



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

Visit the **BEDFORD Group** online at www.road-a-bedford.org.uk **May 2010**

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May Meeting

The Secret Life of the Motorway Part 2

Following on from the January meeting, when we looked at the first part of "The Secret Life of The Motorway" we will continue the motorway theme by showing part 2 of this three part BBC4 series. Part 2 titled "The Honeymoon Period" looks at how we used, loved and cherished (yes cherished!) the new motorway network and all it bought to our lives as "we set out on a voyage of discovery in this new world".

(See below for the explanation of last month's failed showing)

We hope to see you at 8pm on Tuesday 18th May 2010 at the Training Centre of the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service, Southfields Road, Kempston.

April Meeting: Sorry to say that "The Secret Life of the Motorway Part 2" remained just that **SECRET**. As we seem to have heard lately from the Airline industry I have to similarly say "Due to circumstances beyond our control the viewing did not take place!" We arrived to a locked venue. When we eventually got the keys, just after 8PM, we could not despite (we thought) having the correct code disarm the intruder alarm system. The sirens internally and externally then went off A Fire Officer was called to assist He too could not disarm the system, although he did not take the Fire Officer's master key (the fire axe) to it! After about 20 minutes the siren timed out and we could all hear again. Being risk averse on the road we took the same approach to trying to

gain entry again, locked up and drove away quietly. "What fun?". Thank you to those who turned up and persevered the noise and cool breeze for 20 minutes and apologies for not showing what I had intended to show. Please join us on 18th May again for hopefully a successful viewing

Better Driving Course: Unfortunately this was cancelled due to a very low take up. Apologies to those who applied to take the course. We will attempt to run the Better Driving Course at a later date as we will do with "Secret Life of the motorway Part 2". Priority will be given to those who have already applied to undertake the Better Driving Course.

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Space Saving Tyres:

It now seems to be standard with new cars not to have a full size spare wheel supplied with the vehicle. Reasons given by manufacturers for no longer supplying a full size spare wheel include: Punctures are a rarity, reducing weight saves you fuel and it gives you more luggage space. Or could it just be a way for a Manufacturer to save a bit more money when they sell the vehicle? Some vehicle now do not even have a space to accommodate a spare wheel, your only option is often a can of tyre sealant foam, but this would be of little use to anyone whose tyre suffered anything more than a minor puncture. I have also read stories of owners finding that the tyre sealant foam makes the tyre impossible to repair, leading to the tyre (which could be new) having to be replaced. That kind of negates the environmental reason for not having a spare tyre! The one other thing that concerns me from a safety point of view with the "space saver tyre" is the huge difference in both grip and ability to effectively displace surface water that you will have across the axle of a vehicle when you fit the space saver spare. The "skinny spare" states on a big yellow label that you should restrict your speed to 80km/hr (48mph), but I have seen so many drivers still practicing "formula 1 race starts" and overtaking (me) at 70+mph on the motorway with a "skinny spare fitted". Below is a photograph of a standard tyre next to the supplied "space saver spare" tyre from a Vauxhall Astra SRi.



On the left is the standard tyre, 245/45/R17, tread width 245mm and side wall height of 110mm. On the right the "space saver", 115/70/R16, tread width 115mm and side wall height of 80mm. The term "space saver spare" is a bit misleading too as the Astra boot can take a full size spare wheel in the bottom of the boot area. The "space saver" tyre is actually padded out with a polystyrene filler So you actually gain no additional luggage space!

Tyre Checks:

If you regularly check your tyres (which we all do without fail?) you are more likely to spot a problem with your tyres before they become a puncture. A nail or screw in a tyre will not always manifest itself as a n obviously flat tyre. Modern low profile tyres, even underinflated by 25%, will not always look very much different from a correctly inflated tyre. Carry out tyre pressure checks as well as a visual inspection. An underinflated tyre will waste fuel, affect the cars handling and ride and may ultimately suffer from a blowout or other major failure with no warning. Tubeless tyres can often "self seal" around a nail/screw for a good period of time. If you check the tyre treads and notice a nail in the tyre you can then usually get the nail removed and the tyre repaired by a tyre specialist before the tyre starts to lose pressure (as it will eventually do). Better to do that now than to be faced with a flat tyre miles from home at an inconvenient time of day or night and/or the prospect of being stranded on a potentially dangerous road. Changing a tyre by the side of any road is a potentially risky task.

Check your tyre pressures, tread depths, and treads and inner and outer sidewalls for damage regularly. 4 areas, each the approximate size of 4 compact discs or DVDs are the typical points of contact and grip that your car has with the world around you. Your tyres do a lot, but they will only give their best when they are kept at their best. Your life and the lives of others depend upon them being kept in good condition.

Keith Hooson

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