

# TORQUE

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# EDITOR

## WELCOME TO TORQUE MAGAZINE

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I hope you enjoyed the Spring edition with its new look. It certainly seems to have made an impact with members as I received many complimentary messages. Its always good to know you are appreciated.

When I publish an issue of TORQUE, I add a link to our website on the RoADAR Facebook page so other groups can view it and as a result, we had a request from Glos. RoADAR for further details of Pete Fenlon's Tutor Assessment checklist as mentioned in Stephen Cirell's article.

As nobody took up my challenge of providing a seasonal cover photo, I have added one of my own from last summer.

Hard to believe Summer is upon us and to get you in the mood I have added an article about an unusual camper conversion on page 7, but I think I will stick to my car and caravan. Speaking of cars, below is my new car. I can feel a review coming once I have passed the excited stage.



*Martin Jones*

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Cover photo: Eskdale Way, Goathland, N.Yorks - taken by Martin Jones May 2025



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# Meet the Examiner Paul Haigh (and Bruce)



Having recently learned that a new RoADAR examiner had taken on the role in our area, I thought it only right to introduce myself—and, by extension, introduce him to you all. As luck would have it, Paul had just finished an Experienced Driver Assessment at Lumby Garden Centre. So, accompanied by our chairman and fortified by a cuppa (as all important motoring matters should be), we settled down for a very enjoyable chat in the café.



Paul's journey into advanced driving began with South Yorkshire Police in 1990, when he joined as a Special Constable. Two years later, he became a full-time officer, initially serving as a response officer in Barnsley before moving to the Road Traffic Department in 1999. As an advanced driver, he spent many years patrolling the roads of South Yorkshire—presumably wondering why everyone else wasn't quite as smooth and well-positioned as he was.

Before his police career, Paul worked in the Civil Service—though, disappointingly, not as a spy (I did check). This earlier service allowed him to commute pension payments, giving him a very respectable 30 years' service and a full pension on retirement in October 2018. He spent several years as an Acting Sergeant but declined promotion, wisely choosing to remain in the Road Traffic Department rather than swap blue lights for paperwork.

Retirement, however, didn't stick. After about eighteen months, Paul was invited back under the "30+ scheme." This required him to go through the full recruitment process again—proof, if any were needed, that even highly experienced drivers aren't exempt from jumping through the occasional hoop. He secured a role in the Serious Collision Unit, where he worked until 2021. An opportunity then arose in Driver Training as Police Staff, prompting him to resign as a Police Officer in order to take up the position he continues in today.

You may notice the absence of photographs accompanying this article. Unlike some of our previous examiner profiles, Paul is still employed by the Police and quite rightly prefers not to test the limits of Force regulations—or his colleagues' sense of humour—by appearing in print.

Of course, no good motoring story is complete without a memorable incident, and Paul did not disappoint. In 2017, shortly before his retirement, he was involved in a prolonged pursuit of a stolen vehicle originating in Manchester. The pursuit continued south along the M1, culminating in the suspect vehicle becoming airborne (always an undesirable feature) before crashing into trees beside the motorway.

The driver was swiftly apprehended by a Police Dog. Unfortunately, a second dog handler had also arrived on scene and deployed another dog named Bruce—one with rather less discernment about who was on which side. Mistaking Paul for part of the problem, the dog first latched onto his left arm and then, showing admirable persistence, took a further bite from a rather more personal location as Paul made a tactical retreat into his police car.

Paul reports that the dog remained outside the driver's window, expressing its opinions loudly and at length, before eventually heading off southbound along the motorway—presumably in search of someone else to critique. Paul's description of the incident sounded like something from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Paul did show me photos of his injuries which are too graphic to print, but the handler, who was a friend of Paul's, later sent him a photograph of the culprit with a brief note. Typical dog handler humour.



*If it makes you feel better paul  
Bruce felt bad all night as well!*

The meeting concluded on a more civilised note, with our chairman offering Paul Honorary Membership of West Yorkshire RoADAR—an offer he was pleased to accept. So, keep an eye out: you may encounter Paul at a group meeting or even on your next test. If you do, rest assured his bite is considerably less severe than the dog's.

# ADVANCED DRIVING-MY JOURNEY

## BY JON TAYLOR

None of us like to admit we might benefit from a little tuition behind the wheel. We're experienced. We're seasoned. We've "always done it this way." And then we reverse our wife's new car into a parked vehicle. For the second time in ten years. At that point, I had a choice: seek professional help... or be permanently reassigned to driving the old banger. I rang Mike Bell and confessed that my reversing needed urgent attention before I was banned from the Hyundai and left with something held together by oil consumption and optimism. And so began my advanced car journey.

### **The PCA – A Reality Check on Wheels**

My first drive was a Pre-Course Assessment with Martin. "Eventful" would be polite. There were, apparently, areas for development. Holding the steering wheel incorrectly. Changing down sequentially through the gearbox. General evidence that I had passed my test in 1981 and then driven enthusiastically ever since. I was paired with my old next-door neighbour Andy as my mentor – proof that advanced driving truly begins at home.

### **Lesson One – Oil, Water and... 32 PSI**

Pre-drive checks felt familiar as an advanced motorcyclist. Outside checks. Inside checks. Oil and water inspected. Tyres... not kicked but confirmed at a very proper 32 psi. Foot on clutch. Engine start. Warning lights checked. Seatbelt on. Into gear. Observations made. Handbrake off. We were away. What immediately struck me was the live feedback. No waiting until a lay-by to hear about my misdemeanours – they were delivered in real time. "Try holding the wheel like this." "Select the appropriate gear before the hazard." It was efficient. Relentless. Effective. Breaking habits formed over four decades, however, is not a quick fix.

### **Steering – Apparently Two Hands Are Required**

Holding the steering wheel properly – at ten to two, no hooked thumbs – felt oddly unnatural. As did keeping two hands on it at all times. Then came pull/push steering. And feeding the wheel. And always having one hand gripping. Crossing hands? Apparently not ideal. Who knew?

### **The Gearbox – Not a Sequential Work of Art**

As a motorcyclist, changing down 4-3-2-1 is instinctive. In a car, I learned, this is not always necessary... nor desirable. Brake first. Then gear. Then steer. Separately.

This concept – avoiding brake, gear, and steering overlap – took some serious mental reprogramming. Roundabouts became training grounds. My favourite bike roads became car classrooms. Reading Roadcraft again made everything logical. Which was mildly irritating. Why hadn't I thought like this years ago?

### **Tapered Braking and the Dreaded FOG**

"Tapered braking" sounded technical. It turns out it's simply about smoothness: light brake, firmer pressure, then easing off as you come to a stop. Add "Foot Off Gas" (FOG) and suddenly you're managing weight transfer instead of launching passengers through the windscreen. Smoothness became the theme. Even my grip on the gear lever was under scrutiny. No flicking. No hovering hand. Keep the left hand on the wheel until the last responsible moment. Who knew driving involved so much discipline?

### **IPSGA – Feeling Like a Learner Again**

Information. Position. Speed. Gear. Acceleration. IPSGA sounds simple written down. Executing it smoothly is another matter. Nine times out of ten I felt overloaded. Information scanning made me wish for owl-like neck mobility. On a bike you can adjust position dramatically; in a car, movement is... subtle. But gradually, something changed. With 250 miles a week to practise, I began choosing A and B roads over motorways. Driving was no longer transport. It became engaging. Enjoyable, even.

### **The Seat Ibiza – Mechanical Russian Roulette**

My faithful Seat Ibiza was, shall we say, well run-in. Exceeding 3,500 rpm felt like tempting fate. Oil consumption suggested it identified as a two-stroke. "Third for thirty, fourth for forty" was sound advice. In theory. In this car, maintaining momentum below the red-line-of-doom was more like Russian roulette with compression ratios. Overtaking required military planning and a following wind. Then, on a long journey home after sustained 70mph heroics, the Seat coughed, spluttered, and chose to operate on a single cylinder. I limped it into services and said goodbye. RIP Seat Ibiza.



### Enter the Hyundai-A Revelation

Fortunately, I'd been practising in my wife's turbo diesel Hyundai, so the transition wasn't traumatic. Soon I acquired a slightly older version of the same model as my wife's Hyundai. What a difference. Power. Torque. Sixth gear! Overtaking no longer required divine intervention. Third actually worked at 30mph. Fourth held 40mph without complaint. Almost... thrilling.



### The Two-Second Rule (Only a Fool...)

Maintaining a proper safety gap was another habit to master. Two seconds minimum. Not one-and-a-bit. Hazard preparation demanded patience: gather information, analyse, act. Stop rushing. Slow the process down. And 90-degree turns? Select the correct gear before entry and hold it. No mid-corner fiddling. Simple. Not easy.

### The Stop Sign Incident

My pre-test assessment with Mike and Andy went largely well. Mike's example commentary was humbling. Mine required... enrichment. Reversing with a camera? Adequate. Reversing several car lengths on the offside? I executed a perfectly timed handbrake application simultaneously with contacting the kerb. Precision engineering. Then came the stop sign. I explained the correct motorcycle procedure while waiting for two cars ahead to clear the junction. The road became clear. They went. I went. Without stopping. Apparently, at a stop sign, you must actually stop. Who knew? The debrief was educational.

### The Test

By test day, things were coming together. Not flawless. Not silk-smooth. But safe. Legal. Mostly composed. Gear changes were still occasionally hurried. Commentary needed polish. But there were no major errors. I passed.

### Was It Worthwhile?

Absolutely. Advanced driving has transformed something that had become routine into something engaging again. It sharpened observation. Improved smoothness. Increased enjoyment. And perhaps most importantly, it reduced the risk of reversing into stationary objects owned by my wife. My thanks go to Andy for his patient mentoring, Martin for his invaluable input, and Mike for guidance (and justified reprimands). If you're hesitating about starting your own journey, don't wait until domestic vehicle privileges are revoked. You might just rediscover the joy of driving.



**Editor:** The group currently has just twelve motorcyclists who are also full car members. If you are a motorcyclist and the idea of improving your driving appeals to you contact our Car Training Officer, Mike Bell.



## SOMETHING FOR THE SUMMER

BY DAVE ROBERTSHAW



### BMW 325i Cabriolet

Cars are sometimes a bit like films. There are those that I'll approach with no or low expectations, and which turn out to be far better than I'd ever imagined. On the other hand, there are those that I'll approach full of anticipation, only to end up disappointed. The former of these often turn out to be some of the cars (and films) I enjoy the most.

The BMW 218i Convertible was definitely one of those pleasantly surprising cars. On paper, there's nothing much to get excited about. The 218i is powered by a 1.5 litre 3-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine producing 134 bhp, as also used in MINIs of the same era. That's fine, but personally my ideal BMW has 6 cylinders, so we're already starting on the back foot. I was also factoring in the additional weight of the convertible over the Coupe and subconsciously wishing for a 220i before I'd even opened the door.

Things got off to a good early start when I began adjusting the driver's seat. Immediately comfortable and supportive, with the classic side hugging profile that ensures you're sat in rather than on top of the seat.

The driving position is perfect too, rather like BMWs of old, everything falling directly to hand. No leather in this Sport spec model though, an expensive option when new.



Moving off and the 218i immediately proves an easy car to drive; a nice light clutch and a slick gearchange are accompanied by well weighted steering. The hood is generously insulated and keeps the noise down at cruising speed, although a downside of the convertible body shape is limited rear visibility and limited rear space too. The 218i is impressively rigid; aside from a very slight shimmy through the shell, you'd not know you're driving a convertible. There are no rattles or scuttle shake like you'd experience in convertibles of old (roof up or down) and I'm impressed by how well engineered the shell feels, especially over rough sections of road or motorway expansion joints, which would send all sorts of unpleasant vibrations through some convertibles.

I turn off the M56 and head into the Cheshire countryside to find some interesting A-roads. The sun is out, so I stop to lower the roof, a quick and simple operation at the press of a button. I rejoin the road and am immediately impressed. The engine is responsive and feels more powerful than the on-paper figures suggest. You'd never know it was 'just' a triple, and it has a distinctive sound when extended through the rev range, which I like. The accelerator is well weighted and ideal for balancing the car with acceleration sense on flowing bends. The suspension tune (and rear wheel drive) is ideal for this sort of driving, not too harsh but firm enough to be enjoyable without being floaty and its complemented nicely by the steering, which weights up at speed, avoiding the over-light sensation that many modern cars deliver.

I blip down the 'box for a series of tighter bends and I'm surprised to discover that there is automatic rev matching on down changes; something I'd never expected on a 218i. This really adds to the driver experience and makes a smoother approach almost effortless to achieve. Very rewarding.

There's nothing quite like top-down driving on a sunny day in an engaging car and I take the 218i a longer route home to prolong the experience, always a good sign. What a shame open-top cars of this type are on the decline. My advice would be to get one and enjoy it while they're still available, but don't forget the traditional advice on buying a convertible: purchase during the autumn/winter months rather than in spring/summer. Not just an old wife's tale; the owner of the 218i I drove followed just this advice and got a cracking deal. What a bargain.



# THE EUXTON CARABOOT MINI: BRITAIN'S MOST ECCENTRIC CAMPER CONVERSION

Among the many ingenious—and occasionally baffling—British automotive curiosities of the 1960s, few can rival the Euxton Caraboot Mini for sheer audacity. Part Mini van, part caravan, part rowing boat, the Caraboot was a triumph of lateral thinking in an era when post-war optimism, compact engineering and a strong cup of tea could seemingly solve any problem.

Built in 1964 by Euxton Coachcraft Ltd. in the Lancashire village of Euxton, the Caraboot took the humble 850cc Mini van and transformed it into one of the most unusual compact campers ever conceived. Today, it stands as a fascinating footnote in Mini history—and quite possibly one of the rarest campervans in the world.



## A Camper That Grew at the Campsite

At first glance, the Caraboot appeared to be little more than a slightly ungainly Mini van. Its party trick, however, revealed itself on arrival at camp. Using a hand-operated crank handle at the rear, the caravan body could be wound rearwards along metal grooves attached to the van. In doing so, the Caraboot extended to around 15 feet (4.5 metres) in length, effectively turning a city-sized commercial vehicle into a fully-fledged campervan.

The concept was clever, if not entirely watertight—especially when the Mini itself could be detached and driven away, leaving the camper body rather exposed to Britain's famously unpredictable weather. In theory, this allowed owners to use the Mini for local errands while the camper remained pitched. In practice, it also invited rain, wind, and the occasional sideways glance from neighbouring campers.

## Surprisingly Civilised Accommodations

Despite its compact dimensions, the Caraboot's interior was remarkably well thought out. Euxton Coachcraft claimed accommodation for four people, and while "comfort" may be relative, the layout was undeniably ingenious.

Inside, occupants found:

Four beds, including a convertible sofa bed and an upper sleeping area above the Mini's cab.

A fold-down dining table capable of seating four—provided nobody minded a bit of elbow jousting.

A two-burner stove, sink unit and modest food preparation space.

For a vehicle based on a small commercial van, the packaging was impressive and reflected the Mini's broader reputation for maximising usable space.



## The Roof That Went Rowing

The Caraboot's most eccentric feature was also its most charming. The roof of the converted van could be removed entirely and repurposed as a two-man rowing boat, complete with oars. In fine weather, this plastic roof doubled as a dinghy for fishing or gentle exploration, while its absence turned the upper sleeping area into something of a fair-weather loft. Period footage—most notably British Pathé film—can be viewed on YouTube.

## Performance: Optimism Over Physics

Power came from the Mini van's standard four-cylinder, 850cc engine, producing 34 hp (25 kW). Euxton quoted a top speed of 70 mph (112 kph), though real-world performance was rather less optimistic. Contemporary accounts, including one from an Australian doctor who toured the UK in a Caraboot in 1969, suggest it was "terribly slow at all times," with hills posing a particular challenge.

That said, owners reported respectable fuel economy and surprising comfort for two occupants, along with one undeniable benefit: the Caraboot attracted attention everywhere it went.

## Rarity and Legacy

No definitive production records survive, but evidence suggests that at least two Caraboos were built: the original demonstrator featured in period films, and another that was later hired out. One example surfaced briefly for sale around 2011–2012, in poor condition and missing its integrated rowing boat, before disappearing once more from public view.

Today, it is believed that only a single Caraboot may survive, making it one of the rarest campervans ever produced.

## Product of Its Time

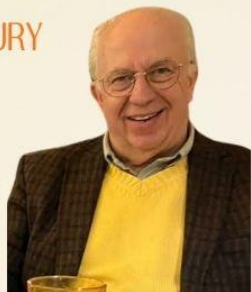
The Euxton Caraboot belongs to a simpler, more experimental age of motoring—one in which bold ideas mattered more than market research, and ingenuity often outweighed practicality. It combined car, camper and boat into a single package, demanded patience on hills, rewarded curiosity at campsites, and assumed that no proper adventure could take place without hot tea.

For modern enthusiasts of compact camping, lightweight micro-caravans from brands such as Go-Pods, Barefoot Caravans and Henkipod echo the Caraboot's ethos, if not its eccentricity. But none quite capture the peculiar charm of a Mini van whose roof doubled as a rowing boat.

In the annals of advanced driving and automotive design, the Caraboot stands not as a technical benchmark, but as a reminder that creativity—and a willingness to try the utterly improbable—has always been part of motoring's greatest appeal.

## A CENTURY FROM THE CENTURY (HOME FROM MONTE)

by Mark Boldry



As many of you will know, the Monte Carlo Rally is legendary in many respects. Today it is a fiercely competitive fixture on the modern rally calendar, but a century ago it was a proving ground for both man and machine. In more recent years, retrospectives of the older events have been run on the same roads, using similar formats with multiple European start points and regularity timing. For those of us on more modest budgets and with less competitive machinery, the Rally Monte Carlo Classic was established as a touring event—still demanding, but rather kinder to both car and crew.

My good friend Peter Baker, of Retro-Speed online magazine fame, had entered his 1954 Daimler Conquest Century for the event. It's a car well suited to long-distance driving, yet with a more sporting engine, suspension, and braking system than the standard Conquest. His navigator, Clive, joined him at the start, but sadly fell ill early on. The decision was made to retire and head home via Caen and Portsmouth. This came after travelling up to the UK start point at John O'Groats, then driving through Scotland and Northumbria, down to Hull for the overnight ferry to Rotterdam—with just 12 minutes to spare—all while nursing a failed oil filter housing gasket and losing oil at an alarming rate.

Gasket replaced, Peter recalled the words of his father: "Don't give up." With that ringing in his ears, he turned Audrey around, retraced his steps back to Portsmouth, caught the next ferry to Caen, and headed once more towards Monaco. After an overnight halt near Lyon, he finally rolled into Monte Carlo. Against all common sense, the Daimler had made it.

Meanwhile, blissfully unaware of Peter's troubles, I received a text inviting me to drive down to Evesham and join him. Unfortunately, I was in the North Yorkshire Moors on an event in my Land Rover, so the chance was missed. The following morning another message arrived: why not fly to Nice and join him there? Now that was an opportunity not to be ignored.

The flight from Leeds to Nice was mercifully uneventful, and by lunchtime I had arrived. From Nice I took the train into Monaco and, by sheer luck, chose the correct exit from the station first time. A quick message to Peter confirmed my arrival, and the next task was to find La Botticelli, alongside the Grand Prix circuit, where competitors traditionally gather each year to celebrate Willy Cave's contribution to rallying. Lunch followed, stories were swapped, and the formalities were duly observed.

With that out of the way, it was time to face the real business. Audrey had developed a catalogue of issues on her epic journey south and was overdue some routine attention. The charging system had failed en route, necessitating the purchase of a new battery. The event mechanics had fitted Peter's spare dynamo, which seemed to cure the problem—temporarily, as it would turn out. The fuel system was checked, and a small leak from the rear carburettor was noted but deemed manageable for the time being. The fluid flywheel—part of the Daimler's pre-selector gearbox system—needed topping up (the handbook advises every 1,000 miles, which in this case was more a suggestion than a guideline). A slight leak was found at the silencer, but the exhaust system was otherwise sound. Even the screen wash system received some overdue attention. By evening, we were as ready as we were ever going to be.



That night, the Automobile Club de Monaco hosted their traditional gala dinner and prize-giving. It was a lavish affair in a wonderfully historic setting, and spirits were high. Team Retro-Speed collected the team award, while individual entrants departed with medals and trophies. It was a fitting end to the event—and the beginning of our long journey home.



Thursday morning saw us loading Audrey once more, ready for an 08:45 departure. Leaving Monte Carlo in glorious sunshine, we soon found ourselves climbing into the Maritime Alps, following old rally routes and the historic Route Napoléon. The Daimler felt sure-footed, taking the twisting roads in her stride. Sadly, the enjoyment didn't last. Before long, the charging system failed again, and the ammeter showed a constant discharge that would haunt us all the way home.

We had two batteries: one fitted, one fully charged as a spare. At our second fuel stop, the problem made itself known. After filling up, the car refused to start—just a forlorn clicking from the solenoid. A quick battery swap got us going again. By chance, fellow entrant Peter Barker and his wife Christa Percival arrived in their Triumph Herald Coupé. I suggested swapping batteries with them so we could charge ours by running it in their car and bump-starting afterwards, but the Daimler battery was simply too large to fit the Triumph's tray. A good idea in theory, at least.

Later that afternoon we encountered service crews from the more competitive Historique rally. At one stop, Peter struck a deal: our new but flat battery in exchange for a fully charged one. It worked. We now had two healthy batteries again, and with a cheery "See you in Monte Carlo!"—despite the fact we were heading north—we pressed on.



Our target for the night was just north of Lyon, chosen because the hotel sat conveniently next to a garage willing to charge batteries overnight. About 20 miles from our destination, the smell of petrol filled the cabin. Not ideal. I suspected the rear carburettor float bowl joint, and as it wasn't yet a fire hazard, we pressed on. Arriving at dusk, I removed the battery for charging while investigating the leak. The culprit was a failed rubber sealing washer—rubber being entirely unsuitable for modern ethanol-laced fuel. Fortunately, we had Viton replacements in the spares kit.

The following morning, in darkness and rain, I replaced the seals. It was awkward, but within half an hour the leak was cured. Only then could we begin our final French leg: just under 400 miles to Caen, with two batteries and a failing charging system.

We knew we would almost certainly drain one battery, and probably most of the second, before reaching the ferry. What we didn't know was whether we'd have enough left to board—and disembark—under our own power.

Rush-hour Caen tested both nerves and navigation, with the sat-nav insisting on sending us into the city centre rather than the ferry terminal. Frustration levels were high, but we arrived with five hours to spare. Optimism prevailed, and we treated ourselves to a proper French meal at a restaurant Peter remembered from years past. Would the Daimler start again?

It did—and not just once. The endless stop-starts of port formalities were survived, and eventually we rolled onto the ferry. By morning, we docked in Portsmouth around 06:30. Waiting to disembark, both of us silently wondering if the battery would hold for one last start. It did. Ignoring the instruction to turn our lights on, we slipped through passport control—where, after hearing of our struggles, the officer kindly waved us through without delay—and headed for Fareham



Halfords supplied a battery that would see Audrey safely home to Evesham and later find a second life in an Austin-Healey Sprite. The final run through the rain-soaked Cotswolds was mercifully uneventful. Back in her garage, Audrey was emptied of 3,500 miles' worth of luggage, tools and memories, thanked profusely, and tucked away to rest.

If you ever visit Prescott Hill Climb, you'll see her again—Peter regularly campaigns Audrey up the hill. After what she's been through, a short sprint seems almost restful.

# FROM HORSE TRAMS TO HIGH HOPES - BY MARTIN JONES

Leeds is often described as the largest city in western Europe without a mass transit system. Yet trams once ran through the city for nearly ninety years, and plans to bring them back seem to reappear every decade or so.

In June last year the BBC reported: "The long road to get Motorway City on track with trams." Some readers may remember Leeds being described as "The Motorway City" in the 1970s. It is a phrase I must admit I do not recall, although I do remember the trams in Leeds.

One of my earliest memories is a bus trip to Leeds from Methley as a toddler, followed by a tram to Soldiers' Field at Roundhay to watch my dad play cricket on a summer Saturday afternoon.

What recently sparked those memories was a post I saw on a private Facebook group about the death of a serving Police Superintendent, William Pullen.



## A Tragic Tram Incident

At 10:10 pm on Saturday 29 January 1898, tram number 96 left the Queen's Hotel at Chapeltown. It was a double-decker pulled by three horses. The top deck was open to the elements, as were the staircases at both the front and rear of the tram. A handrail ran along the outer side of the stairs, but it was low and close to the steps.

Just below Church Lane, Superintendent Pullen, who was known to the conductor, jumped onto the tram while it was moving and took a seat upstairs towards the rear.

A few minutes later he told the conductor he would be getting off at Sheepscar. The conductor rang the bell and the driver slowed the tram steadily. As the tram was coming to a stop, Superintendent Pullen placed his foot on the top step of the staircase. He appeared to lose his balance and fell over the low handrail beside the steps, striking his head on the ground and quickly losing consciousness.

He was carried to his nearby home but died before he arrived. There is little doubt that a higher handrail might have made dismounting the tram safer. However, the inquest on Monday 31 January 1898 concluded that the handrail on tram 96 was as safe as those generally in use, and a verdict of Accidental Death was returned.

## The Rise and Fall of Leeds Trams

The first tram in Leeds ran on 16 September 1871 between Boar Lane and the Woodman Inn at Headingley. Operated by the Leeds Tramways Company, these early public transport vehicles were single-deckers that later evolved into double-deckers. They were horse-drawn and marked the beginning of Leeds' long association with tram transport.

Horse trams were replaced by steam trams in 1880 and later by electric trams in the 1890s. The last tram ran on the afternoon of 7 November 1959, when car 181 made the final scheduled journey from Cross Gates to Kirkgate.

Even before the end of the Second World War, city planners were considering an underground system with an extensive interchange beneath City Square. In the end, the only "underground" system Leeds received was the Inner Ring Road.

## Plans That Never Arrived

Attempts to reintroduce trams have appeared regularly over the years.

In 1988 West Yorkshire Metro proposed Metroline, a tramway running from Leeds Town Hall along Eastgate and the A64 to Colton. Costed at £120 million, the scheme never materialised. Meanwhile, Manchester went on to develop the successful Metrolink tram system, which now covers around 65 miles.

Next came Leeds Advanced Transit (LAT), priced at £1 billion. This was to be an elevated railway running from Tingley through the city centre to St James's Hospital and Seacroft. The idea disappeared without trace, while government funding instead supported Sheffield's Supertram system.

The government later promised 25 tram schemes nationwide, and by 2001 Leeds was given the go-ahead for a £500 million tram network. Preparatory work even began on Great Wilson Street. However, as projected costs increased, government funding was withdrawn and replaced with a proposal for a bus-based alternative.

The idea of electric trolleybuses powered by overhead cables—at roughly half the cost of a tram network—was eventually rejected after the planning inspector ruled it was not in the public interest.

Today the latest proposals suggest around £2.5 billion for just two lines.

## A Driver's Perspective

For drivers, the possible return of trams would bring new considerations. Modern tram systems share road space with general traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. They require careful observation, good anticipation and an understanding that, unlike other vehicles, trams cannot deviate from their tracks and have long stopping distances.

If Leeds eventually sees trams return to its streets, advanced drivers will once again need to adapt to sharing the road with a form of transport that disappeared from the city more than sixty years ago.

For now, though, I remain cautious. After decades of plans, proposals and cancelled schemes, I suspect I will only truly believe it when I am actually sitting on a tram somewhere in Leeds.

# KIA PV5- A PRACTICAL SHIFT TO ELECTRIC MOTORING BY JAMES STIER

For most of my driving life, estate cars have been my default choice—practical, predictable, and well-suited to carrying equipment while covering long distances efficiently. So, when the time came to replace my current vehicle, moving to a fully electric van was far from an obvious decision. In truth, I approached it with a fair degree of scepticism. That scepticism didn't last long.

I now run a Kia PV5, a fully electric van designed from the ground up as an EV rather than adapted from an existing combustion platform. That distinction proves more significant than expected. The vehicle feels cohesive in its design, well balanced, and surprisingly refined on the road. In everyday use, it behaves far more like a car than a traditional van—to the extent that returning to a diesel van now feels somewhat clumsy.

From a driving perspective, the benefits are immediate. Acceleration is smooth and linear, while the low centre of gravity adds a reassuring sense of stability, particularly on longer journeys. For advanced drivers, this smoothness naturally encourages better anticipation and planning. I find myself driving more progressively, making greater use of momentum and regenerative braking, and generally adopting a calmer, more considered approach.

Range was one of my main concerns prior to making the switch. Official figures are one thing, but real-world performance—particularly in winter or when carrying a full payload—is what truly matters. In practice, I've been consistently achieving around 275 miles on a full charge. That's slightly better than the headline figure and, importantly, it has held up well even with heavier loads and in colder conditions. While there is some variation, as expected, the penalty is far less than anticipated.

Efficiency typically sits between 3.5 and 4 miles per kWh, depending on the nature of the journey,



providing a useful and predictable baseline for planning longer trips. Running costs are where the advantages become particularly clear.

Charging at home on an off-peak tariff of around 7p per kWh, a full charge (from a usable capacity of approximately 71 kWh) costs just under £5. This equates to roughly 1.3 to 2 pence per mile—exceptionally economical for day-to-day use.

However, it's important to present a balanced view. Public rapid charging, particularly on the motorway network, is significantly more expensive. Using providers such as Gridserve, even with membership discounts, typically costs around 60–65p per kWh. At that rate, a full charge can reach £40–£45, pushing the cost per mile closer to 16–18 pence—comparable to, or even exceeding, an efficient diesel vehicle.

The reality is that EV ownership works best when most charging is done at home or via lower-cost networks, with rapid charging used strategically rather than routinely. On that note, one of the more reliable and cost-effective charging networks I've encountered is Be.EV, a northern-based provider offering dependable infrastructure at more reasonable rates, typically around 39–49p per kWh.

From a RoSPA perspective, the safety systems are worth highlighting. The PV5 is equipped with a comprehensive suite of driver assistance features, including adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping assistance, collision avoidance systems, and regenerative braking.

Regenerative braking, in particular, promotes a more anticipatory driving style. Lifting off early and allowing the vehicle to decelerate progressively soon becomes second nature. When used effectively, it enhances efficiency, reduces reliance on conventional braking, and contributes to a smoother overall drive.

As with all driver aids, these systems are most effective when treated as support rather than substitution. The core principles of observation, planning, and control remain unchanged.

Where the PV5 becomes especially valuable for me is in its support of my work. As a camera operator, I frequently work on location, often in remote areas with limited access to power. The vehicle's Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) capability effectively turns it into a large mobile battery, allowing me to power lighting, charge equipment, and run essential systems directly from the vehicle.

In practical terms, this reduces reliance on generators, minimises noise, and creates a more flexible, self-contained working environment. It's a feature that initially seems like a bonus but quickly becomes integral.



I didn't make this transition as an enthusiast or early adopter—if anything, I was cautious. Concerns around range, infrastructure, and real-world usability were all very real. However, after a month of ownership, those concerns have largely diminished. While the public charging network remains a notable drawback, the PV5 has proven itself to be reliable, predictable, and, in many respects, better suited to my needs than the estate cars I've previously relied on.



Perhaps the most telling point is that I'm now looking forward to taking my next RoSPA re-test in it. It's not often that a change of vehicle influences both your driving style and your perspective on the future of transport—but in this case, it genuinely has.

**Editors note:**

From a tutors point of view, I tutored James in 2019 in his manual Mazda 6 Tourer. He went on to pass his advanced test achieving GOLD in early 2020. He had a couple of refresher sessions with me three years later, but this time in his latest car which was an automatic and went on to pass his second test in 2023, again achieved GOLD.

I was a bit apprehensive about tuition in a van, but I drove one at work for many years and know the pitfalls. I needn't have worried as the drive was safe and smooth, quiet and comfortable and progressive. James hadn't lost any of the advanced skills he had learned and he is soon to take his triennial retest.

# No Lights No Sirens-Just Skill 24 Hours as a Blood Biker Tony Bradley

With several members of West Yorkshire RoADAR volunteering for the Whiteknights Yorkshire Blood Bikes, I thought it might be useful to offer a snapshot of what a typical 24-hour “on call” period looks like.

This particular shift forms part of the regular Friday evening through to Sunday morning rota—so we’ll start at the beginning.

It’s 19:00 on a dry, warm evening when my shift begins. At 19:09, my phone pings: first job in. It’s upstairs, into full riding kit, and ready to roll. The task is to collect medication from Bradford Royal Infirmary reception and deliver it to Marie Curie on Leeds Road.

That route demands a clear head and heightened observation. Anyone who’s ridden through Bradford at night will understand—what we might consider “normal” driving behaviour can be... flexible. Vehicles stop unexpectedly; drivers wave others out without warning, turn without signalling, or simply appear unaware of their surroundings. You quickly learn to anticipate the unpredictable; its defensive riding taken to another level.

While collecting the medication, my phone goes again—another job. A quick check reveals I need to collect controlled drugs and deliver them... to the same place. Convenient. I head down to the basement pharmacy, complete the necessary checks and paperwork, load up, and set off.

By 20:50 I’m home, out of my gear, and settling down—briefly. At 21:50, the phone sounds again. This time it’s blood samples from Huddersfield to St James’s in Leeds. Back into gear and out the door—but as I’m about to mount the bike, another call comes through a collection from Calderdale to Huddersfield.

Now the logistics kick in. Since Calderdale lies en route, I can collect those samples first, deliver them to Huddersfield, and then proceed to Leeds. Efficient planning is half the job.

At Huddersfield, however, I’m informed that some samples need to go back to Calderdale. So, a quick re-route back to Calderdale to drop those off, then onwards to Leeds with the original consignment. En route, I notice unusually heavy oncoming traffic for a Friday night—likely a motorway closure. Sure enough, joining the M62 eastbound confirms westbound is shut. Useful intel for the rest of the shift.



The Leeds delivery is completed, and I’m home by 00:15. Gear off, into bed, and hoping for a few hours’ rest. At 00:45, the phone decides otherwise—another run from Calderdale to Huddersfield. A now-familiar route, completed smoothly, and I’m back home by 01:50.

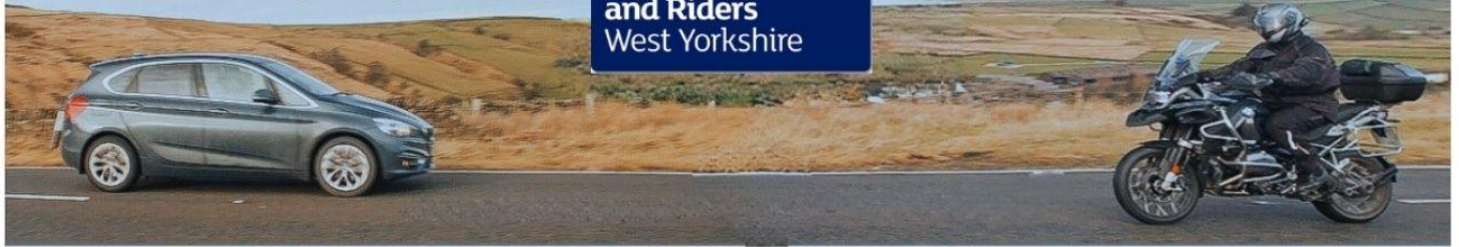
Next task: a scheduled breast milk donation collection from Golcar at 10:00. I’m up at 09:00, ready to go. Two insulated boxes are collected and carefully secured to the bike, then delivered to the neonatal unit at Calderdale—vital supplies for premature babies. I’m back home by 11:45.

There’s a lull until 16:30, when another call comes in—Huddersfield to Calderdale with blood samples. Naturally, this arrives five minutes after my pizza is delivered. Cold pizza it is. The job is completed, and I’m home again by 17:50. And that, in a nutshell, is a 24-hour window into life as a Blood Bike volunteer.

For those who may not be aware, all of this is done entirely on a voluntary basis. The service operates thanks to donations, and every rider is an advanced motorcyclist—many from within groups like our own. I’ve been doing this for nearly ten years now, and it remains one of the most rewarding uses of my riding skills.

I hope this gives a useful insight into what goes on behind the scenes—quietly, efficiently, and often through the night.

# WHAT THE GROUP HAVE BEEN DOING



## MARCH

The committee met for their second meeting of the year and membership was on the agenda. Funding was requested and granted for Quiz prizes later in the year and the best article submitted to TORQUE throughout the year will also see the author receive recognition. The car tutors had their biennial meeting this month and the newly collated tutor figures showed the last four months have been busy for them, with 158 tuition sessions conducted during that period. **Bob Everick** passed the triennial advanced car tutor retest and both **Mathew Wilman** and **Bill Gilliam** passed their initial advanced driving test and achieved GOLD. They were both tutored by Andy Richardson. Bill had the privilege of meeting a new examiner, Paul Haigh, who observed his test, which was conducted by Glenn Hardaker. Hopefully some of us will meet Paul at our group meetings or perhaps he will conduct your test, so good luck to him in the future. Bill completed his Blog which was added to our website and wrote an article to encourage new members to become advanced drivers. This was added to both our group and the RoADAR Facebook pages and was quickly liked and shared.

Motorcycle section Tutor peer-peer training was undertaken due to the possible diminishment of skills that may have occurred during the winter lay-off that many riders have. It is also considered necessary due to the amount of time that tutors spend behind students riding 'out of position' and the subsequent effect this may have on their 'in front' performance.

## APRIL

Congratulations to both **Ivaylo Borrisov** on passing the Advanced driving test and achieving Silver and his tutor Dave McAulay. Motorcycle section had their first test of the year with **Lewis MacDonald** who passed the Level 3 Triennial Retest and **Shaf Salaam** who qualified as a Group Approved motorcycle tutor.

I've followed up on several initial and triennial retests car tests with RoADAR this month. It always seems a little unusual when members go to the trouble of paying their annual subscription but don't then pursue their retest. You've paid for it and are fully entitled to take advantage of it. I appreciate that some members do try, and run into administrative hurdles. If you're having difficulty arranging your retest, please contact [FURTHERINFO@ROADAR.ORG](mailto:FURTHERINFO@ROADAR.ORG) for assistance. If an examiner contacts you to arrange your test make it at a time, date and place to suit you both.

Group member, Colin Fairburn, gave a presentation to the group about prostate cancer and the journey he has gone through since being diagnosed. An informative and brave thing to do.

The motorcycle section had three open training days but attendance was disappointingly low with more tutors than associates in attendance. The planned social ride did not take place due to lack of support, but there were five motorcycle members attended Stanningley Fire Station on the last Thursday of the month for a healthy discussion.

## MAY

The May committee meeting ran exceptionally smoothly considering there had been no meeting last month. We still need a Treasurer to step into Peter Stirks' well worn shoes, so can someone please help the group out. Whilst we struggle to get someone to join our committee, so do the committee of Garforth Miners Welfare Hall. If you can help out there then let us know.

Congratulations to **Janet Murphy**, **Andrew McPherson** and **Taira Hussain** who all achieved GOLD on their triennial Advanced driving retest and **Dean Robinson**, **Victoria Armitage** and **Alistair Fletcher** who all achieved GOLD on their initial Advanced driving tests. **Andy Richardson** also passed his triennial Advanced Motorcycle Tutor retest.

John Gregory (Reg Local of YouTube fame) gave an entertaining presentation to 50 members and guests about his background as well as a humorous insight into the comments about his YouTube videos.

Some of our motorcycle members have been off road riding at BUMPY at Howden Clough, Birstall and there was another motorcycle members discussion evening at Stanningley Fire Station on the last Thursday of May which only had four in attendance.

The proposed social drive/ride to Bridlington on 28<sup>th</sup> June has been postponed due to lack of interest.

# THE ROAD AHEAD

Whats coming up...

## JUNE

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> 7pm**- Committee meeting - Isabella Room, Garforth Miners Welfare Hall.

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Social Ride

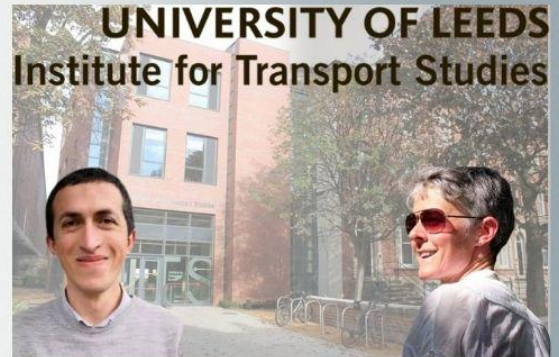
**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Open Training- National Coal Mining Museum

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> 8pm**- Group Night - Presentation by Ibrahim Ozturk & Jac Billington - Garforth Miners Welfare Hall.

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Weekend Social Ride

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle section Open Training-Lumby Garden Centre

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>** -The 19<sup>th</sup> Hole- Members social drive/ride to Bridlington



## JULY

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Open Training- National Coal Mining Museum.

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> 7pm** - Committee meeting - Isabella Room, Garforth Miners Welfare Hall

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Open Training- National Coal Mining Museum.

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section 4 day Social Ride

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> 8pm** Group Night - Yorkshire Ambulance Service - Garforth Miners Welfare Hall

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Open Training- Otley Garden Centre.



## AUGUST

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup>** - No Committee Meeting this month

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Open Training - National Coal Mining Museum

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup>** - No Group Night this month

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>** - Motorcycle Section Open Training - National Coal Mining Museum

