

aamc



# TREADS

The February 2009 Newsletter of AAMC

## Editor's Bits

Last month I was reporting that the price of petrol had dropped to a record low. Well it's started to rise again, only 1p at a time. This time it's due to the value of Euro against the Dollar. Well that's the petrol companies' excuse. They always have an answer!!

I'm sat compiling this issue on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February with approx. 4" of snow outside. What a week! Snow every day since Monday, absolute mayhem on the roads. Road gritting too little too late and then only on major roads. The worst since 1963. Showing my age but I can remember that! Then there were very few 4 x 4's, a lot less private vehicles so people had to rely on public transport. There were more people using cycles and motorbikes even in these conditions. I think it will be some time before we consider taking our bikes out after the gritting which took place and the fact that a lot of authorities have had to use table salt in with the grit.

Keith.

## View from the Chair

If things go to plan this month, which frankly they rarely do for me, you should have a new 2009 club Diary of Events included with this issue. As you can see,

the first club ride of the year, led by yours truly, is only just over a week away, so it *must* be nearly spring. If the weather isn't too bad on the day I expect a reasonable turnout, since we're all in need of a ride to blow-away those cobwebs that have grown up in the garage and in our heads over the past few months.

I don't know about you, but I've hardly been out on the bike for some months now, what with the incessant rain last year and then the snow and salt since just after Christmas. They say the long-range weather forecast is good for this summer, and I just hope they're right. After the past two cold and wet summers it just makes you feel like selling the bike and staying indoors.

Anyway for the first ride, if it's half decent weather, I intend going to Hay-on-Wye. There are a couple of good cafés there and it's a sensible distance. I will be sticking to mostly tidy roads as the surface on the smaller ones can be rather 'suspect' at this time of year, and it's not worth taking the risk when most of us won't have been riding regularly for some time. I hope to see you at Severn View services.

It's also time for the Final Reminders to go out for those of you who haven't yet re-joined. Luckily it's not very many this year, but if you want to take advantage of all the rides, training and a few social events, please get on with it and send Sue back your form. If you don't, this is the last issue you will get.

Also included this month is a note with details of the forthcoming Skills Development Course that starts on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. I already have six names down on my list, so if you are thinking about doing some training, please get in touch with me and we can discuss it, or just complete the application form and send it back to me. If you are one of the six who already expressed an interest, please will you now complete the form and send it back.

The AGM is coming up at the end of the month, Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March. Please make an effort to come along as the committee need your thoughts and ideas for new or different events, as well as some general help with just doing things. You don't need to commit to anything and you won't be 'press-ganged' either! The beer is really quite good there...

Congratulations to Robert who passed his first RoSPA test at Gold standard just before last Christmas. It's not easy to get a Gold on your first test, so well done to him. If anyone else has passed and not had a mention, then I apologise. Sometimes I don't know and sometimes I just forget to put it in here...

Finally I would like to welcome the following new members to the club. Mark lives in Frome and rides a GSXR1100m, and in fact was a club member when I joined in 1991 but left to bring-up a family. Noel lives in a small village just outside Highbridge in Somerset and rides a KTM950 SM. Noel was also a club member a few years ago and has re-joined. Richard lives in Shepton Mallet and rides a Harley Davidson 1200. We hope to see you all out and about with us on a ride or at an event very soon.

*Simon.*

We have received the following information from Jim and think it is well worth relaying to you all.

It seems that the photo part of the driving licence has a 10-year life and the first ones are due for renewal about now. I don't know how many people know this & I don't suppose that DVLA will tell anyone. I wonder what stance the police will take on it, as the main part of the licence is still valid.

Regards

*Jim*

## Valid driving licence?

Thousands of motorists are at risk of being fined up to £1,000 because they are unwittingly driving without a valid licence.

They risk prosecution after failing to spot the extremely small print on their photocard licence which says it automatically expires after 10 years and has to be renewed - even though drivers are licensed to drive until the age of 70.

Motoring organisations blamed the Government for the fiasco and said 'most' drivers believed their licences were for life. They said officials had failed to publicise sufficiently the fact that new-style licences - unlike the old paper ones - expire after a set period and have to be renewed.

To rub salt into wounds, drivers will have to pay £17.50 to renew their card - a charge which critics have condemned as a 'stealth tax' and which will earn the Treasury an estimated £437million over 25 years.

The fiasco has come to light a decade after the first batch of photo licences was issued in July 1998, just as they start to expire. Official DVLA figures reveal that while **16,136 expired this summer**, so far only 11,566 drivers have renewed, leaving **4,570 outstanding**. With another

**300,000 photocard licences due to expire over the coming year**, experts fear the number of invalid licences will soar, putting thousands more drivers in breach of the law and at risk of a fine.

At the heart of the confusion is the small print on the tiny credit-card-size photo licence, which is used in conjunction with the paper version.

Just below the driver name on the front of the photocard licence is a series of dates and details - each one numbered. Number 4b features a date in tiny writing, but no explicit explanation as to what it means.

The date's significance is only explained if the driver turns over the card and reads the key on the back, which states that '4b' means 'licence valid to'.

Even more confusingly, an adjacent table on the rear of the card sets out how long the driver is registered to hold a licence - that is until his or her 70th birthday.

A total of 25million new-style licences have been issued but - motoring experts say - drivers were never sufficiently warned they would expire after 10 years.

Motorists who fail to renew their licences in time are allowed to continue driving. But the DVLA says they could be charged with 'failing to surrender their licence', an offence carrying a £1,000 fine.

AA president, Edmund King said: 'It is not generally known that photocard licences expire: there appears to be a lack of information that people will have to renew these licences. 'People think they have already paid them for once over and that is it. 'It will come as a surprise to motorists and a shock that they have to pay an extra £17.50.'

The AA called on the Government to use the annual £450million from traffic enforcement fines to offset the renewal charge. Before photocard licences were introduced, old-style paper licences were valid until the age of 70. 'Many motorists

still believe this to be the case with the new ones."

Driving instructor Tony Carter, of Canterbury, said: 'It's outrageous; everybody thinks their driving licence is for life. 'Why - when you have already paid £50 for your photocard licence - should you pay the Government an extra £17.50 every 10 years? 'It's another stealth tax. Drivers will be very annoyed.'

Today the DVLA said the date of expiry was carried on the new-style licences, even though the AA says this is 'not clear'. The Agency was unable to say whether motorists were told the licences would expire when they were first issued. It said it was issuing postal reminders to drivers whose photograph was due to expire, to get the renewal message across. But a spokesman admitted this was the limit of the DVLA's publicity.

Experts say many drivers will slip through the net because DVLA records are inaccurate and many motorists have changed address, making it impossible to trace them. A DVLA spokesman said: 'Previous experience has shown that wide-scale publicity is less effective and can generate enquiries and concerns from those not affected. Instead, DVLA focussed on targeted publicity to ensure that we got the message to the right person at the right time.'

The Driving Standards Agency is allowing L-test candidates with out-of-date photocard licences to sit their driving tests as long as they provide a valid passport. This concession will end in January next year, raising the prospect that some L-test candidates will be turned away.

I have one of the original, non-photo licences (OK, I know!). I'm not sure if this is still valid abroad?!

*Keith*

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## Helmet testing

I'm sure that you have read about the new helmet-testing standard called **SHARP**. As far as I can make out it's another test as well as BSI but using a more accurate, realistic test to replicate damage to the helmet in a crash situation. They have now included Flip-front helmets.

I looked at their web site: -

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/sharp>

and was surprised to see how many 'Cheaper' helmets obtained a '5 star' rating.

The test does not take into account the comfort and noise levels.

I cannot understand why comfort and noise are not taken into account when testing helmets. We are encouraged to wear ear-plugs so the testing bodies recognize there is a problem. Most helmets record a level of 90Db's or more and would not be allowed in a work place even for short periods, yet we ride for 1 - 2hrs or more and count this as normal!!

*Keith*

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## Do you feel inflated?

Watching the BBC news on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. there was an A & E surgeon who thought that it should be mandatory for motorcyclists to wear inflatable jackets. These jackets have just come on the market and cost approx. £400. They have a lanyard which connects to the bike and when the rider is thrown-off the jacket is inflated by a compressed air cartridge, similar to an airbag in a car. Trousers with this facility will be available soon. Would it be better to have a one-piece suit that inflates, just like a 'Michelin X Man', perhaps using Helium gas instead of compressed air? Then we could float above the accident!!

*Keith*

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## Skittles evening

21 Club members met at the Tuckers Grave Inn for the first Club event of 2009. The Landlord had lit the fire a bit earlier so the alley was at a more comfortable temperature than it has been in previous years.

It was decided that we would play 'Killer' and the numbers were gradually whittled down to 2: - Nick versus Arnie. Arnie still had his 3 lives to Nick's 1, but Nick scraped thro' to win in the end.

We then set about the food which Jim & Jan had bought, brought, prepared and laid out. It was quite quiet for a while!!

The 2<sup>nd</sup> game was a lot noisier with lots of "Oohs and Aahs".

Nick this time was eliminated quite early, (looking at the brew he was drinking and the fact he had been offered a lift home I think there were too many skittles to aim at!!) the final being between Jaimie and Brian with Jaimie eventually coming out top.

We had a very enjoyable evening, with thanks to Nick for organising and booking the alley and to Jim and Jan doing another excellent job of preparing the food and serving it on the night.

*Keith*

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We endeavour to issue Treads on a regular basis during the third week of the month. Therefore if you have any items to be published in Treads, can you please ensure that they reach the editor before or during the first week of that month. Contributions for Treads are always needed, whether they are motorcycle related or of general interest! Please don't be shy.