



## Safer Driving in Autumn

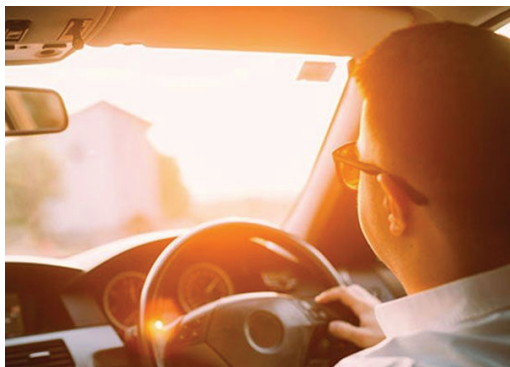
Members' Magazine: Autumn 2017 (issue 191)

### Things are getting tricky!

Right now, with the focus on Safer Driving in Autumn, there are hazards unique to the season which demand special attention.

So, here are some practical, useful tips to help you cope with the weather - however tricky that might be!

Autumn in Herefordshire is the time for harvesting and its consequences for drivers - both you and other road users. Read on . . .



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# Herefordshire Headlines

## Hereford Fire Station “Open Day”

We were invited to exhibit at the Hereford Fire Station on Saturday 2nd September, to promote our “Safer Driving Courses”.

David, our Chairman, was away prior to the event so he asked me to organise it. I panicked for a minute, but got hold of our Marketing Guru, Mike and somehow we got publicity material printed in time so that Big Al (Alan Eastough our Membership Secretary) could collect it on the eve of the event.

The day at the Fire Station started at 11am so, full of enthusiasm, we arrived at 10 to set up our stand..... we were provided with a table - so the white sheet our Events Co-ordinator bought recently made an excellent table cover.

We were a bit anxious, because we had brand new display material and we were not sure exactly what we were displaying! However after a few false starts – we had to fix the new posters to our felt display boards – no problem if you know how Velcro works! It also helps to have a pair of scissors handy – why hadn't I doubled checked my little box of goodies?

However a handsome Fire Officer soon produced one of the most menacing knives I have ever seen – bottle opener, screw driver, knife, cork screw, hook and dozens else – and, thank goodness, a small pair of scissors, which were quite difficult to operate!

Had I listened to the very detailed brief from Mike, I might have come with all that was required. However, with Velcro duly stuck in place, we were in business.

*(Note to self: Plan ahead)*

In addition, we had leaflets, our summer magazine, and our Chairman, David appeared with a laptop complete with extraordinary images of some exceptionally bad drivers, which caused great amusement to passers-by.



I was not prepared for what happened next - the minute the doors opened – it seemed that hundreds of children, under the age of 6, poured through the entrance with their parents and grandparents in hot pursuit! They grabbed plastic fireman's helmets and rushed about looking at everything in sight. I looked out of the entrance door and saw a queue which disappeared into the far distance down St. Owen Street. The atmosphere was great – quite noisy – fire engines do seem to have that effect - but very exciting. There were competitions to see how many children could knock down targets with the fire engine's water supply; people (adults) were invited into a tent to experience surviving a “smoked-filled” room; children scrambled all over a wide variety of emergency rescue boats, water carriers, command support units, red cross ambulances, fire hydrants – and even a rather large horse - although I am not sure what that was doing there!! There was the treat of the day for many – ten-at-a-time, people were taken off round the town for a ride in one of the Fire Engines! I missed out somehow!!

Everyone had to pass our stand sooner or later and we were able to talk to those who hesitated and who said they were interested in improving their driving skills. Several enquired about our Refresher Days – and some signed up to do our Advanced Driving Course. The time passed quite quickly - lunch time came and went – but if one was patient enough to join the queue we were rewarded with delicious hot dogs and burgers, generously provided by the splendid Fire Officers.

We really enjoyed the day – in spite of my feet giving up after several hours – and at four o'clock, we dismantled everything, packed it into our cars and disappeared home.

**Stella**



## Some interesting roads!

In this issue, I've recorded some of the routes I've travelled, marvelling all the while how beautiful our countryside is.

On holiday near Penrith a few weeks ago, we ventured out for a sightseeing journey which we hoped would give us a real feel for the character of the Lake District.



My Audi Q5 proved impressive, taking the road in its stride and giving us supreme confidence in its ability. A rare opportunity to use some of the technology it has on board.

I know that some of you are passionate photographers as well as drivers, so how about letting us have your stories and shots?

I'll be running a competition over the coming year and prizes will be awarded for rural beauty, seasonal characteristics or severity of driving hazard, entitled "Memorable Drives".

Photos and captions submitted to Mike or me may be in digital or printed form. **David**

I chose a route which would take us over the Hardnock and Wrynose passes - one after the other - and nearly all single-track roads.

I anticipated some hills to climb, but combined with switchbacks and very steep gradients it was a test of driving skills very different from those we need to use in Herefordshire.

Panoramic views we had in abundance as we climbed, then descended. At one stop we met a Dutch couple. The drive was proving a real experience for them!

The man had his smart phone giving him information of the route ahead and was lost in wonder when it reported that the steepest section was 32%!





# Safer driving in Autumn



Every season brings its hazards and Autumn is no exception. Here are some to be aware of, particularly when driving in Herefordshire:

## Autumn sun

The sun is at a lower angle in the sky, in both mornings and evenings, meaning that there is an increased risk of being dazzled.

Coming out on to the lane from my driveway, I can tell by the lack of shadow, that the sun will be shining straight at me when I turn left. I pull down my sun visor before turning, in anticipation.

Get to know similar situations in your area and when driving elsewhere, note when the sun is shining on your left or right and anticipate that it will be in your eyes when you make a turn, whether it is a bend or a junction and get prepared. So many times, when people have not realised what is about to happen they get thoroughly stressed by the situation as they simultaneously try pull the visor down while steering one handed around the turn.

Visibility is often impaired and glare from the sun is much more likely and remember that, if the sun is behind you, it is in the eyes of oncoming traffic, too; if it is blinding you, then it will be the same for those following you. You might be invisible to other road users when coming out of the sun, so use your headlights to help others see you. A good pair of sun glasses is a must for these conditions.

Make sure your windscreen is clean outside - and particularly inside, which can become greasy from chemicals and oils in the plastics, causing "vinyl fog" which can dazzle you when the sun is low and is a devil to remove.

Frequent use of a microfibre towel and proprietary glass cleaner is recommended.

## Leaf fall

The risk of skids are enhanced if leaves have fallen on to a wet surface, because they create a skid surface. Add in a touch of ground frost and you have a serious hazard!

So drive as you would on ice; nice and gently, with no sudden turns of the wheel and no harsh acceleration nor braking.

## Driving on rural roads

Driving on rural roads is twice as dangerous as in cities and more than 8 times when you are on motorways.

Statistics show that there is an increase in road accidents during the Autumn months. During September, October and November, the UK experiences the heaviest amount of rainfall. Heavy farm traffic on rural roads especially will have left a coating of mud and dust and this combined with prolific leaf fall combines with the rain to present surfaces some times as slippery as ice.

Animal habits change with the seasons, so look out for wild life on our rural roads. Collisions with deer are highest in Autumn.

Living in an agricultural area, we should be aware that there will be harvesting of root crops in the coming months.

Potatoes and beet create churned up soil and it inevitably clings to the tractors and other machinery, to fall off as they get onto the hard surface of the highways and pick up speed.

Good sideways observation as well as looking ahead for signs of mud on the road, will give you time to adjust your speed- and often your position on the carriageway - but be careful not to encroach on to the other lane. Anticipate that oncoming traffic will also be attempting to avoid the mess.



## Safer driving in Autumn (contd. from p4)

This also a time for muck-spreading, with similar mud-spreading consequences.

This is especially important if you will be driving in the dark, since dirt on your headlights can seriously reduce their effectiveness and an obscured number plate is a road traffic offence.

## Driving as the light fades

As the earlier nights approach, take extra care during evening driving to reduce the risk of missing hazards in low light conditions.

Fog is often a sudden and serious hazard and when possible avoid travelling when fog is forecast. If visibility falls below 50 metres, conditions become severe and foglights should be used. Fog can distort your impression of speed, so be sure to slow down and, when slowing down, use your brake lights and mirrors. The driver behind might not be as observant.

## Extra demands on your car

Your vehicle is likely to get dirtier, quicker. So, in addition to your usual pre-car checks, remember to carry at least a cloth to wipe your headlight glass and rear number plate and clean them when you pause on a long journey, or before you make your return journey.

Now is the time to prepare for winter weather and decide whether you should fit winter or all-weather tyres. Either choice will give you a significant safety advantage in snow and ice. Some garages will store your 'summer' tyres for you, if you purchase winter/all-weather tyres from them.

A number of garages offer a free or modestly priced winter safety check. Tyres and windscreen wipers are the most important but a battery check could save some difficult morning moments.

## Dealing with distractions

It goes without saying that driving in hazardous conditions is not the time to be watching your Sat Nav, nor paying attention to your media system.



HEREFORD & WORCESTER  
**HWFR**  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



## Welcome to our new Vice-President, Nathan Travis, Chief Fire Officer, Hereford & Worcester FRS

After joining Gloucestershire FRS in 1993 as a fulltime firefighter, Nathan has undertaken a number roles, including Training Officer, Health & Safety Officer and Station Commander, as well as Head of Risk Management, Head of Support Services and Head of Service Delivery.

In 2011, he moved to Oxfordshire FRS as Assistant Chief Fire Officer and was promoted to Deputy Chief Fire Officer in 2012. In April last year, he became the Chief Fire Officer in Hereford & Worcester.

Nathan has a particular interest in widening the scope of prevention, protection and response activities that the Fire & Rescue Service undertake locally and sees training and education as key elements to that success.

"I'm passionate about reducing risk in our local communities and, wherever possible, preventing harm and injury from happening in the first place.

The *Institute of Advanced Motorists* has the same aims and I am honoured to be offered the role of Vice President of the Herefordshire group".

# What's on the road ahead?



## Personal Development Planning

To cater for the needs of the majority of drivers in Herefordshire, we run several types of course, regularly throughout the year and at different locations (see below).

However, we know that drivers are at different levels of skill, so we plan to deliver our services more flexibly, to ensure that their needs are satisfied at whatever level they have reached in their route to better, safer driving.

Just as we maintain our car regularly (you *do*, don't you?), so we need to advance our driving skills whenever we can.

Yet, how long is it since you measured yourself against the level you attained when you passed your test?

Why not re-assess yourself on the opposite page, to see how far you are along the route and decide at what level you are, right now?

### 1. IAM RoadSmart Advanced Driver Course for which we are the local Official Provider.

Designed for drivers to raise their skills to advanced level and fulfil their potential.

Our approach to running this programme is different in several ways, which you will find will work better for you:-

- an open style of learning, encouraging self-analysis and personal planning
- interactive presentation, with team participation and open discussion
- non-judgmental, no pressure . . . just working at your own pace - and enjoying it!

**Accompanied drives:** you are assigned a Qualified Observer who will guide you progressively in advancing your performance.

**From now on, our Advanced Driver Courses will be run 0930 - 1600 at Saxon Hall, Hereford.**

**For information, please ring David Williams (01981 580382) or email him at [chief-observer@advanced-drivers.org.uk](mailto:chief-observer@advanced-drivers.org.uk)**

For details of **[IAM RoadSmart Advanced Driving](#)**, please go to their website at [www.iamroadsmart.com/courses](http://www.iamroadsmart.com/courses)

### 2. Safer Driving Refresher Days

Specially designed for licenced drivers of all ages, who need to update their skills and for those who have lost confidence whilst driving nowadays, whether for leisure, business or necessity.

Each is adapted to the particular needs of those participating, to help them:-

- become more aware of other road users and driving hazards
- reduce the risks of accidents
- get up-to-date with the new Regulations
- feel more confident, with or without passengers

**Programme: 1000 - 1600**

Each session includes an update on rules and regulations, discussion about driving in Herefordshire and a drive in your own car, accompanied by a friendly Observer, who will give you constructive advice which will prove invaluable for years.

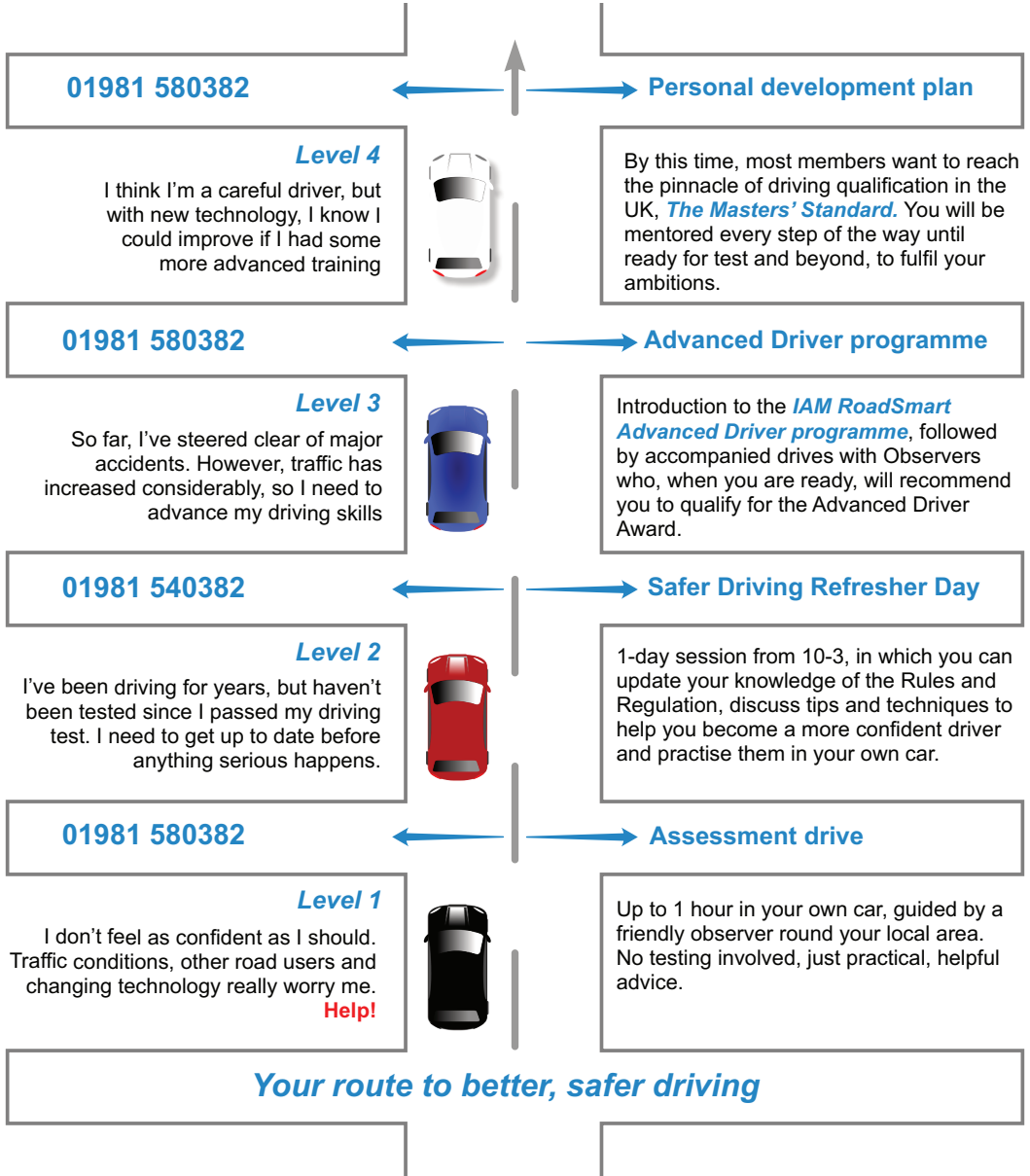
**For information, please ring Kath Watts on 01981 540382 or email: [events@advanced-drivers.org.uk](mailto:events@advanced-drivers.org.uk)**

# How confident a driver are you, right now?

Assess yourself below, to see how far you have travelled along the route and decide what level you have reached, right now?

If the result gets you thinking, why not contact your Observer to arrange a Refresher drive?

Incidentally, if you do this with your family and friends, you might be surprised by their rating, compares with yours!





## A Grand Day Out . . .

Our Chairman contacted the Observers of the group to find out how many Associates we had looked after over the years, as a special day out had been arranged by **IAM RoadSmart** to celebrate all our hard work, it was not open to general members.

Unfortunately not all those who had done service could manage to attend, but there were three of us who could.

So, on Saturday 5th August, we were up very early and with David Williams by 8am. He drove us to Silverstone in Northamptonshire where the event was taking place.

We were surprised how big the place was. The surrounding buildings and spectator stands were huge.

On arrival at the events building, near where we had parked, we were treated to a display of vintage cars, full of admiration for all the hard work these **IAM** owners had so lovingly shown to their prized possession.

These perfect examples made it hard to believe that they had left the factory floor so many years ago. It brought back thoughts of cars we had once owned when we were younger, and if we had kept them, how much they might be worth today.

But that's history.

Then we went for a look at the race track from a balcony that ran the entire length of the building above the pit lane. Racing cars were whizzing round and a beautiful Aston Martin caught Robin's eye.

David W got the opportunity to go as a passenger in a super-duper Caterham 7 sports car. You can see him looking at the camera in the picture.



How he managed to squeeze into such a small car with those long legs of his is still a mystery! He came back glowing with admiration for the driver.

The building we were in was rather like a very large aircraft hanger on three floors. There were stalls in the main hall offering a car racing test against a machine and changing driving wheels on a racing car.

On the top floor were two very large Scalextric layouts, where people were racing each other.

Outside there was a manoeuvrability test and you could also have a bus tour of the site.

Refreshments, including hot and cold food were available and of a very good quality. After mid-morning buns and coffee, we returned to enjoy lunch together.

Then it was time for the award ceremony. We stood in a queue, waiting for our turn to be presented with the appropriate colour badge; blue if you had mentored more than 100 associates; gold for 50; silver for 25 & bronze for 10 or more.

Then, one last hot drink before David drove us back home.

We must thank **IAM RoadSmart** for a grand day out and, of course, our Chairman who did the driving and organising.

Thank you David.

***Phil James, David Rose and Robin Turner.***

### Could listening to music while driving be banned?

We are all well aware of research by various bodies concerning the distraction and danger that can be caused by using hand-held or hands-free mobile phones when driving, but I have recently become aware of some new research concerning listening to music in your car that suggests that this could also distract.

University College London has published a study which indicates that listening to music while driving causes low level distraction that leads to slower reaction times and a reduced awareness of road conditions around you.

The creator of the study, Dr Ulrich Pomper, admits that in normal driving conditions for normal drivers the impact is low level. However, he says "for the elderly, hearing impaired, or drivers who are tired, stressed, or trying to perform complex navigation tasks, the impact can be significant and dangerous".

*Algernon's view: I would suggest that people in the latter categories pose potential problems even without the music, excluding of course the elderly, of which I'm one!*

Dr Pomper continues: "Mobile phone use while driving has already been proven to be a leading cause of driver distraction and serious accidents. Could this study be the start of road safety experts pushing to ban music in cars as well, on the grounds that it could lead to driver distraction and cause accidents?"

### Outline of the study

In the study, scientists measured the brain activity of a group of volunteers while listening to sounds coming from speakers. People listening to music were found to have slower reaction times and higher mental stress when looking away from the source of the audio.

The people behind the study also think the effect could be worse when we are tired or under stress, as well as for people with hearing issues and older people. The researchers, from the University College London (UCL) Ear Institute, found that moving the gaze just a few degrees away from the source of a sound can have a profound effect on brain activity.

They believe this is because our brains expect the direction of our gaze to be aligned with what we hear. Whilst we believe we can listen to sounds attentively without looking towards them, the findings indicate this isn't the case.

### Algernon's view

I just wonder where this will all end! I have never had an issue with the use of hands-free mobile phones; it's no more distracting than having an in-depth conversation with a passenger, especially if it is an argument.

Unruly children can also be a serious distraction when driving, more so I would suggest than a conversation on a hands-free device. Members of the Emergency services have been doing this for as long as I can remember without any training; having served with two different disciplines of the Emergency services I certainly never received any, if in fact such training exists?

From personal experience I'm aware of crashes/collisions which were the direct result of distraction by passengers in the car, but they have never received the prominent reporting that hands-free mobile phones have. I would of course never condone the use of hand-held devices in any circumstances whilst driving, or indeed hand-held maps, magazines, newspapers or the application of facial cosmetics, which I do occasionally see whilst out on my travels.

The fact is, that there are numerous distractions in the modern car whilst driving, both in and outside the vehicle.

As I see it, the only solution is to use 'driverless' cars (dreadful things!), or produce cars which encapsulate the driver in their own space where they are unable to speak to their passengers or play around with the multi-functional display units. The vehicle, would of course need to be an automatic, so that the driver is not distracted by the operation of the gears and clutch!

**Algernon**



In the previous Magazine, I wrote about my experience with the cataract removal procedure and its remarkable impact on my vision and I said then that I was looking forward to having the procedure carried out on my other eye.

Fortunately, I did not have to wait too long and it was carried out eight weeks after the first eye and the result has been as good.

I have just had an eye check with my optician and 20/20 vision has been confirmed.

I do have slight Astigmatism, meaning that the curvature of the eye is not completely round.

Most people have this condition to some degree and it can be present from birth, but in my case might also have been caused by the cataract procedure.

It is of no longer a concern, because I do not need glasses now.

I have been advised that, in time, my new lenses might become cloudy but if it should occur it is a condition corrected easily by laser treatment.

Any further change to my vision that can be expected with age will, as with any other person, be correctable with the inevitable glasses but I hope this will only be in some time to come.

I'm looking forward to many more years of clear driving vision.

**Bruce Foster**

### **Advanced Car Safety Features**

*(sometimes referred to as Driver Assist Aids)*

Advanced safety features which were previously only available on premium models have become more affordable during 2017. Whilst there are many being offered either as standard or optional extras, insurance surveys indicate that the following are positively affecting road safety:

#### **Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB )**

Some manufacturers refer to this as **Forward Collision Prevention (FCW)**.

This system detects an impending collision with another vehicle or object and automatically applies the brakes. Some systems work at normal highway speeds but others operate at lower speeds only.

#### **Lane Departure Warning (LDW)**

The driver receives a warning when the vehicle is drifting without a turn signal preceding the deviation. Some very advanced systems can intervene with a steering correction and braking.

#### **Blind Spot Monitoring**

The driver receives a warning signal when a vehicle is in the blind spot. (Some will show camera pictures of what is in the blind spot but this might possibly create a distraction from the road ahead).

#### **Alertness Monitoring**

Sensors are used to detect erratic driving. Tiredness is a known accident-causing factor. The driver is warned by an audible alarm or a vibration in the steering wheel.

#### **Rear View Camera**

This allows the driver to have a clear view whilst reversing. Numerous accidents are caused by reversing with limited vision.

For the majority cost is always a consideration when purchasing a new vehicle but some of these systems can be life-saving. No doubt more will emerge as the motor industry accelerates towards the autonomous car.



## Congratulations & thanks



### A Day with the W.I., Hereford

Following our successful “Safer Driving” Refresher Day in March, when 60+ members from W.I. Hereford joined in a series of presentations and practice driving in their own car, we ran another at Saxon Hall Hereford on Friday 6 October.

What a nice crowd of people the WI ladies are - readily participating in the discussions and asking Tina Lawrence, our wonderful presenter, lots of relevant questions.

Many told us later how much they enjoyed their day, including:

- I hadn't realised things had changed so much!
- Really worthwhile. And enjoyable!
- I'm glad I came; I shall tell others to come on your courses

One or two were a bit nervous waiting for their assessment drives - but we appeared to have allayed any fears because they came back smiling, having enjoyed their experience.

Our thanks to them for making our day, too.

Observers commented that some of the W.I. ladies were excellent drivers and only needed a few pointers to come up to the **IAM** required standard.

I suggested that, if they or any of their family, friends or colleagues wish to advance their skills further, they would be welcome to ring David Williams on 01981 580382.

**Stella**

### Our Observers are recognised by IAM RoadSmart . . .

David Williams had submitted details to **IAM RoadSmart** of those Observers who were each known to have helped over 100 Associates to pass their test, who included Jon Baker, Mary Bevan, Phil James, David Rose & Robin Turner.

They joined the **IAM RoadSmart** “Ton-up” Observers, who were specifically invited.

However, all Observers had the opportunity to attend and be presented with their appropriate badge. Our Chief Observer received his ‘50’ badge at the event. Any Observer who has helped at least 10 Associates to test, can request an appropriate badge from our CO.



## Who's who?

### Committee 2017/18

#### President

**Maj. Gen. Ted Willmott, CB, OBE**

#### Vice President

**Nathan Travis, CFO, Hereford & Worcester FRS**

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