



The **BEDFORD** Group of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders Members Newsletter

Visit the **BEDFORD Group** online at www.roadad-bedford.org.uk **Feb 2010**

President **Dr. Lisa Dom** BSc PhD CPsychol, AFBPS

Bill Brady (Chairman and Senior Tutor) 01234 768408 chairman@roadad-bedford.org.uk

Stan Jones (Secretary) 01234 782071 secretary@roadad-bedford.org.uk

Adrian Bailey (Treasurer) 01234 826466 treasurer@roadad-bedford.org.uk , membership@roadad-bedford.org.uk

Melia Taylor (Training Co-ordinator) 01234 312210 training@roadad-bedford.org.uk

Andrew McGrorey (Training Officer) 01234 346907 andrew.mcgrorey1@btinternet.com

Keith Hooson (Newsletter Producer) 01234 404830

February Meeting

This month we have a talk by Mark Doggett who is a Traffic Officer with the Highways Agency on their work and the role of the Traffic Officer who is now a familiar site on our roads. Mark will also be joined by Paul Airton from the East Anglian Air Ambulance Service who are working alongside the Highways Agency in the region.

See you at 8pm on Tuesday 16th February 2010 at the Training Centre of the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service, Southfields Road, Kempston.

The January Meeting: We showed the first episode of the 3 part series "The Secret Life of the Motorway". This covered the start of motorway building in the UK with the first motorway, the 8 mile M6 Preston by-pass opened in 1958. Yes just 8 miles and only 2 lanes each way! Next came the south section of the M1 from St Albans to Dunchurch in Warwickshire. This was one impressive construction project: 55 miles built in 19 months, only 5 houses and 3 bungalows demolished along the route, 183 bridges built (that's 1 completed on average every 3 days) and **"the first 55 mile section of the M1 was Completed both on time and within budget at a cost of £16.5m"**.

We were also treated to snippets of those fantastic public information films of the era on "How to Drive on a Motorway".

Perhaps it is time that these films were re-made to show to some of today's motorists how to drive (safely) on a motorway? The first motorways had no speed limits and no central reservation crash barriers. Most cars had no seat belts, certainly no air bags, ABS, ESP, Traction Control or Electronic Brake Force Distribution. Most cars had drum brakes all round (few cars had servo assisted brakes), narrow tyres (including cross ply tyres), power assisted steering was only fitted to luxury cars and internal heaters were still an optional extra!

The programme also covered the building of the Brierley Hill Interchange, Spaghetti Junction and the M62 Cross Penine Motorway. By the early 1970s the 7 mile Pennine Summit section took 7 years to build and cost £7m!

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Push-Pull Steering: Telegraph Motoring Readers may have seen the article by Sir John Whitmore (Jan 9 2010) entitled “**Is the Driving Test Out of Date?**” which followed on from an article he had published in December (2009) in the ADI News. The Telegraph article was critical of the existing driving test, the DSA and both RoSPA and the IAM for still “slavishly following the old police driving principles”.

Many Advanced Driver Groups, including our own, have received a response to Sir John’s criticism of the “Pull-Push steering method” from one of the UK’s most respected driving experts, Chris Gilbert.

For those not familiar with Chris, very briefly he has been involved in driver training for the Police and civilians for 40 years and 1 million miles and is one of the country’s top Advanced Driving Instructors.

See www.driving4tomorrow.com for further information on Chris Gilbert.

Chris Gilbert’s comprehensive response to Sir John’s criticism of “push-pull steering”, which is to be published in the “ADI News” and the “DIA” magazine in March, makes interesting reading; especially in relation to the potential risk posed in the event of air bag deployment. Chris cites instances of injuries to the hand and arm caused to drivers by the rapid deployment of a steering wheel air bag when their hands were crossed over the air bag module cover. Air bags are designed to inflate rapidly (via an exploding charge) to protect the vehicle occupants from head impact injuries from hard surfaces such as the steering wheel, dash board, windscreen and door pillars and the windows. Hands and arms in the way of an inflating airbag don’t always stay where they were.

Interestingly too Chris also tells us of a meeting with Sir John in the early 1990s when Chris was a member of the Home Office Working Party investigating driving techniques for possible changes to and entry into Roadcraft. Sir John’s hand over hand steering

technique failed to show any improvement over a Skid Pan Instructor using the Pull-Push method of steering.

Pot Holes: As we are all hopefully aware the UK is still awash with potholes of all shapes, sizes and depth. Should the Beatles “A Day In The Life” with the line “4,000 holes in Blackburn Lancashire” be followed by a new line “If Only”?

The wheel and (40% profile) tyre below may be the owners pride and joy until he/she meets the inevitable pothole.



Perhaps the first mortarway drivers with their 80% profile cross-ply tyres knew what was coming!

Advanced Notice

The meeting on March 16th 2010 will also be our AGM. Our guest speaker, after the formalities of the AGM, will be our President Dr Lisa Dorn.

Several Committee Members will be stepping down at the AGM, so we will be looking to replace those members with new blood. At the moment it looks like we will need a new Training Co-ordinator and a Training Officer. More details will be in the next Newsletter, but if you are interested in volunteering ahead of the AGM please let one of the existing committee members know.

Keith Hooson

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