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Winter 2020



# Driving

Quarterly newsletter of IAM Glasgow North Group



# VIEW FROM THE DASHBOARD

ELAINE OFFERS PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR DRIVING DURING WINTER WITH ITS BAD WEATHER AND LACK OF DAYLIGHT, COUPLED WITH REDUCED STREETLIGHT PROGRAMMES.



**ELAINE IRVINE**  
Chief Car Observer

I do hope this newsletter finds you all well and coping with yet another lockdown. I think that our new 'normal' will be with us for some time until vaccines are rolled out across the country and even then, we may still be under some form of restrictions.

Unfortunately, my last newsletter entry was a little optimistic as we have not been able to return to observed drives as I had hoped.

However, we have still been making plans and hope that very soon we shall be back to Observing.

Autumn seems to be flying by in a blur of wind and rain. My garden is now somewhat underwater and my lovely golden puppy has discovered mud! Her joy is immense as she gallops across the 'grass' with ears flapping and a huge grin on her face as she sprays muddy water all over her legs and undercarriage while heading straight towards me with intent!

My clothing has been covered many times with beautifully perfect muddy pawprints. Thank goodness for washing machines and easy clean laminate flooring!!

The bad weather has a huge impact on the roads with lots of surface water and driving is made more hazardous by the reduced hours of daylight and lack of visibility.

I was driving on the M74 the other day and for the entirety of the 45-minute drive I battled bad

weather as the heavens dropped copious amounts of water which the wind then hurled at me from all sides, in the dark.

My car was constantly buffeted and blown which, along with the darkness and road spray, made the drive extremely tiring and not very enjoyable. I do sympathise with those who drive for a living, it cannot be an easy job when faced with these conditions.

I wrote in the Spring newsletter about driving in wet weather and you may find it beneficial to look over that again.

As always, this time of year brings early sunsets, dark evenings and many dull days with low sunshine. Lack of visibility, glare on the windscreen and reduced forward vision are just some of the hazards this presents.

I find that oncoming vehicle lights seem to be getting higher and brighter which can dazzle and make it difficult to see the road ahead. There's also the added problem of reduced lighting; 85% of councils now turn off or dim their streetlights between the hours of midnight and 6am, though some are dimmed as early as 8pm.

This adds up to over 2 million streetlights! Great for light pollution but hard on night drivers with vision being easily affected amongst other things. With 40% of accidents happening at night, it is important that we understand the hazards

and are familiar with ways to avoid or minimise risk to ourselves and others:

- It goes without saying that good eyesight is essential. Your eyes have a lot of work to do adjusting to the continual changes between darkness, lit areas and oncoming vehicles while trying to read road signs and look far enough ahead. Remember that depth perception, visual acuity, colour recognition, and peripheral vision are all compromised in the dark. If you find you are struggling then book an appointment to have your vision checked. If you wear glasses your optician may recommend a coating to reduce glare. I have been asked about tinted 'night vision' glasses but there is no scientific proof that they work. The yellow tint enhances contrast and can reduce glare however due to the fact that the lens is coloured it cannot 'brighten' anything. It also reduces light into your eye which, at night time, will reduce your vision even further. The yellow lenses may be beneficial when driving in snow to reduce glare but I would not recommend their use in the dark. If you need any further information, check with an optician.
- Ensure your windscreen is clear, both inside and out. A build-up of condensation on the inside

of your windows and dirt on the outside can impair visibility, so it's important to take time to clean them before setting off. Windscreens are particularly susceptible to steaming up on the inside, especially in cold weather, while car heaters can blow dirty air at the glass, causing a hazy film to build up on the inside. This can increase glare from oncoming headlamps.

- Reduce light levels inside your vehicle. If your dashboard does not dim automatically when you turn your headlights on, find the dial or button to reduce the brightness before you set off. Ensure that passengers keep any light source (mobile phones etc) directed away from you and dimmed if possible.
- Make sure all vehicle lights are working and use them properly. It's illegal to drive at night without properly functioning front and rear lights, so make regular checks to ensure they're all in full working order. If you find that a bulb needs changing, get it done as soon as possible to avoid being stopped by the police. Headlight alignment can slip over time and you may consider having them checked to make sure you are getting the maximum amount of light pointed at the right place on the road. The way you use your lights is hugely important too. Turn dipped headlights on about an hour before sunset and keep them on an hour after sunrise to ensure you're always clearly visible to other road users. You should use your full beam on unlit country roads to help you see the road layout more clearly, but if you encounter another vehicle, switch back to dipped beam straight away so that you don't

dazzle them. Headlight dazzle contributed to over 250 crashes in 2018 so it is a definite issue!

- To prevent yourself from being dazzled, never look directly at the headlights of other vehicles. The glare can temporarily impair your vision, making you more likely to panic and lose your bearings. Look to the left-hand side of the road and follow the white line marking the edge if there is one, so you can keep track of your position. If the glare is so bad that you can't see anything, slow down but avoid stopping abruptly as you don't want a car that is travelling behind you running into the back of you. If you have time, use the light from the oncoming vehicle to see the layout of the road ahead and that will help you to pass it safely.
- Many drivers will fixate their vision on the limit of their headlights. Try looking out further; make use of the lights from other vehicles in front to see the lie of the road. Moonlight can allow you to see further than just the headlights and although you might not be able to see details, you could maybe see shadows or shapes in the distance which would alert you to a corner or hazard. You may not be able to scan Far, Middle and Near effectively but make best use of any available light to see further. Remember to scan out to the sides as there may be lights coming from another direction which would warn of a junction.
- Watch out for other road users and nocturnal animals. Cyclists, children and the elderly are at increased risk in the dark. Many pedestrians wear dark non-reflective clothing making them almost

impossible to see. In the cold and rain, many will wear hoods or use umbrellas which will limit their vision and hearing. Look out for dog walkers and wild animals which may be startled by vehicles and dart across the road. Keep your speed down and be able to stop in the distance you can see to be clear, which may be limited by your headlight beam.

- Lastly, don't drive when tired. With less light in the evenings, your melatonin levels may be higher, leaving you feeling a little more bleary-eyed than normal. The constant flickering of passing white lines can also be hypnotic in the dark, making your eyes more tired. Make sure you are well rested, take regular breaks and stay safe.

As we have not been able to do any drives, I have been hosting online zoom theory sessions for all Associates and Observers over the past few months.

I would like to extend this to all group Members. Information about the next few meetings including dates, times and login details will be in the upcoming events section of this newsletter as well as being posted on our group Facebook page.

If you wish to join any of the meetings, click on the link and I will be able to admit you to the meeting.

If you prefer to mute your sound and camera, that's fine by me. I do appreciate that not everyone wants to be seen on camera!

As always, safe driving.

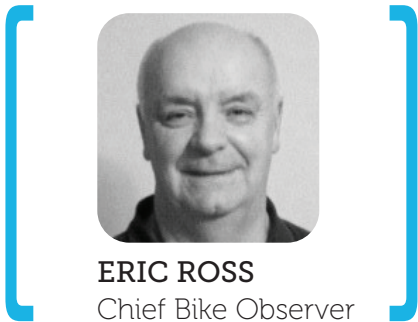
*Elaine*

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# VIEW FROM THE SADDLE

ERIC OFFERS PRACTICAL ADVICE ON GAINING CONFIDENCE RIDING IN THE WET AND COLD; FROM CLOTHING CHOICES TO RIDING IN A MORE PROGRESSIVE MANNER.



I hope this finds you all well and that you managed to get out on your bike before the weather changed.

As we approach winter I know that many of you will be looking to give your bike a good clean before putting it away until better weather returns.

For some, this is simply because they do not wish to use their pride and joy on the roads once the councils start spreading the dreaded salt all over the place and the thought of spending more time cleaning your bike than actually riding it just has no attraction!

For others, it will be a fear or lack of confidence riding in the wet and cold. Whilst I have no desire to ride in snow and ice I am reasonably comfortable riding in the cold and rain.

So what could you do to extend your riding season if you do not

feel comfortable riding further into winter?

If we start by looking at riding in colder wet conditions (not frost and ice) it is important to consider how you are going to keep warm and dry.

The effects of cold are increased once you become wet and once cold your muscles find it more difficult to react quickly whilst you will find it much more difficult to maintain concentration.

As you start to focus on the discomfort caused by the cold you will have less concentration available to direct to your riding which in turn will affect your decision making and proper use of IPSSGA.

This is something we can remedy fairly simply by making proper use of layers of clothing and making sure that our outer layer is both waterproof and breathable.

By wearing several light layers of warm breathable clothing we can protect ourselves from the effect of the cold, but it is essential that the clothing you wear does not restrict your movement.

Heated clothing, heated grips or even heated seats can also help prevent you suffering from the cold but remember if you use heated grips or seats in the wet it can cause materials like gore-tex to reverse and instead of keeping water out, they may actually force the water through your clothing.

The longer you are out in the cold and wet the more likely you are to suffer from them, and the more likely you are to suffer from a lack of concentration. Always take account of this when planning any rides in poorer conditions.

Staying on the subject of keeping warm it is a common belief that a huge amount of body heat is lost through your head, with some 'studies' even quoting figures as high as 80%.



RIDING IN THE WET AND COLD CAN LEAD TO MENTAL AND PHYSICAL FATIGUE – KEEPING WARM AND DRY WILL HELP PREVENT THIS

This is thought to have originated from a misinterpretation of the results of a US Military experiment in which personnel were exposed to extremely low temperatures whilst wearing arctic survival suits. The problem with this experiment was that the survival suits only covered the participants from the neck down; with the obvious result that the majority of heat loss occurred through the uncovered head.

This theory was then reinforced in the 1970s when a US Army field guide recommended covering the head to help prevent the loss of between 40%-45% of body heat in freezing conditions.

Obviously these figures are an estimate of heat loss through an unprotected head, but it is clear that wearing some form of thermal protection, like a thin skull cap or balaclava under your helmet will assist in retaining body heat in cold conditions.

We all understand that if we are going to ride confidently in the wet we will need to plan what we are doing. In order to make efficient and effective decisions it is important to be able to see what is happening all around us.

In the rain, and especially in winter, keeping your visor clear is extremely important. The process of keeping your visor clear is fairly straight-forward.

Never dry-wipe a visor no matter how soft the material you use. It is possible to buy specialist visor cleaners – most of which are alcohol based as this will evaporate and will not leave smears – but plain tap water can also be used.

Whatever you decide to use; if there are dried-on bugs or road dirt on the visor, wet the visor and allow time for the cleaner or water to soften the dirt and bugs.

If using just water it is a good idea to soak a few pieces of toilet

paper and place them over the visor, leaving them on for a minute or two to give the water time to soften everything up.

Once everything has softened up, wipe the visor with a microfiber or soft non-abrasive cloth. If you happen to drop your cloth on the ground, don't then use it to wipe the visor as it may have picked up grains of dirt which will scratch the visor as you rub it. Always wash the cloths you use regularly.

The use of specialist water repellent sprays on the outside of visors and an anti-fog insert or spray on the inside can also assist in improving vision.

Before you set off on the bike you should check that your tyres, brakes and suspension are all in good order and remember that although the legal minimum for tread depth on a motorcycle tyre may be 1mm, the less tread the tyre has the less effective it will be in dispersing water.

Whilst all good motorcyclists take account of weather conditions when riding, for some the thought of riding in the rain causes them to become quite anxious. This in turn causes them to tense up their shoulders and elbows, affecting their ability to feel what the bike is doing and thus entering a vicious circle of tensing up, losing feel and tensing up again because of this. So what can be done about this?

The first thing to realise is that everyone backs off in the wet. We all understand that when the road is wet there is less grip, as a layer of water between the tyre and the road reduces contact between the two. To counteract this loss of grip we need to ride smoother – braking, steering, accelerating, changing gear and using the clutch in a more progressive rather than aggressive manner.

In order to ride smoothly we

need to have a plan in place well before we have to react. The natural reaction to riding in the wet is to allow our vision to drop, which in turn gives us less time to react. Our actions become rushed, which results in more aggressive movements which then cause the tyres to lose grip, resulting in us tensing up and dropping our vision even further.

We need to force ourselves to look further ahead, which will give us more time to plan and carry out our actions, which in turn should result in smoother movements, giving us more grip.

Positioning for bends is also important. In the wet, people often feel more comfortable turning in earlier than they would in the dry, in the belief that this will somehow increase grip when in fact it is more likely to reduce it. Choosing the correct line when entering a bend is important; look as far ahead as you can, identify potential hazards such as road paint (which can be very slippery in the wet), puddles (especially on the nearside which could be hiding deep holes), overbanding and even adverse cambers, all of which can affect grip and stability.

Pick a line which avoids hazards and if necessary reduce your speed as appropriate. Build in a greater safety bubble, both to the nearside and offside, which will allow you to change line without sacrificing your safety.

Work on getting your riding as smooth as possible without sudden jerky actions. Practising in the wet will help but only if you practise the right things; practising bad habits will only reinforce them and not improve your riding.

*Eric*

Eric Ross | 07789 811 630

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



DETAILS OF UPCOMING GROUP ACTIVITIES, MEETINGS AND EVENTS. FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE GROUP WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE.

We still have a programme of on-line meetings and events over the remainder of the season. See below for a slice of activities over the next few months.

*The Committee*  
[committee@iamglasgow.org](mailto:committee@iamglasgow.org)

## Dec 2020

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup>

### Car Zoom Meeting

Online meeting covering Rural, Urban and Motorway driving. All Members are welcome.

Online via [Zoom](#)  
19.30 start

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>

### Car Zoom Meeting

Online meeting covering the topic of Cornering. All Members are welcome.

Online via [Zoom](#)  
19.30 start

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>

### Car Zoom Meeting

Online meeting covering the topic of Overtaking. All Members are welcome.

Online via [Zoom](#)  
19.30 start

## Jan 2021

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup>

### Car Zoom Meeting

Online meeting covering Commentary / Spoken Thought. All Members are welcome.

Online via [Zoom](#)  
19.30 start

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>

### Car Zoom Meeting

Online meeting covering the topic of Vehicle Stability. All Members are welcome.

Online via [Zoom](#)  
19.30 start

## Mar 2021

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>

### Group Night - tbc

This event is subject to confirmation. Details will be published via the group website and Facebook page once confirmed.  
Venue tbc

## Apr 2021

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>

### Saturday Bike Meets commence

This is the planned start date of Saturday morning bike meetings.  
*Robroyston Retail Park*  
09.15 for 09.30 start

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup>

### Group Night - tbc

This event is subject to confirmation. Details will be published via the group website and Facebook page once confirmed.  
Venue tbc

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>

### Wednesday Bike Meets commence

This is the planned start date of Wednesday evening bike meetings.  
*Crow Road Retail Park*  
18.15 for 18.30 start