

# Dorset IAM RoadSmart



September Newsletter - 2020 (edition 65)

## A sudden change

Once again I find myself desperately short of time when it comes to creating this month's newsletter. I can at least say, hand on heart that I started writing this in September, although there is a very good chance you won't be reading it until early October.

Two weekends ago I was enjoying a lovely 87-mile bike ride which saw us heading up the Cerne Valley towards Yeovil where we stopped for a sausage and bacon roll and a cup of coffee at Hamish's Farm Shop and Cafe (it is on the Dorchester Road just to the east of the A37 before you head over the railway line into Yeovil). From there two of our group headed back to Weymouth (other family commitments), so the remaining four headed towards Beaminster. From there we cycled to Bridport, stopping off at West Bay for a cake and coffee.



Somewhere along this section of road we encountered a traffic jam at a crossroads. As it was a lovely sunny day, the farmers (and their contractors) were busy collecting in the final cuts from the fields. The traffic jam was caused by a backlog of 7 tractors all with trailers and two camper vans. Add in some narrow country lanes and you get havoc for 10 minutes! Still it was sunny and we weren't on a schedule, so it didn't cause us any dramas other than the amazement at how many tractors were at the same junction at the same time!

After our second refreshment stop we set off in the direction of Littlebredy. For those who it, has a nice hill climb from about 30ft up to 650ft. I saw a couple of mountain bike riders, so my mission was set: catch and overtake them before the top. Not sure they were quite so impressed! After that we returned to Weymouth, via Upwey. We stopped at Oasis for a quick catch up (might have been a few hours over coffee!), before ending the ride with a loop out to Quiddles on Portland, to be treated with a wonderful sunset.



Fast forward to this weekend just gone, rather than worrying about if I had put enough sun cream on, I had to wonder if I'd be warm enough! Leaving the house at 0730 it can be a gamble as to what to wear. As it was, I opted for shorts, t-shirt and fingerless gloves (which is my standard summer cycling kit). The first hour or two was a bit on the chilly side (the wind didn't help either), but after that I soon felt suitably comfortable.

A couple of days later, here I am sitting in my office at home with the rain hammering down. Has summer finished, or is this just a blip? edit: day later and back to glorious sunshine!

While the cycling season isn't over, it appears that some Sunday car drivers' skills have reverted back to their pre-lockdown inconsiderate skill sets. Dan-

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generously close overtakes are the common theme. We were riding along Puddletown Road (from Glider crossroads) towards Wareham. Those familiar with the road will know it is long and straight with good visibility. We had two cars both perform overtakes barely giving us 50cm of clearance, let alone the 1500cm as recommended minimum in the highway code. The road was clear in front, visibility was great, there was simply no excuse for such poor driving. The only conclusions which can be drawn is that some car drivers shouldn't be driving - and I don't mean any particular demographic, but those who seem to lack in the ability to share the roads. Whatever medium we choose to travel the roads by - be it cycling, driving a car, running, or even riding a horse we are all equally entitled to be there.



Times are challenging, let's show a bit of consideration is everyone. Don't just get in and shut the door on your car and believe you are only person in the world which matters.

Stay Alert, Control The Virus, Save Lives

*Matt Ames*  
Newsletter Editor

## Group Membership renewals - and how renewals work after the 1st year

Membership renewals for September have been emailed out, and I've also sent reminders to a few people from March too. Your speedy return of the renewal forms is much appreciated. If you have misplaced or deleted the email, then you can download the form from our website, at the bottom of the join page: <https://www.dorsetiam.org.uk/join/>

For those who have already returned your paperwork, then your very much; your timely responses are much appreciated. Historically we've had 2 intakes per year - March and September which aligned with our Seminar evenings.

IAM operates a two-tier membership system, where in order to be part of the IAM you need to be a member of the main IAM RoadSmart organisation (HQ if you like), and then a member of a local Group, such as ourselves.

When you first join the the IAM, your membership fee covers both membership to IAM HQ, and your assigned local Group for the period of 1 year. This cost also includes the cost of your IAM RoadSmart test.

Observed runs are offered 'free'\* by the local Group, but you need to be a member of both IAM and the Local Group for our insurance to cover our fully qualified Observers while they are in your car, should the unthinkable happen.

\* our Observers give their time to act as Group Observers, and likewise to ensure their skills and qualifications are kept up to date.

## What does Road Safety Mean to me? from the IAM RoadSmart Blog

This is the question we asked Sarah Rajalingam when she joined the IAM RoadSmart team recently as Senior Communications Executive. Read on for her reflections after 10 years driving experience.

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Do you ever feel you could do something with your eyes shut? I have a few things on my list, but driving is most definitely one of them, except keeping your eyes open is the most important part of all!

With 10 plus years of driving experience, there are times when I wonder how I reached my destination, like my car has been on autopilot, as my journey seemed a blur. So, when I was asked about 'road safety' and 'what it means to me?' I had a brain rush, a flood of memories and my perspective to share.

Road safety is important to everyone, the driver, passenger, fellow drivers, your car and pedestrians. We hear so many stories of 'drink-drivers, drivers' losing control, not being seen in another driver's blind spot and many other causes of crashes that can lead to death and injury yet many of us seem to think it could never happen to us. We all have a story about someone who has been in or even passed away due to a road traffic collision.

So, for me my number one rule is to wear a seat belt; this is your personal protection and could be your saving grace, regardless of who is at fault. It doesn't end there though. Managing speed, clutch control, keeping a safe distance between other vehicles, observing other road users, using your mirrors, signaling when doing manoeuvres and reading the signage throughout your journey is also key.

When practicing for my theory test, I remember feeling overwhelmed by the hundreds of road signs we are all expected to remember. However the more I drove and got used to A roads, B roads, motorways and country lanes on top of my regular town roads, I found without even thinking, my subconscious was able to read the signs, assess and anticipate situations ahead. Once I had mastered the above I thought I knew it all, boy was I wrong!

As a young driver (I passed my driving test shortly after my 19th birthday) I remember always living in

the moment, meaning I was frequently in a rush. I would emergency brake frequently, didn't always plan ahead and would find myself panicking if I was late, stuck in traffic or in questionable driving situations. As a result I got whiplash as well as speeding fines, parking tickets and I'd clocked a few minor collisions with other cars before I had even turned 23, resulting in sky-high insurance; a car that took unwanted visits to the garage (not including MOT and service checks) and highly disappointed parents. Not good at all!

After the novelty wore off as a new driver, I was able to reflect on my journey and mishaps. I knew I had to change my ways and remind myself that I may not be the best driver, but I can do better! I didn't want to take a life and live with the that knowledge and guilt for the rest of my life or lose my own life because I didn't see an oncoming vehicle. Nor did I want to be paying an arm and a leg to get from A to B due to my carelessness. All the above was a wake-up call.

So, when I was asked to write about 'What road safety means to me' I felt I could be transparent with my experiences and brutally honest. I had to really think about the importance of being on the road and how my actions could affect not just me, but others.

From my own experience, I feel I can fairly conclude that road safety is about patience and anticipation; for other road users and yourself. It's about reading road signs and using all the techniques you were taught in your lessons, it's about watching your speed, being adaptable and always vigilant. All things that are second nature to advanced drivers.

After my 10+years of driving behind my seat belt, I can safely say I am a more confident driver, with 1000% more patience. I have learned so much about myself through driving and I am grateful for the experiences that have come with it and the gift of being able to drive. Now I am ready to take it to the next level and take my advanced driving test, which I look forward to doing soon.