



FORWARD

Issue 23



The Newsletter for
Somerset & Wiltshire
Advanced Motorists

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Newsletter of Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists

www.swam-iam.org

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Issue 23

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2026 Annual General Meeting

We are delighted to announce that **our next AGM will be on Wednesday 1st April at 19.00 for 19.30** at Beckington Memorial Hall (Bath Rd, Beckington, Frome, BA11 6SH, just off the A36).

Our speaker is **Vicky Lovell** who will be talking about her work as Director of Carma Drivers Ltd. Vicky is an inspired Advanced Driving Instructor whose career has taken her into many unusual situations. Her talk will supplement and build upon our previous talk on Road Rage, and Vicky will introduce us to positive driving choices in negative situations. There will be more information about the AGM in the next issue of *Forward*.

Welcome to our latest edition of *Forward*. We have decided not to organise any events for the winter months this year as in the past they have been poorly attended, even on Zoom. If you would be interested in having more meetings during this season, please let us know, and we will try to arrange something to suit you. Some of our meetings are well attended, especially the practical sessions and, of course, our Treasure Hunt in the summer, so this is where our main efforts lie. We welcome suggestions for speakers, or any other theme for a meeting, so please come forward with your ideas.

It has been drawn to our attention that some members prefer to read our newsletter in print, rather than online. Several times we have offered this service and each time a few more add their names to the list. If you are in the position of wanting a print version, and did not receive this in the post, then please let us know.

You will see from our Congratulations section on page 13 that we have had a very good number of F1RST test passes recently. This shows how successful our Observers are in getting the best out of their Associates, and how much work both the Associates and the Observers put in. Many congratulations to them all.

There is a special article in this issue, see page 9, on how to respond when you see blue lights, or hear a siren, from an emergency vehicle. There is some valuable advice on how to deal with many different situations which could arise and is well worth a read.

Clare Hogg, Sue Phillips

The next edition of *Forward* will be published in February 2026. Please submit motoring-related articles and/or digital photographs to the Editors (*who reserve the right to edit them*) by Friday 2 January 2026 at the latest. Names of authors and their home addresses should be disclosed to the Editors who will withhold them from publication on request.

Group News

Camerton Gathering

Early August saw SWAM at the Camerton Gathering, near Bath, with our gazebo, a first for us. The Camerton Gathering is organised by

Norton Radstock Classic Vehicle Club, and several hundred pre-2000 vehicles were on display. Unfortunately, the weather was rather damp, to put it mildly, so the attendance wasn't what we had expected, but we had an enjoyable day, nevertheless. There were quite a few entries for our Highway

Code quiz, and all the entrants were sent a link to the online version of the new Highway Code, so we hope they will have benefited from the opportunity to update their knowledge of the Highway Code.

There was an opportunity for all the volunteers at the gazebo to have a look round at the vehicles on display, and, as you can see, Lindsay Flower had a great time in the Rolls Royce!



The police car was also a popular attraction.



Some of the other cars on display



Observer Training

We take the training of our Observers very seriously and in September there was a training session for all our Observers which was well attended. This session was led by David Major, Chief Observer, and Lindsay Flower, Acting Chair. Many thanks to them both for all the hard work they put into making the evening a success. Refreshments were available and a big thank you goes to Rosemary Tandy for all she did to provide sandwiches, soft drinks and crisps and endless cups of tea and coffee.

General Data Protection Regulation Information for SWAM Members GDPR Contract Statement

SWAM is required, under GDPR regulations, to notify members each year of our contract with you regarding the data we hold about you and the way in which it may be used. Please read the following statement carefully.

Somerset and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists (SWAM) would like to thank you for being a member of the group. As part of your membership contract with us, we may contact you with information on training, committee matters, social events or group drives together with newsletters/magazines relating to the group and road safety.

Photographs, videos and written updates of SWAM events such as training, committee matters, social events or group drives, at which you may be in attendance or referred to, may also be published on social media sites such as Facebook, X, etc, in the group newsletter (*Forward*), on group related websites or in the press.

SWAM may also share your information with IAM RoadSmart in

order to administer membership activities.

Option to withdraw from the above

You have a right to withdraw from receiving or participating in any of the above by contacting SWAM.

If you do not wish to receive information on training, committee, and social events, together with newsletters/magazines relating to the group and road safety, or if you do not wish to appear in or be referred to in or on any group social media sites such as Facebook, X, etc, in the group newsletter, on group related websites or in the press, please contact the Membership Secretary, Peter Huntington, either by email (membership@swam-iam.org.uk) or by post to: 17 Regents Field, Trossachs Drive, Bath, BA2 6RP. In addition to your full name, please give your IAMRS membership number.

Membership fees and Gift Aid

Membership Fees

The annual membership fee for SWAM is £12, or £15 for two members at the same address, due at the beginning of January. If you pay by Standing Order, you don't have to do anything. If you pay by BACS or cheque you will need to pay in January and if we do not receive your payment by the middle of the month, Peter Huntington (Membership Secretary) will send you a reminder. Please send cheques to Clare Hogg, 4 Great Ostry, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 5TT.

Gift Aid

Because we are a registered charity, we are able to augment donations using Gift Aid. This means that for every pound you pay, provided you are a taxpayer and sign up to Gift Aid, Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists will receive an extra 25p from HM Revenue & Customs.

Subscriptions qualify as donations, which means that your £12 can be turned into £15, so long as it is made through Gift Aid, thereby generating extra funds for the Group and it won't cost you anything. We are

therefore asking all members to sign up to Gift Aid if they are able to. Many of you have sent us forms and we are very grateful for that. If you are a new member and haven't returned a form but are able to sign up to Gift Aid, please ask Clare Hogg (Treasurer) for the form. It is also necessary to remind members that if for any reason they are not able to claim Gift Aid after having signed a form, they **must** tell the Treasurer. The form which you have signed permits the claiming of Gift Aid until you notify the Treasurer otherwise. This can often happen when members change jobs or retire. It can be a permanent or temporary change, depending on circumstances, but it is your responsibility to tell us so that we can make the necessary change to our records. If you are unsure if you have sent us a form, please contact Clare at newsletter@swam-iam.org.uk.

Emergency Vehicles

It is important to know what to do when you see blue lights, or hear sirens, while driving. Blue Light Aware has produced useful information accompanied by short videos to help you behave in a way which will help the emergency services in their very important work. This is the link to their website where you can see the videos:

<https://www.bluelightaware.org.uk/>

Blue Light Aware

[The resource for emergency service vehicle awareness on the roads.](https://www.bluelightaware.org.uk/)

Based on guidance contained within the Highway Code, Blue Light Aware is a resource containing short videos and animations, produced on behalf of the emergency services. Their crews rely on the help of other road users when they're on a 'blue light' journey. By taking the time to watch Blue Light Aware you will better understand the needs of emergency drivers, reducing the risks you face while contributing to

a safer road environment. You may also be helping to save a life...



Photo courtesy of Shelleysavonlea.net

Smart motorways

On a smart motorway, one or more lanes may be closed because of an incident ahead – you'll know because of red X signs above the carriageway. Emergency vehicles will use these lanes if they can. Keep out of these red X lanes. If no lanes appear to be closed, you can help form what's known as an emergency corridor, so be prepared to move to the right or the left.

Traffic lights

At traffic lights emergency vehicles will find a way around you. If you're first in the queue at a red light, stay where you are, and leave the emergency vehicle to find its way around you. Do not go past the stop line unless directed by a uniformed police officer.

Where to stop

If you hear a siren or see blue lights, stay calm. Look for somewhere safe to move left and stop. Keep going on the approach to a bend or on the brow of a hill – then pull over when there's a better view ahead. Stay out of bus lanes, keep off kerbs and pavements, and don't stop near traffic islands.

Motorway incidents

Highways authority and emergency vehicles occasionally stop in motorway and dual carriageway lanes, for example to protect stranded vehicles or to remove debris from the road. Watch for a red X gantry sign, or an instruction to move to another lane, and follow any signs displayed on the rear of the traffic vehicle.

Solid white lines

In a solid white line system, an emergency vehicle will probably switch off its siren as it follows you. This is because the road layout doesn't allow for a safe overtaking opportunity. So keep going – at the speed limit if it's safe – until you're clear of the solid white lines. Your clue to pull left and let it pass is when its siren goes back on.

Roundabouts and junctions

If you're approaching a roundabout or a junction and you see an emergency vehicle, look at its position, as this will let you know where it wants you to go. If you're already at the junction, be patient and wait for it to come past. There may be more than one emergency vehicle, so check before moving off.

Slow down, move over

Motorway and dual carriageway breakdowns are distressing and potentially dangerous – for recovery operators as well as for occupants of stranded vehicles. If you see a stranded vehicle or a recovery taking place on the hard shoulder, please help those involved to stay safe by slowing down and moving to the right.

Motorways and dual carriageways

On motorways and dual carriageways, pull over to the left to allow an emergency vehicle to pass in the outside lane if it's clear. If traffic is slowing or stationary and there is no lane for the emergency vehicle, its position will let you know whether to move to the right or the left. When you've let it through, stay where you are as other vehicles are

likely to be coming through.

Size matters

Emergency vehicles come in all shapes and sizes. So if you stop to let one through, make sure there's a large enough gap. Check to see if there may be more than one emergency vehicle coming. And make sure whenever you park that you won't be causing an obstruction that risks delaying an emergency vehicle.

Rolling road blocks

Rolling road blocks are used where necessary by police and highways authority vehicles if there's an incident ahead. Stay behind these vehicles until they move left and the incident is over. Rest assured they'll get you moving again as soon as it's safe.

Making a 999 call

The road is blocked by a collision, and someone may be hurt, so you need to call 999 and ask for the police.

Be ready to tell the operator the location of the incident, how many vehicles are involved, details of any casualties, and whether anyone is trapped.

Advice for horse riders

Emergency drivers will always plan to cancel their sirens when they spot horses and riders on the road ahead. We know that horses can be unpredictable in their reactions to large vehicles and loud noises. Do remain vigilant as there may well be more than one vehicle responding to the emergency.

Emergency motorcycles

Motorbikes are used by the emergency services to respond to a variety of urgent incidents. The sooner you can see an emergency motorbike, the more time you have to plan. If the motorbike is approaching, be ready to slow down and take appropriate steps to help it get through.

[You will have noticed reading this article that several times the advice is not to do things like going in a bus lane, or going past a red light. If you break the normal rules of the road in order to allow an emergency vehicle to pass, you can still be prosecuted for your offence. Another example of what not to do is stopping in a yellow box junction, so take care to continue to follow the rules of the road.]

Welcome and Congratulations

We Welcome New Associates

Doug Keating

[Observer: Mark Ellis]

We Congratulate

IAMRS Test Pass

Susan Haines *

observed by Val Czerny

Victoria Holbrook

observed by Rob Norburn

Simon Holford*

observed by John Morley

Josef Karthauser *

observed by Simon Cowley

Ron Lomas

observed by Lindsay Flower

Hugh Pillingar

observed by Simon Cowley

Nick Warner*

observed by Rob Norburn

*F1RST pass

IMI National Observer Programme

Andrew Redfern

mentored by Ray Robbets

Winter Driving

Winter will be upon us again before we realise it, and it is worth taking note of the best way to prepare for driving in winter. These are some of the most important things to consider when driving in winter. For a fuller discussion of preparing for winter driving, see *Forward 19*, page 12, which has information from IAM RoadSmart.

Planning

First, do you have to travel if the conditions are bad? This is not just snow and ice, but rain and wind as well (though to be fair that is an all year-round problem).

Make sure you plan your journey to stick to main roads if possible because they are more likely to be gritted if it is icy. Plan your route so that you know where you can stop, and expect delays so leave plenty of time for the journey.

You may also find a road closed, because of flooding for example, so make sure that you have a map, or a satnav, so that you don't get lost if you find yourself being diverted off the route you were expecting.

Preparation

Even before winter starts make sure your car has had a winter service so that, for example, your screenwash has sufficient anti-freeze in it.

Make sure that your tyres are at the correct pressure and have sufficient tread. A minimum of 3mm is recommended in winter.

Make sure that all your lights are working.

Make sure your windows are clear of snow, ice and rain, and your lights as well.

Have a winter kit in your car containing at least an ice scraper, a torch, warm clothes, a blanket and a high visibility jacket.

Have some food and drink in case you are delayed.

Have a charged mobile phone available.

Driving

Keep your distance! Remember, stopping distances are up to 10 times greater in snow and ice.

Drive more slowly than you would in better conditions.

Use a higher gear as this will give better grip on icy roads.

Many automatic cars have a 'snow' or 'winter' gearbox mode. Check your handbook for details.

Brake, steer and accelerate as smoothly as possible.

Driving uphill – leave plenty of room between other cars or wait until it's clear so you don't have to stop part way up. Keep a constant speed and try to avoid having to change gear on the hill.

Driving downhill – slow down before the hill, use a low gear and try to avoid braking. Leave as much room as you can after the car in front.

Editor's Corner

Editor's Corner is an opportunity for me to air issues which occur to me in relation to cars and driving, while I am out and about. If you have anything you would like to air in a similar way, please get in touch.



Photo courtesy of www.sabre-roads.org.uk

Speed limit signage

In my Editor's Corner last time, I talked about the dilemma I had when I came across countdown markers to a speed limit. Sometimes the new speed limit is in a red circle, and I said that I wasn't sure whether to slow down to the new speed limit immediately, because the circle was red, or whether to assume I could wait until I reached the larger speed

limit signs for the obvious start to the new limit. I have now been given advice that I can wait until I reach the larger sign, as the small

sign, with countdown markers, is a warning of a mandatory speed limit ahead, and not a mandatory sign itself. This is a relief as it is what I have been doing anyway.

Behaviour at junctions

The latest thing to which my attention has been drawn while driving, is the way some people approach a give way sign. I have found more and more recently, or maybe I am just noticing it more, that some drivers stop quite a bit over the give way marks on the road, presumably to give themselves better visibility. This means that I have to give them quite a wide berth and move further towards the centre of the road. At times this can be tricky if the road is fairly narrow and there is oncoming traffic. Another problem is when I can see a car approaching the give way lines at such a speed that I think it is not going to be able to stop in time. It probably will, but it causes me a degree of anxiety which is not conducive to calm driving. Has anybody else noticed the same problems?

If you have any comments on anything I write in Editor's Corner, or would like to air your own opinions about what you come across whilst driving, please let me know at newsletter@swam-iam.org.uk.

Clare Hogg

PLEASE NOTE

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the Committee of Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists, nor by IAM RoadSmart.

Due acknowledgement is made whenever material is taken from other sources.

SWAM keeps names and addresses of members on computer to assist in group administration. This information will not be passed outside IAM RoadSmart.

SWAM may from time to time publish photographs taken at group events in *Forward* and on the website, or display them at publicity events.

If you have any concerns or wish to opt out of having your photograph taken or published by SWAM, please email or ring the Secretary (details on page 2) and request an acknowledgement in writing.