

## Motorway tolling trials to start ...

Sir George Young, Transport Secretary, has announced that trials of high-tech tolling systems will start in early 1996 on the M3 between junctions 6 and 7. Six consortia will erect their sensing and tolling equipment on overhead gantries. The companies involved include Bosch, GEC, Lockheed, Peek, Racal, Serco, Siemens, Syntegra and Texas Instruments. Racal and Peek form the Tollstar consortium; Lockheed is in two consortia, with GEC and with Siemens.

Two hundred vehicles will be deployed by the Department of Transport to drive back and forth between the two junctions testing the systems. But ordinary traffic "will not be affected".

The trials will be followed by a formal invitation to tender for the contract to install a tolling system on all motorways. The contract is expected to be worth £800 million. Tolls are expected to be in the region of 1.5p per mile for cars and 4.5p for lorries.

### ... but for no logical reasons

What Sir George, "the bicycling baronet", failed to give is any logical reason for installing such an expensive and unnecessary system. The costs of which will ultimately be borne by all consumers (including pensioners and the unemployed) as businesses inevitably pass on the increased costs of transport to their customers.

He cited the need to fund the cost of maintenance of motorways, £175 million a year, but failed to mention that £17,000 million is already taken from road users in excess of what is spent on transport.

If a financial disincentive to using motor transport is needed (if, for some perverse reason the Government wishes to dissuade people from going about their business, earning a living and paying taxes) then Sir George failed to mention that there is already a very efficient metering system. It is called

"the petrol pump". The Government already has in place a ruthlessly efficient way of extorting taxes from road users by means of this device and could simply increase the tax if it wished. The fuel tax is also efficient in ways which those professing to be concerned for the environment would approve of: the more you travel the more you pay; drivers of large vehicles pay more, drivers who go fast pay more, drivers who travel at peak times and get stuck in jams pay more.

... continued on page 3

## Mystery of "The Disappeared"

### What happens to 250,000 vehicles a year stolen and not accounted for?

The sheer number of vehicles stolen every year is shocking enough to motorists who work hard to earn their wheels honestly, but even more amazing is the number of stolen cars and lorries which simply "disappear". This happens in nearly a quarter of a million cases a year.

The official line is that they go abroad, but is this credible? Right hand drive vehicles stick out like sore thumbs on the continent. But if they are going abroad then they are going through a limited number of ports. These locations are already well-staffed by police and customs officers monitoring traffic vehicle by vehicle. The relatively high proportion of stolen vehicles could, with a little extra diligence be identified in such a controlled situation.

More likely is that most of them are

still on the roads of the UK. Assuming that a stolen vehicle lasts a few more years, there could well be a million of them on the road. That means that one in every twenty vehicles on the road is a stolen vehicle. Their drivers could well be ignorant of this having bought them in good faith.

Given that road users subsidise the rest of the economy to the tune of £17 billion a year is it not reasonable that motorists should expect the authorities to pay more attention to vehicle theft?

Issue 8, Autumn 1995

### Inside this issue

"Speed kills" debunked

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## ABD on National TV

ABD chairman Brian Gregory and committee members Bert Barrs and Jonathan Newby-Robson appeared on "You Decide" on BBC1 on Tuesday 8th August at 11.00pm. The programme gave prominent coverage to Brian Gregory and the name of the Association of British Drivers. The arguments presented by the ABD representatives were broadcast to a national audience, and this was a first for the campaign.

The format of the programme involved audience participation and the proceedings were chaired by Jeremy Paxman. Audience telephone poles were taken at the beginning and end of the programme to test the public's agreement with the proposition "Should we be forced to use our cars less? Prior to debate the "National Opinion" was that we should be forced out of our cars, 62% for, 38% against. The arguments put during the programme by the pro car lobby, including the ABD representatives, managed to swing the opinion to 51% for, 49% against. The result was declared a dead heat by Paxman. Given the recent virulent anti car propaganda in the media this was a resounding victory for the pro car lobby.

More details inside on page 8.

# NINE FACTS THE DoT WON'T ADMIT ABOUT THE "SPEED KILLS" CAMPAIGN

The latest *Distorters of Truth*, sorry, Department of Transport, campaign about speed says baldly: "Speed Kills". Over 1000 deaths a year are attributed directly to excess speed by this campaign.

The things it *doesn't* say are even more enlightening:

1. The DoT publication "Killing Speed and Saving Lives" indicates "excessive speed" to be a **contributory** factor (not the **only** or even the **main** factor) in 22 to 32 percent of all accidents.
2. Therefore, in at least **two-thirds to three-quarters** of all accidents, **misuse** of speed by one or other road user (which **must** contribute to 100 percent of accidents) is not even considered to be a contributory factor by the DoT!

## DoT accident assessors need not even hold a driving licence!

3. The DoT does not consider that its accident assessors need to be expert drivers. Indeed, they **need not even hold a driving licence**.
3. Since 1965, when civilian DoT officials took over from expert police accident assessors (who were all Class 1 police drivers), the proportion of accidents attributed to "excess speed" has **leapt from 8 percent to the current 22 to 32 percent**. Police assessors had favoured the term "misuse of speed", which covered situations in which a road user's **lack** of speed had been a contributory factor to an accident; a concept that now seems to be inexplicable to the closed minds of the DoT "experts".

Who do you believe? **Inexpert civilians or expert police drivers?**

4. 1965 saw the beginning of the gradual

winding down of the police driver training schools such as Hendon. At that stage the police driver accident rate was **one per 80,000 miles driven**. With the inevitable decline in police driving standards brought about by the decline in training, this statistic has **now risen to around one accident per 20,000 miles driven**.

Pretty conclusive evidence in favour of driver education over anti-road user legislation, wouldn't you say?

5. **Over 60 percent** of UK fatality accidents and **over 70%** of UK road casualties occur on roads with **40mph or lower speed limits**.
6. Our motorways, which are our highest speed roads, and on which the discredited 70mph limit is ignored by some 60 percent of vehicles (and hence over 70 percent of car drivers) are also **comprehensively** our safest roads. You are **three times less likely to be killed** and **nine times less likely to be seriously injured** on a UK motorway than on all other classes of UK road.

## UK's urban road accident fatality rate is twice that of Germany

7. Yet the UK's **urban** road accident fatality rate is **twice** that of Germany, a country without a mandatory maximum national motorway speed limit. Germans motorists respect their Transport Ministry's responsible attitude in allowing ultra-rapid motorway travel under good conditions and reciprocate by rigidly observing all other posted lower limits.

What a contrast to the UK; where contempt for the 70mph motorway limit has bred contempt for all limits - and particularly urban ones - amongst many drivers.

8. Largely **speed limit-free** Autobahns in the former West Germany are **safer than the 55 and 65mph limited** US freeways.

## Autobahns are safer than US freeways

9. The United States most unsafe major roads are their 55 and 65mph limited rural freeways:

**Single-vehicle accidents** are the primary contributor to their appalling safety record.

Rigidly applied, low speed limits have virtually enforced the adoption of cruise control. This, combined with wide, long, straight, featureless roads breeds driver inattention and boredom. This in turn leads to periods of micro-, or worse, full-blown sleep and a fatality rate (at 21.25 fatalities per 1000 million vehicle km) **over three and-a-half times higher than that on the former West German Autobahns**.

Now try and convince yourself of the puerile suggestion that **under all circumstances** it's automatically true that: "Speed Kills".

There are, of course, **high risk** situations in which moderating your speed makes sense, e.g.:

- In poor weather and visibility and in dense traffic.
- In the vicinity of schools around school opening and closing hours.
- On urban and suburban estate roads where there is a high concentration of children, other pedestrians, parked vehicles, unrestrained animals etc..
- At locations of poor visibility approaching blind bends, road crests, poor visibility junctions (for merging traffic) etc...

Equally, there can be circumstances in which **increasing** your speed can prevent dangerous situations arising; e.g., during an overtaking manoeuvre or when merging with a faster-moving traffic stream.

Making good progress under circumstances in which it is safe so to do also affords time to moderate speed when that is appropriate.

So, in terms of the speed issue, I think what the self-appointed "experts" actually **mean** is:

**When and Where** Speed is **likely** to kill, Kill your Speed.

But that brings us back to **driver (and possibly even civil servant) education**, doesn't it?

## The Association of British Drivers

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For contact details see:  
[www.abd.org.uk/contacts.htm](http://www.abd.org.uk/contacts.htm)

Sir George said that tolling could encourage people to avoid travelling at peak times. This is another example of this Government treating people like idiots. Clearly Sir George is unaware that people are already getting up earlier and earlier to avoid peak periods. They do not need any financial incentive to avoid jams if they can.

The Government persists in its view of road users (fostered by the media) that they drive about the countryside just for the hell of it, presumably finding some perverse pleasure simply in being in a car and in a jam! What can be done to make the government and media (so besotted with the false and emotive arguments of the green lobby) realise that people drive on the roads because they have to? Travelling to and from work and about one's business is essential for most people and driving is what the Americans would call the "least worst" option.

The greens will, of course, call for more to be spent on public transport. But then they are not living in the real, hard world. People whose journeys to work are fairly simple (suburb to town centre, for example) do use public transport. But for many, the journey to work is more complicated and no public transport system could cope with the variety of routes.

The railways, praised by environmentalists have already had billions spent upon them and remain one of the most inefficient and unpleasant modes of transport imaginable. Being stranded on broken down trains is by no means a rare occurrence; and management concern for the customer is non-existent.

### **civil liberties at risk - but who cares?**

Sir George said that the system would provide better information on traffic flows. He neglected to mention that this information is already gathered by the induction circuits embedded along most motorways. The only difference is that with the tolling technology the Government would know exactly *who* had been where and when.

Is it not odd that the civil liberty campaigners who raised such a hue and cry when the tagging of thieves and burglars was suggested, have raised not a single voice about what will amount to the tagging of every honest, hard-working citizen? Perhaps they will change their minds when, having got the main infrastructure in place for motorways, the government extends the system year by year to every UK street.

So who will benefit from tolling? It is

hard to see how even this spendthrift and irresponsible government can justify spending £800 million of money which it has not got on a completely unnecessary project. The world's financial markets are already anticipating (with the pound at a poor DM2.16 and appalling FF7.43) that the Government will print its way out of trouble again. This is one twist to the future inflationary spiral, tolling will be another; so the British public is definitely not on the list of beneficiaries.

### **The beneficiaries of tolling (yes there will be some)**

Of course the company that wins the contract will do well, and one cannot blame the bidders for going for the business.

A future totalitarian government will find it extremely useful to be able to keep tags on its citizens. Especially when the vehicle-borne part of the equipment becomes small enough to be carried (compulsorily) about the person. Tolling and tracking need not stop even when one gets out of the car and walks.

Then, of course, the individual directors of the winning company will do extremely well. Six-figure salaries and seven-figure pension funds no doubt. It will be interesting to see who is on the board.

## **And these are our "friends"? - Motoring organisations look set to betray their members**

On cost reduction grounds, Regional Police forces are apparently in the process of relinquishing responsibility for manning motorway observation centres to civilian (AA and RAC) observers, who will henceforth direct recovery services to broken-down vehicles etc.. While this may result in a reduced burden on the *public* purse, the net result is that the cost of recovery from the motorway to the private motorist will be *increased* - not just because of the "handling costs" the two major motoring organisations charge for directing the recovery services to the stranded motorist - but also because only *selected* recovery operators (and presumably *not* the cheapest ones) will have the AA and RAC's approval.

It is also interesting to speculate that once established for recovery purposes, the two organisations would be ideally placed to handle traffic control and speed limit enforcement operations (which have also been proposed for subcontracting to the private sector - to howls of protest from the Police).

Bearing in mind that the AA is nowadays primarily a profit-hungry, marketing-led, financially driven organisation; its previous, somewhat bewildering support for the completely discredited 70mph motorway speed limit becomes a little more comprehensible - particularly if a percentage of the fine revenue were to find its way into the AA

coffers as part of the deal for taking over these duties.

It is instructive (and somewhat depressing!) to recall that the AA was formed to *protect* motorists from such revenue-motivated state persecution as the notorious "Red Flag" Act.

Indeed, the AA's founders vigorously opposed this particularly pernicious piece of state terrorism and furthermore actively prevented the unreasonable enforcement of unrealistic speed limits. Quite a contrast to their current stance, wouldn't you say?

Nowadays, *on totally fabricated grounds*, it appears that some environmental extremists; sadly, also

some politicians *and even sections within the established motoring organisations* would like to see the motorist plunged back into a maelstrom of oppressive, unjust regulations such as were applied in the early days of motoring.

If the AA in particular are not prepared to act to *protect* (instead of *erode*) motorists' hard-won freedoms then it is up to us to organise to protect ourselves.

It almost makes you want to weep, though, doesn't it? Charles Jarrot and his colleagues (the founder members of the Motorists' Mutual Association (which became the Automobile Association) must be turning in their graves!!!

### **"On yer bike" says AA boss**

Simon Dyer, head of the AA travelled by chauffeur-driven limousine to London to announce to the world:

"It is my firm belief that all car owners should be encouraged to choose the most appropriate means of travel for every journey - walking, cycling or taking public transport whenever possible."

Most people already do this and we don't need town-hall totalitarians, media mafiosi or AA hypocrites to tell us to.

*On yours, Simon.*

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# Motoring in Europe

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## **Spain: land of contrasts - and motoring pleasure**

*Hugh Bladon writes compellingly of a spring-time journey through Spain.*

Until a couple of years ago, the Spanish tourist office used to run an advertisement which had "If you think you know Spain, think again" as its catchphrase. My wife and I always thought that this was one of the most honest and appropriate adverts, since most people's perception of Spain is gained from the short drive between airport and accommodation, with the possibility of a trip into the hills behind whichever resort they are at at the time, whereas the truth is very different. Mainland Spain is a land of contrasts : there are rich and poor, modern buildings and ancient architecture, rugged mountains and barren plains and, of course, it can be very hot and quite cold - occasionally.

There is one other aspect which is not covered in any guidebooks. For anybody who wants to enjoy driving, Spain is the country to go to. They will not be disappointed. As a taster, let me tell you of our recent trip back from the south coast.

### **For anybody who wants to enjoy driving, Spain is the country to go to**

We normally head off to the Costa del Sol in May. France is a country which is easily dismissed in the day and we usually fork left at Bordeaux and choose a different route over the Pyrenees heading south down past the east of Madrid. Our return journey is normally in the same direction, but taking in other roads and stopping at different Paradors. This time we decided to come back via the west side of the country for a change.

For the first time for two weeks, we woke on the morning of our departure to find the sun was not shining. Instead there was a heavy sea mist and it was almost chilly as we loaded up and set off at 1000 from our seafront apartment near Marbella. The infamous coast road is now an excellent dual-carriageway and as we looped up into the hills behind Torremolinos we had to employ the wipers as the mist was turning to rain. However, it was not long before the clouds began to thin and as we climbed up the hill behind Malaga the sun broke through and it was time to turn on the air-conditioning.

The drop down towards Antequera is the first time the driver has to exercise restraint. The road is smooth and there is little traffic. 90 - 100 is the norm but it would be quite possible to do a whole lot more if one were so minded.

Just beyond Antequera you meet the road which runs from Saville to Granada. For some reason the Malaga traffic is signposted this way to Granada which means two sides of a triangle, rather by the old direct N321 which is much shorter and still used by those with local knowledge. This means that the light traffic to this junction suddenly became a trickle as we swept left and on towards Seville and the Granada traffic went the other way.

It is as you drive along this next section that you have time to wonder why the peabrains at the DoT (or the TRRL or whoever makes these decisions) do not adopt measures from other countries which are so clearly better than our own.

Whereas our motorways and dual-carriageways have only an ugly piece of Armco down the middle, the Spaniards adopt a different approach altogether. Generally they have a shallow valley between the opposing lanes. This has the effect of allowing a vehicle to go off but it will not go up the other side and into the path of traffic coming the other way. Furthermore, it will not bounce back into the path of following traffic either. The final bonus is that it does not need maintenance or repair. Far too simple, cheap and effective for our decision-makers. But the Spanish go one step further. They then plant small shrubs in the little valley and these grow up so that there is a nice screen between the opposing traffic. This has the effect of not only making the road extremely pretty with the nice flowering shrubs but provides a habitat for wildlife and at night there is no problem with dazzle since you are shielded from oncoming headlights. All round, in my view, the perfect solution. The road along towards Seville is thus a mass of colour and a delight for driver and passenger alike.

We did not go all the way to Seville. Instead, we forked right at Osuna because I noticed a small white road which ran due NNW from here to join the main road from Cordoba and cutting out Seville with the obvious extra traffic in that area. It also got us on to the little back roads which are such a pleasure and the best way to see rural Spain. There is downside, of course. They are sometimes very rough and can be quite winding and there is no telling from the map. This road was a mixture but mostly it was not one I would wish to use again. There was virtually no traffic and we passed through some lovely unspoilt countryside but it took quite a long time to cover the 100 miles until we were back onto the main road and the real motoring we so enjoy in Spain. A short section towards Zafra and we then headed north on the N630 to Merida and the Caceres, making up time as we swept along roads which are so smooth you wonder how they can possibly get them like that. Beyond Caceres we were to find out because they are busy regrading and resurfacing the road which winds past the lake which would seem to be the perfect place for a watersports holiday. A huge area of water but only one yacht to be seen on its surface with a few at anchor in some of the bays.

### **Spain ... can spend billions on road improvements at our expense**

Soon the road starts to climb up into the hills and here they are busy with the diggers. Not for them, it seems, do they have to worry about protesters and environmentalists. If the road needs to be made straighter they chop a piece out of the hillside and that is that. Easy, of course, when the country is so vast and the population concentrated into small areas. Easy, too, when the EC is shovelling our money into Spain and they can spend billions on road improvements at our expense.

Pasencia is a lovely old town with masses of Stork's nests on the tops of the buildings. It was getting quite late now so we did not have time to stop but had to fork right here and travel down a little yellow road, also being straightened and resurfaced, to our Parador at Jarandilla de la Vera which is about 120 miles due west of Madrid in the Sierra de Gredos. It was about 6pm and the temperature was still up in the 80's. Unfortunately this was too early in the year for the Spanish

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# Motoring in Europe

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and the swimming pool, into which I would love to have plunged, was empty.

Paradors, (Posadas in Portugal), are state owned hotels - with a difference. Over the years the Spanish have taken over old castles, convents and monasteries and turned them into fine hotels throughout the country to assist in the promotion of tourism. We have only ever come across one (at Bailen) which was not up to standard and some are modern buildings. In the main, however, they are superb buildings, often miles from anywhere but commanding wonderful views of the countryside and occasionally with their own little township around them. They are extremely comfortable, have fine restaurants with excellent food and are not too pricey. We have always found the service good and the menus have English translations so you do not have to worry about what you are eating - (my schoolboy French once let me down and I ended up with sheep's brain on my plate, which was not a good idea !!). This Parador did not disappoint, other than the pool, since it had a wonderful lounge area with suits of armour on the walls and the food was excellent.

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## the village turned out to be one of the most extraordinary we have ever seen

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The next day, Sunday, was to be one of sheer motoring enjoyment and the reason for writing this short piece. The little road we had used to get to our Parador continued nearly all the way to Avila but extended for almost 80 miles. It was very wiggly on the map and climbed through the mountains. Furthermore, parts of it have red crosses on it which indicate poor road. The map, however, also revealed a small white road which we had passed on the way and which would take us back onto the main road for Avila, the N110. We decided to use this instead and accordingly retraced our steps for about 10 miles before turning up into the foothills. A small navigational error took us into instead of round a small village called Garganta la Olla. This error was not one we regretted since the village turned out to be one of the most extraordinary we have ever seen. The buildings were leaning over and the balconies almost touching so that we could barely see the sky above as we negotiated the very narrow streets. At one point, the street opened out a little to reveal a large boulder about 5ft high around which I had to drive. Sticking out of this boulder were wooden beams holding up the balcony of the house above. The village itself was a dead-end and I had retrace my steps through the tiny streets in order to extricate us. We then found the correct road to continue our journey.

And quite an interesting piece of road it turned out to be. The road, very narrow but smooth, wound backwards and forwards up the mountain and on each hairpin bend the views became more spectacular. We passed two Visa vans on the way but otherwise saw no other vehicle. Eventually, just as we reached the top we stopped and the view before us was quite breathtaking. Simply miles and miles of Spain spread out before us as far as we could see. There was just a rustle of breeze in the trees to accompany the clicking noise from the catalytic converters as they cooled off. It was one of the finest views we have seen anywhere.

The road then ran along the shoulder of the mountain

before beginning the descent and we were now looking down into the valley with more mountains the other side. Very soon we were driving down through masses of cherry trees which were laden with fruit. The families were out picking and there seemed to be cherries in ever greater quantities until we eventually emerged onto the N110 and headed right for Avila. This 'short cut', which measures about 10 miles on the map had taken us over 1½ hours to cover but we did not regret the loss of time one bit.

The N110 is one of the best roads you could hope to drive on. From the point from which we joined it to Soria, (just short of which it actually becomes N122), is a distance of some 200 miles. I can think of no better road on which to drive. It is smooth, has everything from hairpin bends to long straights and is almost totally deserted. When you add a backdrop of beautiful scenery and a complete absence of police, radar traps and all the other paraphernalia we have to endure in this country you will get some idea of why I would recommend such a journey to anybody who enjoys his motoring.

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## road markings ... are sensible and helpful

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It is interesting to note the system of road markings in Spain since they are, in my view, not only sensible but much more helpful than ours. On any long hill, where the road width permits, it is divided into three lanes as are ours. However, the system of overtaking is such that an overtaker in lane two can be overtaken in lane three and this is expected. However, near the top of the hill there is a no-overtaking sign which can be confusing the first time it is seen since this refers only to the use of the left hand lane. It is still permissible to overtake up the middle lane. On our hills, of course, this sort of thing is not permitted since the lines between lanes two and three become double and if you are unfortunate enough to be following two lorries trundling up beside one another you are stuck until the overtake is completed - by which time you have probably reached the top of the hill and it is too late anyway.

Overtaking and no-overtaking is signed by the same line system we use. However this is re-inforced by signs at the

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# Motoring in Europe

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same point on the side of the road. This in itself makes it easier to anticipate when it is next possible to overtake. The bonus, however, is when one is driving along a bendy road. Our system tells you there is a bend and the chevrons sometimes indicate how sharp it will be. In Spain you enter a bend and when you can see the cancellation of the no-overtaking signs on their posts, you know that at that point you will be able to see and the road will be straight(er). You can thus start to accelerate earlier, almost as if somebody is reading the road to you from pace notes or from a map.

A further refinement is advisory speed signs as you approach a corner. I generally regard these as being in miles per hour and thus a corner with a 40 sign as you approach will be quite tight and is best taken at 40 mph. and so on.

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## Overtaking where it is not permitted is punishable by something which I fortunately do not know

As far as police activity goes, they go in two's on motorbikes. They are not in the least interested in speed and I have, from time to time, driven past them standing by the roadside at 3 figure speeds and they have not even looked up from their conversation. I have also been waved through when police vehicles have seen me approaching from behind. However, they are red hot on people who cross the lines in the middle of the road. Overtaking where it is not permitted is punishable by something which I fortunately do not know, since I do not do it. However, the motorcycle cops station themselves at the top of a hill where they can see back down both sides and anybody who transgresses is pulled in and dealt with accordingly. This seems to me to be an extremely sensible attitude to take, overtaking in the wrong place obviously being far more dangerous and serious than exceeding a speed limit - out of built up areas, of course.

Where we joined it, the N110 is running along the valley beside the river, through some pretty little towns before climbing steeply to over 4000ft where you can look back

down the valley which is lush and green and totally unlike the normal conception of Spain. The road then flattens out and the only constraint on the driver is - well, there is none ! However, it was time for a refreshment stop and we pulled into an inviting restaurant to find the carpark full of 4 X 4 vehicles all laden with hang-giders. We then noticed that they were taking off from the escarpment at a height of 4500ft nearby. It was obviously a regular meeting spot with wives and kids running round and everybody enjoying the sunshine. What a difference the weather makes.

We soon found ourselves following a Madrid registered Merc 300-24 which was going at a cracking pace as we overtook the occasional vehicle. Eventually a long straight with nothing in sight as far as the eye could see prompted me to go past. As I drew alongside he accelerated, which is unusual for a Spaniard. I should, I suppose, have gone down to 5th but even in top there was plenty to see him off and it was as we went by that my wife noticed that the driver was grinning from ear to ear. Our faith in Spanish drivers was restored.

Photographs cannot prepare you for the first sight of Avila. This walled city is beyond description. There is a Parador, where we have stayed on a previous occasion, within the walls and I would recommend at least a night here for anybody exploring Spain.

On this occasion we simply passed through and our journey continued up through Soria, on to Pamplona and then via the very slow but extremely picturesque N121A to Fuenterrabia on the north coast of Spain just short of the border with France, which we reached at about 5pm after about 400 miles. I would recommend the few extra miles to St. Jean de Luz which is much cleaner and prettier.

This is just a taste of Spain. There are many other routes like this one. Go there and enjoy some motoring - it will make you thoroughly depressed about the state of things in this country but at least you will know where you can go to get away from the misery, even if only for a short while.

*You've sold me! - Ed.*

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## Letters



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### The folly of politically motivated speed limits

Sir - Two years ago I was in correspondence with my local M.P. complaining about the tendency of local councils to extend speed limits round villages and towns more than was strictly necessary. This resulted in motorists speeding up in places where they should be driving slowly and with great care. I pointed out that speed limits should only be used sparingly and only in places where motorists should slow down and drive very carefully. Needless to say I was ignored. At about the same time the 30 mph speed limit on Fairmile Lane, Cobham was extended to the straight section of Fairmile Lane.

Just before this was done I wrote to the Esher News predicting a fatal accident as a result of this additional speed limit. The Esher

News published my letter. A few weeks ago there was a fatal accident on Fairmile Lane. Again I wrote to the Esher News giving likely reasons for the crash and again they published my letter. The response so far [from the authorities] has been unrealistic. The suggestion is that when there are 30 mph signs around motorists should obey them. Fine in theory, in practice things do not work out that way. If there are many speed limits and they tend to be extensive and are seen to be in many instances stupid then motorists do not obey them. This means that motorists drive fast in places where they really should slow down. The process of setting speed limits should be a pragmatic one and should take into account human nature otherwise a lot of people are going to get killed. I fear that in the case of Fairmile Lane there will be another fatal accident in six, nine or eighteen

months time unless my suggestions are acted on.

It has been suggested to me that local speed limits should be set by the police who are experts in traffic and know what they are doing instead of local councils. I think that this is a very good idea.

Dr Michael S Bingley, Cobham, Surrey  
*Sounds a good idea to us too. Many areas are suffering from the imposition of unwise and inappropriate speed limits.*

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### What's happening in your town?

Write to "On the Road" with news of what is happening (or not happening) in your town, village or county.

# Pollution and health issues

## Asthma - evidence shows cars are *not* to blame

Separate surveys in Scotland and Norway indicate that traffic pollution is not a cause of asthma.

The Scottish survey was conducted in the Highlands, an area noted for things other than vehicle fumes, and covered children aged 12 and 13. It found that 14% of them suffered from asthma. This is almost the same as the national average. Those surveyed in Skye suffered more asthma than the national average: 17%.

The survey in Norway also found no link between asthma and vehicle exhaust emissions.

Doctors associated with the National Asthma Campaign commented on the survey. Dr Jane Austin stated that "the results seem to contradict popular opinion which tends to link the dramatic increase in childhood asthma over the last couple of decades with the huge growth of traffic. Dr Jon Ayres said asthma has a wide variety of causes.

The survey team in Scotland is now looking at other possibilities, in particular the home environment and factors such as ventilation and tobacco smoke.

## Asthma - family size is a further factor

The rise in the number of cases of asthma is not in dispute but the cause is far from clear yet. Previous issues of On The Road have drawn attention to reports of independent scientific research projects which have suggested several possible causes of asthma.

Perhaps the strongest candidate at the moment is the house dust mite which loves the modern home environment of warmth and fitted carpets. The microscopic particles of house dust mite excrement are known to exacerbate the symptoms of asthma sufferers. Children are spending more time in this environment too, watching the television instead of playing outside, so are more susceptible.

So, ironically, in respect of asthma, parents may be making things worse rather than better in attempting to provide a safe, comfortable home environment.

## Firstborn children more at risk

New research suggests the statistical influence of family size is significant in the rise in numbers of asthmatics. Firstborn children are known to be statistically more likely to suffer from asthma. This is because they are to some extent protected from contact

with viruses etc until they go to school. Whereas younger siblings come into contact with infections brought home by the older, school-age children.

Professor Newman Taylor of the Royal Brompton Hospital, London, suggests that there could be a critical period early life when "viral infections may inhibit or modify the way the immune system behaves".

He goes on to say that as the average family is now smaller than it was, a greater proportion of the population are now firstborn. Thus greater numbers are susceptible to asthma.

## LEAD-ing us into even bigger environmental problems

The electric car, hailed by many "greens" as the solution to urban traffic pollution problems, has now been suggested to pose an even greater environmental threat than the internal combustion engined vehicles it was slated to supersede.

Work by researchers at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University, recently reported in the *New York Times*, have established that emissions from intensive increases in mining, smelting and recycling of the lead necessary for increased battery production to power these electric vehicles - even using the anticipated most environmentally-neutral future technology - would *annually* emit *six times* as much (at best) brain-damaging (and at worst potentially lethal) metallic lead into the local environment *per battery produced* as a small car running on leaded petrol.

In an article to appear in May's *Science* magazine, the researcher's suggest that even if only 5% of America's 200 million vehicles were powered by lead-cell batteries, an extra 21,000 tonnes of toxic metallic lead would be released into the environment annually.

Alternative current battery technologies would use even more toxic, and rare and expensive elements such as nickel and cadmium.

## Cleaner and more efficient cars are on the way

A new steam treatment system is under development which promises cleaner and more efficient cars. Professor Andrews of the fuel and energy department of Leeds university says that the development, which involves injecting steam into the engine reduces emissions of nitrogen oxides from petrol by up to 40%.

It also makes them cheaper to run, and a Ford Sierra fitted with the system has achieved

65 mpg instead of 32 mpg, and the cost of adaption is about £350 for a car.

Carbon Dioxide emissions and hydrocarbon emissions also fall considerably with the system.

A water boiler about the size of a kettle is fitted to the car exhaust, and heated to high temperatures before being fed into the engine.

The system was invented by a Mr Megenbier, a former German prisoner of war.

## "Keep Traffic Moving!" says SAAB

Saab's head of Research and Development, Stig-Goran Larsson, has suggested that cuts in car emissions are being undermined by under-investment in traffic management and by traffic calming measures.

He cites the example of the current Saab 900 Turbo; which, on a journey from London to Blackpool and back at a steady 56mph, would produce less hydrocarbon pollution than spilling half-a-teaspoonful of petrol on a filling station forecourt. By the end of the decade, all new cars sold in Europe will have to meet this standard.

## "Traffic flow must be improved. Moving traffic reduces pollution." says Larsson.

But this technological progress is being more than negated by lack of investment in traffic management by European Governments, leading to stop-start motoring in traffic jams, and braking and accelerating at road humps - both of which increase emissions dramatically.

## Wanted

The ABD is run entirely on a voluntary basis. Funds are limited. To assist with the campaign we urgently need the following equipment and services.

- Fax machine.
- Printing or photocopying services.
- Linotronic or similar bureau services.

Please contact the Chairman if you can provide any of the above free of charge or at low cost.

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# ABD appears on BBC's You Decide programme

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ABD Chairman Brian Gregory appeared on BBC 1's You Decide programme on Tuesday the 8th August, hosted by Newsnight's Jeremy Paxman. The programme was devoted to discussion of the proposition "Should we be **forced** to use our cars less?"

Before the programme, viewers were invited to take part in a telephone poll to see what proportion agreed or disagreed with that statement. A majority (62%) of those who called before the programme thought that drivers *should* be forced off the road, although it is quite likely that this sample was not representative because, with the notable exception of ABD members, car owners (even enthusiastic ones), are far more complacent than their opponents, and thus did not vote in sufficient numbers.

## **Cars are getting cleaner all the time**

A heated debate then took place, with a panel of leading anti-car witnesses, including Dr Meyer Hellman of the Policy Studies Institute, Phillip Connolly from Greenwich Action to Stop Pollution, Roger Higman of Friends of the Earth and Phil Miller from an organisation known as "Reclaim the Streets" (which has been setting up illegal road blocks on main roads in London and Birmingham in an effort to "attack car culture head on") putting the case against the car.

The audience was selected so as to be evenly divided between supporters and opponents, and the pro-car campaigners were invited to challenge the panel.

Brian Gregory challenged the view put by Professor Hillman that parents are too frightened to allow their children to walk or cycle to school because of traffic, and cited the fear of abduction as being the primary reason.

## **Force of argument swings opinion**

ABD member Jonathan Newby-Robson, who also spoke on the programme, pointed out the attack on personal freedom which car use restrictions necessarily imply.

Amongst other leading speakers supporting our cause were journalist Mike Rutherford from Auto Express magazine, who particularly singled out the continuing and growing subsidy - now £17 billion per year - which motorists pay to the Exchequer when the "enormous" cost of the road budget was discussed, and Ernie Thompson of the SMMT countered the accusations that cars are causing ever more pollution of the environment by explaining that cars are being made cleaner all the time, and that, by the end of the Century, 98% of noxious emissions will have been removed from the exhausts of new cars. The programme made the point that our air is already getting cleaner, though our newspapers are choosing to ignore this fact.

The ABD's Jonathan Newby-Robson quoted the fact that the Saab 9000 has been tested in London and shown to produce exhaust emissions which contain lower levels of major pollutants than the surrounding air.

Andrew Pharoah of the British Roads Federation stressed the low level of investment in roads in this country compared to other European countries, and the adverse effect on

our economy of either failing to update the road network or making it too costly to use. He also exploded the myth put about by the Eco-fascists that the whole country is about to be covered in tarmac. Roads currently cover about 1.5% of our total land area. If the entire "Roads for Prosperity" programme of the late 1980s was completed that would rise to 1.6% of our land area.

Edmond King of the RAC, also attended and was batting for our side as were many others including Bert Barrs of the ABD.

## **all we need to do is give the public the facts**

Unlike the sterile anti-car propaganda that we are usually fed by the media, the debate was a good one and an informed one, raising most of the issues that we have been tackling, and a telephone poll conducted at the end of the programme showed an almost even split with only 51% then opposing the right to drive. Bearing in mind the initial poll result, and the likely views of many who watched the programme, it is a considerable achievement to have swung opinion so much.

**It also tells us that we need to get the message across even more strongly than before: all we need to do is give the public the facts. If we can do that, we can win the arguments.**

## **ABD Committee Meetings.**

**All ABD members are welcome at committee meetings.**

These are held at the Mundy Arms Hotel, Mackworth Village, Derby.  
Future dates: 30 September 1995, 2 December, 24 February 1996, 13 April, 15 June.

Meetings start at 10.30 am.

Minutes of previous meetings are circulated to attendees and are available to members. Contact Kyle Burnett for copies.

### Demise of UK tourist industry threatened - by Green extremism

Those involved in the Lake District tourist industry would be well-advised to seek a more secure home for their hard-earned investments. The radical Green Movement, in its bigoted, unthinking, pseudo-religious zeal - which must now rank up there with the IRA and the PLO in its ability to threaten intimidation and oppression on an unprecedented and totally unjustified scale - has decided in its omnipotence that the car must be sacrificed on the altar of Green expediency.

The Prophets of Environmental Doom have managed to persuade weak-willed - and even weaker-minded - politicians that the Lake District is the place to start the Campaign of Terror against the car.

It is proposed that *all* minor routes are to be restricted to 20mph to safeguard walkers.

Major routes, such the A66 arterial dual carriageway, corridor to the Teesside conurbation to the East, are to be restricted to *40mph!*

There can only be one outcome of this absurd battery of anti-motorist proposals: motorists (who, by the way, are frequently also *tourists*) will, *and should*, vote with their wheels and find somewhere with less Draconian, less anti-car policies.

If the authorities "responsible" (and I use the word in its loosest possible sense) for other UK beauty spots adopt a similarly asinine stance, It is predictable that the even more Britons will be propelled (via their local travel agent) to the nearest international airport (at 40mph, of course) to catch a flight to an ex-UK resort not tainted with Green Lunacy.

Should you wish to register your utter rejection of these mind-bogglingly stupid proposals, the person to write to is:

Andrew Ryland,

Lake District Traffic Management Initiative,

c/o National Park Offices, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7RL.

### Road-pricing study withheld

The £3 million report on road pricing, three years in preparation, has been withheld from public scrutiny. Whitehall's policy towards the public remains the same: treat them like mushrooms (keep them in the dark, and feed them with brown stuff).

### Unrealistic speed limits futile ...

Department of Transport research has shown, once again, that 47% of Britain's drivers exceed the 70 mph motorway limit in free flowing traffic, with 14% exceeding 80 mph. 23% of motorcyclists exceed 80 mph.

This is despite the millions of pounds spent on a propaganda campaign to urge drivers to slow down. The researchers should hardly be surprised. If they had spoken to their friends at the Transport Research Laboratory, they would have been told that drivers usually respect a limit that they see as appropriate, but will ignore one that they consider to be too low.

How do you explain to a motorist who has just returned from an entirely legal high speed trip across France or Germany, that they are risking the lives and limbs of all around them at an entirely reasonable 80 mph in free flowing traffic?

### ... and fatal

#### Fatigue the main cause of motorway accidents

Fatigue is the single, avoidable cause of up to 50% of motorway accidents, according to M40 traffic patrol bobby, PC Tony King.

A recent AA report puts the proportion of fatigue- and stress-related motorway accidents at 40%, while workers at Loughborough University's Sleep Research Laboratory estimate it at 23% - while admitting this figure almost certainly underestimates the scale of the problem.

Until 1993, the Birmingham-Oxford stretch of the M40 had no services, and a sleep-related accident occurred almost every day, according to PC King.

With the spectre of yet lower motorway speed limits and more rigid enforcement, the

scope for monotony, boredom and inattention - and hence micro-, or full-blown-, sleep is substantially increased.

This view is borne out by the fact that rural freeways in the state of Nevada in the United States (which are subject to a rigidly-enforced 65mph limit) have an appalling 21.25 fatalities per 1000 million vehicle kilometres driven, over 3.5 times the figure (6.0 deaths per 1000Mvkm) for the largely speed limit free former West German Autobahns.

The largest proportion of Nevada interstate road accidents? Single-vehicle fatigue-, and sleep-related ones.

Under the further de-regulation of US speed limits currently underway, Nevada is considering removing the speed limit altogether on these roads.

This is hardly surprising when one realises that Nevada could cut its interstate death toll by over two-thirds by adopting the German system: drivers may be going faster, so *if* they have an accident it will be a more serious one, but at least they'll be *awake* and able to take avoiding action to avoid the accident occurring in the first place!

When will the powers-that-be learn that *speed is not the killer* on our motorways; but that *lack of it* may actually be?

### BSM finds danger at speed - 35 not 100mph

The British School of Motoring has conducted a survey of motoring in which it reveals that driving 5mph over the limit in towns caused more fatal accidents in 1994 than were caused by driving at 100mph on motorways. This entirely supports the ABD's stance on the issue of speed limits.

The survey was based on the observation of company car drivers and listed their faults including (in order of frequency) exceeding speed limits; not slowing down sufficiently for bends and junctions; misjudging other vehicles' speed; driving too close to cyclists, pedestrians and other vehicles and overtaking near side roads. There was also a general failure to anticipate hazardous situations arising.

Insurance company, Privilege is encouraging its policy holders to take BSM's advanced driving course by offering reduced premiums. BSM claim that major corporate customers have seen accidents and insurance claims drop dramatically after providing the course for their company car drivers.

This supports the ABD's insistence on the importance of improved driver education and training, both in initial training leading to a tougher L-test and in continuing training.

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## A case of misplaced priorities?

Geoff Browne recently raised a very thorny issue in his "Browne Sauce" column in Classic Car Weekly. He pointed out that on a recent 80mph journey along an empty stretch of M4, *had* he given way to temptation and "pressed on" there would have been every likelihood of him being stopped or Gatsoed and fined; possibly even banned.

He contrasted this with the attitude of the police to the burglary and vandalism of a colleague's car, his office and a separate colleague's house: in one case it took them four days to acknowledge notification of the incident!

A resident of a new estate on the outskirts of Middlesbrough, a town noted for its car-theft and griefriding problems, awoke from sleep very early one morning to observe a group of youths trying to screwdriver their way into his nearly-new Calibra 2.0i 8v. When the police finally deigned to arrive (in an Escort van) the culprits were long gone and the policeman's attitude was: "serves you right for driving a flash car"! Surely there is something wrong here - a case of misplaced priorities?

It even spills over into the latest DoT "Speed Kills" campaign: it doesn't say: "*When* and *Where* speed is *likely* to kill, kill your speed" It just says (incorrectly): "Speed Kills".

And we all know at whom this latest campaign will *in practice* be targeted: *not* at the 50mph "urban cruise-missile": the dozy, inattentive or inconsiderate driver who threatens our childrens' and old peoples' lives - no, it will be the drivers on far-and-away our safest roads - motorways. Why? Because it's *easy*! Why bust a gut trying to catch *real* criminals? Why get into a sweat trying to reform the *real* traffic menaces? Take the soft, easy option - it's only lives that are affected, after all!

Or is it even more cynical than that? Are the DoT happy for our urban pedestrian fatality rate to be *twice* that of Germany, a country without a mandatory motorway speed limit? That way they can continue to claim that the only way to improve the situation is through ever-increasing driver regulation, instead of more rigorous road user education (which clearly works in Germany)?

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## Three Cheers!

### Ontario bans "Orwellian" speed cameras

Freedom-loving readers of "On The Road" could move to Toronto, Canada if they find the UK government and media onslaught against the car just too depressing. Mr Michael Harris, leader of the Conservative administration of Ontario has banned the use of speed cameras (or photo radar as they call it over there) in the Toronto area.

Mr Harris's announcement of the ban included some memorable quotes:

*"Photo radar is an Orwellian cash machine."*

*"Technology is becoming the accuser in our society."*

*"Photo radar is a government cash grab."*

Words which are so obviously true over here as well but which we are unlikely to hear uttered by any of the present motley crew at Westminster.

Mr Harris was in favour of enforcement by police patrols who would be able to assess traffic situations and intervene when necessary. He said this was preferable to "simply snapping pictures for cash".

### Gummer's planning U-turn

Mr John Gummer, Environment Secretary, announcing revisions to planning guidelines, has told planners that parking for town centre shoppers must be improved.

Yes, a government minister seems finally to have woken up to the fact that the anti-car fanatics in the town halls (encouraged up to now by the government's own, iniquitous PPG13 planning guidelines) are strangling town centres to death.

The new guidelines would mean that new commercial, retail and leisure developments should utilise land nearer town centres if possible. Mr Gummer said that this was preferable to spreading development "all over the countryside".

However his thoughts are still rather woolly in some areas, he really only wants to let people with children and heavy shopping go into towns by car. Doesn't he know that people usually *come home* with the heavy shopping? Still, it's a move in the

right direction so we must not be too hard on him.

### ABD at Bromley Motor Pageant

The ABD took a stand at the Bromley Pageant of Motoring on June 25th. This is reputedly the largest one-day national motoring event in Europe.

The main objective was to publicise the Association and raise awareness of the issues facing motorists today.

The stand highlighted the inexorably increasing level of financial and legislative persecution to which the motorist is unfairly being subjected - and the policies we want to see implemented to improve the situation.

Local car dealers were represented, and during the day a variety of motoring-related events took place, including the usual concours d'élégance, autojumble etc..

Stalwart members Brian Sealy-Clarke and Jonathan Newby-Robson made the arrangements and manned the stand. They found that the particular interest of many visitors was the proposed extension of "road fund" taxation to cars not used on the public highway. Several new members signed up on the day.