

# Closed Roads

## ROADAR NORTH-EAST

### *Special points of interest:*

- Welcome to the current issue of "Open Roads".
- News Flash: Tribute to Jim Muter

### Welcome to Closed Roads

This is the latest "bumper" issue of the "Open Roads" newsletter for RoadAR North-East members. It's YOUR newsletter, and we would welcome any input that you may want to suggest. Maybe a quiz page, or a facts and figures area, meeting dates, or events locally or nationally that you may be interested in?

All this and more can be incorporated into the newsletter but for it to be a success it needs input, not just from me but from everyone.

But come on you all must have some tips or anecdotes on riding, or even a favorite ride, I would love to hear from you for your 5 minutes of fame in the newsletter.

### News Flash

Well it's not really news, as our valued president, tutor and regional senior examiner Jim Muter retired in August. But due to the lockdown we've been unable as a group to show our thanks and appreciation in the usual way, so we are taking this opportunity to include a tribute to him for his work. Thanks Jim!

### *Inside this issue:*

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### "Words from the webmaster"

Our website <https://roadar-northeast.org.uk/> is currently in development, so there may be occasional teething problems.

Don't worry if you can't "log in" - that is a feature we are developing. However there is a "links and documents" page with some useful links. On the same page you will find a link for "Public documents" where you will find **all issues** of the "OpenRoads" newsletter—including the current issue.

**The website has all the latest information on our status—so keep checking it!**

If you have suggestions for additional documents you would find useful, or for the website, please let me know. John Errington [webmaster@roadar-northeast.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@roadar-northeast.org.uk)

## Meet the RSE

For those of us in receipt of an Advanced Certificate from RoSPA, you may have noticed on the accompanying test report it is verified after the examiners name by the RSE J Muter. Who is this mysterious official? Jim

Muter, the Regional Senior Examiner, joined Durham Constabulary as a Police Cadet in September 1965. His parents didn't have a car and neither of them could drive, so he doesn't know where his love of driving comes from. Unusually for a cadet, he attended a Standard Motor Cycle Course, but had some driving lessons on his weekends off. He told me, "I saved up for the deposit on my first car, an Austin A40 Farina by hitching lifts and saving my bus fares. I was posted to Blaydon on becoming a Constable and allocated a Driving course a year and a half into my service and got the bug. Next was an MG1100 to make my bug go faster. I applied for Traffic after my 2 year probation, was successful and posted onto Section 1 North Traffic with a Hillman Hunter GT in black and white which impressed me as a Newcastle supporter."



He applied to join the Driving School in 1980 and was accepted after successfully completing a very intense six week course but had to wait three years for a vacancy. As a keen sportsman playing football, tennis and squash and cross country running he was told in no uncertain terms by the head of training, "You can't have time off during courses for all your sport lad." Jim told him, "Don't worry Sir, I can do all those after work and at weekends." The highlight of his tennis career was to qualify for the National Championships which were held for the first time ever at Wimbledon and he won the Men's Singles plate event after two very strenuous, but happy days.

During his thirteen happy years in the Driving School at Durham, Jim progressed from training learner drivers and instructing on Standard Driving Courses, to Advanced Driving Courses. He went to Cardington and qualified as a Delegated Examiner to examine drivers of all classes of Police vehicles, Cars, M/Cycles, PCV and LGV and then the Metropolitan Police Driving School on a VIP Protection Course. He retired after his 30 year's service in March 1997.



Having been the driving school practical joker he was expecting a surprise at his retirement party. His colleagues were split between Newcastle and Sunderland supporters and at the end of his speech in the HQ lounge, the door burst open

and in came 4 people dressed in Sunderland football kits, lead by the team captain Kevin Ball. Jim was then showered with many Sunderland football club gifts, the final one being a brick with his name which would be placed in a wall at the newly opened Stadium of Light.

Within three months of retiring, Jim started as a civilian driving trainer at the Northumbria Police Driving School. The following January, the Inspector in charge moved on, his post was civilianised and Jim was given the job in charge of a mix of eight police officers and civilians. Thirteen years after building his team to 31 members and delivering many more courses, the government cutbacks brought about voluntary redundancy for Jim and eleven other members of the driving school staff. Jim then became a "White van man" for the next 18 months, delivering car parts for a local company just 5 minutes walk from his home.

Jim's involvement with RoSPA started in 1979 just after they took over from The League of Safe Drivers when he saw an advert for RoSPA Examiners. He was the first Examiner appointed by the Chief Examiner Mike Collins, who travelled up to Durham to meet him. After a one hour assessment drive and a chat over coffee, he was appointed. In 1989 after the Police Driving School held Advanced Driving lectures on Roadcraft. He and three other interested parties met at a local pub and The North East Group was formed. Jim's friend and colleague from the Driving School, Barrie Barnett, who was the RSE, died suddenly and Jim was asked to step in temporarily to cover the post. That was 10 years ago. As RSE he has responsibility for twenty examiners. He receives test applications from HQ and allocates them to the nearest Examiner. He then receives the completed test reports for checking before their onward journey to HQ. He is also active within the local RoADAR Group as a Tutor and was elected President a few years ago.

Jim is also an active member of the Tyne Tees MX5 owners club and takes part in their runs in his Mark 1 Eunos affectionately named "Mickey". He also spends his Sunday



mornings between April and November along with other Advanced Drivers, Ex Police Officers and Driving Instructors, honing their skills by driving over the Durham Dales, Cumbria, Northumberland and North Yorkshire. Roll on April 2020!!

Jim said, "April is a special month for my wife Denise and me as of April 11th; we've been married for 50 very happy years, apart from her "Sporting Widow" period and now a home bound wife on Sunday mornings! She's been in Mickey twice in my six years of ownership, both times for the three mile trip to Tesco, but never again. Apparently it messed up her hair!!"

He is a long suffering Toon supporter, likes walking their three little dogs, and barbecuing for the family in the summer. He recently taught his eldest granddaughter to drive and she passed after only three months training with just three minors. He says, "I wasn't happy with her!!!"

Editor

## Seven common driving law confusions explained

We sift through some common motoring confusions to find out what is and isn't legal while driving.

Not everyone is completely clued up about the rules of the road, so confusion and misinformation have a habit of spreading; but ignorance isn't an excuse for doing something illegal. With that in mind, we're here to clear up any confusion on some of these common motoring law myths.

### Is it legal to use your phone in the car when you're stationary?

You've been stuck in a tailback without moving for hours. You're beyond bored. You decide to send a sarcastic tweet to lighten the mood. But if your engine is on, you're committing an offence.

Since 2017, using your mobile phone while driving could land you with six points and a £200 fine. And being stationary won't wash with the courts as a defence. And if you think you'll be ok using a phone with headphones or on speakerphone - if the police think you're distracted while using them, you could still get stopped and potentially penalised.

### Is it illegal to splash a pedestrian while driving?

Avoiding puddles on British roads is almost as difficult as dodging potholes, and it may be an unfortunate coincidence that you and a pedestrian pass one another next to a splash zone.

But splashing a pedestrian, whether accidentally or intentionally, is an offence under Section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988:

**“If a person drives a mechanically propelled vehicle on a road or other public place without due care and attention, or without reasonable consideration for other persons using the road or place, he (sic) is guilty of an offence.”**

If you're caught, you could be hit with a £5,000 fine and up to nine points on your licence.

It's ironic that this offence is often touted as a 'weird' driving law in places like Japan, but it's been a firm part of UK legislation for over 30 years.

### Is it legal to flash another driver to warn them about a speed trap?

Letting other drivers know about speed traps and getting them to slow down is doing a public service, right? Surely there's no harm in that?

Actually, there is. Rule 110 of the Highway Code says:

**Only flash your headlights to let other road users know that you are there. Do not flash your headlights to convey any other message or intimidate other road users (our emphasis).**

It has also been successfully argued that warning other drivers about a speed trap is grounds for 'obstructing an officer in the course of their duties', which has a maximum fine of £1,000.

### Is it illegal to eat or drink at the wheel?

We're not talking about drinking alcohol here – that one is very much illegal. Eating at the wheel isn't illegal per se. But if it causes you to drive in a dangerous way, or if you're involved in an accident as a result, then you could face a penalty.

This would come under ‘driving without due care and attention’ – also known as a CD10 - and usually results in a £100 fine and three points on your licence.

This particular offence isn’t limited to eating and drinking. Anything that causes your driving ability to deteriorate would be classed as a CD10, including:

|                      |                                |            |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Middle lane hogging, | Driving while tired or unwell, | Tailgating |
| Undertaking,         | Being distracted while driving |            |

In serious circumstances, you could face a £5,000 fine and nine points on your licence. This would come under ‘driving without due care and attention’ – also known as a CD10 - and usually results in a £100 fine and three points on your licence

## Is it legal to not wear a seatbelt?

There are very few occasions where it’s okay to not wear a seatbelt. These include:

- when you’re reversing.
- if you’re in a police, fire or rescue vehicle.
- if your car was built without seatbelts, no children under three years old are present and children over three years old are sat in the back.

Outside of these very specific circumstances, you and all passengers must be properly restrained in the car. Failing to do so is not only dangerous, but could land you with a fine of up to £500.

That includes other adults, children and pets, so make sure everyone buckles up before you set off.

## Is it illegal to drive with a dirty number plate?

There are strict rules around number plates and how they’re displayed. If your car’s number plate is missing, displayed incorrectly or obscured, you could face a fine of £1,000.

What’s more, this is also a valid reason for your car to fail its MOT, potentially leaving you even more out of pocket

## Is it legal to ask passengers for money?

Asking your mate for a tenner towards the cost of petrol is perfectly acceptable. However, if you’re moonlighting as an unofficial taxi service, then that’s a big no-no.

There are two implications here.

If you’re making a profit from driving people around, that’s considered ‘hire and reward’ by insurers. Unless you have proper cover in place, your car insurance policy could be made invalid.

Also, you could be considered to be ‘operating a taxi without a licence’, which carries a fine of up to £2,500 and automatically invalidates your driving licence.

So there we have it. Ignorance is no excuse for breaking the law, so hopefully you’ll go forth with a little more clarity.

### **Spot the difference ?**

Due to pathogen pandemic restrictions, this issue has had a quick title change, but I wonder how many will notice and get in touch about it? This is to see if everyone is awake, when they are reading the newsletter, or are they skipping through it?

<http://roadar-northeast.org.uk/>

**R O A D A R   N O R T H -  
E A S T**

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Please send any inclusions for the “Open Roads” newsletter to the Secretary at the following email address:-

[secretary@roadar-northeast.org.uk](mailto:secretary@roadar-northeast.org.uk)

We are the local group of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders (RoADAR); a team of volunteers promoting safe and more rewarding Driving and Riding through improved skills.

As one of over fifty regional groups throughout the UK, we provide the training and support you need to pass the RoADAR Advanced Driving or Riding test, and become a full member of the national RoADAR organisation.

We are a non-profit organisation whose members pay a small annual subscription to cover the running costs of the the group. Training for members is free.

Everyone involved in the group participates on a volunteer basis. The Driving and Riding tutors give up their time for free to pass on their valuable skills and knowledge.

### Please stay safe

Presently one in 100 of the people in our area has the virus. Here are some simple things we can all do to protect ourselves and others from Corvid-19:

- Don't mix with other households in their home or garden or in yours: and don't socialise with others outside the home, like in pubs and restaurants.
- Avoid close contact when out and about: and Wear a face covering if you can
- Keep washing your hands for 20 seconds: If you can't wash your hands use sanitiser
- Download the Track and Trace App and check in at venues
- If you need to travel, walk or cycle where you can – and avoid car sharing
- Watch out for symptoms - book a test online as soon as you can or call 119 if you have symptoms of a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- Get a flu jab: As we come up to flu season, it's important that we don't overwhelm the NHS. If you are eligible, please get a free flu vaccine. You may not feel that you need one, but you will be protecting others. Ask your pharmacist or GP.

## Why buy an electric motorbike?

Electric motorbikes are bikes powered by batteries and electric motors instead of the usual internal combustion engines. Power is stored in batteries, and they can generally be charged from a standard household socket, or a fast-charging unit either installed at your home or work, or in a public place like a service station car park.

There are plenty of reasons to buy one right now. It costs hardly anything to ‘fill one up’ with electricity – many are only a handful of pounds to charge – and there are some neat tax incentives for those willing to take the plunge.

However, while most are silent, they’re also tremendously exciting to ride too, because unlike a petrol-powered bike, full electric power and torque is there from zero revs, meaning instantaneous and often completely linear acceleration.

As with electric cars, the biggest drawback is technology, and how quickly we’re able to build up a reliable fast-charging network in the UK. You might find your bike fully charges in an hour, but if you have to queue up for longer then it’s going to get boring pretty quickly.

The other major problem is how heavy this technology is. Lithium-ion battery packs and metal-laden motors weigh a lot, and this can affect the bike’s handling dramatically. Builders are finding answers to such questions, but it’s a slow process.

Range anxiety was a problem for many when the first electric vehicles were announced, but mainstream ranges above 100 miles have meant this is less of an issue now. Even at the low-cost end of the market the £4k Super Soco TC Max will do 60 miles with few worries.

## Who can ride an electric bike?

This depends on the power output of the bike. Some electric scooter and bike models can be ridden on L-plates by 16-year-olds because they’re restricted to 30mph, but other electric bikes can require full motorcycle licences because of their power output. Electric motorcycles are not to be confused with electric bicycles, which can be ridden by anyone with no licence requirement. All electric motorbikes require the same licence as petrol bikes.

## Do you need insurance for an electric motorcycle?

An electric motorbike is still a motorcycle, so if you plan to ride it on the road you’ll need the correct licence and you’ll also need insurance. The level of cover you chose for the road is up to you: you can get quotes for Comprehensive Cover; Third Party Fire & Theft, and as with any other motorcycle Third Party insurance is the minimum cover you require to be road legal.

## Some current models

Super Soco are also making waves and the TC-Max is a hot seller in the UK. For around the £4000-mark you get a practical machine that can cover 80 miles between charges, It’s not really a scooter, but a funky 125 equivalent roadster. Super Soco’s CUx, by Ducati, is definitely a scooter and will appeal to the fashion conscious. After the UK government grant, the CUx in Ducati colours costs just £2299, while a standard CUx is £2099 after the grant.

Then there’s the new electric Sur-ron LBX which effectively bridges the gap between bicycles and motorcycles. Available in two versions, there are no pedals and all the power control comes from a proper twist grip, while the rest of its cycle parts, like the suspension (which is adjustable), brakes, wheels and tyres are all built specifically for a bike of this size.

The result is that it weighs just 50kg but doesn’t feel flimsy like an up-specced push bike. For those wanting purely off-road, there is the X model (that can only legally be ridden on private land) and there is also a road-going L1E model (£4495).

## England's national lockdown sees further revision to the COVID-19 Riding Guidelines

The Coalition of Motorcycling Organisations (COMO) has reacted once more to changes to the COVID-19 restrictions.

The national lockdown for England commencing from November 5 2020 rules out group and recreational riding.

The core detail of the guidelines remains unchanged, but the group riding guidelines are suspended in England until the new restrictions relating to COVID-19 are lifted. Welsh restrictions are set to ease next week, but Northern Ireland and much of Scotland have travel restrictions affecting motorcyclists as well as drivers.

The joint authors of the guidelines, Richard Gladman of IAM RoadSmart and Roger Bibbings of the Vintage Motorcycle Club, have chosen to leave the majority of the guidelines unchanged while emphasising that motorcycling is only permitted for essential travel purposes in England and therefore all group riding in England is prohibited.

As the other administrations alter their restrictions, it is important that recreational or group rides are conducted in accordance with local restrictions.

Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards and Product Development for IAM RoadSmart, said:

“The spirit of the restrictions is clear. The members of the Coalition are all agreed that now is not the time to be seeking loopholes or ways to bend the rules. We are all passionate about riding, but we all have a responsibility to help reduce the spread of this virus.”

The revised guidelines are available at <http://bit.ly/covidridesafe>

The original White Paper Riding COVID safe: a discussion paper submitted to the Secretary of State on May 14 2020 can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/2LqZSrt>

### -- About the BMF --

The British Motorcyclists Federation is one of the largest rider groups in the world. We educate, advise and protect all motorcyclists, from the beginner to the experienced.

Through specialist lobbyists and a UK-wide network of volunteers, we campaign against the dangers of negligent road maintenance, scrutinise new vehicle technologies and safeguard motorcyclists' freedom from unnecessary interference by governmental and anti-motorcycling groups at a local, national and European level.

We are the unified voice of motorcyclists throughout the UK.

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