

# Newsletter

March 2023

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## Chair's letter - March 2023

Nick Room



Dear Friends,

I was delighted to attend another one of Des' Observer Development sessions on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March – informative as ever, and well received. These sessions are so important to keep the Group standards up, and they provide an ideal opportunity to build a valuable dialogue between

Observers across the whole Group, supplementing informal chances to bounce things off each other at our monthly meetings.

On the subject of meetings, Cheryl Evans gave an excellent talk to the Group in our February meeting, illustrated with slides, and on the subject of road safety as seen through the eyes of someone who has to inform, educate, and train the public and council officials in all aspects of staying safe out there. Cheryl was adept at answering questions from the floor as they came up and took us into the world of statistics she inhabits to spot collision trends. The subject of road infrastructure and signage was also covered, and we couldn't resist making a point about potholes – especially hazardous of course for two-wheel road users. Please attend March's member meeting if you can – and see the item in this newsletter for more details. We haven't had anyone from the Road Haulage Association as far as I can remember, so it would be good to see a healthy turnout for our first springtime meeting of 2023.

In this Newsletter you will find all you need to know about the forthcoming TVGAM AGM on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Our Area Manager Katrina Lowe will be in attendance, and she'd like to catch up with as many of you as she can. And think about nominating yourself or others for the various roles that arise to help keep the Group going.

As summer approaches, we are thinking of a drive out – it would be great to have member's views on where we might go for a June or July evening. I expect we will start at Knowl Hill but agree a route and find a good watering hole for some (non-alcoholic) beverage consumption....It will be something a bit different.

Alex is doing fantastic work to raise the profile of Young Drivers within the Group and I am sure he will talk to this in a future member's meeting.

Lastly, do read my article on hydrogen power in this edition of your newsletter. Alex Beeston and I were privileged to obtain a brief but immersive insight into the work that IAAPS are doing in this fascinating area. And of course, the subject is highly topical: there is a piece in the latest IAM RoadSmart magazine on the for and against – and even 'The Economist' recently had a double page spread discussing the science and application of this new take on a 'green solution' to an age-old problem.

Best wishes,

Nick

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## The group meetings program

Tuesday 28th March

For our March event, **vehicle size matters** we greet Rhys Williams of the Road Haulage Association. He is the Regional Operations Manager for the Midlands, Western & Wales Region, but also covers the Oxfordshire, Berkshire & Heathrow areas as area manager. He has 35+ years experience including Class 1 HGV, CPC National & International holder and Qualified DCPC Instructor.



**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** by order of the Group Committee that the Annual General Meeting of Thames Valley Group of Advanced Motorists will be held at 8.00 p.m. on **Tuesday 25th April 2023** at Knowl Hill Village Hall, RG10 9XB to enable the Trustees of the Group (Registered Charity No.1057212) to present their Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2022 for approval by the Group Full Members and to conduct an election.

### Notes

All Group Full Members, Associates and Friends are invited to attend but only Group Full Members may vote.

A Member entitled to vote at the General Meeting may appoint a proxy to vote in his stead. A proxy need not be a Group Full Member.

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## IAAPS - Hydrogen for future mobility

Nick Room



On 23<sup>rd</sup> January Alex and I took the train to attend the first day of this 5-day intensive PhD research project orientated symposium held in the Bath Literary and Scientific Institution event space situated in Queens Square in the heart of the city of Bath. The purpose of the whole week, for the post grad students, was to discuss where the market for alternative fuels was heading, to scrutinise current research into this topic, and to evaluate the potential for hydrogen propulsion as an appropriate fuel for the future of global mobility. Whilst aimed at personal transport by private or public means, the Incubator considered road haulage, the emergency services, shipping, and aircraft in its remit.

We made clear at the outset that Alex and I could only spare one day, but Monday was the best day as these were the sessions when some of the broad brush and blue-sky thinking options got put on the table. Neil Greig, Policy and Research Director for the IAM, was approached for comment and we used some of his text in replies to us in our opening statements created by Alex and me to say who we were and why we were there. As invited guests, we were not alone, but the audience was dominated by students with affinity to the IAAPS programme, interestingly coming from several disciplines, so not all from engineering backgrounds.

We listened to opening presentations given by the student groups tackling subjects connected with current internal combustion engine technologies, and projections for future viability of new fuel applications and sourcing. We then split into groups to brainstorm topics devised in a way that would deliver, by the end of the week, a set of outcomes for the IAAPS directorate to model PhD research programmes. Tuesday to Thursday sessions were not attended by us, but clearly from the content delivered by the students on the

last day (and available to participants such as us in video conferencing) there were some excellent opportunities that are being assessed now that the symposium is over, and the feedback forms are in.

TVGAM were privileged to have a seat at this event (two seats); Alex and I were enthralled with the topic, and both remarked on the excellence shown by the organisation and delivery of this academically focus and supremely enriching week which showed university endeavour at its best. We will be able to share with you any follow ups and indeed, the IAAPS management are looking to hold further work groups into the summer.



## **MEMBERSHIP MATTERS – March 2023**

### **New Members**

A warm welcome to 6 new Members who have recently joined Thames Valley group.

### **Associate Members:**

We wish you all every success with your Advanced Driving Course.

Chris Garratt (Wokingham)	Catherine Lamb (Wargrave)	Hafsah Waheed (Reading)
Yasmin Jemmott (Reading)	Phil Winter (Yateley)	Paul Hayward (Woodley)

**The total of New Members joining TVGAM in 2023 is: 6**

## Test Passes

Many congratulations to the following associates who have recently passed their Advanced Driving Tests and to their respective observers.

Associate	Observer
Jake Rouse (F1RST)	Nicki Kitching

The total number of Test Passes in 2023 is: **2**

## TVGAM Annual Membership fees:

**Associates** - 1<sup>st</sup> year is **included** in your course fee.

2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent years is **£36.50\*** payable to TVGAM depending on Committee approval to continue your course.

**Full and Fellows** - **£12** for all members receiving newsletters and bulletins via email.

**£22 only** for members who depend on newsletters and bulletins by mail.

## Payment methods

**Bank transfers: Lloyds Bank, Maidenhead**

**Sort Code 30-95-36 Account No. 07015567**

**Reference:** Please enter your **Group Member ID** (e.g. nn/nnn)

## IAM Annual Membership fees from April 2023:

IAM RoadSmart have recently announced their new prices effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, they are:

**Full Members:**            **£43**    **Direct Debit only.**  
   **£48**    Cheque / bank transfer / or Debit/  
                      Credit Card

**Fellow Members:**        **£61**    **Direct Debit only.**  
   **£66**    Cheque / bank transfer / or Debit/Credit  
                      Card

**Fellow Members:**      **£61**      **Direct Debit only.**  
                                 **£66**      Cheque / bank transfer / or Debit/  
                                                      Credit Card

Payment by Direct Debit minimises the administrative costs in processing Members subscriptions which is why there is a distinct price advantage to using this payment method.

We promoted the use of Direct Debit in our January edition and are including it again in this time to encourage members to change and save money..

### [Membership Records](#)

Please help keep the Group records in order by sending any changes of address, email address or contact telephone numbers to: [membership@tvgam.org.uk](mailto:membership@tvgam.org.uk).



**Best wishes,**

**Alex Beeston**  
**Membership Secretary**

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### [New articles for the newsletter](#)

Since becoming editor for the newsletter I have been pleased by the variety of articles and views you have sent in.

Please keep on sending the articles, photos and ideas.

Send to [editor@tvgam.org.uk](mailto:editor@tvgam.org.uk)

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## Don't linger next to an HGV

With the visit of Rhys Williams of the Road Haulier's Association at our next group meeting, it seems appropriate to include an article on large vehicles in this edition of the Newsletter.



The simple message is 'Don't linger next to an HGV.'



### The Message

HGVs have zones all around them, where their vision is limited, so don't linger around an HGV. If you are behind an HGV, stay well back so you can see the road ahead.

View their video at

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/road-safety/know-the-zones/#knowthezones>

We have HGV drivers amongst our members, and you must have seen or experienced many examples of bad driving from the cab. Do share your stories with us.

Car drivers, share your experiences of overtaking HGV's. What were your hairiest moments!

Just send the words to at [editor@tvgam.org.uk](mailto:editor@tvgam.org.uk) or click on the blue email envelope at the bottom of this newsletter and we will do the rest.....

With acknowledgement to National Highways UK

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## Chief's report - March 2023

Des McDermott



### Use it or lose it

The concept of skill fade appears to have been in the news a lot in recent months. Most of the articles on the topic relate to the skills that we have lost as a consequence of the pandemic. Skill fade is defined as 'the decay of ability or adeptness over a period of non-use' The phrase if you don't use then you'll lose it seems apt here. Skill fade can happen in an area of life, whether they are the skills we use at work or in our leisure time.

It is also a topic that is well known to advanced drivers and riders. IAM RoadSmart Examiners will frequently remind you after a test that you should continue to keep on top of your advanced driving/riding skills to prevent skill fade from creeping in. In 2022, I completed a member's assessment with IAM RoadSmart because I was conscious that I had not undertaken any advanced motorbike training since before the pandemic. It was money well spent and I came away from the assessment with lots of valuable information and the knowledge that my riding was still up to advanced standard and I had avoided skill fade.

As advanced drivers, our roadcraft knowledge and skills are as good as when they were last tested. If you undertook the IAM assessment several years ago, you may want to consider undertaking some on-road coaching. There are several opportunities available to IAM RoadSmart members who wish to check their driving knowledge and skills. You can request a members refresher session and we will allocate you a free session with one of the TVGAM Observers.

You can also purchase a member's assessment through IAM RoadSmart and undertake a test with an IAM Examiner. Several of the TVGAM group are also IAM Fellows and undertake an IAM assessment every three years as a part of their membership. IAM RoadSmart research highlights that three years post-test is a pivotal time for skill fade to emerge.

Another option is to train as an Observer with your IAM group, where we will provide the coaching to prepare you for the role. This includes an assessment of your current level of advanced driving. Skill fade is something that can creep up on you and it sometimes takes another person to highlight when it has happened. A key question that we need to reflect on is the distance between when we acquired the skills and whether we are able to apply these skills to the same standard today. We also know as advanced drivers that there is always room for improvement when it comes to driving.

Safe driving

Des

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## SMIDSY and some reasons for it

John Willis

SMIDSY as all advanced motorcyclists know is the often heard response to a crash involving a bike and another road user – it stands for **S**orry **M**ate **I** Didn't **S**ee **Y**ou and if that was all that was known about a crash lack of observation would be taken as the problem.

It is not the real issue. It isn't a lack of observation, but a lack of effective understanding about how the eye/brain combination really works making ineffective observation. We have often spoken about low angles of presence for a thin vehicle like a motorbike, or bad observation by drivers and pedestrians but there is an underlying issue which fast-jet pilots and helicopter observers know all too well. At our January meeting Station Officer Andy Ford of the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service raised it towards the end of his visit. It is the Saccadic Masking effect within the operation of our eyes.



A very good article which quotes John Sullivan, published in 2012 explains a lot it is on the LondonCyclist website: <https://www.londoncyclist.co.uk/raf-pilot-teach-cyclists/> John is both a fighter pilot and keen cyclist. In it he echoes what so many of us must have thought when another road user pulls out on us, “Are you blind?”

Well, yes we are mostly blind because our eyes find it impossible see things while they themselves are moving between positions.

A test is to look yourself in the eyes in a mirror. Throwing your attention from your left to right eye and back will result in you seeing what expect, but no “whip-pan” or movement between the two stationary images. Anyone watching you will see your eyes move, but you will never see that. The eye captures the images we see only when it is not moving and uses previous knowledge to generate what we “see” in the intervals when it is moving. These stationary moments or “**fixations**” are separated by the “**saccades**” where the eye is moving and would be presenting a blurred moving projection. The brain stops this happening, so the saccadic masking does indeed render us blind.

Now it becomes much clearer why we miss seeing things at junctions or when we make our last-second over-the-shoulder Lifesaver check. If our eyes don’t stop moving for a couple of seconds we blank out the blurred, hard to comprehend vision produced by a moving eye.

When we then add in Windscreen Masking caused by the pillars of car windows and the use of sound because we drive with our windows closed – something a quick drive with Des McDermott will soon rectify – that awful feeling when you arrive at a Stop Line, look both ways and “all-of-a-sudden” the bike you neither saw nor heard appears and a really worried/angry biker demands to know “Are you blind?” (Other less polite expressions of disappointment may be used.)

### **So, what is the answer?**

1. Keep your windscreen clean – inside and out!
2. Approach junctions using your Speed Phase to arrive more slowly
3. Scan the periphery slowly letting your vision rest at the extremes of vision for 2 or more seconds on each of your right and left scans
4. Especially on quiet roads, open your windows a little and use your ears as extra safety scanners
5. Look again and use your knowledge of “reeling in problems” by looking in 2 or 3 different places along the road
6. Move your head so that pillars in the car don't block your vision and look close to the edges of the pillars

Doing all of this will help to make your driving effectiveness better by vastly improving your observation techniques.

### **The advice for cyclists and bikers is almost reciprocal:**

1. Be aware of being in a saccade
2. When you make your shoulder Lifesaver Check – be aware of both the road ahead and taking enough time to make a fixation point
3. Use strobes on your bike to increase your visibility on drivers' periphery
4. If you are on a push-bike you will have time to see a driver's head move. If they scan and don't stop while apparently looking at you - you are in a saccade and have not been seen
5. If a vehicle has an obviously dirty windscreen or the weather is bad then expect reduced observation

For both drivers and bikers taking an advanced course really does make sense and raising your own awareness of **saccadic masking** is probably one of the most effective ways of reducing road incident numbers especially SMIDSY incidents.

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## New consultation on tyre tax

From the news sites

Recently the government has started a consultation in the relative effects of particulates and their sources. Tyres are now under scrutiny as the extra weight of electric vehicles seems to cause greater particulate generation from both tyres and road surfaces.



It has been suggested that as the environmental activists have won ground in persuading the government to legislate for net zero by 2050 a new battle regarding emissions is looming. The focus is now switching to brake and tyre related particulates.

These have dimensions which allow them to lodge in the lungs and are a mixture of all of the components of the road surface, tyre and brake linings.

The Department of Transport, which has hired the consultants, says that,

“We want to better understand the impacts of non-exhaust emissions, such as tyres, on the environment which is why we’re conducting research on the matter”,

“This research was not commissioned to inform tax policy development”.

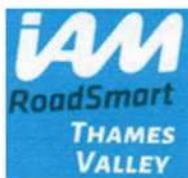
However, the RAC has issued a statement:

“Talk of a tyre tax, while incredibly premature, could do more harm than good by causing more injuries and deaths on our roads by putting drivers off replacing worn out tyres when they should.”

A concern is that less expensive tyres, which wear quicker, may end up being taxed relatively more highly than premium ones and that making cheaper tyres more expensive will prompt some to continue driving on illegal tyre compromising road safety for all road users.

Thanks to Mailonline, MSN, Telegraph, RAC

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Make it easy  
then  
Take it easy



Pay your annual IAM RoadSmart membership by



Simply fill in the Direct Debit mandate form online  
in your IAM Dashboard Direct Debit or search

<https://www.iamroadsmart.com/my-dashboard/my-membership/direct-debit>

Your bank needs time to process the Direct Debit mandate to make sure you set it up well in advance of your renewal date

#### How it works:

IAM RoadSmart will send you a notification a month before the Direct Debit is taken

Your Membership fee will be drawn when it becomes due

No need to contact IAM RoadSmart to pay your membership fee

The amount will automatically be adjusted if the fee changes

If you notify IAM RoadSmart that you wish to cancel your Membership the Direct Debit will not be drawn

Thank you for renewing

Your IAM RoadSmart membership card identifies you as one of the UK's most skilled road users.



Your membership has been automatically renewed for another year

If you have an Direct Debit set up with an your membership fee of £15.00 will be taken for every next month. You do not need to do anything further, thank you for your continuing support.



Need further information!

Contact:

IAM Support at [support@iam.org.uk](mailto:support@iam.org.uk)

or

Alex Beeston at [membership@tvgam.org.uk](mailto:membership@tvgam.org.uk)

# Next meeting

**Tuesday 28th March**

For our March event, vehicle size matters we greet  
Rhys Williams .

Rhys is the Area Manager for Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Heathrow and he will be representing the Road Haulage Association



KNOWL HILL - Village Hall RG10 9XB at 8.00 p.m.

## Venue Map

