

The Thinking Woman's Railway
Centre of the Campaign for Real Railways
Home of the Camping Vans, TOAD & TADPOLE

Telephone:- Christow (01647) 253108
Telegraphic:- Christow@teignrail.co.uk
Internet:- www.TEIGNRAIL.Com.

Your reference:-

Please quote this reference:- 4537
12th February, 2019

RoadPeace,
Unit F6,
Shakespeare Business Centre,
245A, Coldharbour Lane,
London
SW9 9RR

RAILWAY RECONSTRUCTION

Dear Friends,

Drink-Driving: Still a Laughing Matter

There are large parts of the South West that so seldom see a policeman or a patrol that they could easily be classed as lawless zones. The police authority will readily acknowledge the thinness of the blue line but cite low crime figures as proof of a satisfactory service. I think that this must apply to any of the less populated areas of the British Isles.

Fortunately, people are generally honest and law-abiding in the rural areas; money boxes found at remote farm gates and homes left unlocked testify to this. The peace is kept with only the occasional need for police intervention.

However, in one striking respect there is lawlessness, and given the seriousness of the offending and potential for harm, it is surprisingly overlooked or ignored. I will go so far as to say that in some circles it is still a laughing matter. I am referring to perhaps the most offensive behaviour on the roads: drinking and driving.

This incenses me personally because I am most often the vulnerable road user, the one least likely to cause injury. But I am also angered as a public transport campaigner because I know that drink-driving is one of many laxities that is tolerated on the roads – principally with private motorists – but would not be in any other area.

Devon and Cornwall Police Commissioner, Alison Hernandez, is supposed to be strong on this subject – in fact she leads on road safety for the Association of Police Commissioners – so I wrote to her in November. In my postscript, I stated that I would be publishing my letter and her reply, should she be kind enough to make one, on the railway's web pages. I also said that I would be sending the correspondence to your good selves.

Though an acknowledgement was received promptly, advising that a full reply would come from a named team member, nothing has been heard from him.

The Commissioner may have been startled by my approach, which began with some historical connexion. Far from it being the confined complaint that drink-driving was a lapse in an otherwise well disciplined road environment, I wrote that it was only one failing of a whole crummy system that had not yet been "broken in" by the law.

Unlike the railway system, which had to build its own "roads" and was thus, even in its delivery, heavily controlled, motor transport burst

forth onto existing roads, quickly achieving the dominance which even today convinces the car driver he is king.

Such is this belief that anyone who did not know better, and who was daft enough to listen to bar room blather, would guess that the entire road system had been built for motor vehicles and that other users were only admitted later. The brazen demands that cyclists be banned, for instance, when the non-motorized user actually has an inalienable right to use the public highway and it is the car driver that needs permission, proves that a great many of those that come after the revolution have not the faintest idea of how it was brought about.

Even on my lightly trafficked country road, examples of reckless behaviour abound. I mentioned two in my letter: one involving a stupid lad; the other a stupid, grown man. Farther along the same road last year, a young man and his teenage friend died when their car burst into flames after colliding with an innocent motorist, who died later in hospital. One picture in the local paper had youngsters "posing" in front of the usual roadside flower tribute. I should add that as far as I know drink was only to blame in the first incident.

It seems that the Police and Crime Commissioner does not want to correspond on this subject, perhaps because even she continues quietly to accept what you know only too well: that a man can get away with murder if his choice of weapon is the car.

It is not a position I have seen admitted but I suspect that government is reluctant to lower the alcohol limit for drivers because of the effect it would have on rural pubs. The point I make here is that there can hardly be any other situation in which economy takes precedence of safety.

My letter started with the blunt "it is said that road transport lags seventy years behind rail" and went on to describe a protected institution that has proved difficult to unseat. This is grossly unfair, especially as railways are now so tightly bound that expansion schemes, designed to relieve the hell on the roads, repeatedly founder.

"The tragedy is that all the while there is such inequality between modes, one will naturally develop faster and more readily, militating against a return to trains, trams and buses, and the overhaul of transport policies so necessary in dealing with home and global fixes."

Mindful of the limited resources at her disposal, I suggested to Mrs. Hernandez that even a low level of policing would have a great effect and would be better by far than the present no policing, which leads even otherwise decent people to forget the law when behind the wheel.

Your striving to improve road safety I think is the most noble work. I hope you find that my stand accords with your own.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Burges

Encl.

Roadpeace?

Can there ever be an end to belligerent behaviour on the roads while irresponsible manufacturers pander to the imbecile desires of impressionable men?

>> **Transport for the High Achiever** >>
Selling Tonka Toys to Toddlers at Christmas and the "Gallery of Stupid."

www.roadpeace.org

barbarian, n. Rude, wild or uncultured person; an extremely aggressive or violent person.

