

## Hand Signals

At one time the Admiralty had semaphores mounted at high points to send signals to the main naval bases of Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham whereby information could be passed within minutes as opposed to fast horses which may have taken days

Those of you with silver hair may recall that when we were young the first indicators on cars were semaphores which sprouted from the door pillars and glowed a weak orange, not easy to spot. Blinking indicators in the corners of the car followed, but bikes had these fitted much later. We were taught hand signalling in case our car either didn't have indicators or they didn't work. Arm right out for turning in that direction, waving in circles for turning left. Up and down meant that we were slowing down. How quaint

These days the variety of hand signals has taken on a whole new vocabulary as I was reminded when trying to be helpful to a fellow motorist. In the UK our society is dominated by a strict code of politeness which must be rigidly adhered to unless you want a mouthful. The Spanish find this amusing and over the top to the extent that many refer to us light-heartedly as the "por favors". In the UK it is mandatory to let someone out and wave thanks when a courtesy is provided. Likewise, waving thanks to a driver stopping at a pedestrian crossing is the done thing. I have got used to the Spanish wandering across the road looking straight ahead with no acknowledgement, but occasionally my Anglo-Saxon heritage comes out of the closet

Hurling down the motorway with a car close behind I broached the top of a hill to see a police car ahead, instinctively I dabbed the breaks a couple of times and made a circular motion with my hand in imitation of a police beacon. The following driver undertook me and shook his muscular young fist whilst yelling words I did not comprehend but had he been English would surely have been "wucking fanker". Guess he didn't get the message

It is claimed that the two-finger sign originated when English and Welsh archers wanted to show the enemy that their bow fingers were intact. Later the two-finger sign was used as a general insult then latterly replaced by that American import, the single finger salute. These days the most common gesture is mimicking the action of shaking a sauce bottle accompanied by the expression "tosser" or some equally charming epithet. And we are the polite ones!

At a junction, it was far easier to let the other driver cross my path than negotiate the small gap that she had left so I waved her across. Generally speaking the Spanish only wave to people they know so she just stared at me to see who I was and just didn't get what I was attempting to communicate, so through the gap I crawled

Kieran is a young lad of 20 from my cricket club who has just passed his Spanish driving test. At first we veterans of the road thought that he was taking the mickey when it came about

that using the handbrake whilst doing hill starts was not taught and they had to quickly learn how to balance the clutch without this aid. No wonder he admitted that he ran back into a few cars whilst practising; unreal.

He then had us completely gobsmacked. After we explained that when his grandad was his age he would have been taught hand signals, we expected him to think how old fashioned that was. Instead he said that he had been taught a range of hand signals which formed part of the driving test. Why we innocently asked? Well in case the indicators don't work was his straight response. Why teach an alternative to something that is not used?

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