



WELCOME FROM OUR CHAIRMAN Adrian Barlow

Despite the high temperatures and drought conditions for much of the summer, both hedges and herbage on road verges have grown enormously, narrowing the highway on many rural roads and restricting vision of the road ahead. Furthermore, the quantity of rain during the winter resulted in considerable damage to many road surfaces and despite extensive repairs during the summer many potholes and ruts on verges remain and represent considerable hazards to road users who need to be aware of these dangers and to drive accordingly.

Our first three Driver Refresher Days were very successful in terms of attendees and those who have expressed interest in taking the Advanced Driver Course. These Refresher Days do take a considerable amount of organisation, and our thanks are due to all those who assisted but in particular Linda Harding, Stella Boyd-Carpenter and Nigel Jenkins.

I would remind all members that they are entitled to a free observed drive each year. It is very easy to slip into bad habits with the passage of time, and an observed drive can help to rectify faults and maintain driving performance at a high level. Uptake of the entitlement has always been very limited, but members are urged to take advantage of this opportunity.

We still have no Young Driver Ambassador despite considerable efforts to fill the vacancy. In the last five years three members have taken up the role but had to resign after a short period due to new work commitments or relocation. Recruiting young drivers to take the Advanced Driver Course should be an important part of our activities but we do need someone to organise and undertake the work. Please let me know if you might be interested in taking on the role or if you would like more information about what might be involved.

I wish you all safe driving.

Adrian
chairman@advanced-drivers.org.uk

GROUP CONTACT Stella Boyd-Carpenter



One of our long-standing and extremely helpful members – Andrew Jenkins – passed away at the end of May following a long battle with a brain tumour. Andrew joined our Group many years' ago and qualified as an Advanced Driver. He always kept in touch with us and was particularly helpful when he attended and helped at our Driver Refresher Days. He would appear at 8.00am or even earlier and within half an hour we found tables, chairs and all the equipment we needed was ready for use. He helped us set up and would frequently offer to fetch and carry to and from Much Birch Village Hall where we kept some of our equipment. He was always cheerful and thinking of what he could do to help others.

In more recent times when he was a patient at St. Michael's Hospice, he was determined to come and watch the Driver Refresher Day we were holding there.

In addition to his love of cars and driving, Andrew was also a very keen cyclist – and this was borne out by a great number of his cycling colleagues who attended Hereford Crematorium for his final goodbye; in fact, the crematorium was full.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Andrew's wife Susan, their children and wider family.

Stella

DRIVER REFRESHER DAYS

Remaining date in 2026

Saturday 3 October, St Michael's Hospice, Bartestree

Stella Boyd-Carpenter, 01432 840835
group-contact@advanced-drivers.org.uk

Driver Refresher Days cost £30 per person or £25 each for two or more booking together.

If you know anyone who would like to attend, please contact the named person below each event.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY
Herefordshire Advanced Drivers' AGM
Thursday 22 October 2026
Kindle Centre, Hereford (rear of ASDA)
6.30pm
Details to follow from the Secretary

OUR CHIEF OBSERVER

WRITES.....



Observers and what we do, DRDs and why we do them

Observers are the backbone of a group as we are the workforce who provide the training for all associates, advanced driver trainees. My role, as lead trainer, is to ensure our Observers continue to meet required standards, and to oversee the delivery of advanced driver courses to associates.

All of us, including me, go through a rigorous training and testing programme to achieve our qualifications, we work at our convenience and none of us has regretted the decision to take that next step up from our own advanced driver courses. At the moment, I have one trainee Observer, who is close to qualifying and, potentially, two other candidates. But we still need more people to come forward, so I would urge anyone who holds an advanced driver qualification to consider training as an Observer. It isn't difficult, the course is free and costs nothing but an hour of your time to explore the opportunity over a cup of coffee, and I even buy that. Give me a call or email me for no-obligation information.

We are volunteers who are passionate about making our roads safer and passing on our life skills to other drivers, individually as well as at our regular Driver Refresher Days (DRDs) that are held around the county between March and October.

Our DRDs have been well attended this year, although there has been some effect on numbers, possibly due to concerns about the cost of living and particularly fuel prices. But those who have attended, many of whom have had no evaluation of their driving skills for decades, have given us a universal thumbs-up for the quality of our presentations, the skill with which our Observers offer their advice (we do not test people) and how we put candidates at ease during their practical drive sessions.

Most, as indicated by the responses on the feedback forms, find the events invaluable in helping them find their driving confidence again, while showing them how to plan their drives and observing better, will help them avoid conflict in the future.

August has seen a big rise in the number of incidents* on our roads, most of which are down to driver error and many of which could have been avoided with a little more care or forethought. It is particularly important to

be vigilant on Herefordshire's roads due to their rural nature, high and uncut hedges, narrow nature and movement of farm machinery. These roads are also often used as shortcuts, or rat-runs, and we should be wary about becoming complacent on our journeys because, statistically rural roads carry by far the greatest accident risk. Take it steady and ensure you and other road users get to your destinations safely and without incident.

*The use of the word incident instead of accident is deliberate!

Nigel Jenkins

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chief-observer@advanced-drivers.org.uk

Mature Driver Event (external to HAD)



Together with 12 other people my husband and I recently attended a Mature Driver Awareness Session at Ross-on-Wye Fire Station. The free 2-hour afternoon had been organised and delivered by, and in partnership with, West Mercia Police Road Safety Team, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and National Highways.

Vicki from the Road Safety Team covered subjects including glare from headlights, especially the new LED or xenon HID headlights (also reported in the recent Summer 2026 issue of 'Roadsmart' magazine), eyesight and coping strategies, the new Hierarchy of Road Users in the updated Highway Code, and medication that may affect driving and reportable medical conditions (www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions).

Gayle from National Highways spoke about her work on the M50 attending incidents that require lanes to be closed to enable the emergency services to do their work.

She also explained about the different types of motorways – the ‘traditional’ type with a hard shoulder, (that most attendees preferred), but in fact are the most dangerous to motorists in a broken-down vehicle and to the emergency services. The average time before a stationary vehicle on a hard shoulder is struck by another vehicle is 11 minutes. Gayle then explained about the different types of ‘smart’ motorways – All-Lane Running, Controlled and the Dynamic Hard Shoulder.

Darren from West Mercia Police spoke about how to react and respond to emergency services vehicles coming up behind you in traffic, and not to ‘jump’ a red light thinking this will assist them. Darren also advised that there is likely to be another emergency vehicle following the first so to be aware, turn down the radio/open the window and listen for a siren.

Anna from Herefordshire Council spoke on the Driver Refresher – a 2-hour practical driving session that is available to all residents of Herefordshire aged 70 or over for a subsidised £20.

There is also the Mature Driver Review booked directly through the IAM and, of course, the HAD Driver Refresher Days run in venues around the county, information already covered elsewhere in this newsletter.

During the session we were able to watch ‘Keep Driving VR’ a short virtual reality film watched seated through a VR headset to highlight areas that can become challenging as we get older. This was the first time I had used a VR headset and found the film interesting although I felt slightly car sick as we were ‘driving’ around a car park looking for a space. It was a strange feeling sitting in the driving seat but not being in control of the vehicle, I found I was holding the chair to steady myself.

Linda Harding

All comments, compliments, complaints regarding this newsletter happily received to aco-west@advanced-drivers.org.uk

How the Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) changed from April 2025 – were you aware?

From **1 April 2025**, registered keepers of electric, zero or low emission cars, vans and motorcycles will now pay vehicle tax in the same way as registered keepers of petrol and diesel vehicles. This change applied to both new and existing vehicles.

This new measure removes band A under the previous VED system which was £0. Vehicles in this band will move to the first band where a rate becomes payable.

- How the changes will affect your vehicle:
 - Electric, zero or low emission cars registered on or after 1 April 2025
 - You will pay the lowest first year rate of vehicle tax set at £10 from 1 April 2025. From the second tax payment onwards, you will pay the standard rate. This will be £195.
- Electric, zero or low emission cars registered between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2025
 - You will pay the standard rate. This will be £195.
- Electric, zero or low emission cars registered between 1 March 2001 and 31 March 2017
 - These vehicles will move to the first band that has a VED value. This will be £20.
- Hybrid and alternatively fuelled vehicles (AFVs).
 - The £10 annual discount for hybrid and AFVs will be removed, and the rate you will pay will depend on when the vehicle was first registered. If the vehicle was:
 - registered before 1 April 2017 - this rate will depend on the vehicle’s CO₂ emissions (check the current rates for these vehicles)
 - registered on or after 1 April 2017 - you will pay the standard rate (this will be £195)