



### Dash cams – what are they like?

With the frequent use of satnav devices and Bluetooth linked mobile phones in many cars, the idea of an additional gadget like a dash cam might seem for many drivers more of a questionable toy. But it is clear they are being used in all types of vehicle so why have one, what do they do, how do you set them up and how do you get one? Victor Smith sets out what he found.

With the **increasing cost of motor insurance and the risk of losing your no-claims bonus** from an accident which was not your fault, there are real concerns for motorists, not least for classic car drivers, where the complications of settling a claim involving a full rebuild can be a serious problem. Many insurance claims can be very difficult to resolve fairly as each party often denies responsibility and where the police are involved, any forensic evidence may not reveal the true situation and responsibility. This can result in either both parties having to share responsibility, or even worse, the innocent party being held wholly responsible.

By having clear video evidence with the date and time recorded, insurers are able to understand the circumstances leading to an accident and settle the claim using that evidence. With video evidence that can lead to faster insurance claims processing by removing doubt and uncertainty which might otherwise have delayed the settlement of the claim. The benefit is it enables you to protect your no-claims bonus and avoid the risk of increased premiums.

One particular scourge over recent years has been the growth of “**crash for cash**” **scams** where often highly organised gangs orchestrate crashes which usually result in

an innocent party hitting the back of a car driven by a gang member who can then claim for anything from vehicle damage, loss of earnings and personal injury, often for passengers who were not in the car at the time! Good quality video evidence from a dash cam can show the real situation and hopefully reveal the real nature of the scam accident so avoiding loss of your no-claims discount and a higher insurance premium.

**Other reasons for a dash cam** are to have evidence of other drivers' dangerous or unreasonable behaviour including tailgating, under-taking, using handheld mobile phones or road rage incidents. On a more cheerful note, the dash cam enables you to keep a video record of a memorable route, something many classic car drivers might often have wished they could do as they were enjoying a drive through the Yorkshire Dales or the Highlands.

### How do you get a dash cam?

The range of dash cams available online or through high street shops like Halfords is large and assessing their capabilities and performance is daunting. A Which? magazine review of dash cams in their August 2014 issue indicated the NextBase 402G was their top rated model with **GoPro Hero3** (popular with motor racing enthusiasts) and **Transcend DriverPro 200** second and third, but their article noted “you will need to choose your dash cam carefully. Given that they have the pretty simple job of recording the road ahead in decent detail, we were disappointed to find most weren't really up to the task”. My first purchase was a **NextBase 402G** at £150 from a high street retailer but I found the set up menu was frustrating and close to impossible to

use. So I took it back to seek help from the techie fellow at the shop who twiddled the options on the touch screen for some four minutes and declared it was fine. Once home again, I tried to access the set up menu and nothing happened, so feeling depressed by the experience I took it back to the shop for a full refund.

I then investigated a dash cam regularly advertised in Safety Fast!, the **Digi-Cam Action Camcorder** supplied by RBS Property Marking in Kent for less than £75 which includes a special Club member discount. I spoke with Stan Ratcliffe who runs the company and found he was not Fred the Shred's replacement at RBS bank but it was another business altogether - a small company in Kent. I bought one of his Digi-Cams and set it up very easily in five minutes and had it working immediately. It has a built-in 3.7V rechargeable lithium battery and the video resolution is 720P (1280 x 720, 30 frames/second). It comes with a free 4GB class 10 memory card which was helpful as I found that with most dash cams you have to buy the card separately. However I decided to buy a 32GB card to give a greater recording capacity.

I had a query over how the Digi-Cam is mounted on the windscreen and Stan called back replying to my email on a Saturday afternoon. I then mounted it on the windscreen of my V8 and trundled round the neighbourhood to check it was recording well. This dash cam is a particularly small unit (only 68mm W by 46mm H and 28mm front to back) weighing in at only 50 grams and it is mounted on a suction pad on the windscreen. It is almost hidden when located just to the left and above the rear view mirror. The recording formats are AVI for video and jpeg for still images.

### How has the Digi-Cam preformed?

Well the daytime video recording quality is good and you can identify the model of car ahead but reading number plates is not easy even when just ahead of you. Night footage is at a lower quality but still useful. You can connect the Digi-Cam to a computer with the USB cable provided and copy footage across. The kit comes with a plug-in power lead from the cigar lighter to the screen mounted unit to ensure the built-in battery will be topped up. It worked well recording my trip to the Club's meeting at Snetterton so I feel it is a useful introduction to dash cams and good value for money.

Most new technology has intense product development and that is very likely to be the case over the next 12 to 18 months with dash cams.

For further information with photos, see [www.v8register.net/more.htm](http://www.v8register.net/more.htm)