



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

June 2010

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**Congratulations this month go to -
Stephen Boyd & Neil Farmer
on becoming Members of the Institute.
Good luck and safe driving to any Associate(s)
approaching their test.**

**No Group Meeting in July.
Next Group Meeting is on
Tuesday, 10th August, 2010**

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).

June Group Meeting

8th June, 2010

This month was the occasion of our, now annual, Navigation Exercise and Barbecue. This is an evening of mixed emotions - everyone loves the barbecue but most people wonder why they put themselves through the masochistic, mental contortions demanded by the Navigation exercise. There was an extra factor this year - the weather. The evening started out with a light drizzle and finished with the proverbial cats and dogs coming down out of the heavens.

Having set the scene let us look now at how the evening progressed. Circa 1900 hours a variety of passenger carrying vehicles converged on the Scout Centre at Crawfordsburn Country Park. Of these vehicles nine of them left the Centre again each laden with a driver and one or two crew member(s) (we will call them navigators). They left armed with a map, route instructions, a romer (a device to help plot 6-figure map references) and a pencil. The crews consisted of people from a wide spectrum of map-reading expertise ranging from those that were actually looking forward to the challenge posed by the mephistophelian route-setter to those who wondered what 6-figure map references were.

However, they all went on their respective ways with a smile and a merry heart. From Crawfordsburn they went to explore the country lanes between Clandeboye and Newtownards. Then they left Newtownards, visited Dundonald before calling in briefly at Hollywood. The Craigantlet Hills were next on the agenda before flitting through Helen's Bay on the way back to the Scout Centre.

Some crews completed the course very quickly while others took a lot longer. This was not an issue as speed was not of the essence in this particular exercise.

The returning crews were met by the smell of a barbecue and a table spread with many colourful and appetising salads and relishes. Graham (the barbecue chef) and Trevor (the salad chef) had conjured up a feast that was heartily enjoyed by the crews as they discussed among themselves the answers to the clues. Luckily the warden in charge of the centre had allowed us the use of a large room so that we could shelter from the elements.

As the crews were enjoying their burgers frantic marking was taking place to determine the winning crew. The results were then announced (in true Miss World fashion) with third place going to Neil and Matthew with 32 points out of a possible 40. Second place went to Louise, Phil and Aaron with 36½ points leaving the champions this year to be Sarah, Keith and Alan with 38½ points. Well done to the winners and all who took part. Many thanks to the Scout Centre for supplying the venue, to those who supplied the food and to those who prepared it. It all went together

to make it a very enjoyable night even if the weather did its best to put a damper on it.

Gear up for tougher roads, says IAM

With the 1st June marking the 75th anniversary of the introduction of the driving test in the UK, the IAM has called for drivers to continually improve their technique in keeping with increasingly demanding driving conditions.

Peter Rodger, IAM Chief Examiner, said: "There are more cars on the road than ever before, and the driving environment is becoming more complicated. Our driving tests, however, have changed little over the years, and an improvement in driving standards is needed to fill the gap.

"Although cars are becoming easier to drive - with much improved brakes and suspension as well as power steering and a host of safety systems - traffic has significantly increased and traffic networks have become immensely more complex, so the driver needs far more understanding of what's going on outside the car," he said.

The IAM also wants to see a rural road element being incorporated into the driving test, as it is not currently compulsory. In the UK 71 per cent of road deaths occur on rural roads.

"It is improving the driver which will make the single biggest improvement to road safety in the future, and drivers need to take it upon themselves to adopt a lifelong learning approach," added Mr Rodger.

- In 1935 the driving test was introduced: within a year the death toll had fallen by nearly a thousand.
- In 1934, 7,343 people were killed on Britain's roads when there were just 2.4 million vehicles. In 2008 there were two-thirds fewer deaths (2,538), but fourteen times as many vehicles (34 million).
- In 2008 the learner pass rate was 41 per cent for women and 47 per cent for men.

Cut the queues, says IAM

Have you ever sat in a queue of traffic, patiently waiting your turn, only to see a car speeding down the outside lane and then "pushing in" ahead of you?

It may be frustrating, and appear more than a little rude, but perhaps that opportunistic driver sailing past you is in fact just making good use of an otherwise empty lane. And by being over-polite and joining the queue you are simply adding to the length of the congestion.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger said: "Driver etiquette means that 'zip merging' can be frowned upon by drivers in long queues of traffic, but if all available lanes are used, right up to the bottleneck, it is perfectly acceptable for vehicles from each lane to take it in turns to merge into the single lane. This reduces the length of road the queue stretches along and prevents blocked junctions."

"Pinch points" are all too common on our roads, but the advice in the Highway Code on how to "merge in turn" is vague.

Mr Rodger offers this advice: "If you are approaching a long queue of traffic in only one lane, you should stay in the lane you're in, even if it's empty, as long as you reduce your speed. Even if you have to merge further down, it is worth using all the space available to avoid unnecessarily long tailbacks.

"When travelling alongside a queue of traffic keep your speed right down and be extra vigilant, as other drivers may be considering pulling out into the empty lane."

Dates for Your Diary

<u>July</u>	<u>No Meeting</u>
24th July, 2010	Saturday at 9.30am Karting Challenge
10th Aug, 2010	Group Night - Car Maintenance
31st Aug, 2010	Recruitment Night
7th Sept, 2010	STAC - Class and Driving Practice
14th Sept, 2010	Group Night - Police Helicopter
28th Sept, 2010	STAC - Class and Driving Practice

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