

# Motoring On patrol

sponsored  
by

  
**A.A. CLARK**  
OF  
WINDSOR  
**01753 800600**  


JOHN patrols the area bounded by the M25, M4, M40 and the A404 (M), some of the busiest routes in the country.

"We cover Slough, Maidenhead, London, Surrey and South Bucks," he explains, and adds: "We're deployed by a computer, so it will send a patrol that can get there within a specific time."

Today, the average time from the customers call to the arrival of a patrol is 33 minutes.

Priority is given to breakdowns at dangerous locations, women alone or with children and people with special needs.

Customer relations are as important to an AA patrol as automotive skills according to John, especially in this area.

"We have a lot of people needing to make it to the airport and it's a main holiday through route."

"We need to be able to talk to people. We always remember that the customers are the people that pay our wages."

*Despite the fact that the breakdown could be irreparable, the sight of the amber flashing lights and chequered yellow-black livery is a welcome sight to any AA member. Richard Hill goes to meet Patrol Officer John Hogan*

"There's no typical day," says John. "The mornings tend to be all 'home starts', especially on very cold mornings."

"On the evening shift they tend to be breakdowns on the main routes – the 'A' roads and motorways."

Occasionally the bizarre can happen. A few years ago, John was called out to a car refusing to start in a nudist camp near Camberley:

"At first I thought it couldn't be – but in the distance I could see people playing ball in the nude!"

Today's cars are far more complex and sophisticated.

"New cars are more comput-

erised," says John

"They get more difficult, especially the sort you can't repair without specialised equipment."

"But they can also be the simplest because sometimes it's just a poor connection."

"We have a technical help desk in Basingstoke."

"We can phone them and they've got all the information there and they can talk me through any difficult problems."

John certainly gets a lot of job satisfaction. "It's a sense of achievement," he explains.

"The best is getting a car running where there was no sign of life – that's the buzz."



■ AA Patrol Officer John Hogan.

## A point of view

ANGELA Pober (Observer Letters) and other drivers who have been convicted of driving in excess of 30mph in Upton Court Road, Slough, feel that they have been unfairly treated.

However, the truth remains that the speed limit was changed legally and it is each driver's responsibility to comply with the speed limit in force.

Responsible driving is about good observation and a good working knowledge of the Highway Code.

Any responsible driver will know that a lit street in a built-up residential area is subject to a 30mph speed limit, unless otherwise indicated.

Speed restrictions are there to reduce accidents. The residents in Upton Court Road, particularly those with children, would be appalled if the police or local authority failed to enforce the speed limit, particularly if speeding led to a subsequent accident.

Richard Hill, Motoring Correspondent, The Observer