



Good luck and safe driving to any Associate(s) approaching their test.

We usually meet (unless otherwise stated) at 7.00pm on the second Tuesday of each month (except July) at the Boathouse, in the harbour carpark, at Groomsport. For more details of our programme please see the section entitled "Dates for Your Diary". If anyone has recently done their test, don't forget to contact John (07967 010443) for a debrief. Observers, please keep John acquainted with the progress of your Associate(s).

January Group Meeting - AGM

12 January 2010

After the recent snowy, frost and icy conditions it was a welcome change to drive to the first Group Meeting of 2010 on clear roads.

Ivan welcomed everyone to our first meeting of the new year. He intimated that STAC 19 would be starting on the 2nd February, 2010 and that there would be another special Group Meeting which would be held on Tuesday, 26th January at Room2Race at 68 High Street Bangor at 7.00pm.

He also reminded us about the forthcoming February Group Meeting which was going to be held on the 9th February at the Tudor Cinema, Drumhirk Road, Comber. (For directions see later.)

Ivan then introduced Graham, a member of the Group, and asked him to give the talk for the evening. Graham's talk was entitled "Modern cars don't breakdown" (an insight into automotive development).

He really opened our eyes to what is involved in the development of even the smallest and simplest component for inclusion in what will be a motor car. He went through what happens from the first idea of the part takes shape to it being included in the car. This process can take years from inception to fruition and can include as many as 20 steps. So many of the steps have the words 'testing', 'validation', or evaluation in them. The components are tested in a high temperature environment, a low temperature environment, for exposure to salt fog, chemicals, how they react to being dropped or to constant vibration or when they go from high to low temperatures very quickly. Just about any situation that a component is likely to experience is recreated and then tested for thousands of hours. Even a simple seat can require quite a number of parts and each one of these has to be tested as above.

He then went on to describe what each of us probably thought of as car development testing where cars are driven round tracks with different surfaces for hours and hours. Graham introduced us to Arjeplog, a Swedish track, which is quite near the Arctic Circle. Here is where the cold weather testing is carried out in temperatures of -40°C by quite a number of the world's major motor manufacturers. He also talked to us about the hair-raising Grossglockner Road which is to be found high in the Austrian Mountains near Salzburg. The third testing ground that a number of manufactures use is in Papenburg, Northern Germany which consists of a number of circuits and road surfaces where cars can be driven for days on end.

He was able to give us the real insight into what is involved in car testing and show us that it is not always as glamorous, dangerous and exciting as we may think.

This brought him to some of the developments made in recent years to improve a person's chances of survival in a crash (Seatbelts, Airbags, Laminated windshields, Crumple zones, Collapsible universally jointed steering columns, Pedestrian protection systems) along with progress that has been made to assist the driver e.g. ABS, Electronic Stability Control, Traction control systems.

Graham concluded his talk by saying that while the big car companies continue to try to make cars safer it is still the responsibility of the driver to ensure that his or her journeys are the safest that they can make them. He showed us a graph which illustrated that road deaths in Northern Ireland had been steadily reducing over the last 30 years but it is still disheartening to note that in 2008, the number of people killed due to careless driving is still 36 out of a total of 107. He still sees the importance of the IAM and its programme of education in trying to reduce the number of road fatalities still further.

The number of questions showed how interested the audience had been and Ivan asked them to show their appreciation to Graham. Ivan then wished everyone a safe journey home.

Route to the Tudor Cinema

From the new roundabout just South of Comber head south on A22/Killinchy Rd for 1 mile. Turn right onto the Drumhirk Road and proceed for about 0.1 ml. Take the lane on the left where there is a line of bungalows on the right. Keep straight on not taking any entrances to the right until you see the cinema at the end of the lane.

The film that we will be seeing is the Spence Brothers' own documentary on the Ards TT. Please be there at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm start. Let Philip know before 2nd February at phil_cairnduff@msn.com if you are going. Refreshments will be available. Please bring £5.00 for a donation. Family and friends are very welcome.

Older drivers are the safest, says IAM

18 January 2010

Drivers over 70 are no more likely to cause crashes than any other driver, and are considerably safer than younger drivers, according to a report published today by the IAM.

Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research said: "The report contradicts the common assumption that older drivers are a danger on the roads. Just eight per cent of drivers are over 70 and they are involved in around four per cent of injury crashes; but of the 15 per cent of drivers who are in their teens and 20s, 34 per cent are involved in injury crashes."

Older people rely heavily on their cars, and the ability to drive gives many older people better mobility and access to more activities. Men in their seventies make more trips as car drivers than men in their late teens and 20s.

Mr Greig added: "The IAM recommends that, rather than seeking to prevent older people from driving, we need to make them aware of the risks they face, and offer them driving assessments to help them cope with these risks."

Greg Lewis of Age Concern/Help the Aged said: "We believe that where drivers wish to continue behind the wheel beyond the age of 70, only convincing reasons should prevent them from doing so."

Mr Lewis added: "An elderly person's risk of being killed or suffering a serious injury as a result of a road crash is between two and five times greater than that of a younger person because of their increased physical frailty."

Other key findings:

- In the next 20 years the number of male drivers over 70 will double, female drivers will treble.
- Drivers over 70 are safer on bends and overtaking than 50 year olds, but are more at risk at roundabouts, junctions and slip roads on high speed roads.
- In some traffic situations, older drivers are less likely to be in a crash because they tend to adopt a more careful and restrained driving style.
- No particular age was identified where there is sudden increase in crash involvement.
- Older drivers self regulate and take fewer trips on motorways, in poor light or wet weather, or at peak times.
- Drivers over 85 are four times more likely to have caused a crash than to have been an innocent victim of one.
- Crashes in which older women are to blame peak about five years earlier than those for older men.

"The IAM strongly believes that there is no case for compulsory retesting of older drivers at an arbitrary age. More research is needed on the best age to renew driving licences and there needs to be a wider debate on the introduction of restricted licensing," said Mr Greig.

"Room 2 Race" - Tues 26th January, 2010

Twenty "Advanced" Motorists on a simulated motor racing circuit in "high-powered racing cars" and what do you get? Mayhem! Bedlam! Chaos and utter pandemonium! In other words - a super evening! I can't wait to go back.

Dates for Your Diary

2nd Feb, 2010	STAC 19/1. Classroom and Driving Practice Session
9th Feb, 2010	Group Night - "Night at the Movies" - Comber Cinema
23rd Feb, 2010	STAC 19/2. Classroom and Driving Practice Session
2nd Mar, 2010	STAC 19/3. Classroom and Driving Practice Session
9th Mar, 2010	Group Night - "Talk given by The Motorcycle Section"
23rd Mar, 2010	STAC 19/4a. Classroom and Driving Practice Session