

MOT TESTING

MOT TESTER
& AUTHORISED EXAMINER

May – July '15

N: 85

Annual Subscription only

Communicating with the UK MOT Industry

www.motester.co.uk

Live on-line MOTs...

Let the 'roll-out' commence!

Editor **JIM PUNTER** goes 'behind the scenes' at DVSA's computer project centre in Bristol.

When you read this, if everything goes to plan, the first Testing Stations using the new web-based MOT computer will be logging on to the new system to carry out MOT Testing. Make no mistake this is a very big deal for everybody – DVSA Directors and their staff, Testing Station owners, MOT Testers, and motorists.

Crucially there's no 'back-up' option. After 31st August this year the Atos MOT computer contract will end, and the current dial-up computer system will be switched off. Thereafter,

if the new system fails, there's nothing; no alternative except what will now be called 'contingency Testing' – back to MOTs handwritten on paper. It is, inevitably a high-risk strategy prob-

ably adopted due to the huge additional fees and costs Atos required to provide a contingency beyond the current contract expiry, although we don't know the full details.

A complex project

What VOSA, and now the DVSA have done is to take the decision to invent from scratch an entirely new system – software, architecture and infrastructure, and a data migration process. They are developing the new system as a joint venture with three partners from the private sector: **Kainos** (focus on software development), **Valtech** (focus on data migration), **BISS** (architecture and infrastructure).

The work is being undertaken as a fully integrated partnership between the DVSA and the three companies concerned, with DVSA staff working day-to-day and side-by-side with employees from the three private businesses involved. Clearly this is a very good way of developing the new system, and must to some extent mitigate the risk of future problems, but there's

(Continues on page 16)

PLUS:

Computer switchover:



"Many VTSSs still not ready" say DVSA. We provide a checklist and contact details...

MOT Scheme control and monitoring:



Is it effective? How it is carried out, and

how it could be improved...

DVSA News:

List of withdrawn VTSSs, is DVSA web-ready? Is the MOT being neglected? MOT Fee discussions at DfT...

Equipment Review:

Wheel alignment equipment – update and buyer's guide...

PLUS! DVSA Matters
• Testing Times •
Readers' Letters •
MOT Workshop Free Supplement – New Products + much more



DVSA Chief Executive Alastair Peoples (left) and Head of MOT Scheme Modernisation Neil Barlow in front of the 'numbers board' discuss the implications for Testing Stations who have yet to declare their 'readiness' for the new system.



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In this issue:

Cover Story:

Web-based MOTs – the new MOT age is dawning

– **The question is: “Are you ready?”** – If you're not, you should be working on it as a matter of urgency. Jim Punter has visited DVSA in Bristol and been shown how the project is being handled and how it has taken shape, and passes on to our readers a few hints about getting your VTS web-ready...

4. Testing Times

– **News from the MOT industry:** The joining up of the DVLA and VOSA to create the new DVSA does not appear to have gone smoothly, with the MOT division apparently being neglected ... MOT Fee negotiations continue at DoT ... The pros and cons of the 'Rolling 40-year-exemption' for 'classic' cars...

8. Topical Tips

– **The MOT Club's John Ashton** points out that the initial reduced functionality of the new web-based computer will mean more work for busy Testing Stations, and helpfully provides some useful pointers ...

10. Readers' Letters

– **More letters from the Editor's postbag** – Topics this issue cover MOT fees and discounting, diesel fume extraction and the way disciplinary action acts unfairly against Testers dependent on whether they qualified with the NTTA or NVQ/ATA...

18. Spotlight On:

– **Control and monitoring of the MOT scheme** – We take a look at how the MOT scheme is monitored and controlled, whether it is effective and what could be done to improve it...

21. Consultant's Casebook

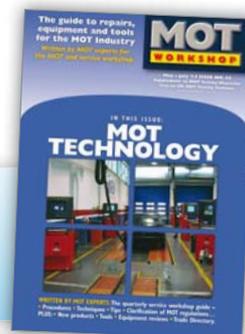
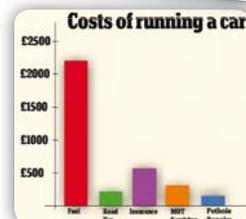
– **More tips from Eamonn Loney's casebook** – We all know when a vehicle should be Tested as a class IV or a class VII don't we? The penalty for making a mistake is severe... Eamonn shows how to be sure, and also looks at PRS and 'failed defect still present after re-Test' pass...

22. DVSA and DfT News

– **More news from the DVSA and the DfT** – A list of recent VTs who have had authority withdrawn... We ask "Is DVSA ready for the changeover?"... and following the merging of DVLA and VOSA to make DVSA, is the MOT Scheme being neglected? From the DfT a report on the MOT Fee increase discussions.

24. PRODUCT REVIEW:

– **Wheel Alignment Equipment** – The latest equipment is fast, easy to use and very accurate, giving garages the opportunity to generate revenue while providing a genuinely useful service to motorists. We provide a review of currently available equipment.



MOT Workshop Magazine (free supplement)

4. New Products and Services

– More news, new products and services from the MOT industry...

12. MOT Technology

– To coincide with the roll-out of the new web-based MOT computer, we share the GEA's Dave Garratt's vision of the technological future of MOT equipment and IT, and compare it to DVSA's reality.

16. Trade Directory

– The indispensable updated guide to tools & equipment suppliers!

Next issue! (August - October '15)

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Spotlight on... telematics... and driverless cars:

The advent of driverless cars will probably require either some additions, or changes to current MOT Testing regulations. But the ramifications go much further than that... the telematic technology they will use has some serious implications for Testing and driving 'normal' vehicles not only for the MOT itself, but for repair workshops everywhere. We have a closer look and try to predict what these developments could mean.

DVSA and DfT Matters

Currently there are a lot of MOT issues effectively 'on hold' due to the uncertainties surrounding the General

Election and what the next Government will look like. MOT fees, how the new computer has 'panned-out'... and how the DVSA control and monitor Testing in the future. Or perhaps we'll still be in stasis! We'll keep readers informed.

Web-based MOTs – how was it for you?

Assuming DVSA's web-based roll-out was successful, we'll visit some Testing Stations to see how they're getting on – hopefully it will all be smiles and sweetness and light!

PLUS: • Testing Times • DVSA Matters • Readers' Letters • Consultant's Casebook • Plus: MOT Workshop free supplement.

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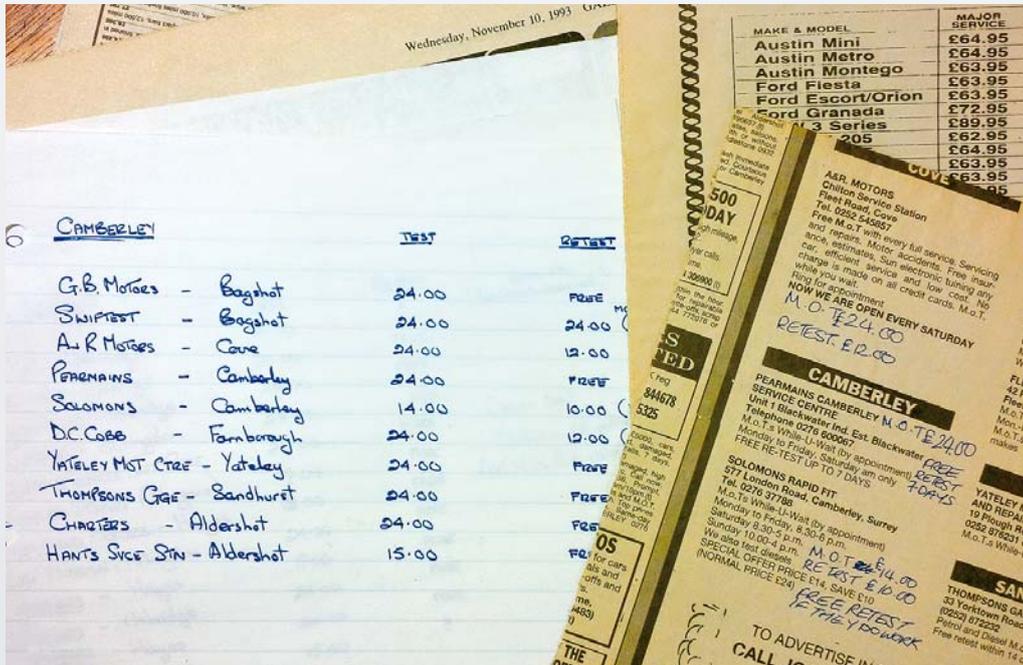
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Readers' Letters

Star Letter

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It is indeed astonishing that over 20 years ago an MOT could be bought for much the same price as exists today from some fast fits (£25).

MOT fees, discounting and VAT

Dear Sir,
We recently refurbished our offices and came across some forgotten files. One was labelled 'MOT pricing Feb 1994'. I enclose some pictures which tell the true story as to how this industry and the hapless key players in it have well and truly shot themselves in the foot. As you can see, the majority of garages local to me then, were charging £24 a test (full fee) in late 1993, with a mixture of paid for and free retests, which was then, of course, a full retest. My current garage is sandwiched between a Mr. Clutch and Halfords and guess what – you would think it's the early nineties again (£25.00 & £29.95 for their MOT's) respectively – 22 years later!

In that time, inflation (CPI) has increased by 56%! In addition, the test has mushroomed in complexity, the number of items and time taken, as well as Testers' wages plus all other costs and to add insult now I am spending my money on a computer and printer to continue to Test. Couple this with unchecked growth in Test sta-

tions, no fee increase since 2010, is it any wonder that as you keep reporting, MOT Test quality is getting increasingly poor, with all the attendant risks to vehicle safety as prices get cut to the bone. The issue of price cutting has been with us for years but now it is at dangerous levels.

Given the trade is still dominated by independent garages like mine, why are the so called trade associations like IGA, and others seemingly doing nothing about it. If they really cared about our welfare they would be putting a strong case together to government to stop this madness and fix the MOT price at a level that would suit all stakeholders.

The big companies can afford to cut the price as a loss leader and therefore 'set' the trade fee levels, but us small companies and the thousands of employees in them are being squeezed and no one seems to give a damn. Taking a leaf out of the current state of politics, may be what's needed is a new group that will fight for us and will really look after the interests of thousands of independent test stations who

want to do a good job and take pride in their work. I am serious – given as you champion our trade why don't you start one. I would prefer it if you did not publish my details as I am a DVSA low risk garage and don't want any issues.

Name and address withheld by request.

The reader could also have mentioned dealerships offering MOTs free for the life of the car if you buy a new vehicle. Another factor is the uncontrolled growth of Testing Stations; there were probably 10,000 less in those days compared to nearly 23,000 now. Government's easy acceptance that the MOT, a vital road safety check, is so widely used by national companies and dealerships as a marketing tool never ceases to amaze me. It also makes a 'nonsense' of their claimed political policy of supporting small businesses. The majority of Testing Stations are small independent business, who get squeezed by the MOT discount 'wars' between the discounting fast fits and dealerships offering 'MOT free for life'.

part of the MOT scheme; one quick and easy way to make station change the same would be

to lower the fee to say £50 but then put VAT on the price of the Test. If we use a hundred test slots in a month the government would receive £10 per MOT, so if a station was discounting the MOT they would still have to pay the government £10 for very One that they did.

Stephen Healey

The reasoning behind proposing an annual fee for Testing Stations is that some VTSS carry out very few Tests and pay very little to DVSA in slot fees. Yet DVSA spend the same amount of time and resources to monitor and control that Testing Station as another which does many more Tests paying more into DVSA's kitty to cover their costs. On VAT, I'm not sure Mr Healey is right. VAT would apply after discounting. A £50 fee, discounting to half price at £25 would only add 20% of £25 for VAT – just £5, not £10 as he suggests. His idea has merit in one respect, however. With MOTs attracting VAT, that would incentivise the Government to fix the fee so as to maximise VAT tax revenues from MOT Tests. Ed.

Diesel fumes in Testing Stations

Dear Sir,
As we know the SMMT have just launched a programme to defend diesels, which are now being jumped on by politicians as causing serious health risks from Particulates and Nitrogen Oxides. Paris wants them banned from 2020 and London wants a £10 addition to congestion charges for diesel cars and an Ultra Low emission zone that will prevent most from entering. Many other cities are considering the same, (Islington Council parking permits are going to be £96 more for diesels) as they try to meet the EU standards...

However there is another aspect to this that the MOT industry needs to consider.

The Institution of Occupational Safety & Health (IOSH) is concerned that many employers are putting staff at risk where they are exposed to high levels of diesel exhaust emission (DEE), particularly where they work in an enclosed space where a diesel engine is running. As DEE is a hazardous substance, under law employers have a duty to assess risks and take action to reduce exposure.

While the new Euro 6 diesels are very low in Particulates and NOx, older ones are not, and we now test more diesels than ever at roughly 13 million a year. As DEE related cancers are attributable to more than 650 deaths a year, many MOT bays are

Dear Sir,
You have an article in this month's issue of MOT Testing

about Test fees. I don't see why they are looking at making MOT stations pay an annual fee to be

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What's the difference between a class IV and class VII? Not a lot apart from size, but the fact remains that you can only Test the latter, if you have the DVSA approval and the designated equipment to do so – normally a bigger ramp.

A classical error

Over the years I've had clients inadvertently Testing goods vehicles over 3,000 kg as a class IV. In all cases the MOT database has permitted the mistake, usually based on a previous Tester having changed the classification on the computer system, or the NT personally amending the classification in the mistaken belief that it's a class IV on their ramp.

Such mistakes can and have gone unnoticed by DVSA for years and they'll only occasionally pick up on it if:

- They stop a vehicle at a roadside check and check the current documentation or
- Visit a VTS pre-armed with some analysis off the database.

The latter only occurring if the VE has received intelligence that something is wrong. On DVSA establishing that a class VII has been Tested at a class IV site, the disciplinary process dictates that a Tester and AE can be banned from the scheme for 5 years, regardless of the fact that the vehicle has undergone a thorough road safety assessment. That said, the penalty can be reduced to 50 points if there has been no deliberate attempt to disguise the vehicle's correct classification.

Obviously checking the

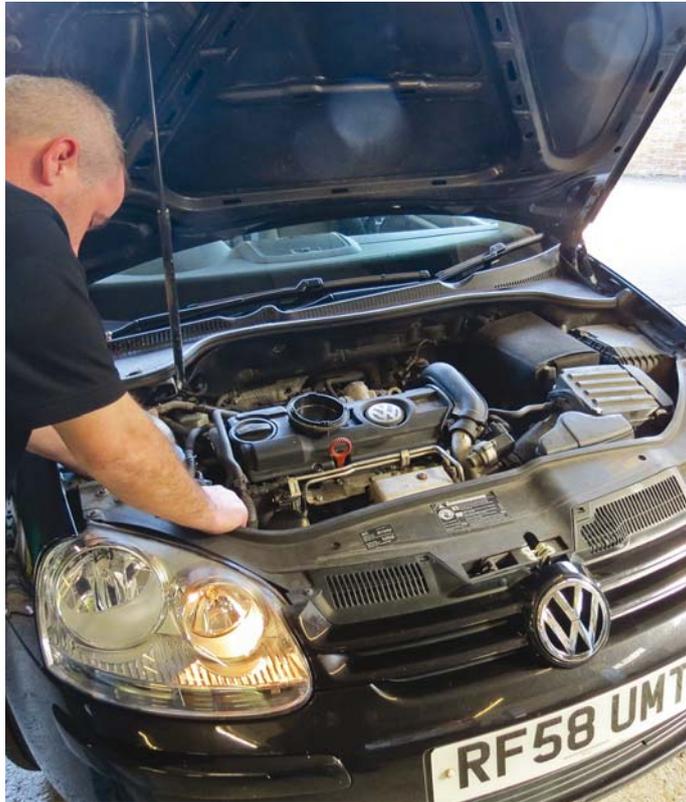


Consultant's Casebook

from **Eamonn Loney**
(MOT Consultant, ex VI Appeals Executive)

Eamonn Loney is a principal of MOT Consultants EBL Partnership; telephone 01225 340858. email: eamonnloney3@aol.com

More notes from Eamonn Loney's casebook...



Even something as mundane as a blown headlamp bulb could attract 500 disciplinary points if the Tester issues a pass knowing that the repair had not been done.

weight plate will prevent such hiccups occurring, but there are still a lot of Testers who guess-timate a vehicle classification. This of course isn't helped by dual purpose vehicles, motor caravans etc coming into the mix.

Some Testers take the presenter's production of last year's certificate 'as proof' that the vehicle's a class IV – wrong – don't do it!

DVSA are strict in their handling of such misdemeanours and rightly argue that it's the vehicle itself which is being Tested, not the V5C or previous VT20. It's therefore never acceptable not to check the vehicle's weight plate.

As I say, the MOT computer doesn't prevent these departures, hence many such vehicles are Tested 'out of class'. As far as I'm aware, any class of vehicle can be entered onto the system and therefore there's nothing

to prevent an unscrupulous employee issuing motorbike or class VII Test certificates at your class IV only site! NB AE's should therefore regularly check for irregularities such as Kawasaki or Iveco appearing in the Test log performance reports!

Bringing it to DVSA's attention that an employee has deceived you (and the MOT system) and they'll only take disciplinary sanctions against the Tester.

If DVSA bring it to your attention and consider that you have been lax in management control, they can and will revoke the authorisation for 5 years, especially if there are numerous examples.

Passed Rectified at Station – PRS

A reminder that PRS allows the Tester up to an hour to fix minor defects, provided the Tester has completed the initial examination before any repairs

are carried out and the vehicle has been retained and repaired at the VTS.

If the defects are rectified within one hour of completion of the Test, only then must the NT enter the results on the VTS Device. He must also issue a VT30 in addition to a VT20.

If the defects cannot be rectified, for any reason, within one hour then the vehicle must be failed and a VT30 issued. PRS is a partial re-examination for which no fee can be charged and during which the NT cannot register any new Tests.

I find a lot of Testers still misunderstanding PRS, believing that having completed a Test procedure and having found minor defects, they can issue a VT20 thinking that they then have one hour to complete the rectification work. WRONG! If you do this and get caught by a VE, DVSA headquarters will argue that you knowingly issued the electronic certificate to a defective vehicle and hammer you for 500 points.

I'll say that again... a VT20 must not be issued before the vehicle satisfies all the Test requirements! Remember too that repair/s must be personally assessed by the NT, don't just take a colleague's word from the workshop that it's fixed.

In many cases it's probably much better to just fail the vehicle and once repaired re-Test it. After all, many 'minor' defects may well take longer than an hour to fix... Remember too that depending on the fail items, sometimes you can only perform a fast track re-Test if no measured items were failed i.e. brakes, emissions etc.

Failed defect still present after re-Test pass

I've come across a few cases where a vehicle has left the VTS following VT30 and returned days later for a re-Test. The Tester has then gone on to complete an inadequate assessment of the repairs i.e. not put vehicle on the ramp to fully assess rectification standard and just leant under the vehicle for a quick glance.

When DVSA get involved (usually when the new owner complains), this error by the Tester can sometimes cost the AE dearly, as it can result in an accusation that the NT is culpable of gross negligence. The missed welding etc will then not be scored at 30 pts, but could attract a score of 500 pts, as the dereliction of duty could be deemed as a dishonest/gross negligent act that affects road safety.

Wheel alignment

Wheel alignment equipment is a crucial area where digital and optical technology has transformed the way measurements are made, and significantly reduces the time taken to do it – a really useful and increasingly profitable piece of equipment for the workshop.

Advanced technology

It was not that many years ago that measuring wheel alignment was a relatively lengthy process. Setting up the equipment took time, as did the actual measurement. Things have dramatically improved. With advanced laser and digital optical systems, and modern computer technology the process can be amazingly quick and easy. Setting up takes just a couple of minutes or so, with printed results available almost instantly. It can, quite literally take just a few minutes or so from the vehicle being driven onto the bay to the results spewing out from the printer.

This has changed the way wheel alignment equipment can be used in the workshop. Traditionally, wheel alignment was only checked after a problem had been diagnosed – asymmetrically worn front tyres for instance, or after work involving the front suspension and/or steering which affects the alignment of the front wheels. With the latest equipment other market opportunities have emerged.

Vehicle screening

It is now a practical proposition to screen the wheel geometry of every vehicle entering the workshop – whether or not that is why the vehicle is there in the first place. This not only provides a better service to customers, but a legitimate opportunity to improve profits. The fact that the outcome is completely objective means that for the customer it is a transparent process backed by an accu-

rate print-out of the results. So here's an example where the very latest technology can not only significantly improve workshop productivity, but also offer legitimate selling opportunities, coupled with greater customer satisfaction – a real 'win-win' situation!

Training and experience

Whilst the equipment is easy and straightforward to use, the training and experience of the technician is also vital. Measuring the wheel geometry is only the starting point; the underlying causes of misalignment are extremely varied. The next stage is to diagnose the problem. Excessively worn steering and/or suspension joints will throw up an error, as will a bent or damaged steering arm or a broken spring. Diagnosing the prob-

lem and then remedying it is a matter for the experienced and trained technician. Such experience is also important when the steering geometry has been re-adjusted following remedial work. It is advisable to road test a vehicle following remedial work and check the alignment again. Replaced, and/or adjusted component can 'settle down' during a road test, affecting the geometry.

A range of products

There is a wide range of products available to MOT Testing Stations and vehicle service businesses. In this quarter's product review we have assembled some of the leading examples for readers to evaluate and decide which would be most suitable for their workshops, below and next page.

PRODUCT REVIEW

BRADBURY EQUIPMENT

WC5401 Bradbury Laser Four Wheel Aligner trolley mounted and wall mounted available. Features: • Designed to allow the busy workshops to measure and adjust common steering angles. • 12 months warranty on parts and labour. Benefits: • Wall mounted compact for easy storage. • Trolley mounted. • Simple and easy to use laser system • Ideal for fast fit tyre shops for toe adjustments. • Low cost entry level system. Key features: • Computerised wheel aligner. • Proven communication technology. • Fully mobile. • Buses and HGV versions available.



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