

# On The Road

Journal of the Association of British Drivers AUGUST 1994



## The Association of British Drivers goes from strength to strength.

A major article on the subject of speed and road safety by ABD Chairman Brian Gregory was published in the Weekend Telegraph of 21st May 1994.

Brian Gregory has given an interview to the BBC, for screening in a programme on the subject of traffic and congestion through the ages, called "Metropolis", due for screening in November of this year.

ABD member Dimitro Nolic, who races a Ford RS Sapphire Cosworth in the Production Saloon Car Series has kindly agreed to put our logo on the side of his car. Car stickers opposing the introduction of road tolls have arrived and should now have gone to all members. We give our thanks to Association member Richard Fox, for his invaluable assistance in getting these printed for us without charge.

We have made a submission to the Public Enquiry currently being conducted in the Midlands into the proposal to construct a new motorway to the north of Birmingham - known as the Birmingham North Relief Road. This vital new road is designed to ease the chronic congestion suffered on the M6 at present. It deserves and has received our support, although we oppose the proposal that it should be a toll motorway. Our support for it has been in association with AUTOFORUM.

Car Week magazine has published a readers letter by Brian Gregory, on behalf of the ABD.

Preparations for the National Launch Day are continuing. The event will take place on a week day (because we are inviting the Press) in London in November. Full details will follow very shortly. Please note that it is VERY IMPORTANT THAT AS MANY MEMBERS AS POSSIBLE SUPPORT THIS EVENT, which is being supported by the SMMT. Details of speakers will also be with you soon.

The Association of Car Fleet Operators have launched a petition calling for fair treatment on road pricing and opposing any net increase in motor taxation. We are in touch with them and hope to work with them in support of their aims.

More Press interviews are planned and membership enquiries continue to come in at an increasing rate. There has been a good response since the Telegraph article appeared with many enquiries resulting from that source alone.

Almost all our 1993 paid-up members have renewed their subscriptions with us.

## All Change at the DOT.

The latest government reshuffle has led to the almost complete replacement of the ministers at the Department of Transport, only Steven Norris has kept his job; John McGregor has resigned, to spend more time with his friends in the city, his replacement is Brian Mawhinney from Health; Roger "Speed Limiter" Freeman has been pushed sideways to Defence, he is replaced by John Watts; Lord McKay hands over to Viscount Goschen; and our dear friend Robert "I love cars, I love Roads" Key is sacked! The new lineup has one less politician and responsibilities have been reassigned. There is now no longer a minister solely responsible for Roads and Traffic. John Watts is Minister of State responsible for railways and road construction; Steven Norris is responsible for transport in London, local transport and road safety and Viscount Goschen is responsible for shipping and is the transport representative in the Lords. According to the Daily Telegraph "Goschen is a speed freak". He is 28 and a member of the All Party Motorcycling Group. His current mode of transport is a Porsche 944 which he now uses since he got rid of his Yamaha FJ1200!! Fellow ABD members are urged to write to their MP's to try find out whether the change of personnel has led to a change in policy! See inside for examples of Robert Keys replies to our letter writing campaign.

## Association to incorporate !

The decision was taken at the last meeting at Mackworth, Derby on the 21st May that the Association should become a Company Limited by Guarantee. As there could be legal difficulties in the use of "Association of British Drivers" for the title, the name "Pro- motor" has been chosen. There are some formalities to be concluded, and an Extraordinary Meeting will be called to deal with these. We will continue to campaign under the existing name, but the name Pro- motor will also appear on all publications and letters. The new name could also be used as our main title at some future date, if we wished. The advantage is that members' liability will be limited to £1.

## CAR WEEK attacks Britains speed limit madness.

Carweek published a well written article on 1st June 1994 which argued for an updating of Britains speed limits. The article pointed out that many rural and urban limits are set

too high and that our motorway speed limit is out of date and too low. Car week urged readers to help in the campaign for speed limit reform. See inside for The ABD's response to this campaign.

## The Institute of Advanced Motorists calls for realistic speed limits.

It has been reported in the media that the IoAM has called for an increase in the motorway speed limit to 80 mph. Chief examiner Ted Clements a former traffic cop reportedly said that lives were being put at risk by the unrealistically low 70 mph maximum limit, and that the DoT should place more emphasis on the fact that speed in the wrong place at the wrong time causes death, but not necessarily at all times and in all conditions.

## Parking Hypocrisy

Moves to open up Horse Guards parade to pedestrians by removing car parking facilities for Ministers and Bureaucrats have been blocked by the Minister for London. Readers of previous issues of OTR will recall that the Secretary of State for The Environment John Gummer is the prime mover in initiatives aimed at reducing car use, stopping further planning applications for out of town shopping developments and in removing in town car parking facilities. And guess who the Minister for London is? The Right Honourable John Gummer!

## Effectiveness of Spy Cameras in Doubt.

Auto Express carried a report earlier in the year which said that Transport Research Laboratory scientist Michael Winnet believes that cameras do not cut accidents, are often badly sited and traffic calming measures should be used instead. He was reported to have said "Many councils are buying cameras, but they are putting them up on straight stretches of road where there weren't many accidents anyway. Drivers inevitably get to know where the cameras are and speed up after they have passed. His research on the subject will be published in September, it shows that while Gatso cameras slow down vehicles and reduces injuries the number of accidents had not been reduced. "We need to question their effectiveness in the long term. I think tailgating is much more dangerous than speeding on a motorway, but speed is always targeted as it is easy to measure".

# The return of the sedan chair ?

The Government's anti-car policy is apparently so deeply entrenched that it has turned down £250m of EC financial support for employee retraining for the automotive industry aimed at going some way towards plugging the skills gap opening up in this area. The industry is understandably appalled. Government claims to want to re-direct the funds to the unemployed (i.e., to use it to pay unemployment & other social benefits as a purely short-term measure to ease its current budget difficulties.

Could it be that the aim of its campaign of persecution of the motorist is to force all motorised vehicles off the road altogether? Government & the DoT could then promote an "environmentally sound" form of transport with other added benefits: the sedan chair!

Using the unemployed as the motive power, the Government would decimate the jobless level & save massively on social benefits, traffic

speeds of 4mph in towns would then become the norm (little different from central London's current 11 mph, I suppose - & this despite falling traffic levels). Government could even argue that its monumental mismanagement of transport policy was actually a preparation for the reintroduction of this (superseded) transport mode: the affluent could once again be whisked around in not entirely silent or comfortable splendour - with the added benefit that nearly full vehicle occupancy (four bearers & minimum of one passenger) - is guaranteed, while the unemployed & the lower classes would once again know their place!

Sounds a touch divorced from reality, a little far-fetched, doesn't it? But then don't all the Government & DoT pronouncements on transport issues?

Brian Gregory.

## LETTERS

The Association of British Drivers, 111 Harrow Road, Wollaton Park, Nottingham, NG8 1FL.

Sir - I agree wholeheartedly with everything I have read of the views and arguments the ABD is putting forward. I will mention a few of the things I feel strongly about.

The 70 limit is inappropriate and brings the law into disrepute. It is self evident that speeds of at least 90mph are perfectly safe on our motorways subject to drivers exercising the usual caution with respect to road, traffic and weather conditions. I strongly resent the current situation where safe and considerate motorists could, in effect, be deprived of their livelihood for breaching an arbitrary, bureaucratic regulation. And this virtually at the whim of police and magistrates.

I note that, in stark contrast, "New Age Travellers" in vehicles which were probably untaxed, uninsured and not MoT'd got off scot-free for blocking the M5 at 5mph last year.

The use of standard 50mph limits in roadworks is stupid. In many instances 60 or 70 would be safe; but on the M20 in 1993, 40, 30 and even 20mph would have been appropriate on some stretches. They are increasingly used as excuses for big brother to demonstrate his power. This is oppressive.

Motorway pricing is an outrageous concept. Do they really want M1 traffic back on the A5? There is already a perfect road pricing mechanism in operation. It is called the petrol pump. It ought to be considered extremely fair: not only do those who travel further pay more; but those with bigger vehicles pay more; those who travel fast pay more; those who make unnecessary, short journeys pay more; those who travel at peak times pay more. The current proposals are nothing short of a big-brother style nightmare. People have not thought through the implications; for example, the taxman will be able to search the computer files for evidence of all those business trips to Glasgow.

The danger is that it will now be driven forward by the companies which stand to gain from supplying and installing this network which would have been the envy of the Stasi.

A lot of the anti-motorist attitudes which seem to be pushing government policy are wantonly ignorant. Apart from true leisure driving - going to

sports events, visiting friends and family or going on holiday - most traffic is on business. As an essential part of the economic activity of this country, the people at the wheel are contributing the taxes (and not just the motoring taxes) which pay for benefits, pensions and the salaries of all government employees. The economy of this country still needs all the help it can get and that includes better roads.

Motorways and new roads are not built for the personal gratification of motorists. They are built because traffic is the lifeblood of the nation. All these protesters who are apparently able to disrupt roadworks on weekdays are having their benefits paid for by those who spend hours behind the wheel travelling on business.

Bypasses are usually built primarily to benefit the town or village being bypassed, not the road users. The tragedy is that the lack of a strategic road plan means that we end up with worse roads at greater expense. Look at the A12 map from the M25 to Colchester for example, it is a stupid succession of bypasses with dangerous bends and junctions. A completely new road should have been planned in the 60s and built stage by stage, even if only slowly like the M25 was.

In the 80s the workforce was encouraged to be mobile, thus many people now travel further to work. So why don't people move nearer to their work? Well, the government could for a start remove the Stamp duty on house purchases!

The increase in road traffic is not going to continue indefinitely. The population is relatively stable and people can only drive one vehicle at a time.

Much of the excessive vehicle pollution is caused by slow moving or stationary traffic jammed up because of inadequate roads. Look at the Friday night queues at those roundabouts on the A1 near Grantham, for example.

My wife and I each have over 20 years driving experience. We have driven in France, Germany, Switzerland and the Benelux countries. I drive about 16,000 miles a year but in one recent year did 40,000. In my experience, driving standards are on the whole very good in this country. But there

are some areas of weakness which need to be addressed by campaigns of advertising prior to raising the speed limit. These include use of lights, use of mirrors, and anticipation. Keep up the good work!  
Colchester S Dommett

Sir - In a recent issue of Car magazine it was reported that the Society of Motor manufacturers and Traders had called a press conference to publicise the government's figures on air quality in urban areas. The statistics revealed that air quality in British towns and cities has been steadily improving since 1990. Moreover, it is projected that this trend will continue well into the next century.

Were the journalists eager to print this good news? Did they rush headlong to catch the first editions? They were completely uninterested. Worse - they did not want to know.

From another source, it is claimed that 10,000 people were being killed every year in Britain by urban pollution caused by diesel engines. Approximately 98 per cent of these emissions are output, of course, by buses, trucks, and trains.

I also understand that emissions of petrol engines for various gases now range from 9 to 27 percent of their 1970 levels.

The conclusions from all the above are that British urban pollution is declining and that by far the major part of it is caused by public transport. The Department of Transport and the media are being wilfully ignorant and malicious. They continue to rant that "...we must get the cars out of the towns..." and the Green party's witty but nonsensical "mad car disease"; but they have a duty to seek the truth, not blindly to pursue their prejudices.

The ABD must broadcast the facts. The motor car is not the major environment destroyer. We are continually being told that attitudes need to change. Very true; but it is the media, government, and Green Party which have to alter.

Newport L Green

## Urban smog in an English summer.

Much has been made of the threat to health caused by "smog" - the mix of ground level air pollutants which are considered to be harmful to health, and are thought by some to aggravate asthma symptoms - during the recent spell of hot weather enjoyed by much of England and Wales.

The smog, which is commonplace in cities as varied as Cairo and Tokyo, and Los Angeles and Bombay, is a relatively rare occurrence in the UK, because air borne fumes of all types are rapidly dispersed in the windy and wet weather which forms our staple diet.

Its appearance though has been the cue for a number of national newspapers to launch the most incredible offensive against the "evil automobile", much of it bordering on hysteria and some of it very short on factual analysis. The impression left on the reader by one of the dailies which likes to think of itself as a "serious" newspaper is that the more extreme elements of the green movement have seized control of it completely.

These reports have been accompanied by the usual calls for "banning cars from urban areas" "restricting cars from entering our towns and cities", and "the need to wean people out of their cars".

The pollution problem is real, but the real solutions are not being discussed, least of all by the green lobby. Much has already been done, is being done and much more could yet be done without the need to restrict individual liberty in the gross way proposed by the rabid environmentalist factions which have infiltrated our press, and are increasingly influencing government policy.

The introduction of catalytic converters, two decades after the Americans got them, is already paying dividends, and the papers may not wish to report it, but city pollution levels are ALREADY FALLING. London has recorded cleaner air than the much smaller capital of Wales, Cardiff, and the difference is thought to stem from the greater concentration of new cars in London.

The good news is that all projections show rapidly falling levels of emissions from cars over the coming two decades as a result of the compulsory fitment of converters. This is also confirmed by the government's own Warren Springs Laboratory (see separate article in this issue). Converters typically strip out 80% of noxious gases -

and some are much better than that.

Cars made in 1994 emit no lead, 90% less carbon monoxide, and 85% less oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds than cars made in 1970 (the latter two being primarily responsible for smog). The AA reckons that emissions of nitrogen oxides will fall back to the levels of 24 years ago by the year 2000, despite the enormous increase in traffic.

Even among the existing vehicle fleet, there is much scope for improvement. The worst cars produce as much pollution as 40 clean ones, and ten per cent of cars produce half the pollution. Clearly, if cleaner air is the aim, those cars need to be cleaned up or scrapped and replaced by new ones. The French government recently ran an incentive scheme to encourage the scrapping of cars over 10 years old, by subsidising trade ins against new ones. Some similar enlightened policy could be introduced here too, if the government was really committed to clean air.

Little is said about it, but much pollution comes from non-vehicle sources: power stations, even petrol driven lawnmowers (amazingly, their filthy two stroke engines are far worse than cars engines), as well, during the winter months, as the heating of houses and other buildings. It seems that none of these polluters are being targeted by government or the green lobby at all.

The future will bring even greater improvements - much of the technology already exists. Saab of Sweden, in particular, is in the fore front. The car, the Trionic 9000 CS, is already on the market and gives the lie to the environmentalist claim that "there is no such thing as a green car". In tests it was shown to be capable of actually cleaning up city air, with less toxic gas coming out of the exhaust pipe as was present in the surrounding air. We will be featuring more details about this remarkable car - and others - in a future edition.

But it just goes to show how misguided the current thrust of environmental thinking is with its emphasis on controlling and restricting the car. The sooner the green lobby learns that the car is here to stay, and works to get cleaner cars, the sooner we will get cleaner urban air.

## Town planning and the motorcar - builders fight back.

The last two issues of On The Road have contained articles on the way government is now abusing the planning process to force the public out of their cars.

Now, the London based Housebuilders Federation have become so concerned that they have approached carmakers and retailers to see if they would be interested in opposing the offending guidelines. They say that the rules pander to environmental activists and threaten economic recovery - which has been our view all along.

The Ford Motor Company is apparently considering the suggestion. It will be interesting to see their response as, in marked contrast to other manufacturers, they seem to ignore our requests for information and data.

In this, they echo the British Road Federation which has also criticised the policy guidelines issued by Environment Secretary Gummer. The BRF considers that the government is appeasing the more extreme elements in the environmental movement, and are calling for a balanced approach, which takes into account people's

aspirations in terms of growth jobs and a high standard of living.

A new BRF report "Roads and Jobs", produced by the Centre for Economic and Business Research, claims that tens of thousands of new long term jobs could be created if there was a higher level of investment in roads.

Meanwhile, three main retailers, Sainsbury's Tesco and Cargo Club have attacked government policy which they claim are "a recipe for disaster" and unworkable. Far from reducing Carbon Dioxide emissions from transport, the big three believe that the guidelines could even have the opposite effect, as people are forced back into congested town centres.

Richard Wright of commercial agents Jones Lang Wotton has said that there is a need to make town centres more car-friendly, not less. Unfortunately, there is no sign yet of the government listening to the businesses and organisations that make the country's economy tick, and they are continuing to pander to the more extreme elements of the so-called "green" lobby.

# Careless Slogans can cost lives.

Reducing the maximum speed level will not stop accidents, says Brian Gregory,

The following article was published recently in the Saturday Telegraph.

The publication of this article came about because Brian had written in reply to an earlier article published in the same paper, which had put forward the "blindingly obvious solution" to the "huge toll of death and injury on the road", ie the fitting of speed limiters to cars! "Blindingly stupid" would be a better way of describing this solution! The paper decided that Brian's letter was suitable enough to publish as an article in its own right.

This shows that writing in response to ridiculous arguments broadcast in the media is a valuable way of putting forward our point of view. Fellow members are urged to follow Brian's example.

"Speed kills," says the Government's new campaign. It's a neat phrase, easy to remember. Millions of people will accept it without question, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of accidents claims popular support for the idea of fitting speed-limiters to all new cars. Three weeks ago, in these pages, John Lucas argued that speed-limiters set at 70-75 mph would encourage a lower-speed ethos, which would in turn reduce the severity of accidents. But is this true? Before we accept "speed kills" as an absolute and universal law of physics, let's look at the facts.

UK road accident deaths have, for some years, been falling year on year despite a dramatic growth in traffic volume, and were at an all-time low last year, when 3,879 people died. That's fewer than in any year since records began in 1926, when more than 5,000 were killed. This is no cause for complacency, but proposals such as the introduction of speed-limiters may actually worsen things.

The current Department of Transport campaign distorts reality in a subtle way. The DoT's own statistics indicate that in two-thirds to three quarters of all road accidents "excessive speed" is not even a contributory factor; inappropriate and inconsiderate road-user behaviour, however, is a factor in all of them.

Clearly, in urban areas with 40mph or lower speed limits-where 65 per cent of deaths and serious injuries occur - motorists must pay attention to necessary limits, but outside these areas, there is no objective evidence that reduced speeds lead to fewer deaths.

A comparison of motorway limits and death rates around the world suggests that fatality rates decline as speeds increase; West Germany for instance, with large tracts of limit-free autobahn (predominantly dual carriageway) has one of the lowest motorway death rates in the world, and still achieves a lower pedestrian fatality rate than that of the UK.

Safer driving standards can only be achieved by education. It helps if motorists feel that they are being treated as mature adults, not recalcitrant children: German motorists recognise that they are given latitude on the autobahns in return for strict observance of speed limits in other areas.

That quid pro quo is absent from the British motoring scene, in which even the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers was in 1991 pressing for an upward revision of the discredited motorway limit, until nobbled by a Government keen to maximise

future revenue from motorway speed traps.

Fitting British cars with speed-limiters set at an arbitrary 75 mph will not make roads safer; it is likely to make them less safe, leading to traffic bunching, lower concentration levels and head-on collisions in otherwise safe overtaking manoeuvres through the intercession of the limiter.

Nor will a 75 mph limiter prevent the irresponsible driver from massively exceeding a sensible 10, 20, 30 or 40mph urban limit. It is, therefore, not only a dangerous proposal, but a totally ineffective one.

The main factors leading to motorway and dual carriageway accidents are, in fact, fatigue (responsible for up to 60 per cent of all motorway accidents, according to a recent Thames Valley Police report), failure to maintain an adequate braking distance from the preceding vehicle, and poor lane discipline.

If we examine the facts, we find that the involvement of HGV's in fatal accidents is disproportionate over all classes of road, and that the proportion of HGV's involved in fatal motorway accidents is nearly five times higher than their numbers and annual mileage would lead us to expect. The fatalities occur predominantly among car drivers because a fully loaded HGV travelling at 60 mph has the potential to generate more destructive force than a normal family saloon travelling at several hundred miles per hour.

This demonstrates the importance of keeping a safe distance from the vehicle in front - the minimum two-second gap, for instance, recommended by the Institute of Advanced Motorists, RoSPA and other bodies but largely ignored in Government safety campaigns.

Limiting cars to 75 mph will not increase vehicle separation, and if it encourages a particular ethos, it is likely to be the belief held by some motorway users (frequently found travelling at an indicated 69.9 mph in the middle and even the overtaking lane of an otherwise empty motorway) that the most dangerous thing one can do is to exceed 70mph.

Travelling at 65mph or so 10ft (approximately one tenth of a second's reaction time) behind the preceding vehicle is apparently considered less dangerous than observing a safe minimum two-second gap and averaging 85 to 90mph where traffic density and road conditions allow.

This is patently absurd and demonstrates the DoT's farcical attitude to road safety. The fact is that it is easier to catch and fine motorists safely exceeding a discredited motorway speed limit than it is to re-educate the numbers of slower but deadly dangerous drivers tailgating vehicles.

It is not road safety that is the real issue here, but revenue generation. If the Government were really interested in road safety, it would be proceeding with motorway tolling. Indeed, tolls will transfer traffic from our safest roads - motorways - on to inherently less safe and B roads - with tragic consequences.

What we need is an integrated transport policy for the country as a whole, combined with a road safety campaign based on a sane evaluation of the facts.

What we don't need are emotive, inaccurate and perhaps even dangerous slogans.

# The Pro Motor Campaign! Members must continue to write letters to put forward our point of view!

Here is another example of an excellent letter written by an ABD member in response to biased media coverage of motoring issues. This one was sent in to "HTV West Viewers Comments" by Julian Rowden in response to "The West This Week - 19th May 1994".

Sir - I am writing to take issue with the style and some of the content of the edition of The West This Week last week, on the subject of speeding motorists, with Peter Cullimore. The programme left the impression that he considered all drivers to be complete maniacs (which is rubbish), and that all of our often arbitrary speed limits should be strictly enforced (which leaves no room for common sense). I make the following comments about the programme:-

1. It contained factual inaccuracies, such as the contention that there is "an ever rising toll" on our roads. This is patent nonsense, as road casualties in this country are not only lower than in just about any comparable country, but have been falling steadily since the 1930s despite the enormous increase in traffic over that time. Road casualties even fell throughout the 1980s, despite a steady increase in average vehicle speeds, in the numbers of vehicles registered, and the distance each of those vehicles travelled. Total deaths on our roads last year amounted to about 4000, which is the lowest figure for half a century, and about 50% less than the total in the mid 1970s. By comparison, about 150,000 die each year in this country of heart disease. If one tenth of the resources spent on speed enforcement was used to cut this toll, probably more than 4000 lives could be saved!

2. The programme did (rightly) mention that 70% of all injury accidents take place on roads limited to 30-40 mph, but then went on to defend at length the archaic and discredited 70 mph motorway limit. That limit, as pointed out by Roger King, was imposed in the 1960s, since which time the design and safety standards of both cars and roads has been revolutionised. Mr Cullimore may like to know that many responsible bodies including the Institute of Advanced Motorists, the RAC and even the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers have pressed for an upward revision of that limit to 80- 85 mph. The fact that 56% of drivers exceed the motorway limit (and many of those who OBEY it most certainly do not RESPECT it) merely shows how out of touch with the public both the government and the media have become on this subject.

3. The driver of the VW Passat car stopped on the M4 for doing 90 mph has my sympathy. Any penalty for such a trivial infringement seems wholly inappropriate, particularly the penalty points he will almost certainly receive. The idea put to him that he "was putting lives at risk" is simply not true. The driver did not think that he was doing anything dangerous at all, and on the basis of the film you showed, I would agree with him. If he had been driving in most European countries he would have been barely above the legal limit, if at all.

4. The British motorway limit is one of the lowest in the European Union, and Germany sees no need for an upper limit on the autobahns at all. Germany's traffic casualty rates are a little higher than Britain's, but not by much. Indeed the German casualty rate is the same as that in the U.S., which has some of the world's lowest limits at 55 and 65 mph. International comparisons show that there is no correlation between speed limits and casualties.

5. The current idea of "making speeding as socially unacceptable as drinking and driving" is extremely foolhardy. The corollary to that argument is that drinking and driving is as trivial as a minor speeding dangerous where exceeding a speed limit, whilst always illegal, is not NECESSARILY dangerous - it depends on the circumstances.

6. Your commentator's obvious love of the "speed limiter", backed by emotional arguments by RoSPA was not even accepted by Roads Minister Robert Key. This totally ignores the fact that a limiter would do nothing to prevent a driver from exceeding important urban limits, and would merely encourage "foot on the floor" driving on motorways without reference to road and weather conditions. Already, too many drivers think that 70 mph is "safe", regardless of rain, fog and dense traffic. Furthermore, a limiter would have the effect of imposing the archaic British speed limit on drivers of British registered cars abroad - over 2 million vehicles already cross the Channel every year.

Personally, I have taken my 120 mph car to Germany twice in the last three years, and I am shortly to go again. Each time it has been driven, quite legally, at speeds of well over 100 mph when conditions are good. The journeys, all on family holidays, have all been safe and uneventful, and it would be outrageous for the government to control the speeds of cars used outside its jurisdiction.

The 70 mph limit does not even extend to the Isle of Man! There is no evidence that limiters would reduce casualties at all. What limiters would do is discourage car owners from changing their cars for new safer and cleaner cars, and the car industry AND the environment would suffer as a result.

7. Much was made of the danger to pedestrians - and rightly so. However whilst tight control of most urban limits is desirable, there are other issues:-

a. Pedestrian behaviour plays an important role. When I was at school I was taught the "Green Cross Code". You DO NOT step into the road without LOOKING first. Every road user needs to understand the importance of giving way to traffic on the road.

b. Road engineering can make a big difference. Swindon, a town I lived in for many years, and featured in your film, is a good example. Akers Way would be perfectly safe with a 40mph limit if prickly hedges were planted to keep traffic and pedestrians apart, except at authorised crossing points. Much of West Swindon requires no limits on urban roads because pedestrians and cars are separated, with an excellent network of foot and cycle paths.

8. What is needed to cut casualties effectively are measures like these:-

A Better driver and pedestrian education, especially the importance of adjusting speed to the prevailing conditions (not blanket adherence to arbitrary limits).

B Better urban road engineering to separate traffic and pedestrians wherever possible, as well as more cycle paths and traffic calming elsewhere, with 20 mph limits on some residential roads.

C An extension of the motorway network - they are by far the safest roads, and our network is still poor compared to those in Holland, Belgium and Germany.

D Continuing improvement in vehicle design - already happening at a rapid pace, with air bags ABS brakes etc all becoming standard features on new cars.

I am left with the view that the government's sole aim of the so called "kill your speed" campaign is to smooth the path for indiscriminate robot enforcement for the simple aim of raising revenue from fines. If the authorities had the slightest interest in road safety they would certainly not be pushing ahead with the monumental folly of motorway tolling which everybody knows is going to push traffic back onto through the towns and villages the motorways were designed to bypass -like Bathpool on the A38, where I live. People will pay for that little "brainwave" with their lives, but none of the media has campaigned to stop it.

Yours faithfully, Julian Rowden

# Robert Key replies to ABD members letters.

Letter dated 14/04/94 from THE MINISTER FOR ROADS AND TRAFFIC - Robert Key to Robert Atkins MP in response to a letter by ABD member Simon Butler.

Dear Robert Thank you for your letter of 29 March enclosing this correspondence from your constituent Mr S Butler about the motorway speed limit.

Following a thorough review of the motorway speed limit in 1991 it was concluded that the 70 mph limit remained appropriate. This decision was strongly influenced by international evidence. For example in the United States, the decision by 40 States to raise the speed limit on interstate highways from 55mph to 65mph between 1987 and 1988 led to an increase in average car speeds of about 3mph. Over the same period, there was an increase in fatalities on these roads of between 20 and 25 per cent - an estimated 500 deaths a year. If there were a similar increase in speed on our motorways we could expect between 45 and 60 extra deaths a year.

In no instance have we found an increase in speed not resulting in more, and more severe accidents. Similarly a reduction in speed has in practice always been followed by a reduction in accidents and the severity thereof.

When assessing the effect increased speed limits have had on fatalities on motorways, it is important to remember that there are only three groups of vehicles whose speed limit have remained at 70mph and have been unaffected by enforcement techniques such as speed limiters. These are cars, light goods vehicles and motorcycles. The speed limit increase over the period 1983 to 1991 for these vehicles is around 6% or 5mph. It must be pointed out that this increase is in "free flow speeds" ie when speeds are not constrained by congestion. If as seems likely the amount of congestion on our motorways has increased the overall average speed may not have changed. Fatality data from "Road Accidents Great Britain" shows a 48% increase in fatalities over the period, compared with the 35% increase expected on the basis of speed increase alone. Obviously, other factors, particularly the increase in traffic flows, have played their part in this increase in fatalities.

The Department has no current plan for the widespread use speed cameras on motorways other than at roadworks and as part of a variable speed limit trial on the south-west quadrant of the M25. I can assure Mr Butler that speed cameras are only used at accident blackspots where other traffic calming techniques would be inappropriate. They are therefore very much a "last resort" technique.

I am glad that Mr Butler considers that the maintenance of safe following distances is an important consideration and I share his concern to see an improvement. The Department already works hard to influence driver behaviour by offering advice on how to judge safe separation distances in various road and traffic conditions. The Highway Code gives a simple aid to judging distance - the TWO SECOND RULE. This rule

was introduced to help drivers judge a gap of one yard for each mile per hour of vehicle speed in good dry conditions.

An experiment has also been conducted on a stretch of the M1 to assist drivers in keeping safe following distances. During this, chevrons were placed on the carriageway and signs erected informing drivers to keep two chevrons apart. The initial results of this trial were encouraging in terms of drivers understanding their purpose and reductions in accidents. However it was felt necessary to undertake an assessment of what affect any "novelty" value of these chevrons had on the initial results. The trial was therefore extended for a year and a final report is due shortly. If the results are again positive the chevrons may be used on many more roads in the future.

However, it is clear that a significant number of motorists will ignore all safe and sensible advice and continue to drive too close for the speed and conditions - this is essentially a driver behaviour problem. The Department has a Behavioural Studies Research Programme which is investigating driver behaviour and the motivations behind unsafe driving practices. However, as I am sure you will appreciate, changing deeply entrenched driver behaviour is often a long term process - drinking and driving being an obvious example. Meanwhile while close following exists, it would be inappropriate to increase speed limits and consequently the risk of serious motorway accidents because of this behaviour.

I agree with Mr Butler that in some cases a speed of 30 mph is not appropriate in urban areas. This is why we introduced the possibility of 20 mph zones in urban areas. Local Highway Authorities have now constructed over 80 such zones; the accident savings in these have been up to 70%. Trials of variable speed limit signs have also commenced outside schools; these indicate a speed limit of 20mph when children are arriving at or leaving school and revert to the usual speed limit at all other times.

As far as motorway charging is concerned, many respondents to the consultation paper indicated that their support for charging was dependent on the resources being used to fund additional road capacity. It has always been my intention to ensure that the revenue and expenditure on roads subject to charges would be transparent, and that the proceeds of charges would be applied only to the construction and operation of the charged network. I can also confirm that I will take into account the relationship between the charges and existing motoring taxes in setting their respective levels.

I will also be discussing separately with the construction industry and others the introduction of new contracts under which the private sector will design, build, finance and operate roads. We believe that bringing private finance and management into the roads programme offers the prospect of substantial benefits for the motorist and the taxpayer.

Yours sincerely Robert Key

Letter dated 15/06/94 from THE MINISTER FOR ROADS AND TRAFFIC - Robert Key to Robert Banks MP in response to a letter by ABD member Anthony Watkinson. Dear Robert Thank you for the letter of 26 May 1994 sent by your private secretary, enclosing this correspondence from your constituent A I Watkinson about speed limits and shadow tolls.

The Department is aware of the crucial role played by the road network (and the vehicles that use it), in the economic and social development of Britain. It should be remembered however, that the convenience and economic benefits that come from an efficient road network have to be weighed against the environmental and safety impact that vehicles can have in towns, and in environmentally sensitive areas outside towns. Generally speaking, it is up to local authorities to decide what traffic management measures are appropriate.

The squeeze on public expenditure inevitably meant funding for road construction fell in 1994-95. We do not believe however, that the picture is quite as gloomy as your constituent seems to be suggesting. Although any reduction is regrettable, the 1994-95 level only appears low when compared with the record breaking levels of expenditure seen in recent years.

With regard to the comments made by Roger Freeman of the fitment of speed limiters to cars; I understood he was expressing a personal view, rather than expressing the policy of the Department. As you are probably aware, speed limiters are being phased in for HGVs and coaches. There are however, no **immediate** plans to do the same for cars, as there would be a considerable number of practical and technical problems to be overcome beforehand.

Although motorways are our safest roads (carrying around 15% of all traffic while accounting for just over 3% of all accidents), I feel that an increase in the present motorway speed limit would jeopardise our excellent safety record. Our record of 3.9 fatalities per billion kms travelled compares favourably with most of our European neighbours (Germany has 5.8, Italy has 13.2 deaths). In any event, it is likely that drivers who presently exceed the limit on motorways would also exceed a higher limit unless it can be rigorously enforced. A limit of 80mph would probably result in a similar percentage of motorists exceeding 90mph and this would certainly result in higher casualties.

Turning to shadow tolls, the Green Paper "Paying for Better Motorways" referred to the option of private sector concessionaires designing, building, financing and operating roads, (DBFO) with remuneration from Government according to usage. This proposition was warmly received. We have since consulted the industry and the City on our more considered thoughts and we have appointed financial advisors who are currently having in-depth discussions with potential key players about DBFO principles. Our aim is to invite tenders for a first tranche of schemes in the Autumn and to let the first contracts by mid 1995. Yours sincerely Robert Key.

# CARLTON AND CASKET TO TARTU

Hugh Bladon, ABD Treasurer makes a high speed dash across northern Europe in Diesel Carlton!

"Is that part of Yugoslavia?" the lady asked when I said we were going to Estonia. "No", I replied "it's one of the Baltic Countries". I suppose I would have had little better idea where it was if there had not been some family connection. The advance of the Red Army during the latter stages of the Second World War led many people from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to flee to comparative safety farther west. Some arrived as refugees in this country where they found homes. This was how one Estonian came to live with my wife's family until his sudden death two years ago. He wanted to return to his homeland but only when it was "free". The collapse of communism came too late but we felt that it was only right that his ashes should go back to his sister still living in Tartu, a town some 130 miles south of the capital, Tallin.

Our immediate problem was one of transport. Our present car is a Vauxhall Carlton GSI 24V which comes with Catalytic Converter as standard and I quickly established that it was impossible to remove the Cat. This meant that unleaded fuel was a "must". Enquiries revealed that we might get unleaded fuel somewhere but nobody could say with any certainty. It seemed quite likely that we might reach Estonia but not get back.

We had virtually given up the idea when the opportunity came to borrow a Vauxhall Carlton GL turbo Diesel for two weeks at the end of August. Now we could start planning routes and getting visas. The countries we would pass through after leaving Germany were to be Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and then into Estonia itself. A visa is no longer required by British passport holders to enter Poland and possession of a visa for Estonia (easily obtained from the very helpful embassy) is sufficient for travel through the other two Baltic countries.

The lounge floor was soon covered with maps. The shortest route seemed to be via Kaliningrad and Riga but the former is in an isolated part of Russia and there is no border crossing from Poland for tourists. A Russian visa would not be necessary but this meant a longer route round to the south-east to get direct from Poland to Lithuania.

While on a trip to the Estonian Embassy in London to have the casket sealed and to get the necessary documentation we discovered that since 21st July a visa is no longer required.

By 1300 on 12th August we were on our way to Dover in the silver grey Carlton Turbo Diesel driving through the heaviest rain I can ever remember on the M4. It was blowing a gale as well and we did not fancy the forthcoming crossing. However after carefully brimming the tank at Dover, a process which took nearly 30 minutes to get it absolutely full we enjoyed a stable crossing in P & O's Pride of Calais. We left Calais at 2030 French time and covered the 190 miles to Eindhoven by 2330, stopping for the night at the Eindhoven Motel.

## Biggest surprise of all was the ability to accelerate so well and maintain high cruising speeds -

First impressions of the Carlton were based on comparison with our petrol model. The ride was much less harsh and the seats very comfortable. Biggest surprise of all was the ability to accelerate so well and maintain high cruising speeds - all much better than I had expected. The boot, of course swallowed masses of goods for our friends in Estonia, together with four jerry-cans and our luggage.

It was a joy once again to be able to drive at a reasonable speed without looking for radar traps and police cars. Traffic in Germany moves quickly but the drivers there obey the limits when imposed - probably because they know there is a reason for them.

Next day saw us into Germany covering familiar ground after many years with BAOR and it was a joy once again to be able to drive at a reasonable speed without looking for radar traps and police cars. Traffic in Germany moves quickly but the drivers there obey the limits when imposed - probably because they know there is a reason for them.

## Audis and BMWs passed doing well over 100 but we went with the rest of the traffic at a steady 90.

The old border at Helmstedt is a monument to the past with its large areas of concrete, big sheds and rusting lights everywhere. This used to be the point at which traffic became controlled but now you pass through without even anywhere to stop for a photograph and the speed of the traffic continues as before. Audis and BMWs passed doing well over 100 but we went with the rest of the traffic at a steady 90 and covered the 398 miles to Berlin by 1700. The only snag with the Autobahn is that the heavy traffic and only two lanes mean that a small roadworks results in a big jam. Furthermore the Berlin ring road was solid and we wasted a lot of time getting into the city and finding a hotel.

A taxi took us round and we saw as much as possible before dark. The wall which used to curve round the Brandenburg gate has completely vanished and you have to look carefully for a mark in the new tarmac to see where it used to be. It needed a drive of three miles into the old east sector to find part of the wall still remaining, covered in graffiti, a reminder of the past.

## I was finding it strange to go so far on so little, and we had now covered 588 miles since filling up in Dover, much of that at 90mph.

The time had come to refuel. I was finding it strange to go so far on so little, and we had now covered 588 miles since filling up in Dover, much of that at 90mph. At the same time we filled our four jerry cans which meant paying for nearly 148 litres. The car did not seem to change attitude with the extra weight.

August 14th saw us driving out of Berlin through the old eastern sector. The road runs absolutely straight passing countless massive blocks of flats until eventually these run out and the scenery becomes more rustic. It still looks pretty horrid in the rain. There are little abandoned Trabants dumped on the side of the road and still a lot of these puffing around. The road soon becomes Autobahn but now it is concrete and rough.

At the Polish border, 90 miles from Berlin, we were able to drive past a long line of lorries to the formalities which took only a few minutes. Now was the time to change some money and become immediate millionaires as there are 25,000 Zlotych, (pronounced Lottie), to £1.

The road away from the border is well made, single track and with very light traffic, passing through a heavily wooded area. We had not done more than about 5 miles when a Police Lada pulled out from a side turning in front. By now it was raining and I was not sure about the speed limit and if I dare overtake so it was a relief when the Lada took off in a shower of spray and we were soon locked in behind at a steady 70 mph in the direction of Poznan. Any traffic we encountered pulled well over to let the Police through and we followed before they had recovered. We continued like this for 50 miles before the call of nature forced us to give up the chase. Thereafter progress was not so rapid but we made good time to Poznan where there was a lot of slow-moving traffic and it took us 30 minutes to get through. A lunch stop on the way out of town gave us the chance to sample Polish prices, once we had mastered the menu! A Wiener Schnitzel and Chips, a Salad and Chips, two coffees and a Lemonade set us back just £3.

We continued on to Olsztyn where we arrived at the Novotel at 1900, having done 404 miles in the day. At no time did we feel tired or uncomfortable and we were both getting to like the Carlton more and more.

While waiting for our evening meal we met an English lorry driver from Staffordshire working for a Dutch company, who was on his way to Riga. Steve Smith is a regular in these parts and made our journey seem very tame since he has been as far as 1,000 miles the other side of Moscow. We owe him our sincere thanks for putting us right about our proposed route. When I showed him where I planned to go, (by means of the only marked red road), he advised me that there was no crossing there and we had to go via the little white road at Sejny. This advice saved us at least 150 miles. He also told us to be prepared for a long wait at the border where he has spent up to 3 days before now. I thought he was exaggerating.

The hotel was very comfortable and cheap. The evening meal cost about £2 and we can confirm the stories about plugs for basins and baths - fortunately we had taken our own.

**This was Hitler's northern headquarters and the place where one Of his Generals tried to blow him up in the plot on his life in July 1944.**

A two-hour drive on 15th brought us to what was formerly Rastenburg, now Ketryzn. This was Hitler's northern headquarters and the place where one Of his Generals tried to blow him up in the plot on his life in July 1944. Covering an area of 2.5 sq. kms. it consisted of numerous massive concrete bunkers set in woodland and so well concealed that the Allies never found it. After the war, the Russians blew the place up but it took ten tons of dynamite and broke windows six miles away just to break the roof of one of these bunkers, so massive and re-inforced was the construction.

**Lots of open straights and fine sweeping bends.**

It was a fascinating place and we could have spent hours there but we knew we had still a long way to go. The countryside here is really lovely, with woods and gentle hills, similar in many ways to mid-Wales but with masses of lakes. The yellow road to Suwalki is a pleasure to drive, being beautifully smooth with lots of open straights and fine sweeping bends. With the very minimum of traffic it is a driver's delight and the Carlton was ideal, with vigorous response in fourth whenever a little extra speed was needed.

We saw a Metro just before we stopped for fuel in Suwalki - the first UK registered car we had seen since leaving the Ruhr. Diesel in Poland is very cheap- 60 Ltrs cost 282,000 Lottie which frightened me a bit until I worked it out at just under £11.50 or about 85p per gallon. Petrol, however, is more like £1.35 and that is for 97- octane. The petrol stations are reasonable but not inviting.

Our journey continued past Sejny and on towards the border. I was beginning to think that we had chosen well since it was Saturday and we had seen only one truck and very few cars. However, on rounding a bend we came upon the rear of a queue which curved round and over the hill. People were sitting around on the grass and it looked as though they had already been there a while. I decided to walk forward and take a look. About 30 vehicles up the queue was Steve Smith with his lorry. He confirmed that he had been there two hours already and the queue was at least 2kms long. We had arrived at the start of the queue at 1500.

Steve suggested that we should try to plead our case using our casket of ashes in view of the strong religious nature of the Poles. If we were sent back we could nip in ahead of his truck.

We decided to try it and drove slowly forward down the narrow road to the front of the queue where a soldier waved us to one side. The system is that he issues a small slip of paper upon which he has written the vehicle's registration number. Once you have that, you can proceed into the process of checks. I managed to get him to come over to the boot of the car and showed him the casket. Bending the truth a bit, I attempted to make him understand that we had to be at the funeral by 1100 the next day in Estonia. He told me to go and see the officer' so I marched forward with the casket and as much documentation as I could muster. A senior policeman seemed sympathetic and told me to go with him to where the soldiers were, where I had to wait outside. After some ten minutes I was curtly told 'you wait'. Any attempt to change this decision was greeted with complete indifference by the officer-in-charge, a scruffy disgrace to any uniform who flatly refused even to look at me as I tried to explain my plight. I had to retreat to the car where my wife had been discussing the situation with a group of motorcyclists who had already been there some six hours. An English speaking Danish student of Economics told us that they had been told they must wait another 10 hours and tempers were getting very frayed.

**I had seen money passing hands in exchange for the coveted slips of paper.**

The only course of action seemed to be to make a fuss. I had seen money passing hands in exchange for the coveted slips of paper. but that I was not

prepared to do. I shadowed the soldier in charge of this operation until he could stand my presence no longer and gave me my slip just to get rid of me. We drove forward into the processing area to cheers from our biker friends.

Three hours after we arrived at the queue we left the other side. In addition, the time zone changed so it was now 1900. Furious at such a pathetic performance by representatives of both Poland and Lithuania, angry at the loss of time and feeling slightly guilty at having jumped the queue, I drove away straight into the waiting radar trap less than two miles from the border. On being asked for 'car documents' I handed over the driver's handbook which seemed to satisfy the policeman. What was more difficult was payment of any fine since we had no Lithuanian money. However, a 100,000 Lottie note with its string of zeros seemed to be enough to impress him and I thought £4 was small price to pay to be on our way again.

We still had quite a way to go to get to Riga, the Latvian capital. By now it was beginning to get dark but the cross-country road to Kaunus and on to Panevezys was excellent. Not much definition but virtually traffic-free and with a mainly pretty smooth surface, which enabled us to crack on at a good rate.

**A sheer reaction swerve was the monumental avoidance needed to prevent us from becoming history.**

The main road, M12, runs from Tallin (the Estonian capital in the north) to Minsk. We joined this at Panevezys and that was very nearly the end of our journey. The road is mainly long straights. The surface is good and it is quite wide. At night it is very dark because there are virtually no markings. With a vehicle coming towards us but still some way off, our dipped lights failed to pick up an abandoned lorry which had-just been left on the road with no lights of any sort. A sheer reaction swerve was the monumental avoidance needed to prevent us from becoming history but it was so close we had to stop to get our breath back. Thereafter I drove with foglights on for added illumination.

We had no trouble passing through the border into Latvia and by now there was very little traffic. The road, smooth and straight, passed through an endless avenue of trees and my main concern was the possibility of wildlife.

We arrived in Riga and found a hotel just before midnight. It had been a long, hard day and we were glad to stop for the night, even if the hotel was very spartan indeed. In the morning, the British Ambassador, Richard Samuel was in the area and we took the opportunity to tell him of the absurdity at the border, which he promised to pass on to his Polish opposite number.

**The Carlton had not given a moment's trouble and had proved comfortable, fast enough and I was still amazed by its economy.**

Riga is not a very attractive place, being full of austere buildings. There is little attempt at road signs and it took us a long time to find our way out. We had to navigate by the sun and hope for the best. However, once we had found the correct road it started as a perfectly smooth dual carriageway turning into an excellent road with long straights and very little traffic and it was not long before we were at the Estonian border at Valga. Thereafter the yellow road up to Tartu became less smooth but we were delighted to find that it was wide, straight and almost deserted. Our arrival in Tartu was mid-afternoon, after 1830 miles from Weston-super-Mare. The Carlton had not given a moment's trouble and had proved comfortable, fast enough and I was still amazed by its economy.

Estonia, the most northerly of the three Baltic states, seems to have suffered more from Russian domination than the other two. Everywhere seems to be poor and run-down. There does not seem to be actual poverty, although there doubtless is, but the whole place tells of lack of money. It is a country with lots of everything but plenty of nothing. For instance, 40 per cent of the country is covered in forest but they have no paper. There are 1,500 lakes but we saw no fish for sale. There are acres of open agricultural land but no wheat. There are reasons for this, of course, ranging from inadequate distribution, shortage of money to buy grain, and lack of money and expertise to set up vital industries. One wonders why we are helping the Russians, who have been the oppressors and not the Baltic states who have been the oppressed.

Tartu is the second largest city, after Tallin, with a population of 170,000.



There are four petrol stations and only two of these sell diesel, because there are no diesel cars in the country. The sound of our engine made people look round to see what was coming.

It was interesting to note the price of fuel : Petrol 76 Oct. 2.60 Croner. 93 Oct. 3.00 Croner. 96 Oct. 3.15 Croner. Diesel 1.90 Croner. There are about 22 Croner to the £1. You must pay for your fuel before you have it so it was not possible to do a brimming exercise. Instead I put in 35 Ltrs at a cost of 66.50 Croner, or just about £3.

The shops are poorly stocked and the buildings tend to be drab. Queues are commonplace, especially if there is a rumour of white bread for sale. The countryside is very pretty and again very similar to the flatter parts of Wales. This is particularly true of the southern half of the country which has the highest point at just 1,000 ft above sea level.

We are much indebted to Mr and Mrs Albert Saunenen who looked after us while we were in Tartu and had arranged our hotel for us. Hotels do not advertise themselves and there was no way of knowing that this was an hotel without going inside. However, we were pleasantly surprised to find we had a large bedroom similarly sized lounge, small dining area and pleasant bathroom. The bill for four nights B & B, plus dinner for five on one night was £106.75 including 75p for a five minute telephone call to UK.

For the next four days we had a good look around Estonia and much of our travel was in Albert's nine year old Volga, which he called his Russian tank. There was no sign of rust but application of the brakes required major steering correction. Everything was very solid, there were seat belts in the front and the time on the clock was always 1710.

Estonian side roads are like those seen on the 1,000 Lakes Rally and it was strange to drive along roads like that for miles, passing bus stops along the way. On one of our trips we rounded a bend to be confronted with a police road block where again our car documents were requested. Once more, the driver's handbook did the trick and we were waved through !

**We fell foul to the radar again, this time in Valmiera, but the policeman seemed highly amused for some reason and wished us a good journey.**

Our return journey started on the 20th August when the Carlton was loaded up and pointed south for the border at Valga and on to Riga. We fell foul to the radar again, this time in Valmiera, but the policeman seemed highly amused for some reason and wished us a good journey.

Once again we got hopelessly lost in Riga and this time there was no sun to help us find our way out. We ended up coming down the wrong road. It was excellent but the wrong side of the river which meant a long detour Over a pontoon bridge and then a cross-country trip down 45 miles of very rough unmade road with stones and dust flying in all directions.

While we were in Riga we discovered why we had not seen any petrol stations. There were tankers stopped at the side of the road or in lay-bys selling fuel direct. Each tanker had a little queue of cars waiting to buy. We also saw at least three radar traps but they did not get us this time since we were wandering around trying to find our way out.

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**Wide, smooth dual-carriageway which we covered with the speedo on 100mph.**

The final 75 miles into Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, is one of the finest roads we have seen anywhere. Wide, smooth dual-carriageway which we covered with the speedo on 100mph for a while and during which time we saw only about 40 vehicles.

Our hotel in Vilnius was the worst of the trip and one of the most expensive so we were not sorry to be up and away early, especially as we knew we had to tackle the Polish border again. The journey there was down very quiet roads through the forests and we stopped short of the border to pour in one of our cans of diesel to get us into Poland since we did not have Lithuanian money. There is no such thing as credit card sales in the Baltic states.

We arrived at the end of the queue at 1050, having discussed tactics for much of the way. I took some photographs and then we decided to try our luck again. This time there was a soldier at the front of the queue who flagged us down and then seemed totally confused by the words "emergency" and "England" so he waved us on. A second soldier, some 100 yards ahead at the next barrier received the same treatment and he too waved us forward. The big test was to come because the third soldier was the one handing out the precious slips of paper. I tried to explain that the previous two soldiers had waved us on but he was not interested and told us to go to one side. There was only one thing for it and that was to make myself a nuisance again, which I did, keeping by his side and repeatedly asking for 'my paper please'. Eventually he could stand it no longer and gave me the valued slip, whereupon we were in the car and had moved forward before he could change his mind.

Once in the system, which itself was to take about two hours, we were able to take stock of the situation and talk to people, without revealing how we had managed to appear suddenly. The German camper directly behind us had been there for 22 hours. However, what was even worse was the plight of the coaches and their occupants. One driver told us he had been there two days. There were hundreds of men, women and children, young and old sitting around on their luggage which was lying around on the ground. Coaches were parked everywhere. It was extremely hot, there was no water and the toilets had been overcome long ago. People were having to use what little cover there was in the surrounding area and the place was stinking.

**We estimated there must have been 10,000 people stuck at that border.**

When we finally got through the system, my wife started to count the vehicles in the queue headed for Lithuania. We stopped briefly alongside the fifth vehicle which was another UK registered Vauxhall Carlton with two young men aboard who had already been there for 21 hours. My wife counted 413 lorries, coaches and cars in the queue. We estimated there must have been 10,000 people stuck at that border. Such sub-normal behaviour on the part of those responsible is hard to comprehend. The whole thing looked like a refuge camp but it is impossible accurately to describe the sheer hell being endured by innocent people for no good reason whatsoever.

It was with a real sense of guilt that we realised we had completed the crossing in 2hrs 45mins as we made our way towards Warsaw.

A roadside stop provided us with a lovely bowl of soup each with rolls one tea, one coffee, a Mars and a Bounty for 35,000 Lottie (about £1-50).

**It is still possible to see where the huts were, the gravel pit, the gas chamber and the siding where the trains used to pull in.**

A slight diversion took us to the former Jewish labour and death camp at Treblinka. The Nazis closed this down in 1943 and removed virtually all evidence of what had gone on there so it is now more or less a memorial only. However, there was an eerie silence about the place and it is still possible to see where the huts were, the gravel pit, the gas chamber and the siding where the trains used to pull in. Furthermore, one of the trains still stands just outside the camp with a long row of those awful wagons with their sliding doors ...

We arrived in Warsaw at 1930 and decided to treat ourselves to two nights at the fine Holiday Inn. First impressions of Warsaw were very different from what we had expected. Lots of attractive buildings and the place is spotless. The supermarket, just along from the hotel was still operating at 2330. Unfortunately the Chopin concert scheduled for the next day had been cancelled but we were able to see much of the old town area and were grateful for the chance to relax in pleasant surroundings after all the travel. The bill for two nights with dinner in this really lovely hotel was \$520 (£130 a night). It was very hot indeed in Warsaw.

August 23rd saw us start on the final leg home, making first for Dresden, some 400 miles away. The road out of Warsaw was another of those lovely traffic-free dual carriageways which allowed us to cover the first 130 miles easily in two hours. Before leaving Poland we took advantage of the cheap fuel, filling up just before the border. For the first time we saw unleaded petrol available. The run into Dresden was slowed by very heavy rain and it was now much colder. We stayed for one night in the Hilton where B & B was DM240

(about £90) and the is well situated for seeing the town and walking by the river.

The following morning, with the sun shining, we were able to walk around and see some of this amazing city. Quite what it was like before being bombed is hard to imagine because the buildings that are left are truly superb. However, in time it will be possible to see it again because the old buildings are being restored. Not for them the easy solution of knocking the rubble to one side and building a concrete replacement. Each building is being restored as near as possible to its original. The amount of work going on is awesome and the whole place seems like a huge builders' yard. We admired the work that is being done and could have spent a long time walking around. As it was, we gave ourselves 90 minutes before setting off once again, this time to go to Colditz. Now used as a psychiatric hospital it is not possible to wander around inside but you can go into the courtyards and one of the escape tunnels is clearly visible in one corner. The museum in the town has a supply of goodies removed from those who failed in their bid for freedom and it was interesting to note how many British people had been there and signed the visitors book.

I have always admired the efforts of those who escaped from Colditz, the more so when the road we wanted to use was closed and we were forced to leave by another, which resulted in our getting utterly lost in the surrounding countryside. Our pathetic attempt to find our way out, with all the modern facilities of a map and car and with nobody looking for us made their efforts even more admirable. We wandered around tiny little roads for about an hour before arriving at a major road where a toss of the coin decided we should go left - which turned out to be the right choice as it eventually took us to the motorway we had been seeking. We had gone barely five miles along this when we came upon a jam and stood still for the next 1 ½ hours. Eventually

we moved forward to find roadworks but no explanation as to why it was our side which did not move. We motored on towards Marburg. On the approach to the town I noticed a flash ahead and backed off. The poor chap behind did not notice and had his photograph taken as he overtook us.

A lovely cross-country run the following day allowed us to again enjoy the superb ability of the Carlton to travel over such roads with comfort and ease. The fuel light came on as we entered M-Gladbach for the night at the end of another 550 miles on a tankfull.

**Our running average speed had been 53.76mph and our consumption figure was 39.11mpg.**

The remaining three cans of fuel went in here so that we could get back to England without stopping for more, although we had to put 20 Ltrs in on the M4 to get us all the way to Weston, where we arrived at 1820 on the 26th. after a total distance of 4,261 miles. Our running average speed had been 53.76mph and our consumption figure was 39.11mpg. These figures would be good for most cars but considering the load we carried they are even more impressive. We were sad to hand back the car which had served us so well for two weeks. It completely changed my opinion of diesel cars.

We saw things we thought we would never see and achieved something we felt had to be done. It was a fascinating experience which has given us many memories. Poland is a country we would strongly recommend for a cheap holiday. A trip to the Baltic states would have to be done via Finland unless the absurdity of the border crossing is stopped. They, too, are countries worthy of a visit.  
Hugh Bladon.

## The London Speed Trap Map.

The London Speed Trap Map now in its second edition (blue cover, first edition - white), will soon be updated by the third edition (red cover) due out this autumn. The map is published by The Clever Map Company Limited, 6 Old Town, Clapham Common, London SW4 0JY, phone 071-498-1679. The map identifies the position of all speed and red light camera sites in London at the date of publication.

Motorists who spot new camera sites not shown on the map and report them to the clever map company receive a free map and small cash reward. The map can be purchased at WH Smith and other good newsagents in London. The company will also publish a Scottish edition this year and an "Atlas" to cover the whole country next year. J.L.Newby-Robson

## Gatso - Speed Enforcement Cameras on the A40.

Regular users of the London section of the A40 will have come to know the location of the of the half dozen or so Gatso speed enforcement cameras that have been installed on this road. Those drivers who have not learnt the location of the cameras will not fail to notice that most people still speed, except in a few places where for some mysterious reason everyone suddenly slows down!

The signs advertising the presence of the cameras cover the section from the end of the M40 at Denham to the beginning of the elevated section of the A40M in central London. On this stretch there at present at least three camera sites covering London bound traffic flows. Each of these sites covers an inherently hazardous road formation. The first is located at the start of the 50mph zone at Denham. The 50 mph limit here is understandable because the dual three lane carriageway narrows to dual two lanes and about 500 yds further on there is a set of traffic lights. This road formation has now been bypassed, more of this later. The second position covers another narrowing of the carriageway from dual three to dual two lanes at the hangar lane underpass. Incidentally according to media reports a video Gatso linked by wire to Alperton police station will shortly be installed in this underpass. The third covers a bend followed by the first set of lights after hangar lane. GATSO trap spotters are advised to purchase the London speed trap map, further details elsewhere in this issue.

The first and third of these cameras are located in centre of the road

between the inward and outward bound carriageways. These cameras are reversible and are usually turned round in the evening to catch outward bound commuters speeding home. When reversed, which is about 50% of the time, these cameras are no longer covering the accident blackspots mentioned above and helping to reduce accidents but are instead covering relatively hazard free areas of road with little or no effect on road safety. Therefore GATSO cameras are being used to catch motorists on safe stretches of road for the sole purpose of raising revenue. If the sole purpose of these cameras is to reduce accidents then they would remain fixed to cover the accident blackspots 100% of the time.

The first camera mentioned in this article covered a blackspot which has now been bypassed by a new section of near motorway standard road (dual three lane). When this section is fully operational, parts are still coned off, the camera will no longer serve a useful purpose in reducing accidents. Its only remaining function will be to act as the Governments speed tax collector! It will be interesting to see whether in the near future the 50 mph limit and camera are removed!

If the government were really interested in reducing accidents and not just ripping off safe drivers, it would invest in civil engineering work to improve hazardous carriage way formations and thus remove the accident black spots.  
J.L.Newby-Robson

## ABD supports Car Week's campaign for an updating of speed limits!

Brian Gregory's letter to Car Week was published in abbreviated form. Here follows the original submission. Sir- I read the article on pp.18-19 of the June 1st issue & was in almost complete agreement: the current speed limit policy is little short of criminally farcical: no real attempt is being made to educate road users generally about the importance & relevance of, & logic behind, realistically set 20mph, 30mph etc.. urban limits.

Your comments on the recent expensive & ineffective campaign with the irresponsible, witless pedestrian blaming the hapless motorist for her suicide are totally valid: the advert has only succeeded in incensing many responsible motorists; while the key role responsible pedestrian & cyclist behaviour must also play in maintaining & accelerating the pace of the decline in the urban road accident toll is being almost totally ignored.

Meanwhile, the maximum motorway speed limit is kept artificially low for fiscal reasons (in anticipation of festooning them with Gatso traps as we have been warning for nearly two years now) & breeds a frame of mind amongst some drivers that the only dangerous thing they can do is exceed 70mph: foolhardy 10ft. tailgating of the preceding vehicle at 65-70mph is considered less dangerous than maintaining a safe minimum 2 to 3 second gap, but averaging 85- 90mph when traffic density & road conditions allow.

The clear objective of installing robotic speed traps is - & always has been - revenue generation. This becomes clearer & clearer as the dual carriageway & recently-announced motorway sites proliferate at the expense of cameras at genuine accident blackspots.

A further, clear indication of the Government's real (as opposed to stated) road transport aims is their obdurate & intransigent persistence with the motorway tolling objective - in the face of overwhelming opposition from virtually every motorist & motoring organisation in the country.

It is universally recognised that tolling will transfer traffic off our safest roads (motorways) onto toll-free - but substantially more dangerous - A & B roads. The real "toll" will be the unnecessary, additional deaths & serious road injuries this Government-generated traffic pattern change will cause.

When the choice between generating more revenue from motorists & reducing casualties has to be made, Government takes the money & (literally) takes lives, too!

In 1992 there were only 3.9 fatalities per 1000 million vehicle kilometres driven on British motorways. This represents a fatality every 256 million kilometres (160 million miles); & is the second lowest motorway fatality rate in the world after the Netherlands (3.2 fatalities per 1000 million Vkm) which has a 125kph (75mph) variable motorway speed limit.

To put into perspective the risk factor associated with driving on UK motorways; if, immediately after passing one's driving test at the age of 17, one began driving at a steady 85mph for an 8-hour working day, 5-day working week, 48 working weeks per year, it would be 982 years before one is likely to become a fatality in a motorway accident. One would then be a cool 999 years old. Speed may kill - but not on British motorways in the average human beings' lifetime!!!

What does kill on motorways is travelling too close the preceding vehicle under dense traffic conditions & this is especially so in poor conditions when many large & heavy vehicles are present in that traffic. The involvement rate of HGV's in fatality accidents on motorways is some five times higher than their numbers & annual mileage would lead us to expect.

Additionally the claim that a 1mph speed reduction would save 300 lives a year is fallacious: on this basis a 14mph average speed reduction would save 4200 lives & there would thus be 400 reincarnated road fatalities per annum! This claim is therefore clearly utter drivel.

Much depends on when, where & how speed is reduced. As your article so rightly states, it is speed inappropriate to the prevailing conditions (which can mean too little, as well as too much) that causes accidents.

So, we fully support your campaign for "a coherent & commonsense updating of speed limit guidelines generally". If it encompassed total opposition to motorway tolling (see the enclosed sticker) on safety - as well as ethical - grounds we would be even happier to support you.

The Association of British Drivers was formed in September 1992, & now has a membership into several hundreds, but clearly we need more members. We alone, are prepared to actively defend the interests of British motorists.). I enclose a copy of our current newsletter & details of our current objectives (a professionally produced brochure is in preparation).

We would welcome your support. It is in your, your competitors' & every sane, responsible motorist's interests to unite to oppose a Government bent on a campaign of propaganda, distortions & untruths to justify their intended immoral & avaricious exploitation of motorists in general! .

Join the Association of British Drivers to help other ordinary motorists to campaign to protect our right to drive on British roads without being subject to unreasonable speed limits, unfair fines, tolls and gross over taxation. Just fill in the form below

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# Traffic News

## Germany's road casualties plummet.

Although the total number of motorcars on Germany's roads rose from 15 million to over 39 million between the years of 1970 and 1993, the number of road deaths fell by well over half during that time. The autobahns remain by far the safest roads despite having no speed limit on many stretches.

## Opposition to toll motorways in Germany.

As in the U.K., Germany is threatening to introduce electronic road tolling on its motorways by the end of the decade. However, in marked contrast to the weak acceptance of the plan by politicians of all shades in this country, it is being opposed at high levels in Germany.

The acting Chairman of the opposition Social Democratic Party, Oskar Lafontaine demanded recently that the plan for tolls should be withdrawn immediately. He said that the constant milking of the motorist for money had gone far enough.

Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Prime Minister of the state of Lower Saxony, Mr Gerhard Schroder has warned his party against following policies which could prove disastrous vote-losers in the country's national elects in October - such as the imposition of a national speed limit on the autobahns, and further increases in the cost of petrol.

## Speed trap catches 1,000 drivers on the M11.

A thousand drivers were caught exceeding a mandatory 50 mph limit on the M11 during 2 days in May. The camera, which apparently cost £27,000 to set up, was financed by the Department of Transport, and was put in place after "talks" between them and Essex Police.

The police insisted that all drivers would be prosecuted. Even if each driver only is only fined at the fixed penalty rate of £35, the operation will produce a cool £8,000 profit for the Treasury - or £4,000 per day. In practice, of course, many will receive higher fines, and the profit will be much larger....

## Car ban proposals from the countryside commission.

The Countryside Commission has put forward proposals which would effectively prevent tourists from getting access to large parts of Britain's National Parks at weekends.

The Parks are threatened with car bans, access restrictions, permits for the privileged, as well as tolls which would raise yet more revenue and restrict access to the wealthy.

The areas concerned are the Lake District, Dartmoor, the New Forest, the Yorkshire Dales, The Peak District, Box Hill in Surrey, the Brecon Beacons, Exmoor, the North Yorkshire Moors and Pembrokeshire.

## Key tightens the screw.

A new hi-tech trap was set on the M1 in June in the contra-flow at Leicester East using a new system which is apparently on test for a 6 month period. It is likely to be introduced on motorways throughout the country as the government's squeeze on the driver gathers pace.

The system displays the registration number of the vehicle exceeding the limit, together with the road speed, and the word "SPEEDING" in large letters. Those exceeding the limit by up to 10mph will get a fixed penalty notice and fine, while those travelling at greater speed will suffer a more severe penalty.

There is evidence to suggest that the old rule of thumb which allowed drivers tolerance of 10% of the limit +2 mph is being dropped. Any information from members on this point would be appreciated.

One wonders what is next: on the same principle why not have introduce electronic signs in every high street posting details of every local convict, together with details of their crimes:-

JOE SOAP  
14 ALBION ROAD  
SMEATHARPE  
AGE 21-----BURGLAR

Roads Minister Robert Key trotted out the usual bit about making "speeding as socially unacceptable as drinking and driving". It is a pity he does not begin by imposing realistic limits in the first place.

## Auto Forum seminars

AUTOFORUM has organised a series of seminars to which Association members are invited. They centre on the need to foster a better understanding of the relationship between a healthy economy and the motor industry in this country.

The venues are as follows:- 4th September 1994 Blackpool, 5th September 1994 TUC breakfast seminar, 16th September 1994 Scunthorpe

Two further seminars are to be held at dates to be fixed in Lancaster and Birmingham for later in the year.

More details can be obtained from Gordon Lee, Secretary of AUTOFORUM at 48 Queens Road Coventry CV1 3EH (tel: 0203-559441)

## Buses and taxis in pollution storm

At a conference held by Westminster Council, Roger King of the Society of Motor Traders and Manufacturers said that "The collection of buses which can be seen pouring out fumes from their exhausts in Oxford Street on any day is nothing short of a disgrace". Many of them are the old Routemasters, often now more than 25 years old.

It is estimated that by the year 2000, half the buses on the roads in this country will be more than 15 years old, and fully one third will not meet European emissions standards.

London's black taxis also came in for criticism,

with most emitting too much smoke. Exhaust emissions of twice the legal maximum are apparently quite common.

## Legal storm over tax saving plan.

Several large accountancy firms have been promoting an interesting and imaginative scheme to enable companies that lease cars to claim back the VAT element of the leasing payments. The method is for a non-UK company to lease the car to a UK company, then import it into the UK. The VAT is then recovered. For the scheme to work, the vehicle must, however, be re-exported at the end of the contract.

The scheme is beneficial, because many EU countries, such as Germany, allow business purchasers of cars to recover the VAT element, whereas the UK does not, except in a few limited cases, such as taxi companies.

The government is, however, trying to crack down on the scheme, and says that it has taken legal advice and believes that it will not work. It is apparently seeking to work with other EU tax authorities in an attempt to prevent repayment of VAT on cars leased to UK businesses. The reason is that the Treasury stands to lose out on a £1.6 billion per year VAT bonanza that it enjoys from car sales.

Customs and Excise, smarting from the loss of duty on alcoholic drinks following the completion of the Single European Market, has issued a blunt warning, saying that the scheme "will not succeed".

Leading accountants, as well as some UK clearing banks, do not agree. They believe that current UK VAT laws are incompatible with European law. If that is the case, then Customs and Excise are wrong. The matter may well end up in the European Court of Justice who will have to decide.

## Shocking Cosworth

Engineer Roderic Minshull was so fed up with the constant attempts to steal his prized Ford Sierra Cosworth that he wired it up to give an electric shock to anyone who tried to touch any exposed metal parts.

He explained that they would receive a little jump if the car was touched momentarily, but considerable pain if they kept hold. Unfortunately a security guard who inspected it for a suspected bomb became a victim, and Mr Minshull was prosecuted as a result.

The jury acquitted him after hearing tales of how several men with baseball bats forced the door locks and smashed the steering column while trying to steal it in January 1993. It was after this incident that he decided to fit the home-made device.

Mr Minshull took the view that "vehicle theft had got out of hand in this country", and formed the impression that "the police could not care less".

Mr Minshull may have gone a little too far, but most of us, surely, sympathise with his plight.

Traffic News - compiled by Julian Rowden.