



Special Edition Newsletter ~ April 2010

St Helens Group of Advanced Motorists
Working to make our roads safer every day...



Chairman's Remarks

Hello everyone and welcome to this 25th anniversary special edition Group Newsletter.

Many thanks to everyone who has submitted articles to Mark and making this happen.

So much has happened over the last quarter Century and the Group has done exceptionally well, not only to adapt and survive but also to go from strength to strength. This is down to the hard work, skill and tenacity of all of the Group activists of the last twenty-five years. Thanks to each and every one of you for making the Group what it is today and enabling us to celebrate our Silver Jubilee. I do hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend the celebrations

being planned so we can mark the occasion in style.

A Group Newsletter produced 25 years ago could possibly have been created using Microsoft's new Windows version one. Additionally, the Chair could have been enjoying the taste of 'New Coke' as he typed his introduction and he may well have been driving a pre-fixed 'B' registration Ford Escort XR3i, or perhaps, a Vauxhall Cavalier Mark II.

For the record, and benefit, of whomever prepares the Golden Jubilee edition Newsletter; the Silver Jubilee Chairman's remarks were prepared using Windows Vista whilst he enjoyed a chilled bottle of Peroni Nastro Azzurro' He also

drove a Renault Megane sport.

I do hope that you all enjoy the articles contained in this special edition and that they evoke some fond memories for you. I have only been with the Group for four years, Chairman for three, and I have a number of great friends and memories.

Here's to the past twenty-five successful years for the Group, and to another twenty-five successful and exciting years in the future.

Safe and happy motoring everyone.

Rob Evans
Group Chairman

Inside this issue:

<i>Maureen Walker (Leonard)</i>	2
<i>Denis Painter</i>	3
<i>Mark Farnworth</i>	5
<i>Hall of Fame</i>	6
<i>Jim Cunliffe</i>	7
<i>Group Officers 1985 to present</i>	8
<i>Val O' Hanlon / Ken Nevitt</i>	10
<i>Alan Prescott</i>	11
<i>Sheila Darwin / Sue Hunt</i>	12
<i>Picture Gallery / Events in 1985</i>	13
<i>Minutes of 1st AGM</i>	14
<i>Committee details</i>	16



Maureen Walker (Leonard) Group Secretary 1985 to 2001

I first became interested in the Institute of Advanced Motorists many years ago through a friend who was a Founder Member of the Merseyside Group – sadly he passed away last year.

In 1980, I obtained a new secretarial position in Warrington and one day whilst reading the local newspaper I saw an advertisement for Warrington Group of Advanced Motorists, inviting members of the public to go along any Sunday morning to learn more about the Group. I went along, became a member and subsequently trained and passed my Advanced Driving Test, after which I became an Observer for the Group.

Whilst there I, along with many other IAM drivers living in and around the St Helens area, received a letter from IAM HQ advising that consideration was being given to starting a new Group in St Helens and extending an invitation to go along to an Inaugural Meeting to be held in the Gerrard Arms Hotel at Denton's Green, St Helens. This was in June 1985.

I attended that meeting where it was announced that a Group was to be launched and two members from the Warrington Group (Alan Clark and Veronica Oates) were prepared to help with the start-up of the St Helens Group. The Group would be a full Group, although usually a new Group started up as a Sub-Group of an already established full Group.

First of all, a Committee was required. I was persuaded by a friend to go on to the Committee. Alan Clark appointed himself as Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary to help the newly formed Group. Two Police Officers from Merseyside Police volunteered to help the Group and were appointed on to the Committee. Joe Thomas, IAM

Divisional Council Member and Bob Higginbotham, IAM Region 5 Organiser attended those early monthly meetings of the new Committee and helped on Sunday mornings at Birchley Street Car Park with training (I had obtained permission from St Helens Council to use the small section of Birchley Street car park every Sunday morning for training, unless required by the Council for any reason). Of course, the Group had no money and I remember Bob Higginbotham started us off with a £5 donation!

It was agreed to have monthly Committee Meetings but for the first three meetings, Minutes were not produced. I was approached by Joe Thomas and asked if I would take the Minutes, as a record was required of the proceedings, and I agreed. The DCM and the RO were very supportive of the Group and helped in many ways. The Group were very fortunate in that the DCM lived in Newton-le-Willows and the RO lived in Stockport.

It was agreed that the Group should hold its first AGM and that would be better if the Group appointed its own Officers from within the Committee who were not members of any other Group. The first AGM was held on 12th November 1985 and I was appointed Secretary (a position I held for 17 years) and John Baxendale (Police Officer) was appointed Chairman.

We started to recruit and train Associates. Those Associates who were close to taking the IAM Test were asked to become Observers and train the new Associates. They all passed their IAM Test and went on to train as Observers. It was a struggle but it worked and very soon we had our own qualified Observers.

As Secretary, I was issued with the Group's IAM Handbook and was asked to study it and act upon the contents. I realised that the next requirement was to appoint a President and the person appointed should preferably be a well-known local person with some standing in the community, but not a politician. After giving this matter some thought, I approached The Lady Mavis Pilkington, widow of the late Lord Harry Pilkington of the world-famous Pilkington Glass Company. When I contacted her, she asked me what did she have to do? Did she have to drive on a Skid Pan and take a Test? I explained that the position was an honorary one and the only position within the Group where the person was not required to take a Test. She asked me what the Members of the Group had to do and when I told her that they had to take and pass the IAM Driving Test, The Lady Mavis told me that she would take on the role of President but only if she trained and passed the IAM Test too. I reported the matter to the Committee and it was agreed that she be trained to take the Test. John Baxendale, the Group Chairman, agreed to take her out on runs, fitting in with his work and The Lady Pilkington's commitments.

When I informed IAM HQ that The Lady Mavis Pilkington had joined the Group and was training for the Test, HQ wanted her to take her Test with them but she said that she would take the Test locally, like the rest of the Group's Members. The Lady Pilkington passed her IAM Test and we had our first President! Incidentally, I would add that when The Lady Mavis passed away and the Group required another President, The Lady Kirsty Pilkington (the Group's current President) also said the same as our late President and she too trained and passed the IAM Test with the St Helens Group.



Maureen Walker (Leonard) - contd.



Photograph taken at the Group's first AGM held on 12th November 1985, Travellers Rest, Crab Street, St. Helens. Left to right: The Lady Mavis Pilkington, Denis Painter (Group Treasurer), John Baxendale (Group Chairman). Photo provided by Denis and Anne Painter

It was quite a struggle for the Group in those early years, especially for finances. I remember the Group did not have a typewriter for the purpose of producing Minutes, letters, Newsletters, etc (computers were not in usage like they are today) and I went and purchased a small portable electric typewriter on HP terms over nine months (interest free) from the St Helens Co-operative Society. A relative of mine worked for a Photocopying company and was of tremendous help because when photocopying machines came in for repair, before they were returned they had to be tested, and he did the Group's photocopying of the Newsletter and the notes for training on them.

As I said earlier, the Group really struggled in those early years but was helped by a great enthusiastic Committee and Members who worked together.

We also held monthly social meetings and one of the Committee Members ran raffles to raise funds; raffle prizes were donated by Members. In those early days, the Group was helped by the late John Harman who, at the time, was Secretary of the Wigan Group and later was appointed Divisional Council Member; not forgetting the Members of Warrington Group. I also received a lot of support from IAM HQ.

The Group then had to decide on a logo. It was agreed by the Committee to run a competition amongst the Members. Members were asked to submit their ideas for the logo which had to contain the words SKILL WITH RESPONSIBILITY. I remember this was one by one of our lady Members, Brenda Nicholls. The Committee organised social events, e.g. Hot Pot Supper and Dance (to records supplied by a Member),

Treasure Hunts, trips to the Skid Pan at Blackburn. By this time the Group had moved from the Gerrard Arms (where they charged the Group £5 for each time we met there) to the Travellers Rest in Crab Street (now demolished). It was emphasised to the Group that any social events should make a profit or at least break even, but should not make a loss!

Over the years the Group went from strength to strength, during which time application was made for a Lottery Grant, and the Rainford Trust, which were successful and helped the Group's funds enormously, as the Group was able to use the Grant to reduce the cost of Members taking the IAM Test. I will conclude by congratulating the Group on celebrating 25 years this year and the Chairman, Committee and Members for all their work in achieving this. I wish you all Good Luck for the future. It cannot be easy, especially in the present economic climate.



Denis Painter Group Treasurer 1985 to 1989, Co-Chairman 1986/87

Hi, I suspect most of you haven't even heard of me. I am one of the founder members of your St. Helens Group. Way back in 1985 several of us, with the backing of the I.A.M. decided to start a Group in St. Helens. In the early days before we became a fully fledged Group ourselves we were only an offshoot of the Wigan Group. During those early years we could always rely on the Wigan Group for help and advice and we often did. We also had terrific support from, Joe Thomas (I.A.M. Divisional Council Member) and Bob Higginbotham (Group 5 Regional Organiser) without whom we would have seriously struggled. They were always available for sound advice, although at times we must have driven them mad, because we wanted to do it 'our way'. We asked the late Lady Mavis Pilkington to be our President, which she readily agreed to be but being the way she was said if she was going to be President then she would have to pass the I.A.M. Test, which she duly did. We also had another connection with Pilkington; the St. Helens Group logo for many

years incorporated part of Pilkington's own logo and we had to ask for permission from them before we could use it; this was very kindly forthcoming.

Another of our milestones (excuse the pun) was when we bought our first caravan. That little caravan was so instrumental in the success of the Group, we made money selling teas and coffees on Sunday mornings and the Officers could work in comfort and have any discussions that needed to be had without having to stand out in the bad weather. For many years it also attended the St. Helens Show where it was fully staffed by members for the whole 3 days on a rota basis. Many Associates were recruited there I can tell you.

We also had a lot of support from Merseyside Police Traffic Department, who were always happy to give us advice and hints and tips. Several of their officers were actively involved with us. John Baxendale (Class 1 Driver) who actually held office within the Group and was himself a founder member, Martin Curran (Motor-Cycle Officer) he too held office within the Group

Bryan Moore (I.A.M. Examiner) and Paul Dereham (Class 1 Driver).

Altogether I was with the St. Helens Group for over 5 years throughout which I was the Treasurer and also stand-in Chairman for 6 months due to an unforeseen resignation. It is nice to see that you have now reached your 'Silver Jubilee' and seem to be as strong as ever, that's good.

In this small resume I have put together I have avoided listing too many names because the list of people who so freely gave their time is endless. I will just mention 3 names, Maureen Leonard who was our Secretary - what would we have done without her? Phil Bayliss, Publicity Officer plus anything else we asked him to do. Last but not least Marmaduke Gardner (Duke) who used to get his face in a knot if he wasn't asked to be involved in everything from start to finish. Congratulations on reaching your 25 years, I hope you go from strength to strength. 1985 seems such a long time ago now!



Photograph taken at the Group's first AGM. The Lady Mavis Pilkington with Driver of the Year winner Denis Painter (third from right), Observer of the Year winner Duke Gardner (right) and Members with their Advanced Driving Test certificates. Photo provided by Denis and Anne Painter



Mark Farnworth Vice-President, Newsletter Editor mid 1990's to present, Observer from 1986, Senior Observer 1996 to present, Chairman 1994 to 1998, Training Officer 1995 to 1999, Publicity Officer 2000 to 2001



My involvement with the Group dates back to March 1986 when I saw an article in one of the local papers regarding an Advanced Driving Group that had recently been set up in the town. I contacted the Associate Co-ordinator Anne Painter and went down to Birchley Street car-park on the 9th March to find out what all this Advanced Driving business was about. I thought I was already a good driver but following my assessment drive with Ann Wright I realized that I had acquired some bad habits following my L-Test some five years earlier. The tone of the assessment was very good and I was motivated to go back and undertake 11 more Observed Runs. I was particularly impressed with the observing talents of Denis Painter, Brian Jackson and David Henshall.

I took my Test with Bryan Moore at 2pm on the 14th July. I was really nervous as I waited for Bryan on the car park of the Ship Inn on Prescot Road. It was a 'sticky' hot day so the temperature certainly didn't help! I was expecting to see a uniformed Police Officer arriving in a Police car! Bryan walked to the car park in everyday clothes. He looked like a 'normal' guy and he quickly put me at ease. Once I had started the Test, the nerves fell away and I got on with the task in hand for which I was awarded a Test Pass. I'd done it!

I'd already decided that I wanted to be an Observer and so the following Sunday morning I went down to Birchley Street car park and was given an Associate to take out. This was the way things were in those days: there was no formal Observer Training, you just got stuck in as an Observer! Over the following few years I learned my trade as an Observer and eventually won the Observer of the Year Competition and joined the Committee on 27th June 1991. In August 1992 I became Vice-Chair of the Training Committee (John Hudson was Chair) as I developed an appetite for organising training and taking my 'observer' skills to the next level. On 23rd June 1994 I had the honour of becoming the Chairman of the Group and had at my side stalwart members Maureen Leonard (Group Secretary), Pauline Taylor (Treasurer) and other Committee members who helped me settle into this challenging position. Alan Prescott joined the Committee at the same time as Associate Co-ordinator to replace Barbara Swift who had done sterling work as Associate Co-ordinator for the previous five years. Alan remains our Associate Co-ordinator to this day – a fantastic commitment to the Group over some 16 years.

In 1995 I became Chair of the Training Committee and Newsletter Editor (taking over from Neil Ranson) in addition to my Group Chair role. In those days computers were not common place and producing a template Newsletter for commercial printing was a complicated business of typing, simple word processing, photocopying and cutting/gluing (rather than copy/pasting!). During my four years as Chairman I became one of two Nominated Examiners for the Group (Roger Eaves being the other). It became clear during this time we lacked a clear training structure to

deal with the increasing number of members who were becoming Observers. We clarified the internal reporting structure by creating the position of Chief Observer who has the Observers interests as their main focus, an Associate Co-ordinator to look after the Associates: both reporting to a Training Officer who can resolve any conflicting interests and is Chair of the Training Committee. Roger Eaves became the Group's first Chief Observer and I continued as Training Officer and a Senior Observer.

Since the launch of the Group it had operated 'open ended mass guidance' Associate Training which most of the IAM Groups were doing. However, some Groups had moved to fixed term courses and had reported improved success at retaining Associates. Some of our Group members were a little sceptical of these new ideas but following Committee discussion we decided to trial a course programme (1998) to run in tandem with 'mass guidance'. We had about six Associates on the course starting at 10am on Sunday mornings for 8 weeks. Other Observers dealt with the 'mass guidance' Associates with the normal 10:30 start. The course was successful but not enough to convince the Group to move completely to fixed term courses.

When my tenure as the Group's Chairman came to an end I continued on the Committee as Training Officer and Newsletter Editor until Dec 1999. When I left the Committee I continued to support the Group as Newsletter Editor and Senior Observer and I was honoured to become the Group's Vice-President. During the following 12 months the Group went through an exceptionally bad spell with difficulties in both recruitment and retention of Associates. The end of the Group seemed close.



Mark Farnworth - contd.

To help the Group I went back on to the Committee as Publicity Officer and my wife, Nicky, became Publicity and Recruitment (P&R) Co-ordinator. Our involvement was conditional on the Group moving away from open ended 'mass guidance' to fixed term courses only. The Committee agreed and with the support of Keith Scott (Group Chairman), Maureen Leonard (Group Secretary), Iain Grayson, Richard Dixon and Daniel Hooley the P&R team put together a course structure which, essentially, still operates today: an eight week course including an Introduction Evening, a mid-course Classroom session and a Meet the Examiner evening.

The new format worked and after two successful courses we were further blessed with a Lottery Grant secured by the Group Secretary Maureen Leonard. The structures were in place to successfully deal with and retain the 40 or so Associates who came to the Group through the discounts that we were offering.

During the early 'noughties' the Group was bubbling and a number of our 'young' members: Iain Grayson, Daniel Hooley and Darren Tipton helped to set up a Region 5 Group 'Alpha 5' to recruit young members to the IAM. Iain and Daniel subsequently became Chairman of the St. Helens Group

Dozens of people have contributed to the Group over the years. It is a testimony to all these people, having a shared desire to make our roads safer, that the Group is still here today. The Group's success continues but we can't rest on our laurels since experience has taught me that only through hard work and commitment can the Group get through both the good and bad times.

So why have I stayed with the Group all these years? My passion is to help people to become safer drivers. I've made many friends along the way and have shared in the joy and disappointments of those who passed and failed

Hall of Fame

Year	Driver of the Year	Observer of the Year	Associate of the Year
2009	John Plumb	George Gaskell	John Plumb
2008	George Gaskell / Jeff Mather	Jim Cunliffe	Rob Evans
2007	---	Les Roughley	Chris Brown
2006	---	Mark Farnworth	Liz Templeman
2005	Daniel Hooley	Ken Nevitt	Roy Matthews
2004	---	---	---
2003	Gordon Bettely	Norman Griffiths	John Fairhurst
2002	Jim Cunliffe	Mark Syder	Mary James
2001	Dennis Boyle	Richard Dixon	Sue Hunt
2000	---	Gordon Bettely	Ken Nevitt
1999	Jim Cunliffe	Jim Cunliffe	Darren Tipton
1998	David Smith	Mark Farnworth	Martina Navin
1997	Alan Prescott	Alan Prescott	Adam Gallimore
1996	Jeff Topping	Neville Bullock	Daniel Hooley
1995	Gordon Bettely	Jim Cunliffe	Christopher Albrathat
1994	Mark Farnworth	Jeff Topping	Richard Dixon
1993	Iain Grayson	Mark Farnworth	---
1992	Jim Cunliffe	Roger Eaves	---
1991	Brian Jackson	Mark Farnworth	---
1990	David Henshall	Roger Eaves	---
1989	David Henshall	Mike Blanche	---
1988	David Henshall	Carole Stevens	---
1987	Mike Blanche	Mike Blanche	---
1986	Denis Painter	Duke Gardner	---



Jim Cunliffe Vice-Chairman and Chief Observer, Observer 1990 to present



Back in 1962 when cars ran on coal and had no brakes, I had never heard of Roadcraft. I had heard of the IAM, and, being a young lad at that time, I just knew I would breeze through an 'advanced' test. There being no Groups known to me at that time, I just turned up 'cold' for my test – not a good idea!

After a 20 minute dressing down from my Examiner explaining that I displayed good road sense but lacked discipline and consistency (System), he passed me! But the whole experience, and his advice, gave a shock to MY system. I realised that I wasn't as good as I thought I was, so I began to take much more notice of what I was doing. Anyway, I suppose, like most people that pass the IAM test, over time I kept some good bits but fell back into mediocrity and let my membership lapse. And that was that!

Some 20 odd years later in 1989, I had cause to look again at driving standards. This was due to high collision rates on a fleet of vans I was operating at the time, and I decided that all the drivers would have to pass a test. But who was qualified to test them? I arranged a two-week full time training course on 'advanced' driving for myself

and a few others, and so that's how I got to just love 'Roadcraft', and its then six features!

The course was one thing, a confirmation test was another. My preference was for ROSPA, due to its 3 year retest programme, so there could be no backsliding of standards. It was a pain travelling to Manchester every week, and my first shot gave me Silver (smoothness was a bit off). My first 3 year re-test got me Gold, and I have hung on to it ever since.

By this time I realised that I could easily pass the first two exams leading to an ADI (Driving Instructor) qualification. I decided to go for it! And sure enough the first two exams were a breeze!

Now, foolishly full of confidence, I decided to go for the final exam that tested instructional ability. In at the deep end – feet first, what a disaster!

This is where the IAM came in. I needed practice at talking to people whilst sitting in the passenger seat. Where could I get the practice I needed? – at the St Helens Group of the IAM of course – and it would be FREE! I joined up, had a couple of runs, and re-passed the test. I volunteered to be an Observer. The training wasn't as structured as it is now, a few runs in the back, and off you go! Fortunately there was already an ADI with the Group, so there was experience to draw on, and after a couple of one to one sessions with Norman Griffiths I felt I could have another go at the dreaded Part III exam. Came the day, it was like 'chalk and cheese', far from perfect, but good enough. Thank you Norman!

At this point I could have just walked away. But having 'used' the Group, I felt it only right and proper that I put a little bit back in. I decided to stay a bit longer as an

Observer for the Group, and improved my skills not only as an Observer but also as a professional driving instructor. The regular practice with the Group did indeed improve my skills, and I have achieved the top Grade (6) as a DSA driving instructor. Not only was I able to give basic and advanced driving tuition to the public, but also to commercial organisations, so doing my bit for road safety.

So, why am I still a member? Not because it's the IAM. Not just because I owe the St Helens Group an awful lot, but because I got 'hooked'. The members of the St Helens Group were, and still are, an enthusiastic and friendly lot (IAM or not) and you can't help but like them. Not only that, but I still get a 'buzz' from helping someone to improve their driving, especially if it results in a Test pass; and of course it means I have to stay up to scratch too!

Some would say I have nothing better to do these days – but there is much more to it than that. Don't knock it if you haven't tried it!

Presidents		Vice-Presidents			
The Lady Mavis Pilkington 1985-1998 The Lady Kirsty Pilkington 1999-		John Baxendale 1987-1998 Mark Farnworth 1998-			
Year	Chair	Vice-Chair	Secretary	Treasurer	Associate Co-ordinator
1985-1986	John Baxendale	Valerie Saunders	Maureen Leonard	Denis Painter	Anne Painter
1986-1987	John Baxendale / Martin Curran / Denis Painter	David Henshall	Maureen Leonard	Denis Painter	Anne Painter
1987-1988	John Henshall	David Henshall	Maureen Leonard	Denis Painter	Anne Painter
1988-1989	Mike Blanche	Anne Painter	Maureen Leonard	Denis Painter	Carole Stevens / Anne Painter
1989-1990	Ian Smith	Keith Scott	Maureen Leonard	John Kirby	Barbara Swift
1990-1991	Ian Smith	Keith Scott	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Barbara Swift
1991-1992	Neil Ranson	Keith Scott	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Barbara Swift
1992-1993	Neil Ranson	Keith Scott	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Barbara Swift
1993-1994	Neil Ranson	Keith Scott	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Barbara Swift
1994-1995	Mark Farnworth	Neil Ranson	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Alan Prescott
1995-1996	Mark Farnworth	Iain Grayson	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Alan Prescott
1996-1997	Mark Farnworth	Iain Grayson	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Alan Prescott
1997-1998	Mark Farnworth	Fran Lewis	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Alan Prescott
1998-1999	Keith Scott	Fran Lewis	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Alan Prescott
1999-2000	Keith Scott	Fran Lewis	Maureen Leonard	Pauline Taylor	Alan Prescott
2000-2001	Keith Scott	Fran Lewis	Maureen Leonard	Keith Scott	Alan Prescott
2001-2002	Iain Grayson	###	Maureen Walker (Leonard)	Daniel Hooley	Alan Prescott
2002-2003	Iain Grayson	###	Debbie Grayson	Daniel Hooley	Alan Prescott
2003-2004	Iain Grayson	###	Debbie Grayson	Daniel Hooley	Alan Prescott
2004-2005	Daniel Hooley	Andrew Boyle	Lorraine Rigby	Daniel Hooley	Alan Prescott
2005-2006	Daniel Hooley	###	Sue Hunt	Daniel Hooley	Alan Prescott
2006-2007	Daniel Hooley	###	Sue Hunt	Daniel Hooley	Alan Prescott
2007-2008	Rob Evans	###	Sue Hunt	Chris Brown	Alan Prescott
2008-2009	Rob Evans	###	Sue Hunt	Chris Brown	Alan Prescott
2009-2010	Rob Evans	Jim Cunliffe	Sue Hunt	Rona Houltton	Alan Prescott



Picture Gallery



Photograph taken on Birchley Street car park in the late 1980's. **Left hand group:** second left, Dave Henshall, far right, Brian Jackson—both are Members today. **Right hand group:** Duke Gardner (white jacket) Brenda Nicholls in front of Duke. To the right of Brenda, Phil Bayliss (Publicity Officer), Anne Painter (Associate Co-ordinator) and Maureen Walker (Leonard). Photo provided by Denis and Anne Painter



Photograph taken on Birchley Street car park on 12th August 1999. The Lady Kirsty Pilkington and St. Helens Road Safety Officer Conal Devitt receive their Advanced Driving Test certificates. **Left to Right.** The Lady Kirsty Pilkington, Keith Scott (Group Chairman), Paul Dereham (IAM Examiner), Conal Devitt, Cllr. Neville Bullock (Group Observer), Maureen Walker (Leonard) - Group Secretary. Photo provided by Keith Scott



Val O'Hanlon Recruitment Officer 2004 to present



I have been a Member of St Helens Group since 2001. I had been promising myself that I would tackle the Advanced Test for over 30 years. I used to envy those motorists whose car carried the IAM metal badge.

In those days badges weren't stolen from cars for fun! Anyway, it was only when I retired that I took up the challenge. I was one of the lucky ones and received a large discount as the Group had obtained some lottery funding. I was very nervous when I started and wondered what the Observers would think of my driving. I had been driving for forty years and had picked up some very bad habits such as throwing the car into neutral when approaching traffic lights!

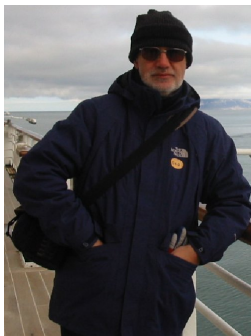
All the Observers were very kind and whilst observing my faults they gave me immense help in overcoming them. The thing that I had most difficulty in absorbing was the pull-push steering. I would drift back into 'ships' steering or crossed arms. The test itself was on a foggy morning but the Examiner was happy to pro-

ceed if I was.

I was very relieved to be told that I had been successful. I was encouraged by the Group to try observing. I did have a go at it but didn't feel confident enough at that stage to continue. However, I wanted to put something back into the Group and try to help others become advanced drivers. I went on the Committee at the next AGM and then became Group Contact and Recruitment Officer. Over the years I have talked to many people about the IAM and even convinced some of them to come on a course.

I have been very proud to be a Member of the St Helens Group and I thank those who had the courage and foresight to set up the Group twenty-five years ago. Well done!

Ken Nevitt Training Officer 2004 to present, Observer 2000 to present



Having joined the Group in January 2000, I have enjoyed many experiences. The most memorable driving related ones have to be two mornings, one on a skidpan and one off-road.

My wife, daughter and I drove to the skidpan in Staffordshire where my daughter and I were able to drive cars with and without ABS: my wife had felt queasy as the cars spun around and opted for

the more theoretical approach of watching us pirouette around. My daughter and I both found the experience illuminating and the advice extremely valuable. But it is a pity that such events cannot occur more frequently as the lessons learned do fade over time. The off-road morning gave the chance to drive in terrain I would not normally expect to encounter. Perhaps the most exhilarating - and most unnerving - moment was approaching an almost vertical drop of about 20 feet (which seemed higher) and being told, after engaging the lowest gear, to take both feet off everything. My understanding of the laws of physics made this sound a questionable practice but the car did roll down as the tutor expected, rather than hurtling down as I expected.

Non-driving experiences must include the recent treasure hunt when

we had to buy a road map after setting off, as we had expected to be circumnavigating St Helens not exploring deepest, darkest Cheshire and Derbyshire. This entailed finding a shop close to the road as wandering off might have incurred penalty mileage points. Luckily Halfords provide just such an establishment in Widnes. Thanks to Marilyn and Mark for a thoroughly enjoyable day, though! We have also attended a few of the annual dinners where we have found the company to be very pleasant.

A final driving comment has to be recently replacing front discs and pads on my Citroen Xsara Picasso after 86,500 miles. I am no engineer or mechanic but from comments on the internet I mustn't complain about premature wear. Or, is it a great advertisement for Advanced Driving?



Alan Prescott Associate Co-ordinator 1994 to present, Observer 1989 to present



Although I had been aware of the IAM for a long time, it was not until the Summer of 1988 that I discovered the St. Helens Group, doing a promotion at the St. Helens Show. I remember speaking to someone called Dave Henshall and collecting some leaflets. We were well into the Autumn of that year before I joined the Group.

At that time, the open-ended system rather than fixed-term courses was the policy so for £10 I could have as many runs as was deemed necessary, and then apply for Test and send the fee direct to the IAM. As it was around Christmas when I was ready for Test, I was waiting until mid-January before applying and passed the Test mid-February 1989. The Examiner was a certain Bryan Moore. The route took me over the Runcorn Bridge out towards Northwich on roads I had never been on (and haven't been on since). The weather was awful with torrential rain for most of the Test but thankfully I did enough to pass! Observers whose names I remember include John Henshall, Steve Deacon, Roger Eaves, Duke Gardner, Ted Sephton, Mark Farnworth and Margaret Stringer. Only Mark remains with the Group. The Secretary was the excellent Maureen Leonard (now Walker) who held that position for seventeen years. Anne Painter was Associate co-ordinator, followed by Barbra Swift, my predecessor.

After passing the Test I did the nine week Observer Course and became an Observer in about May 1989. It was in the Summer of 1994 when I was invited to become Associate Co-ordinator by the then Chairman, Mark Farnworth, who is the only former Chairman to stay active within the Group. As I have held the position of Associate Coordinator ever since, I have worked with several Chairmen, Treasurers, Secretaries (see page 8) and Committee Members. Each, of course, had their own way of doing their respective jobs but all had one thing in common – a determination to further the cause of Advanced Driving in St. Helens. That same determination is still there today, as it always has been.

I have many memories. Quite early on I was in the back of a car monitoring an Observer when I realised how careful we had to be when giving directions or advice to an Associate. In the late 80's and early 90's it was not unusual for an Associate to have a car with just four forward gears. Fourth Gear was often referred to as Top Gear. The Observer, thinking the Associate should be selecting Fourth Gear, simply said, "Top Gear". I was as perplexed as the Observer when the Associate brought the car to a grinding halt. The Associate (who may have been a little hard of hearing) thought that the Observer had said, "Stop here." I don't think either of us used the words "Top Gear" again. Another Observer, when the Associate was approaching a crossroads, said, "I want you to turn left, right?" The Associate was so confused he followed the road ahead.

Of course, in the main, our Observers do an excellent job and sometimes have to think very quickly. An example of this was when smoke was seen to be coming from under the bonnet of an Associate's car. Immediately the Observer asked the Associate to pull up and they both got out of the car. A speedy phone

call to the Emergency Services and an equally quick response from the Fire Service prevented what could have been a really dangerous situation. The Associate did eventually pass the Test... in another car.

Throughout all my years as Associate Coordinator, I have made a point of staying out of Associates' private lives and have ensured that any phone calls are strictly professional. Nevertheless, it is possible to stumble into something and one such instance gave me my most embarrassing moment. A lady who had been doing very well on the Course suddenly stopped coming and after about four weeks I decided to ring to see if there was a problem. A male answered (who turned out to be her soon-to-be ex-husband) and told me in no uncertain terms that she no longer lived there. I politely asked if he knew how I could contact her. The reply was not so polite and cannot be printed here! As far as the Group was concerned, the story had a happy ending as some time later the lady contacted the Group and returned to complete the Course. The ending for her husband (soon-to-be ex) was, alas, not so happy.

All in all, I have enjoyed and continue to enjoy my time as Associate Co-ordinator. I would like to thank all Committee Members, Officers and Observers past and present for the support they have given to me and to the Group. I must include those who were there before me and Mark, as they started the Group. When the Group was 10 years old, Mark at that AGM asked who would still be there in another 10 years. Of the present active Members, probably only Jim Cunliffe, Richard Dixon and I were there then. What will the Group be like in another 25 years!!



Sheila Darwin ADI Passed Advanced Test Nov 2001

This is my story of my IAM training and how it changed my life. I worked for the Local Authority & as with most Local Authority jobs it became less & less fun. To relieve the boredom one day a friend and I were discussing suitable courses that we could go on to improve our lot. We worked on computers all day, so a computer course was ruled out—we wanted something different! We went through the local college prospectus and there was nothing we could both agree on. My friend chose a language, Italian as I recall.

That very day completely out of the blue, we received an email. It informed us that the local group of IAM, were running courses to improve your driving skills and qualify as an Advanced driver, and as I had always enjoyed driving, being the one to take the wheel when going on holiday, or even a trip to town, I decided, this was for me.

I had been driving for about 30 years (learning at the age of 16 in my brother in laws 3 wheeler reliant) and surprised myself at how much I had learned on the course. We would meet on Birchley St car park on Sunday mornings, nothing changed there then. I kept to myself, not feeling comfortable in joining socially with the Local Group, I felt at the time that there was a gap between trainers and pupils, the trainers not always knowing the pupils names etc, but I always enjoyed going out and learning new skills. In November 2001 I passed my Advanced Motorist Test, and relished the challenge. That day changed my life and was the start of my escape route.

My twin sister was at the same time enrolling on a course to learn how to be a driving Instructor; she would come home telling me how great it was, & how much she felt I would also enjoy it too. Putting my new found skills to the test, I gave it a go.

Completing part 1 & 2 was no problem, that is the theory, hazard perception and practical tests, and having been trained by IAM helped. Part 3 is the ability to teach and, not having any experience in that field, I had to learn a totally new skill. A few months short of my 50th birthday, I passed my ADI test. I had made it!

I now run my own driving school called Gemini Driving, which I have run for the past 6 years, in the St Helens area. I left the Local Authority and have never looked back, and it's thanks to the IAM that I was able to get started.

As you see the organisation has had a big impact on my life, for which I am very grateful.

Sue Hunt Group Secretary 2005 to present

I was lucky to be taught to drive by my father when I was 18. Lucky because he was an Observer with the IAM Liverpool Group. I was trained in all the usual:- *Leave a good space from the car in front. (No brake lights in those days). Always expect the unexpected. Use acceleration sense (ABS unheard of, did own cadence braking). Timing and flow saves on petrol.*

The car was a 1953 Hillman Minx, already 13 years old without synchromesh gears so I had to double-de-clutch. Dad was the Union Delegate with the Transport Union and used to say "Every lorry driver in Liverpool knows my car and it will not be seen to be driven badly." I had to drive every day

for 6 months in city rush-hour traffic before I was allowed to apply for test and through the football traffic on Saturday. Finally after passing I was allowed to go out alone to "really begin to learn". In the 60's there were not many women drivers (I heard all the jokes), so every time I overtook a car with a male driver, he would chase me for miles to overtake me. IT'S STARTED HAPPENING AGAIN SINCE I GOT THE PINK CAR. My father always said I should do the Advanced Test if I ever got a chance.

When I had the stroke in 1994, I gave up my licence for just over a year and after an assessment, started having instruction in an automatic with special hand controls. That instructor suggested I might enjoy taking the Advanced course.

Why did all these people suggest it? Did they think I needed help or was I just so good?

I finally got around to it with the St Helens Group in 2001. There was a shortage of female Observers so I trained to boost numbers and soon became the only female Observer. We need some more please girls.

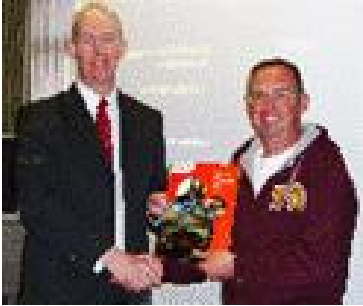
When you are 18 it doesn't take much encouragement to *Make good progress*. I turned into the Speed Queen but the recent training has caused me to comply with the legal limits – mostly. The tenets of Advanced Motoring have kept me safe all these years.



Picture Gallery

Events in 1985

Selection of recent Test Passes



Phil Sharples 2009



Richard Mercer 2009



Rona Houlton 2009



John Plum 2008

1985 (MCMLXXXV) was a common year that started on a Tuesday, in accordance with the Gregorian calendar. The year was declared *International Youth Year* by the UN and some notable dates include:

January

1 - The first British mobile phone call is made (by Ernie Wise to Vodafone).
10 - Launch of Sinclair C5, which was designed by the British inventor Clive Sinclair.
17 - British Telecom announces it is going to phase out its famous red telephone boxes.
23 - A debate in the House of Lords is televised for the first time.

February

10 - Nelson Mandela rejects an offer of freedom from the South African government.
19 - William J. Schroeder becomes the first artificial heart patient to leave the hospital.
20 - Minolta releases world's first autofocus single-lens reflex camera.

March

11 - Mohammed Al Fayed buys *Harrods*.
24 - Norwich City wins the League Cup at Wembley Stadium, beating Sunderland 1-0 in the final.

April

18 - The UK has its first ever national Glow-worm day.
23 - Coca-Cola changes its formula and releases New Coke. (The response is overwhelmingly negative, and the original formula is back on the market in less than 3 months.)

May

16 - Scientists of the British Antarctic Survey discover the ozone hole.

July

4 - Ruth Lawrence, 13, achieves a first in mathematics at Oxford University, becoming the youngest British person ever to earn a first-

class degree and the youngest known graduate of Oxford University. Go, Ruth!

10 - The Greenpeace vessel *Rainbow Warrior* is bombed and sunk in Auckland harbour by French DGSE agents.

13 - *Live Aid* pop concerts in London and the US raise over £50 million for famine relief in Ethiopia.

13 - U.S. Vice President George H.W. Bush serves as Acting President for 8 hours, while President Ronald W. Reagan undergoes colon cancer surgery.

19 - U.S. Vice President George H.W. Bush announces that New Hampshire teacher Christa McAuliffe will become the first schoolteacher to ride aboard the Space Shuttle *Challenger*.

24 - Commodore launches the Amiga personal computer at the Lincoln Center in New York.

August

13 - First ever heart-lung transplant carried out at the Harefield Hospital in Middlesex. The patient is three-year-old Jamie Gavin.
13 - The Sinclair C5 ceases production after just seven months and less than 17,000 units.

October

4 - The Free Software Foundation is founded in Massachusetts in the US.

November

12 - A total solar eclipse occurs over Antarctica at 14:11:22 UTC.
20 - Microsoft Corporation releases the first version of Windows, Windows 1.0.

ST. HELENS GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE GROUP WAS HELD AT THE TRAVELLERS REST, CRAB STREET, ST. HELENS, ON TUESDAY THE 12TH NOVEMBER 1985, AT 8 P.M. AT WHICH 16 MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTE WERE PRESENT, ALONG WITH TWO ASSOCIATES, AS SHOWN IN THE OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE BOOK.

The meeting had been called by the Regional Organiser, Mr. R. J. Higginbotham, and the Divisional Council Member, Mr. J. Thomas, and with the approval of the meeting the Notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

Mr. R. J. Higginbotham thereupon took the Chair.

53. Apologies for Absence: Apologies for absence were received from Messrs. Brian Moore, Brian Jackson, Duke Gardner, Steve Livesey, Malcolm Darbyshire, Ron Clare, Mrs. Jean Neve and Mrs. Ann Wright.
54. Correspondence: A letter was opened and read to the meeting from Mr. Alan Clark intimating that he would not be seeking re-election as Secretary and containing his resignation from the Group with immediate effect, which was accepted.
55. Group Rules: It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the Model Rules of the Institute of Advanced Motorists be accepted, but that Headquarters be asked to approve the following two amendments:-
- "1 (c) - the first line to read 'The Group Committee may at their discretion accept as a Member of a Group a current Member of the Institute on completion of the Group's application form and on payment of his Group subscription.'
- 1 (e) - 'Membership between Groups is reciprocal, but a member of the St. Helens Committee may not be a Committee member of any other full Group.' "
56. Accounts and Honorary Treasurer's Report: It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that that the Treasurer's report covering the period from the Group being formed to the 31st October 1985, be approved.

Mr. J. Thomas thereupon took the Chair.

57. Election of Officers: It was duly moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the following officers of the Group be elected:-

CHAIRMAN	-	JOHN BAXENDALE
VICE-CHAIRMAN	-	VALERIE SAUNDERS
SECRETARY	-	MAUREEN LEONARD
TREASURER	-	DENIS PAINTER.

There were no other nominations for the above appointments.

contd....

- 2 -

58. Election of Committee: It was duly moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the following members be elected to the Committee:-

ANNE PAINTER
 GEOFFREY HAIGH
 PHILLIP BAYLISS
 MARTIN CURRAN
 BRIAN McCORMAC
 DAVID ATKINSON
 ROLAND BURKE
 VICTOR HUMPHREYS
 DUKE GARDNER
 ANN WRIGHT
 ROY WRIGHT.

There were no other nominations for the above appointments.

59. Appointment of Auditor: It was duly moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that Mr. G. Flynn be appointed Honorary Auditor of the Group.

Mr. J. Baxendale thereupon took the Chair.

At this point, both the Regional Organiser and the Divisional Council Member wished the Group every success for the future.

60. Subscriptions: It was duly moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the subscriptions of the Group remain unchanged as follows:-

Associates	-	£10-00
Group Friends	-	£5-00
Full Members	-	£5-00

It was further unanimously agreed that the above subscriptions be for 12 months and fall due for renewal 12 months after date of first joining the Group which meant that the first renewals would become due on 1st June 1986.

61. Any other Business: In reply to the Regional Organiser's question, it was agreed that the Group's year-end date would be fixed by the Committee meeting which would be held at the conclusion of the A.G.M.

The Regional Organiser complimented the officers on the way they had carried out their duties and also the secretarial assistance provided by Maureen Leonard during the last few difficult months.

There being no further business, the meeting then closed.

Approved _____
 Chairman.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS & CONTACT DETAILS

Group President

Lady Kirsty Pilkington

Group Vice-President

Mark Farnworth

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DISCLAIMER

*The contents of this Newsletter
are purely the views of the members
and do not necessarily
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or the St Helens Group.*