



The Borders Observer

Newsletter of the Borders Group of Advanced Motorists

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Editor: Peter Sandison

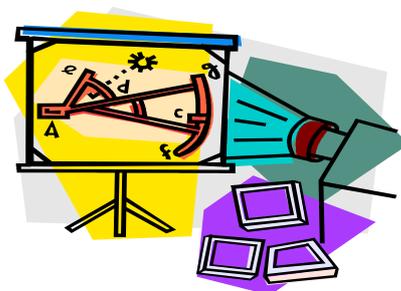
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Please address any comments or contribute articles to the Editor. These would be gratefully received!

Borders Group awarded Lottery Grant!

Awards for All Scotland announced on Tuesday 25th September that our Group had been successful in its bid for Lottery funding. We had asked for help to purchase equipment which would allow us to develop a more professional



approach to our training, marketing and administration. The grant will assist activities for the car and recently established motorcycle section. It has enabled us to buy a laptop, printer, portable projector, DVD/VCR player, portable projection screen, 6 handheld radios and 6 motorbike hands-free radio kits. The equipment was demonstrated at the November monthly meeting — except for the laptop, which chose that evening to misbehave! (see article on page 4 for the further tribulations of the laptop). As well as using the equipment for our regular

meetings, we will find it of great use for our Assessor and Observer training programmes, which all make heavy use of videos and PowerPoint presentations. We are also starting to use CDs for training purposes, and it won't be long before some of the video material we use becomes available on DVD.

Marketing of the Group

Do you belong to another organisation that might be interested in a presentation about advanced/safe driving? If so, please contact us and let us know. It will give us an opportunity to use our own equipment to put on an effective display, and hopefully be of useful benefit to both parties!

Programme notes ...

First Tuesday in 2004

Please note that there is no meeting in January—we thought we'd give you time to recover from the festive season!

February 3rd—Bike Safe

Dave Aitken, our resident expert on two wheels, will be giving a presentation which will be relevant to the four-

wheel as well as the motorcycling fraternity. So please tell any family or friends belonging to this latter category who want to bike more safely!

Friday February 27th—

Social Evening

Details on page 3

March 2nd—Border Toyota

We have been saving this

visit until the extension at Border Toyota was finished. Members who came on the last visit will remember the excellent hospitality provided!

April 6th—Alnwick Group

Date for another of our ongoing series of friendly competitions against Alnwick, our neighbours across the Border.

How the “other half” lives

We all remain either active or interested members of the IAM and our local branch because of our keen interest in improving driving standards. However is there a danger that our own skills might have fallen off over time, particularly if we are not keeping it going by acting as a trained Observer? I suspect the take up rate of the Institute's Special Assessment is pretty low!

Why not consider having a go at the advanced driving test offered by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents). In contrast to the IAM test the RoSPA test is both graded and involves a re-test every three years. The arrangements in terms of Police Class 1 examiners, senior examiners and quality control are similar to the IAM's. The RoSPA grading system ranges from fail through bronze and silver to gold, which is recognised as the highest driving award available to a civilian in the UK. Encouraged a few years ago by our Chairman, who has held a RoSPA gold for a number of years, I had a go and was fortunate enough to gain a gold.

When it was time for the re-test work commitments meant I had to postpone for a while, but the little voice



inside kept saying, “you'll need to do it one day!” That immediately raised the question ‘how does my driving compare with 3 to 4 years ago?’ Well the form went in, the examiner rang and a date was agreed. *Roadcraft* was reread, the video watched and I started talking to myself in the car again. You do get funny looks from passing motorists but perhaps they just think you are singing along to the radio!

The examiner is based in Fife and we agreed to meet just over the Forth Road Bridge. In similar vein to the IAM test, the examiner quickly put me at my ease, told me the broad area of the route and that any changes to direction would be given in good time. So into the cockpit drill, trying desperately to remember to carry out a brake test, and we were off on a route around the Inverkeithing,

Cowdenbeath and Crossgates area. Unlike the IAM test, when in my case, I was asked for a couple of short bits of commentary, I tried to commentate from the start and keep it going. This I found pretty difficult but managed to keep going with varying degrees of fluency. It did help when I was able to pick an ambulance in the far distance with everything on enabling an easy bit of timing and positioning to let him pass through at speed.

It was eventually back to the start for a few questions based on the *Highway Code*, *Roadcraft* and my vehicle. This was followed by a large sigh of relief when the examiner said “that's it; you've got your gold!” This in turn was followed by very constructive feedback on how the drive could be even better!

There may be an element of healthy rivalry between the IAM and RoSPA, but we are both essentially in the same game - raising driving standards and promoting road safety. So if in doubt give the RoSPA test a go and be a member of both. A lot of useful information can be obtained from their web site at www.roada.org.uk.

Contributed by Martyn Buckley, former Treasurer and Observer of Borders Group

Borders Group wins Motoring Quiz by one point!

Borders Group wins by 177.5 to 176.5 points against Alnwick & District Group

The two teams met at a half way venue, Cornhill-on-Tweed Village Hall, on Sunday 16th November 2003.

The Borders team players were Mary Davison, Morag Sterrick, John Brown, Kevin Hamilton and Charlie Dodds. Those competing for Alnwick were John Atkins, Kevin Whitehead, John Wild, Peter Slater and John Davis. There were a few travelling supporters from each group. The competition required a high standard of knowledge. Questions were drawn from *Roadcraft*, *Highway Code*, Motorcycle riding, LGV theory, Motorway driving and a paper on Tyres. Hazard Perception testing using video clips, and identifying the hidden objects in the box, made up the elements of the competition. Each participant had two subjects to cover within the competition. The Borders group used some of the equipment recently acquired from the Lottery award to present some of this competition, so there was more mouse clicking than pen pushing.

There was a gasp of astonishment heard around the room as the result was announced, this being so close. An individual prize was awarded to the best overall score, Mr John Wild receiving this accolade.

Everyone tucked into the buffet spread provided and had a good natter with each other before going their own way home. Alnwick are looking forward to the return match in April 2004.

Contributed by Raymond Black, Chairman, Borders Group

Marie Curie Scottish Ladies' Driving Challenge

One of our members, Morag Sterrick, entered the 2003 Marie Curie Scottish Ladies' Driving Challenge at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh, on Sunday 12th October 2003. Her "challenges" included driving a Mercedes police car, an HGV, a fire engine, a combine harvester, and Del Boy's Reliant van. She was also assessed as a passenger in a military tank, with points probably awarded for managing to get into it elegantly!

The ladies also faced a stiff manoeuvrability test, the course having been set up by Peter Sandison of the Borders Group. Morag was one of a number of Borders ladies who achieved a creditable score for this section, and it was a Borderer from Hawick who got the highest overall score on the day.

Speaking of her day, Morag reported that she found the HGV most challenging, enjoyed driving the fire engine best, and was told she didn't drive fast enough in the police patrol car (!). She now appreciates the skills of lorry drivers as a result of her experience driving one!



This certificate entitles *A. New Member*

to a course in Advanced Driving / Motorcycling
with the Borders Group of Advanced Motorists

Authorized by _____

Expires _____

Frechelen
1 Hayward Drive
Galashiels
TD1 3JB

Not redeemable for cash
Redemption value not to exceed
£85.00



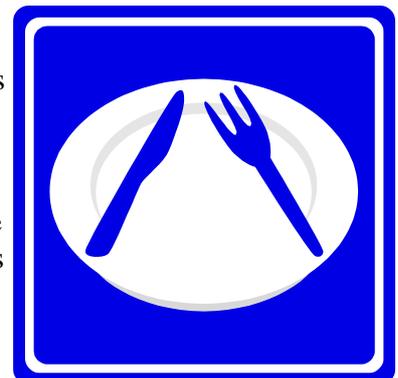
Advanced Driving/Motorcycling Gift Certificate

Looking for an outstanding Christmas or Birthday present for a friend or loved one? Would you like to increase their chances of survival in the tarmac jungle? An advanced driving course can reduce the likelihood of a crash by up to 70%, according to independent research. The gift certificate entitles the recipient to the Institute's "Skills for Life" package: Associate membership of our Group; a place on one of our advanced driving courses and follow-up guidance; a copy of the relevant course book, "Pass Your Advanced Driving [or Motorcycling] Test"; the fee for the Advanced Test; and first year's membership of the Institute if successful in the Test. If the recipient lives outwith the Borders, you can obtain a gift token which will cover any Group in the UK. You can obtain the certificate or token, which cost £85 - with a £10 discount for recipients under 26 - from our Membership Secretary, Bob McKendrick (contact details on page 1). You may never give a better gift!

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Social Evening

Fancy having an extended chat with fellow members rather than a snatched conversation at the end of a monthly meeting? If so, please let us know if you'd like to come to an informal evening meal at the Buccleuch Arms Hotel, St. Boswells, one of our regular venues. We thought that the end of February would be suitable - enough time to have recovered from the Festive Season, but before activities pick up for Spring. You will have a chance to speak to members of the Committee, and perhaps give us ideas for the coming season. If you would like to consider helping out in whatever way, we'd like to hear from you. The date to put in your diary is Friday 27th February 2004, the time 7.00 p.m. Please email or phone the Editor if you'd like to come - contact details on front page.





Have you ever thought about the ideal present for the motorist, apart from the latest model of supercar that you know you could never afford to insure - let alone pay the fuel costs of? Here are some ideas partly inspired by a Canadian journalist, Phil Bailey, writing for the *Canadian Driver*.

- A voice-activated sign for the bottom of your rear window that could display appropriate messages such as:
"Please keep off my rear!" / "Don't you know that the law on mobile phones has just changed?" /
"The car in front is a police car!"
- A similar device for the bottom of the windscreen, but mirror-imaged so that the driver in front can read in his/her mirror messages such as:
"Thanks for cutting in!" / "Do you know there is a tailback of forty vehicles?" / "Can you see the nut behind your steering wheel?"
- A device similar to the one in the first James Bond Aston Martin that popped up from behind the rear window, but which instead of deflecting bullets, deflected the un-dipped headlight or unnecessary fog light.
- Continuing the Bond theme, how about a compressed air cannon - protruding slightly from the front grill - that would fire rubber bullets? The intention being not to damage the vehicle in front, but to create enough noise to wake up the driver and get him or her to move out of the overtaking lane.
- Or what about a device - apparently popular in public places in Israel - which, suitably adapted to cars, would jam every mobile phone within a 50 metre radius?

I'm sure you get the gist! If you have any ideas of your own, please share them with us for the next Winter edition of the Newsletter, unless, of course, you plan to go into production yourself ...

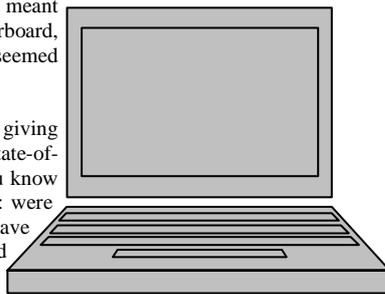
Inspired by a feature in www.CanadianDriver.com and adapted by the Editor.

Tale of the Lottery Laptop

At the heart of our Lottery bid was a very well specified and state-of-the-art laptop computer from a respected manufacturer. It arrived in good time with all its component parts as ordered. Unfortunately it made a literally alarming noise - like a high-pitched screech - when first booted up, which could only be stopped by resetting. So the first call to Technical Help went in, and a long conversation with India took place. I was told that things would "settle down", and so the day of its public presentation at the November meeting took place. Unfortunately it not only decided to "whine" on start-up, but refused to re-start after being reset. It did not entirely spoil the evening, as we were able to play a DVD and video through our new DVD/VCR player. The laptop then seemed to work well enough, and performed for the Quiz against the Alnwick Group. However, disaster struck again at the December meeting, when it booted up, but refused to communicate with the LCD projector. Again, all was not completely lost, as the participants in our in-house quiz cosied round the laptop's screen. Who said lightning never strikes twice in the same place?!

The next day another long conversation with India, followed by a two-hour long diagnostic test during which errors on the hard disc were revealed. The solution - a new hard disc. An engineer duly reappeared, replaced the part, and reinstalled the core software and most of the drivers. Later on, I attempted to reinstall the sound driver, but - lo and behold - the whine reappeared! Another call to India, followed by another engineer the following week, and this time a new motherboard. That meant taking the laptop apart, installing the new motherboard, and reassembling it. Third time lucky - and we seemed to be in business!

The morals of this tale? Firstly, be very wary of giving public performances with animals, children, or state-of-the-art technology! And secondly, it helps if you know something about computers when problems arise: were it not for some technical knowledge I would have struggled to undertake the diagnostic test directed from India!



— Contributed by the Editor

Membership Secretary's News

Well Done Claire!
Congratulations to Claire Dunsmuir who passed the Advanced Test (Car) at the first attempt on 1st November 2003.



Hello!

Welcome to the following new Associates:
Car Section - James Hurt, James Martin,
Colin Ross & Callum Smith.
Motorcycle - Nigel Carrick, Colin Ross,
& John Shepherd.

Membership Update

Including the new members above, we presently have 28 Associate members at various stages of guidance.

Bob McKendrick