLA theory test. Did I forget to mention any watch goes into the locker; you are not allowed to wear one. Having demonstrated that I have no slips of paper or technology about me, I am given a wipe for the computer mouse. I ask for a tissue where I am directed to a tissue box, I take one and go into the test centre. The room has twenty cubicles each with a mouse, screen, and headset. I am told to sit at a specific cubicle, which displays my name on the screen. I confirm that I am that person and read the onscreen instructions. I go through many introductory screens and click the mouse on the 'Next' button to begin the 50-question theory test. I have 1 hour to complete it.

The first theory question presented was the hardest and really threw me I had to spend 90 seconds considering the answer, I do not remember the question, but it was slightly bizarre compared to all the hundreds of questions I have ever seen. Anyway, I chose a reasoned answer and moved on. I flew through the rest of the forty-nine remaining questions. Although there were two dubious questions where two of the possible four answers that every question has could be correct, so it was a case of which one has the better fit. Having completed the fifty theory test questions last five are based on a case study, I have the option of a 3-minute break. Which I declined and pressed forwards into the fourteen hazard perception tests. I commence with a trial run and proceed to the real test. About halfway through the hazard perception test scenarios, I was presented with a CGI (computer generated image) horse and rider at which I had to laugh as they aimlessly crossed the road (it was like in the middle of a concrete jungle a high street). I could not help but notice the CGI aspects thereafter although generally good quality had a few things that stood out compared to real life.

There was another instance of a CGI woman running across the road aimlessly, which I also found amusing because of how it was presented. Alas in the third scenario from the end one of the real videos with lots of hazards, not necessarily 'developing hazards' - now you mark a hazard early because often it will be half a second to a second later as to whether it is a developing hazard or not. I clicked seven times, and to my dismay was told my clicking 'behaviour' is invalid and I will get zero points for that scenario. I am certain if I got a chance to review the video, I got maximum marks for it, just the algorithm decided that I was trying to 'cheat' it. Anyway, I just ignored it and continued. I reached the end of the test, and was the second person to leave the room, the people already in the room started the test up to 15 minutes before me. Having left the room, after 2 minutes I collected my result. The certificate part is the bottom third of the reverse side of the result sheet, which merely states my driving licence number, name, date, and certificate number, and bears the centre's stamp. not something that looks like a certificate.

The pass mark for the multiple-choice theory part is 43 out of 50 (86%). The pass mark for the hazard perception part is 54 out of 75 (approx. 59%)

I enjoyed the experience and have gained knowledge and skills in the process.

Dashcams and SD Cards

by Paul Gillett

During the recent presentation by Elliott Blackburn of Nextbase about dashcams, he highlighted the need for the memory card containing recordings to be regularly reformatted. This came as quite a surprise to many of those present, who were unaware of how to reformat their memory cards, or couldn't understand why it should be necessary.

In this article, I've started with a simplified explanation of how recordings are stored on the memory card, and how space on the card can be used up, such that the dashcam may no longer work. I then explain the comparatively simple task of reformatting the memory card, which should be done regularly by all users of dash-cams and, indeed, any device used for recording moving images, such as a GoPro and other action cameras.

What is formatting?

A memory device, typically an SD card, can be used in a variety of devices to store information as a collection of separate files. Although the same SD card can physically fit into a dashcam, action camera, mobile phone, computer tablet or PC, they may each use different "formats" - patterns of ones and zeroes for mapping out where files are to be stored, and for the indexes that allow those files to be retrieved.

Think of the first stages of setting up a traditional library. The building is complete, but you need to install shelving that is systematically labelled to help people navigate their way around. You also need to provide some form of catalogue (e.g. a card index) so people can find out to which shelf their book has been allocated – or, indeed, whether or not a copy exists in the library. Formatting an SD card equips it with the equivalent of shelving, shelf labelling and an initially empty index, all ready to receive documents.

Adding Recordings

Files (recordings) can now be written to the card one after the other. Each recording lasts about a couple of minutes. Every file is given a unique name, which is recorded in the index together with the file's location so that the recordings can subsequently be retrieved. When the memory card is full, which can take about a month for an active driver, the dashcam starts to recycle its memory space, deleting the oldest files and replacing them with the latest recordings. This is known as Continuous Overwriting and means that the dashcam will generally "forget" anything that happened more than a month ago.

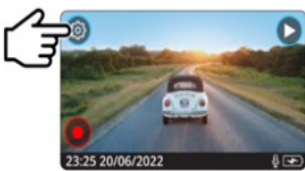
The dashcam is programmed to detect anything that could be a significant event – harsh braking, a bump from a pothole or road hump, evasive steering or even a SLAMMED door. On some models, a recording can also be triggered when people loiter close to the car, or when the driver pushes a "Record" button. When any of those things happen, any files currently being recorded are marked as "locked" in the index. This means that they will not be automatically deleted by the Continuous Overwriting process and therefore remain as proof of any incident should that be needed. It is recommended that after any significant event (e.g. an accident), the SD card in

the dashcam is removed and kept for evidence and a replacement card is inserted in its place – make sure that you have a spare.

Such is the sensitivity of a dashcam, the number of recordings over-cautiously marked as “locked” typically grows quickly until there is little or no space left to recycle; it then becomes impossible to record any new files. Assuming that no significant incident has happened, the memory card should then be reformatted.

How to format a memory card. When you first put a memory card into a dashcam (or any other device) and switch on, you will usually be invited, nay told, that it will need to be formatted. Then follows a short delay whilst a light flashes or the screen provides some sort of progress display. Once that’s completed, your card will have been formatted and is ready to go. Any previous files on the card will be deleted (even if they were “locked”) and a pristine index will be created.

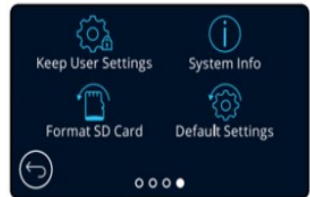
Manual reformat. You can also trigger a reformat using the menu system built into the recorder. To do this on a Nextbase dash cam:



Press the 'Menu' button to enter the Dash Cam's menu system.



Press the 'Setup' button.



Press the "Format SD Card" button

Other brands of dashcam have similar facilities, albeit that the menu structure could be different, and you might have to use up/down, left/right, enter and exit buttons if you don't have a touch-sensitive screen.

Don't forget: it is recommended that you reformat the memory card in your dashcam or video camera at least once a month. Even if it seems complicated the first time, you'll soon become familiar with the process and will have the satisfaction of knowing that you're unlikely to run out of memory space just as you really need it. You could even add it to your POWDERSS routine!

Why not just delete files manually? At first sight, those with an IT background might think it better to use other processes to remove the “locked” marker everywhere and then delete all files. However, there is a good hardware reason for not doing so. Every “write” to a specific solid-state address degrades that memory component; after a finite number of accesses, that location will fail. The most frequently-accessed part of the disk is the index, which is therefore most likely to go belly-up. Moreover, as the memory card fills up, the index gets increasingly complex. That results in significant access delays, which are unacceptable for storing data at the high-speeds required for images. Reformatting the file allows a new index to be created at a slightly different location on the disc, reducing the risk of data failure and restoring performance to the desired level.

NELE IAM Committee

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The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributor and not necessarily those of NELE IAM or IAM RoadSmart unless so stated.

Comments, ideas, suggestions and perhaps some motoring humour most welcome!

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