

Centre lane hogging – some examples on the M3



Above - the car ahead has just passed my car (travelling in the nearside lane at 70mph) having closed on my car over the previous mile or more travelling in the middle lane with no vehicles seen in either the middle or near lanes behind my or his car. The car passed at a speed estimated (relative to my car) to be at least 80mph.



Above – the car continued to hold the middle lane even when it was well ahead of my car and there was no car ahead of it within a half a mile in any lane. In the

enlargement alongside below you just see a car way ahead in the nearside lane on the long bend of the motorway.

The increasing use of cruise control may explain why some drivers do travel in the centre lane when clearly the nearside lane is clear ahead of them. They seem to set their cruise control at say 77mph (the speed limit plus 10%) and then feel able to hold the centre lane on the basis they are travelling comfortably above the speed limit so anyone approaching from behind must be well in excess of the limit and can take to the "fast" lane "where the speed hogs feel they own the road". So the centre lane hogger's thinking must be those needing to travel faster can blaze by in the outside lane and those slower can keep to the nearside lane - the centre lane is their comfort zone and for them. You often see several centre lane hoggers in a line where they have matched their cruise speeds and are seemingly pleased to be able to latch on to a steady group of "centre lane owner drivers" or CLODS so then they do not have to think too much about the irritation of lane changing. Those following the lead CLOD feel they cannot be criticised as they have another car a couple of chevrons ahead of their own car.

The increasing tendency of many drivers to travel as a matter of routine in the centre and offside lanes at between 75 and 85mph does mean anyone driving at 65 to 70mph and using the nearside lane whenever it is clear, will find when wanting to move out into the centre lane to pass a slower vehicle they face the prospect of cars bearing down on them at a relative speed of between 15 to 20mph. That's a relative speed of between 22 and 30 ft per second or 110 to 150 ft every 5 seconds. In heavy traffic conditions where both the centre and offside lanes are busy, pulling out from the nearside lane at 70mph is often not easy and the inclination of centre lane drivers to give way to an indicator showing a need to pull out is not often considerate. In addition there is clearly an increase in cruise control driving in the centre lane where drivers find it convenient to set the cruise speed at around 75 so often a car reaching a point behind you where you can no longer pull out safely - at say 50 yards - will then take between 5 and 10 seconds to pass you. In some cases a car will close on you and then hover off your rear wing or even alongside. By doing that they no longer have to consider whether your car on their nearside might pull out and do not have to slow down if you did. It's a cynical and poor style of driving but of course they may not be aware of what they are doing.



Above – this is an enlargement of the photo alongside, bottom left.