



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

This month we would like to welcome, as new members, Hugh Finlay, Gareth Hughes, Lesley Steer, Richard Taylor and David Williams. 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 Meeting - AGM

9th February, 2010

Our Group Meeting this month took the form of a visit to the cinema. The cinema in question was no ordinary cinema but the Tudor cinema owned and operated by the brothers Roy and Noel Spence on the other side of Comber. When we arrived there Trevor met us with a supper of sandwiches and rolls and hot flasks for tea and coffee making. When adequately refreshed we went into the inviting heat of the cinema which was kitted out with the old-style flip-up seats and ashtrays mounted on the row of seats in front. The whole atmosphere was extremely cosy.

The film that we were there to see was introduced to us and some of the history behind its making was explained to us. Those vintage car buffs among us then sat enthralled for the next two hours while "Strictly TT" was shown. This showed the Tourist Trophy races that were run on the Ards circuit from 1928 to 1936. It was an excellent film and if anybody is interested in purchasing a copy, please contact the Spence brothers at the cinema. It was a very enjoyable night and we will definitely put another visit to the cinema on the programme for the future.

Fuel Prices Website

Thanks to Nicky Bloch for this advice.

Of late, I've noticed that fuel prices vary enormously even within a small area. I have always assumed that Tesco or Sainsbury garages had the cheapest fuel prices, until I came across a brilliant website www.petrolprices.com. By inputting your postcode and entering the search radius from your home, it lists the cheapest garages for petrol, diesel, LPG etc.

Keep calm and carry on: how to deal with a stuck accelerator

3 February 2010

As Toyota recalls millions of its cars due to accelerator problems, the IAM today offers advice to drivers on what to do in event of an engineering malfunction.

Stephen Mead, IAM Assistant Chief Examiner, said: "Keep calm – surprisingly the perception of the average driver with a stuck accelerator is that they can't brake either, but this is a misconception brought on by panic.

"Press the brake firmly, then the clutch, disengaging the power. In an automatic, drivers should brake, wait for a reaction from the vehicle and then put the car into neutral. You can still steer, too, so a stuck accelerator isn't actually the disaster it sounds," added Mr Mead.

Look for somewhere to stop safely, indicate and make the manoeuvre as you would under normal circumstances. There will be loud revving in the background and you will probably be in a state of shock, but if you remain calm you can avoid serious danger."

Mr Mead offered this advice for owners of car models subject to recall: "Do look into getting a recall as soon as possible. Surprisingly few people actually approach manufacturers for recalls, which means the vehicles get sold on with the fault going unknown."

Peter Roger, IAM Chief Examiner, takes BBC reporter Richard Scott to a driving test track to show him how to bring any car back under control using the brakes and gears.

Go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8500693.stm> to view the clip.

Don't be a victim of car crime, says IAM

11 February 2010

Despite alarm systems being fitted as standard and an increase in video surveillance over the years, the IAM has warned against complacency and given drivers advice on how to reduce the chances of a car break-in or theft.

Peter Rodger, IAM Chief Examiner, said: "It seems obvious, but we'd still remind drivers, where possible, to park in a well lit, busy area with valuables out of view - and make sure your car has both an alarm and an immobiliser.

"Never underestimate the determination of some thieves: don't leave your car keys in a bowl or on a rack by the door - one of the most common methods of stealing a car is using a pole to reach through the letterbox to get the keys," said Mr Rodger.

If you have a garage, now's the time to clear out the ski boots and rolls of old carpet and make way for the thing it was built for – your car – although cars have got bigger over the years, meaning most of us have to park outside which affects both road safety and car security.

More advice on avoiding car crime:

- Try to use a car park with the 'ParkMark' logo which means it has achieved basic standards of security - but remember that you have no consumer rights in a car park and the car park operator has no legal responsibility whatsoever to protect your car.
- Thieves will break into homes to get the keys to steal a car. If your car is high value, check the security of your home.
- Don't leave the keys in the ignition when filling up your car with fuel or warming it up - remember your insurance could be invalidated if you do and your car is stolen.
- Don't leave a satnav fitting on display, and rub off any ring left on the windscreen by the suction pad - a thief will smash the window and go straight to the glove compartment to find it.
- Never store your car's documents within it and keep the glove box empty, leaving it open to make it clear there isn't anything inside.
- Consider fitting a vehicle tracking device to help track and find your car if it gets stolen.

Mr Rodger added: "The value of property stolen from your car may be relatively low, but the cost of repair to the car will be considerably more, not to mention the inconvenience, so vigilance and common sense could save you money and hassle."

Diesel drivers: watch out for waxing, says IAM

6 January 2010

With -20°C forecast in some parts of the UK, the IAM is warning drivers of diesel cars to remember that their fuel can wax over in extremely low temperatures, which could damage the fuel filter and cause a breakdown.

Neil Greig, IAM Head of Policy and Research, said: "Waxing is the formation of crystals in the diesel which block the filter. If you drive a diesel vehicle, it pays to try and park in a garage or sheltered area, and try to not to leave your vehicle standing unused for too long,"

"If you can't park in a garage, do ensure that the engine bay of the car is parked downwind, so that the wind hits the back of the vehicle first. After starting the engine, let it idle for 10 minutes before driving off, as this will let the heat from the engine warm the filter and pipes."

Lorries with exposed fuel tanks and fuel pipes are most at risk but cars and vans can also be affected if it's cold enough.

Water in diesel fuel tanks and filters can also freeze. Mr Greig advised: "Keep the fuel tank full and, if possible, fill it before arriving at home as this will prevent the build up of condensation on the inside walls of the tank, helping prevent water building up in the bottom of the tank."

Dates for Your Diary

2nd Mar, 2010	STAC 19/3. Classroom and Driving Practice Session
9th Mar, 2010	Group Night - "Talk given by The Motorcycle Section"
23rd Mar, 2010	STAC 19/4a. Classroom and Driving Practice Session
30th Mar, 2010	STAC 19/4b&5 Classroom and Driving Practice Session
14th Apr, 2010	NB - This is a Wednesday Nt. Group Evening - Slot Car Racing
18th Apr, 2010	Fire & Rescue Service at Comber Fire Station 12.00 - 4.00pm
22nd Apr, 2010	Region 8 Conference at Bangor Signal Centre
27th Apr, 2010	STAC 19/6. Classroom and Driving Practice Session