



The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists (Group 8199)

Helping to Improve The Standard of Driving and Riding on the Roads in Northern Ireland and the Advancement of Road Safety



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Good luck and safe driving to any Associate(s) approaching their test.

This month we would like to welcome, as new members, Karl Hunter, Susan Hunter, Tina Stanley and Verity Walker. We hope that they will not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers. We usually meet (unless otherwise stated) at the Boathouse, which is situated in the harbour carpark, at Groomsport at 7.00pm on the second Tuesday of each month (except July). For more details of our programme please see the section entitled "Dates for Your Diary". If anyone has recently done their test, don't forget to contact John (07967 010443) for a debrief. Observers, please keep John acquainted with the progress of your Associate(s).

February Group Night 10-Pin Bowling

Tuesday, 10th February, 2009

Twenty-two members of the group braved the elements to meet up at Dundonald ice Bowl for the annual chance to throw their dignity to the four winds and for each of us to exhibit our bowling deficiencies (except for those who had sneaked up the week before to practise.)

The first problem some people had was putting their names into the rink's computer/scoreboard. This became apparent when we looked at the score sheets. Either some people's parents had had a very bizarre taste in children's names (Worzel, Plum, Pinky) or the member's memories had failed them or else some members had difficulty typing with more than one key (e.g. typing five 'e's in a row - Deeeee and Teeeeena. However, if we forgave those with literacy, memory or typing problems we were left with those who had problems reading their own names. This occurred later on when some took turns that should have been someone else's turn. But sure it was all in fun (all the talk of voodoo dolls and pins were only hot-air on the night - I hope).

Once the totals were added together and the averages calculated it was found that 'Marky Mark' was the champion with Ivan in 2nd place followed by 'Arm', with Brian fourth. Congratulations to everyone who took part and particularly those who were able to keep the bowl out of the gutters. A good nights craic!

Drivers now need grit - not just salt - for bad weather, says IAM

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) has put together an at-a-glance guide to driving and riding in adverse weather, to help the estimated six million drivers who are now facing the worst driving conditions in a generation.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger, one of the UK's most qualified drivers, said: "Blame for some of the problems may focus on the lack of salt - but a lack of grit on the part of many drivers also led to difficulties, especially on side roads up and down the UK.

"In the last week, poorly prepared drivers and vehicles have ended up stranded by driving conditions that for which they had little or no experience.

"Blizzards and strong side winds are predicted, with more snow and ice, plus the inevitable local flooding that follows. These would challenge even experienced drivers," said Mr Rodger. Drivers in different parts of the UK will be combating a range of treacherous driving conditions for days to come.

Mr Rodger echoed police warnings that even though the first snow has gone, it doesn't mean that the roads are safe again.

The IAM said that five main things drivers should be aware of are when facing the full range of the British winter are:

FRESH SNOW – get your speed right (not too fast to lose control, and not too slow to risk losing momentum); create lots of room

around you and do everything smoothly – braking, steering, accelerating. Start gently from stationary, avoiding high revs.

HEAVY RAIN – watch for the shiny patches that are lying water; give yourself a longer gap to other traffic, and be ready to slow down when you need to; keep the demister working; don't soak pedestrians by running through puddles .

FLOODING – lower your speed right down and choose the most shallow route available , using the middle of the road if that's where it is and you can do so. Use a low gear to keep revs high but control speed by slipping the clutch (and beware that water could enter the exhaust, so keep the revs up).

FOG – the lead vehicle in a queue will clear pockets of fog, potentially deceiving vehicles following that the conditions are clearer than they are. Don't use full beam. Use wipers on the outside and the demister inside to keep your visibility as clear as possible.

HIGH WINDS – give yourself more space, with plenty of distance between you and the vehicle in front; take particular care when passing large vehicles and motorcycles, and be ready for side winds at gaps in buildings or as you come out of a cutting. Cyclists are particularly vulnerable to side winds.

Give and take

Being prepared mentally for what may happen next when you are on the road, rather than relying on reactions to sort out a problem when it has already arisen, is a key factor in safe driving and riding. By doing that you can also be prepared for what other road users around you might get wrong. Be ready to keep things safe by what you do to allow for them.

A bit of give and take goes a long way.

This is the opposite of the "blame culture". Instead of mentally complaining because "that white van man just cut me up", have a think about what you were doing before hand and what you could have done, if anything, in a different way to prevent that near miss happening.

The IAM researched this approach with Brunel University two years ago. Using two control groups of drivers, plus a third coached to IAM standards, Brunel were able to evaluate the difference this approach made.

Those drivers who were prepared to see themselves as part of the potential hazard were less likely to be involved in a crash or a near miss than the drivers who just "blamed" other road users around them. Being alert to the possible mistakes of others may feel like a low priority when you are under pressure, or on a bad Monday morning perhaps. It's easier to expect others to do what they should do, all the time.

But there is no such thing as the perfect driver. Do your bit by allowing for their errors. And, if that feel too onerous, think about this: haven't you, at some stage when you were driving made an error which someone else then made safe? Be honest - we all have. So make a point of helping out the other road users who might do the same for you.

And Finally -

Hell hath no fury like the lawyer of a woman scorned.

Be careful of your thoughts, they may become words at any moment. If it weren't for electricity we'd all be watching television by candlelight. Did you hear? They took the word gullible out of the dictionary!

Only adults have difficulty with child proof lids.

Dates for Your Diary

- 3rd Mar, 2009 STAC 17/3 - Boathouse, 7.15pm.
- 10th Mar, 2009 Group Night - Damien Coll Forensics Talk Part 2.
- 24th Mar, 2009 STAC 17/4 - Boathouse, 7.15pm.
- 31st Mar, 2009 Extra Night - Slot Cars 7.00pm £8.00 per person including light refreshments.
- 7th Apr, 2009 STAC 17/5 - Boathouse, 7.15pm
- 14th Apr, 2009 **NO GROUP MEETING AS IT IS EASTER TUESDAY**
- 28th Apr, 2009 STAC 17/6 - Boathouse, 7.15pm

The views expressed in the 'Road Observer' are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Group or the Institute of Advanced Motorists

Group Contact - Miss Norah Reid

Tele No: 02891 461314 / 07788 548435

e-mail - norahreid@talktalk.net