



GO BETWEEN

Oxford IAM Group Newsletter

September 2008



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Photo courtesy of www.MartynDaniel.co.uk

<http://www.iam-oxford.org.uk/>

From the Saddle

It's been a busy summer for the group. We've had weekend ride outs as well as the usual summer drive and ride meetings from Kidlington. At the same time, we've also had the surprising announcement from IAM HQ that central IAM subs are increasing pretty steeply. The plan is to increase them from £18 a year to £30 (£28 if you pay by DD).

So what do you think?

I think it's a hell of an increase. I make it around 60% with no change in membership benefits. Someone in Chiswick has got their sums badly wrong and the Institute is now trying to sort out the mess and calling on us to help.

Bluntly, I suspect a lot of people will walk. At the same time, I'm staying and stumping up the extra, if not exactly with a glad heart. Why?

Because if people do walk and the IAM folds – who's left carrying the "training makes safer drivers and riders" banner?

RoSPA? Indeed. With a membership of around 20,000, as good as they are, they won't be changing the world. Who else? Maybe the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety. That'll be the same group whose chairman stated "trained riders just kill themselves faster." Not much support from that corner then.

Bluntly, without the IAM there is no large group, with access to national government, advocating driver and rider training. At the same time, there are plenty of organizations advocating more enforcement of more rules more harshly. These organizations believe that driver and rider training is, at best, a waste of time. Without the IAM, for all its faults, there is no-one with credibility to oppose them and put the case for training and its benefits.

For this reason alone I'd stay. But, for me, there are other reasons. Like our Observers who go out, month after month, training people how to drive safely and well and perhaps even enjoy their driving a bit. Like the rest of our committee – a better bunch of people I'd struggle to find anywhere. And like the members of OAGAM – the ones who come each month to meetings, and all our other members. Each of them is carrying a flag that says "Training Works".

So, although I'm angry as hell with HQ (and drafting a letter from the Group to that effect), I'm remaining a member of the IAM and OAGAM. For me, the work we're doing is too important to walk away from.

Yours,

Mark

Mark McArthur-Christie
Oxford Area Group Chairman
mark@freemanchristie.com

Notes from an Ed...

What happened to this year?! Mine seems to have disappeared into a haze of exhaust smoke- I haven't had a non-motorsport related day off this year! I have again been competing in the National 2CV Race championship, which has been extremely competitive this season. It was a difficult start to the year, with some minor car faults at Silverstone & then some driver problems at Pembrey (!), but it got better, as I gained my best result at Oulton Park (a 5th place) & won the club "Driver of the Day" award at that meeting. We also came 12th in the 24hour race at Snetterton. I have been doing some marshalling, both for cars & bikes, and I spent 2 weeks on the Isle of Man at the Manx GP (like the TT but with classic bikes as well). Now the winter is fast approaching & the Group meetings on the 1st Wednesday of each month have some fascinating talks booked. We're always looking for content to put in the newsletter so if anyone would like to submit any write-ups or reviews on any of the talks please do so. In fact, if anyone has anything driving/ riding related, stories, hints, tips, their experience of being an Associate/ Observer etc they might like us to include we'd be very grateful!

Safe journeys,

H

Car Observer Notes

What a miserable summer! Despite that we have had some very successful summer meetings. These meetings rely upon our hard working Observers and this year it has been noticeable that we have had more people wishing to go out for a demonstration drive than Observers. This has meant that those Observers that have turned up have sometimes had to do two runs in an evening. The Committee is conscious of this and is considering if this is a sustainable activity.

On a similar note we are currently struggling to cope with the number of Associates. We hope that all Observers are taking as many as possible but we have a double edged sword at the moment in that the Senior Observers do not have time to train new Observers as they are trying to help with the backlog of Associates. Observers if your Associates have "gone quiet" then take a couple of minutes to give them a brief phone call and start things rolling again. If not then please let Duncan know and he will be pleased to give you another from his list.

Clive Stayt

Car Chief Observer

Events

We are trying to "kick-start" the group into becoming more active by organising some "motoring" related activities.

Bus Museum, Long Hanborough – Sunday 23rd November @ 10.30am
Cost £3 per person (payable in advance by 9th Nov & non-refundable)
There is a café on site where refreshments can be purchased.
See www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Lane/5050/obm/index.htm for more details



Mini Factory Tour, Cowley – Saturday 8th November @ 9am
Cost £8 per person, (payable in advance by 25th Oct & non-refundable)

Duration 2.5hrs - The tours will start in the Plant Oxford Info Centre, with the main focus of the tour being the Body in White (welding) and Assembly Halls. For Health and Safety reasons, visitors will not go into the paint facility, but instead be introduced to key highlights of the paint process with visual aids in the Info Centre. Please note they are unable to take round anyone under the age of 14yrs or anyone who is fitted with a pacemaker.

Unfortunately we have not been able to run any skid control or 4x4 events, due to the lack of interest. We need a minimum of 12 people to run one of these events at a cost of £75 - £100 per IAM member (subsidised by the group). Non members are welcome, but will need to pay the full price.

If you are interested in any of the above please e-mail/post your contact details together with the number or members/non-members wanting to attend.

iamoxfordevents@hotmail.co.uk or
Helen Jeffs, 22 Park View Road, Witney Oxon, OX28 1GA

So what did you do on the 29th Feb?



I went for a little ride out. As you may know, I like my long distance riding; up to now I've kept it mainly to the summer months, so I'd been planning to do something this winter. One of my trips was scheduled for the 29 Feb, for no other reason than there's not too many of them. The idea was to ride up to Inverness from Oxford and back in 24 hrs (an 1100+ mile round trip) as a Iron Butt Associations sanctioned SS1000 ride. If you're unfamiliar with the workings of the IBA, you need to prove to them that you've actually done the ride; you do this by providing them with a written log of the trip plus petrol receipts and also start & finish witnesses. The route was planned to take in some of my favourite Scottish roads (not necessarily the most direct). Carefully monitoring the Met offices forecasts for the week, I knew I was in for a rough ride; normally you'd adjust your trip dates to take into account the weather. But a 29th Feb trip is pretty limited to the available departure dates.....

The norm is to have a 5 or 6a.m kick off and finish in the early hours of the following morning, I wanted to complete the run on the same day – there's loads of March 1sts – So it was a 1am alarm and off at 2am. Months of planning meant it should all go like clock work.....

After chucking on my tank bag which contained a change of cloths a few snacks, some pages liberated from a road map (just in case the GPS gave up) & a small Tupperware box for the paperwork, I headed for the pre-arranged start at the nearest 24hr service station. My start witness signed the witness form and the first of ten till receipts confirmed the official start time for my 24 hour odyssey was 02:21 on the 29th Feb. Surprisingly the weather was good- a star-filled sky made for an enjoyable start to the day. My route from Oxford took me North on M40 to Birmingham. I'd given one of my sons a 4 GB SDHC card to load with music albums for me, so I had no idea what I'd be listening too. I turned it on as I left the slip road the first song 'Highway to Hell' If I only knew.....

Then the first problem of the trip! I'd planned to go north on M42 to meet the M6 but all the overheads were flashing 'road closed', so it was south on M42 north on M5 and back on course. The M6 at 3:30am is nice and quiet- only me and a million trucks so lane three was all mine. The receipt for my 2nd scheduled stop at Keele services some 135 miles later was stamped 04:18am. A trucker was laughing his head off as I past him still eating the pork pie I'd started at the pumps....One of my main planning concerns was to get around Manchester before rush hour; this now was not a problem. It was another 140 mile sprint up to stop #3, Southwaites Services just south of Carlisle, time 06:21, four hours to the minute from kick off. I also filled a 5ltr can and gave myself 5 minutes for a double espresso while I checked that I was recording everything correctly. In the map pouch of the tank bag I have an air temperature thermometer and more importantly an 'idiot list' of how to record all the stuff.



- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| A) CORRECT ADDRESS | some services only use their head office address |
| B) DATE | it's a leap year, do they have a 29 th Feb up north? |
| C) TIME | have they changed the clock back to GMT |
| D) ODOMETER | to help the IBA to track my route |
| E) TEMP | for my own information |
| F) MILES FROM LAST STOP | again for my own info |

It's the most important and yet easiest thing in the world to slip up on the paperwork. If that's wrong then I may as well of stayed in bed.....



As I left the M6 and Carlisle behind I headed into Scotland on the A74(M) dawn was just breaking over my right shoulder. By a miracle of international planning I arrived a little tired at the gates of Glasgow with every other commuter for miles..... a few miles of filtering and I'm awake again, I picked the northern route through Glasgow, M73 – M8 and out onto the old A82 past the Erskine bridge. The A82 will take me all the way to Inverness..... A few miles (relative) outside Glasgow is Loch Lomond. It was at some point along this Loch that it first started to rain. It would rain for the best part of the next 600 miles.

I arrived at Break #4 The Green Welly Stop Services, Tyndrum at 09:34 and 156 miles from Southwaite looking a bit worse for wear and very wet. I afforded myself another double espresso and a chat to the attendant. Off again up the A82 through the snow capped Black mount area and into Glencoe, It was about 20 miles south of Glencoe village that after rounding another corner that the wind coming down the valley tried its best to ditch me and the bike. The magnetic tank bag flew into the air, I just managed to pin it between my knee and elbow. That was a very big surprise and good practise for thing to come..... I had a forced stop in Onich as it was the

furthest north west point of the trip and again proof was required that id been there, It was now 10:34 and only about 35 miles on. It took an hour to have a coffee and ride 35 miles Oops that's not good. A pump engineer from Inverness working on the pumps held my bike up right while I filled it up- he couldn't believe I was doing this for fun, actually nor could I. I took the head stock strap from the tank bag off because if it decides to jump ship again and make its own way home I'm not going with it. He did have some good news; it wasn't as windy nearer to Inverness. He was right! Up past Fort William and Ben Nevis it calmed down a lot, still raining though onto Fort Augustus and Loch Ness. At one point I thought the sun may come out, but no.

My first non-petrol stop in over 500 miles- 10 minutes along side Loch Ness, for a rest and a bit to eat. (I can recommend crusty rolls in the rain; it just runs off instead of soaking in).

Stop #6 probably the most important was at Kessock service station Inverness time 12:52 and 548 miles from the start and 506 miles from the proposed finish at the Northampton services on the M1. But as usual no time for hanging round. Inverness is all downhill now I take the A9 south through the Cairngorm Mountains and on to Perth. Did I say it was raining.....For only the second time on all my travels the water found it's way into my boots. My gloves and thermal glove liners were so wet they acted as insulators for my hands; my heated jacket was brilliant. I haven't mentioned my heated jacket have I? If it wasn't for that jacket I would still be in a motel someplace just north of Glasgow.....

Broxden services in Perth was #7, 14:59 and 112 miles from Inverness. The overheads are saying 'Forth Road Bridge closed to high sided vehicles'. I leave Perth and head for Edinburgh on the M90, the wind is picking up again the further south I get. By the time I get to junction one the bridge is now closed to motorcycles as well, I'm forced to make a 30-35 mile detour over the Kincardine bridge. I'm now half way back to Glasgow so I stop and reconsider my options- do I now carry on and come down the M6 or go with my plan and head back along the M9 to Edinburgh? As there wasn't a great deal of total mileage in it I went with my plan.....east on the M9 and M8 onto the A720 Edinburgh ring road and onto the old A1 coastal road to Berwick-upon-Tweed and my 8th stop at Lindisfarne service station. The wind and rain was now getting serious between the Lammermuir hills and the coast, the first A1 road closure was at the small village of Haggerston immediately north of the services, it was 17:48 when I reached Lindisfarne services and another 140 miles under my belt. I wanted to call in on Lindisfarne - Holy Island – but I'd lost too much time with the weather and diversions. It was a straight-forward run south on the A1 to Newcastle, I also wanted to see the Angel of the North again but it was now dark so I missed it as I shot past Gateshead and onto the A1(M) and M1 heading for #9 Woolly Edge services south of Leeds in south Yorkshire.

It was now that the cracks started appearing, the wind and rain are both now travelling horizontally at some speed heading east presumably the front end of the Emma storm that hit mainland Europe on Sat morning. The spray being kicked up by the north bound traffic is as bad as the rain. I've also been keeping an eye on the bikes Odometer to watch it click over 30,000 miles which it did somewhere north of York. The receipt says it was 20:38 when I reached Woolly Edge and another 165 miles. I'm now having to hog lane two- if the wind calms I drift into lane three and if it gives me an extra shove I've got lane one plus the hard shoulder to sort it out..... The motorway was closed for clearing damaged vehicles of the carriageway twice more. I think it was Tibshelf services by Mansfield that I pulled into with only 30 miles left to go before I break the magic 1000 miles mark and wonder if I should call it a day, the 'Highway to Hell' song came to mind. This problem was answered for me when I soon realised that the bike couldn't stand up by itself in the wind and there would have been bits of Rocket all over the car park by morning.....So we headed for our final check point, the Northampton services for my final receipt and to find a witness to sign me off, Time 22:54 and 114 miles. A total recorded mileage of 1079 in 20.5 hours, with an average moving speed of 60.9 mph. The trip home took the days takings up to 1135 miles in 22 hours.

By Pete West

THE KNOWLEDGE- ADVANCED DRIVING

There has been much talk recently on the use of the Matrix signs on major roads, and how useful they are. I seem to remember a discussion about them in one of the Group Meetings last year. The following appeared on the RAC Forum and Tony Chalky has gained permission to reproduce it. It might explain a few things.....

I can explain why there sometimes is nothing there as I am one of those persons that now-a-days sets these signs & signals.

When we get a call from anyone, often via the police because someone's phoned in on 999, we MUST set some sort of warning signs.

If the call has come from a member of the public (MOP) and we cannot confirm that the problem, obstruction, accident actually exists at the location given, we set 50 mph on the signs.

Unfortunately, most people have no idea where they are on the motorway exactly, they know which junction they've got on at, and they know which junction they will be getting off at, but anywhere in between will usually be a stab in the dark.

If on the other hand, the call comes from a "reliable source" i.e.. Police or HATO officer, a recovery agent, Highways Agency contractor, or CCTV, then we take that as confirmed, and set whatever is required, egg. lane closures or more severe speeds.

If a MOP calls in from an emergency roadside telephone (ERT) and they can actually see the incident from where they are at the phone, we can set speeds down to 30 mph just prior to the scene.

****NOTE;** if you call in from an ERT we know exactly where that phone is, so will know exactly where any problem is. (ERT phones are free, and come directly into the Highways Agency Control Rooms, and are answered within 20 secs)

Once a patrol (police or HATO) gets to the scene the incident is quickly assessed, then all sorts of things can happen, including the update of the signals, either more severe, or cleared.

ALL signals are only cleared on the say-so of a patrol at scene (Police or HATO); no-one else can give that authority.

As you can see, it's much more exact if you call in from an ERT, rather than calling 999 on your mobile. you will also speak to someone in a motorway control room, who knows about the motorways and the locations, whereas with 999, often you'll speak to a police call taker who probably knows nothing about motorways, and doesn't know just what questions to ask you, that's another reason why you can get miles of signals set, with nothing there! We often get (especially from a couple of police forces) between junction X and junction Y, now the average distance between junctions on the M6 is about 5 miles, but there are some that are 13 miles.....I rest my case!

People sometimes stop in the live lanes for the most craziest of reasons! this is then called in by good citizens, the next thing, the muppet who stopped, realises the wisdom of his ways, and drives off, meanwhile we have signals set, patrols on route to sort things out, and there's nothing there, but we can't clear the signals until it's checked to be clear, just in case.

You just wouldn't believe the things that are "dropped" on the c/way requiring initial signals set at 50's until confirmed with the patrol etc.

how about:.....

a complete single bed, a settee, garden shed, garden fish pond (the plastic bit that you sink into a hole)

Ladders (regularly) bags of cement, paving stones, full HGV wheels (HGV tyre bits are many times a day), car spare wheels, push bikes still attached to the roof-rack, top-boxes, suit cases, flat-pack furniture, in fact anything and everything, so if you see 50's (debris/incident) be aware, slow down, drop back and leave a good bit of room between the car in front and yourself, watch in case he swerves for anything, but most of all, be prepared for anything.

.....

Road works are a little different, the signals are set when the foreman of the road works "gang" asks for them, they then start to put out the large "hard signage" (i.e., the yellow signs showing which lanes are closed) once he has those in place, and has coned off the lanes that they are closing to work in, he calls for the matrix signals to be cleared, as drivers should be taking notice of the "hard signage" (but still manage to drive straight into a bank of cones with flashing lights on!)

When they are ready to remove the road works, he calls for the matrix to be reset.

Then when all the lane closure cones, and the hard signage have been removed, he calls for the matrix to be cleared once more.

.....

Any signals/VMS showing anything to do with "Queue" and a speed restriction, are set automatically by MIDAS (Motorway Incident Detection and Automatic Signalling) these are sensing wires set into each lane of the motorway (on busy motorways, with VMS type signals) that can sense the speed and amount of traffic that goes over it, should the average speed of the traffic fall below a certain level, it automatically sets "Queue" and a speed restriction, normally this is either 50 mph, or 40 mph (will only set lower if the HDS has been altered.....but I'll not go into that) it looks at the readings of that midas pad, approx every 4 mins, if the average speed has increased over the set speed, then it will switch off all the signals.

This means that if you see signs and signals saying "queue" you can bet that there is/has recently been a queue.

One other thing that will trip these signals, is a slow moving HGV, so you could be driving up the motorway at 70 mph, with nothing else on the road, and see "queue" signals, thinking they are stuck, you ignore them, only to find yourself hurtling up behind a slow moving abnormal load doing 10 mph! OOPS!!

.....

We are measured for how quick the signals are set once we are told of something, and we are also measured how quick they are cleared once instructed by a HATO or police patrol.

The signalling system is a computer system, now and again the odd signal won't go off and the engineer has to go out to fix it, but that is a very seldom. You will only see just one signal on its own when this happens.

The police are now actively booking people who go through lane closures, so beware! Don't do it.

One other thing, it takes sometimes up to 2 minutes to set signals (depending on if the system that day) a busy motorway will come to a standstill at the rate of 1 mile/minute if the road is blocked!

Musings of a grumpy old man.



Blind spot. We hear a lot about this, but surprisingly if one moves ones head the blind spot can be reduced drastically - particularly on the drivers' side. We are not dummies so let's not sit there like them. This also works for negotiating right hand bends - lean to the left this gives even more than positioning on the road. Never mind what passengers think!

Does anyone agree?

A little bit of lean can improve visibility

Nick Morse

In The News

Texting while driving is more dangerous than drink-driving

Texting while driving is riskier than driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, a study has suggested. The Transport Research Laboratory found that motorists who use their mobile phone to send text messages while on the road dramatically increase the likelihood of collision. Their reaction times deteriorated by 35 per cent, much worse than those who drank alcohol at the legal limit, who were 12 per cent slower, or those who had taken cannabis, who were 21 per cent slower. In addition, drivers who sent or read text messages were more prone to drift out of their lane, the research found, with steering control by texters 91 per cent poorer than that of drivers devoting their full concentration to the road.

Despite it being illegal for a motorist to use a handheld phone behind the wheel, the RAC Foundation said that nearly half of British drivers aged between 18 and 24 admitted to texting on the roads. Yet only 144,000 people were prosecuted for using their mobile while driving last year. During the study, the Transport Research Laboratory concluded that text messages took on average 63 seconds to compose while the phone owner was driving, compared with 22 seconds when sent from a desk. In one minute, a car travels half a mile at town centre speeds and more than a mile on the motorway.

Diary 2008/9

1 OCTOBER 2008

Roadside first Aid

5 NOVEMBER 2008

AGM and talk by Peter Jell: Investigation of Fatal Collisions

8 NOVEMBER 2008

Mini Factory Tour, Cowley 9am

Cost £8 per person

23 NOVEMBER 2008

Bus Museum, Long Hanborough 10.30am

Cost £3 per person

3 DECEMBER 2008

Christmas Quiz Night!

JANUARY 2009

No Meeting

To Be Confirmed...

February 2009 Professor Horne Sleep and driving

March 2009 Steve Haley Mind driving

April to August Demonstration Drives

Sept 2009 Preparing for and demonstration of night driving

Oct 2009 Andy Morrison Motorcycling

November 2009 Thatcham and AGM

December 2009 Quiz

Committee Members

Mark McArthur-Christie (chairman)

Janet van den Berge

Roger Pickering

Clive Stayt

Duncan Jones

Chris Caspel

Mike Roberts

Tony Chalkly

Jane Olds

Helen Deeley

John Lang

Nick Morse

All Contributions will be gratefully received, however Editors decisions on content are final, & we reserve the right to edit articles.

Contact us:

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Oxford Area Group of Advanced Motorists (including Motorcyclists)

46th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

5th November 2008 at 8pm at Exeter Hall, Kidlington, Oxfordshire

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of the 45th Annual General Meeting held on 7th November 2007.
(Resolution 1)
3. Matters arising from the 45th Annual General Meeting.
4. Amendments or Adjustments to this Agenda.
5. Chairman's Report.
6. Secretary's Report.
7. Treasurer's Report and Adoption of Accounts (Resolution 2)
- 8.
8. Election of Officers *
9. Election of Committee Members **
10. Any Other Business (being properly the business of the AGM)

Note:-

1. Questions from Members will be invited following each report.
2. Please vote only if you are a Full Group Member.

Resolutions:-

1. That the Minutes of the 2007 AGM be approved as a true record.
2. That the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2008 be approved.

* All Officers (Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer) retire annually

** One third of the Committee Members, excluding Officers, retire annually in rotation.

**Minutes of the 45th Annual General Meeting held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 7th November 2007
at Exeter Hall, Kidlington, Oxfordshire**

Present: Chairman - Mark McArthur-Christie; Secretary, Treasurer; Committee Members and approximately 50 Members, Associates and Guests.

- 1. Apologies** were received from Chris Burras, Gill Ward and Pat Watson.
- 2. The minutes of the 44th Annual General Meeting** were approved, subject to correction of the date to the 1st November 2006, and there were no matters arising.
- 3. The Chairman reported** on a year with excellent guest speakers, including talks on the Ordnance Survey. . He was delighted to welcome so many new members including many motorcyclists. The Group had over 200 members, of whom about 25% attended meetings. The Committee had underwritten some driving events but unfortunately had taken a loss on one because people had not turned up; in future, money would be taken when bookings were made. Volunteers would be welcome to help on the stand at Shows, to help with renovating the MDU and also both car and motorcycle observers were needed.
- 4. The Secretary reported** that the Committee had met 5 times during the year, discussing (*inter alia*) waiting lists, events, the newsletter, the MDU and finances. Vice Chairman Jane Olds had done much work to improve communications, organising the Group's mobile phone, website and database as well as the printing and despatch of the newsletters. Chris Burras, resigning from the Committee, would be much missed for the valuable work he had done and also hosting the Committee meetings.
- 5. The Treasurer produced accounts** to the end of the financial year to the 31st March 2006. He commented on the small deficit (£85.69) for the year, mainly due to the low attendance at one event, but pointed out that the bank balance (£5,811.80) was healthy and that there was scope for suggestions on how Group funds might be used, in accordance with the Group's charitable objectives. A request was made for the purchase of more reflective jackets. The Treasurer also asked for a volunteer to carry out the required independent check of the accounts. The accounts were approved, subject to this.
- 6. Election of Officers.** The following had agreed to stand again and were elected *en bloc*: Chairman – Mark McArthur-Christie; Secretary – Janet van den Berge; Treasurer – Roger Pickering.
- 7. Election of Committee.** No nominations were received. The following members had agreed to stand again and were elected *en bloc*: Jane Olds (Vice-Chairman); Ian Jeffs (Vice-Chairman); Clive Stayt (Cars Chief Observer); John Lang (Motorcycles Chief Observer); Duncan Jones (Associates Co-ordinator); Helen Deeley (Newsletter Editor); Tony Chalkly, Alexander Glowacki and Peter Ingram, Ordinary Members. Chris Burras had decided to retire from the Committee and the Chairman expressed a “big thank-you” for all the work he had done, as well as the meetings he had hosted.
- 8. Other Business.** (i) Ian Jeffs, Events Manager, said that skid pan, 4 x 4 and rally driving training could be arranged if enough people would commit to attending, and that other suggestions would be welcome. (ii) A vote of thanks to the Chairman was proposed from the floor.

The meeting was followed by a talk by Regional Chief Examiner Trevor Dickinson.