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I have been asked to consider the following questions

1 What evidence, if any, is available regarding whether driving standards are falling?

- 1.1 There is a view that there was once a "Golden age of motoring". However, Lord Montagu writing in *The Art of Driving a Motor Car* first published one hundred years ago on March 1st 1906 obviously felt that there was a need to try and create respect on the road. He devoted a chapter to Road Maxims and Manners¹ listing eight occasions when readers are urged to drive slowly, including – when meeting or overtaking lady cyclists and when a drunken man is on the road. This seems somewhat surprising as press reports suggest that alcohol abuse is a twenty first century phenomenon. He concluded his guidance thus "a motorist cannot go far wrong if he drives like a gentleman; in other words, with consideration for all."
- 1.2 A few years later in 1914 the first edition of *How to Drive a Motor Car* stated "The first requisite for all motorists is that of coolness coupled with a strong undercurrent of gentlemanly behaviour." It goes on to suggest "Never allow yourself to become addicted to the bad practice of showing off."
- 1.3 Forty plus years later in 1958 the nineteenth edition of the same title states "Plain rudeness and lack of courtesy on the roads is responsible for a good deal of ill feeling which ought not to exist, and not a few accidents."
- 1.4 The concept of a golden age seems unlikely, although it does seem that increased traffic volumes and changing attitudes have accentuated bad driving manners over time.

2 What role do driving instructors play in trying to instil good practice into learner drivers regarding "respect" to other road users?

- 2.1 All driving instructors teach all their pupils to drive correctly and with due courtesy and consideration for other road users. However, they do so in an environment that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to do that in a way that is effective in producing behaviour that lasts much beyond the driving test. It is said that education is what survives when what has been learnt has been forgotten. For a driving instructor in a car teaching a learner, whose main interest is in gaining enough practical skills to acquire a driving licence as quickly and cheaply as possible, it is difficult to teach respect. This is made worse when the surrounding environment is full of experienced drivers driving without much respect for each other.
- 2.2 In the 2002 consultation document *Introducing a More Structured Approach to Learning to Drive* the DfT (then DTLR) discussed the concept of Compulsory Theory

¹ Reproduced on page 3

Training for learner drivers with the aim of *ensuring that learners gain a proper understanding of the theory of driving*, the Motor Schools Association has supported classroom training for new drivers for many years and in response to that document the association stated *learning the theory questions by rote and watching some video clips may produce candidates who can pass a test but is unlikely to produce new drivers properly equipped for a lifetime of safe driving*.

- 2.3 At that time DfT were discussing classroom training as a means of improving a learner's grasp of driving theory. That may be the wrong concept. Perhaps what we should be discussing is group study in order to engage new drivers in discussions on the attitudes, beliefs and motivations which affect their choices of driving strategies.
- 2.4 At what stage of their development we should require new drivers to give some thought to their own viewpoint of driving is debateable, some believe pre test and others post, as in the enhanced Pass Plus scheme that has been piloted. Engaging with groups of new drivers and encouraging them to think about their own ideas and values' regarding road safety may be an opportunity to improve their concept of respect for other drivers.

3 What more could driving instructors do, assuming a blank sheet of paper, to instil "respect" into learner drivers?

- 3.1 A large amount of work is currently being undertaken to look at ways in which the higher order skills detailed in the GDE matrix (Goals for Driver Education) can be trained and tested it is to be hoped that the research will soon produce some workable results that driving instructors may be able to utilize.
- 3.2 It might also be useful if there was more definition available of what we expect from drivers in the way of respect for others. The text books all talk about showing courtesy and consideration for other road users but do not explain or define what that means. There is also no laid down code of polite or respectful behaviour for drivers, we tend to shy away from teaching politeness for fear it may cause problems.
- 3.3 The commonest form of polite behaviour on the road – flashing headlights to let another driver know you are giving way to them – is frowned upon. Driving instructors, on a daily basis, tell their pupils the flashing of headlights has only one real meaning...
- 3.4 Instructors also tend to discourage their pupils from beckoning other road users to proceed, on the basis that they might be beckoning them into danger. Drivers are also often discouraged from giving a wave of appreciation in acknowledgment of any courtesy they receive because it is considered dangerous to take one hand off the wheel.
- 3.5 Perhaps a code or laid down system of how to behave politely and respectfully on the road would give instructors something to teach and examiners something to test. Simply asking the chaps to behave in a gentlemanly manner is not just un PC and antiquated it failed to work a century ago, it is hardly likely to work today.

THE ART OF DRIVING A MOTOR CAR

by Lord Montagu Editor of *THE CAR* - First Edition issued March 1st 1906

CHAPTER III.

Road Maxims and Manners.

WHEN on the road the first care of every driver should be consideration for other users of the highway, and a concise set of rules, issued by *The Car* for the League of Considerate Motorists (mounted on Card, price One Shilling), is here set forth:—

ROAD MAXIMS FOR MOTORISTS (Compiled by the Editor of "*THE CAR*")

DRIVE SLOWLY

- 1) Through towns and villages.
- 2) When approaching cross roads or turning corners.
- 3) When passing schools, cottages, and churches.
- 4) On dusty or muddy roads when passing cyclists or pedestrians.
- 5) When meeting or overtaking lady cyclists; and do not steer too close to them.
- 6) When entering a main road from a side road.
- 7) When you see a drunken man on the road.
- 8) When passing any live animals on the road, cows, sheep, dogs, &c.

STOP

- 1) When an accident of any kind occurs, whether your fault or not. Render all the assistance in your power, and, as a safeguard against future proceedings, ascertain the names and addresses of a few witnesses.
- 2) When you see any likelihood of a horse becoming restive. If necessary, do this even before the driver holds up a warning hand.

ALWAYS ASSUME

- 1) That other road users may do the wrong thing, i.e., a driver may pull the wrong rein, or a pedestrian hesitate and try several courses.
- 2) That it is your business, not the other man's, to avoid danger.

The road is free for all; therefore be courteous and considerate, and **ALWAYS DRIVE LIKE A GENTLEMAN.**

The law, of course, cannot guide one in every event of the many which may befall every day, but it is the duty of the motorist, from every point of view as owning the handier and the faster vehicle, to make allowance for those not so fortunately situated. In fact, if the rule of the road at sea be kept in mind and applied to the highway, it will be found a very fair method of ascertaining what one ought to do in each case, and how to meet difficulties. The rule of the road at sea ordains that the stronger must look out for the weaker, and that the greater the command of speed possessed by a vessel the more responsible is its captain in case of accident. Let this simple idea dominate the mind while driving, and whether the strict letter of the law may be occasionally not complied with, a British judge or jury will certainly appreciate that the considerate motorist acted for the best, even should an accident occur. I do not intend in this chapter to go into the question of manners in detail, but everything may be comprehended in the phrase—that a motorist cannot go far wrong if he drives like a gentleman; in other words, with consideration for all.