

## FORMER PRESIDENT ALAN DOMVILLE CONTINUES HIS REMINISCENCES AS A MOTORING WRITER & LIFELONG GROUP FRIEND.....

Many years ago when I started to write a motoring column I took part in an exercise with Fiat which was intended to show correspondents the manoeuvrability of their cars; so long ago that autonomous cars were an idea reserved for centuries hence.

At one point we were called to reverse a vehicle into a "garage" formed of cones and unfortunately I knocked one down in the process. Later that evening at the hospitality reception the most proficient driver of the day earned his award while I was given a bunch of twigs and told to get practising reversing.

It didn't endear me to Fiat but it did convince me that I should never be in that situation again. With practice and experience I now have a sideboard filled with trophies for "this and that" and I was rather delighted some time ago after winning an economy exercise that a younger colleague came along the next morning and proudly declared he'd just beaten the petrol consumption figure I had achieved. "Too late," I replied with a smile, "I won - you can read it in the papers."

There was one other incident that put me in an embarrassing situation but which I managed to turn round.

Each September, the motoring writers would take on a motor industry team at cricket and the former must have been short of players because I was included in the squad for the first time. At the wicket I made a few runs before being given out to a contentious "leg before" call. The opposition began their innings and under the one-day rules everyone had an opportunity to bowl.

Sure enough the ball was tossed to me for an over. Having been a spin bowler for the Guardian side back in the day I approached the challenge with confidence. But not having bowled a cricket ball in 30 years it turned out to be probably the longest over in the history of the game: three wides and one ball that didn't even reach the batsman. Still, I had only conceded around six runs. I was duly sent, I think in disgrace, to the outfield where I couldn't do any harm. The game was in the balance and our opponents were six short of their target with one over and one wicket left. The batsman hit the ball high into the air towards the boundary - and me. Time stood still at that moment but remembering what I should do from years ago I didn't take my eyes off the ball, ran beneath it, caught it and joyfully threw it to a nearby fielder.

The game was won and I received an accolade for the "catch of the match" - and even became a mainstay in the team (though I was never asked to bowl again!).

The cup I won is part of the sideboard display but I value much more the one next to it - the award I received from Warrington Advanced Motorists "in recognition of 25 years' commitment to road safety."