

Wrong Way on Slip Road – How You Can Tell

The attached photograph and article made me think. I went back to look at it frequently; it was trying to tell me something. It contained a clue, if I could just find it, as to how similar collisions may be avoided in future.

Although these incidents happen infrequently, they do occur regularly, and when they do a head-on crash is likely and head-on crashes are likely to be fatal. Factor in the knock on effects and this will be a very expensive incident in both lives and money. The newspaper cuttings, from *The Scotsman* and *Evening News*, I have from the 1994 to 2008, concerning wrong-way driving, come to fifteen incidents. That is one per year but I have not collected cuttings of these incidents assiduously so they will be the tip of the iceberg, there will be many more. But even if they are few in number they should be researched diligently because one crash, which could be at a combined speed of 140mph, will be expensive in lives, damage and time.

As a driving instructor for forty years, 1963-2003, I acquired the skill of empathy and can still read and understand the mind of all types of road user. I know how confusing complex junctions can be and combined with missing or hidden signs they conspire to send drivers in the wrong direction. But there is not much I can do about junctions and signs.

So what can be done if the worst comes to the worst? What could this lady, and all other drivers, have known to prevent them from continuing down a slip road the wrong way?

I had to study the picture many times until I realised that she was entering the dual carriageway on a **RIGHT-HAND BEND**. Invariably entering, or even leaving, a motorway it will be on a left-hand bend. Exceptions, if there are any, must be rare.

Even if the driver has missed the indication that the right-hand bend gives him, the question must come to his mind that having reached the end of the slip-road he is faced with crossing what appears the 'fast' lane, which is in fact lane one, to what he thinks is his 'slow' lane, where he will in fact be meeting traffic head-on in lane three or two. (Only on the centre of Glasgow section of the M8 does a slip road enter lane three from the right-hand side.) A further clue is that if they look to their left they will see the opposite carriageway, something that should only happen when driving on the continent.

How can we let all drivers know? We have television programmes on cooking, watched by people who may not even cook; they find them interesting. So why not a series on driving for people who think they don't need to know more about driving. I suggested this to the BBC and they replied, "Your suggestion regarding a programme on road safety is an interesting one but as you rightly point out it is not territory that is easy to bring to life and engage the casual viewer without adopting an inappropriately light tone." Ewan Angus, Commissioning Editor, Television. A fine turn of phrase but he has no faith in his production teams.

Regrettably driving is seen in terms of *Top Gear*, *Police*, *Camera*, *Action*, *Grand Prix* and *UK's Worst Driver* with all the misinterpretation which that entails. Drivers will not realise that they need further education, Continuous Driver Development if you will, until they get it. Once you convince a driver that they are in error by, say, not entering a yellow box junction when turning right, their mind will be receptive to learning more about other things that they do not know about that will prevent collisions, injury and deaths.

Undermining overconfidence is a prerequisite to emptying minds of misinformation before filling them with sound knowledge that will induce them to shoulder responsibility.

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