



# 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

May 2010

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**Congratulations this month go to -  
Jay Neilly & Anne McFarland  
on becoming Members of the Institute.  
Good luck and safe driving to any Associate(s)  
approaching their test.**

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).

## May Group Meeting

11th May, 2010

This month our guest speaker was David Corr who runs the Ireland Off-Road Experience based on the 2000 acre Clandeboye Estate, the home of the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava. He started off by giving the group a short history of the Experience and he was reminded by some of the group that he had provided an extremely entertaining, enlightening, if not, frightening experience some years ago (Saturday, 27th May, 2000 - Ed) when he was based near Drumaness, Ballynahinch.

David then went into what distinguishes a proper 4-wheel drive vehicle from a standard one. This included information about diff locks and 4-wheel drive (selectable, automatically selected and permanent). Tyre choice was also mentioned as were the various types of driving offered at the course e.g. climbing and descending hills, side slopes, deep water and deep ruts & tracks.

He then went into the technicalities of Dynamic Stability Control which is a computerized technology that improves the safety of a vehicle's stability by detecting and minimizing skids. It reduces the tendency to understeer or oversteer at the limit of tyre adhesion.

Time ruled out any further discussion but the consensus of opinion was that the Group wanted some hands-on of the 4WDs so we'll have to see if the Committee can organise an evening with David.

Ivan thanked David for an excellent talk and told him that we will definitely be in touch.

## Prepare your car for summer: 5 tips from the IAM

The IAM has offered drivers advice on how to prime their cars properly for the warmer weather.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger said: "After a long winter of wear and tear through snow, salt and potholes - and now volcanic dust - your car will be in need of a little TLC. Being prepared for the summer and making checks now can save you a lot of money in the long run.

"Try to deal with any minor problems and repairs as they happen, as they can become very expensive if left to build up over time," he added.

The IAM recommends five tips to prepare your car:

- Now is a good time to treat your car to a spring clean. Salt is a corrosive and will cause rusting if left on the bodywork. If possible take your car to a car wash that specialises in under-car cleaning to get rid of every trace.
- The UK pollen season starts around now and can be pretty miserable for hayfever sufferers, so replacing your car's pollen filter annually is a vital investment. Keeping your air-con well maintained will help, too.
- Servicing your air-con will help your car smell better. If it smells stale when you turn the heating on, it could well be a sign that mould is building up in your condenser.
- Flies will soon be out in force so be sure to refill your washer fluid. Habitually washing the windscreen and headlamps when you stop for fuel is also important as windscreen wipers won't get rid of all the fly debris.
- Old wiper blades are not only deafening, they can leave marks on the windscreen, so remember to replace them regularly. After the dust that has fallen from the volcanic ash cloud, it is particularly important that you clean them regularly to avoid damaging your windscreen.

The IAM stress that certain checks should be made regardless of

the season: "Anti-freeze contains corrosion inhibitors so you should keep your car topped up with the right mixture all year round; going without could lead to expensive internal damage such as a blown head gasket," added Mr Rodger.

## Potholes: a 'hole' lot of trouble, says IAM

With potholes estimated to cost motorists £320 million every year, and more potholes than ever appearing with the thaw of the recent cold-snap, the IAM has issued advice on how to deal with them.

Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research, said: "Potholes form and get worse after icy spells as water gets into small cracks in the roads, expanding as it freezes and forcing the tarmac apart.

"For this reason, roads will increasingly start to show signs of damage as the weather warms up.

"As well as worrying about your vehicle, with potholes being a major cause of suspension failure, drivers should be particularly conscious of cyclists and motorcyclists trying to get past a pothole and give them a wide berth. They are entitled to a wobble and would appreciate not having a motorist attempting to overtake just as they avoid a hole in the road," added Mr Greig.

More pothole advice from the IAM:

- Leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front so that you can see the road surface before you drive or ride on it.
- If you do hit a pothole accidentally, make a point of checking your tyres once you've stopped. Check the inner as well as the outer tyre wall, which may have been damaged as a result.
- Avoid suddenly pulling out to avoid a hole - you might discover that there is a motorcyclist trying to get past you, or encounter an oncoming vehicle.
- Bikers and cyclists need to look well ahead and change direction early so they have time to deal with the holes, and so that their movements don't cause surprise to other road users.
- Potholes tend to reappear in the same place again and again as previous repairs fail - remember where you saw one and expect it to be there again.
- Be extra vigilant on roads with lots of lorries and also around bus stops. Extra pressure is put on the road surface wherever heavy vehicles stop, start or turn.

"Always make a point of reporting a pothole to the local authority as an early repair could prevent a future accident" Mr Greig added.

## Navigation Exercise & Barbecue

Tuesday, 8th June, 2010

This will start from the Scout Camp Crawfordsburn at 7.00pm. To get there from Bangor travel west along the B20 through Crawfordsburn village and after a further 0.2 mls turn right down Bridge Road towards Helen's Bay. Go down Bridge Road about 0.3 mls and then turn right into a tarmac roadway. Continue on for about 0.3mls and then turn sharply uphill to the left. Follow this lane for a hundred yards to the Scout Camp.

You might want to bring with you- soft pencils (2B should be about right), an eraser, a NDAM Romer if you have done one of these exercises before, a magnifying glass might be a good idea, a torch might also be a good idea and a sense of humour - essential!

Don't forget £3 per person to pay for the barbecue. Good luck!

## And Finally - A couple of newspaper articles

*'Commenting on a complaint from a Mr. Arthur Purdey about a large gas bill a spokesman for North West Gas said, "We agree it was rather high for the time of year. It's possible Mr. Purdey has been charged for the gas used up during the explosion that destroyed his house."' (The Daily Telegraph)*

*'At the height of the gale, the harbourmaster radioed a coastguard and asked him to estimate the wind speed. He replied he was sorry, but he didn't have a gauge. However, if it was any help, the wind had just blown his Land Rover off the cliff.' (Aberdeen Evening Express)*

## Dates for Your Diary

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1st June, 2010        | Final STAC Class and Additional Driving                       |
| <b>8th June, 2010</b> | <b>Group Night - Navigation exercise and Barbecue. 7.00pm</b> |
|                       | <b>Crawfordsburn Scout Centre. (See above for directions)</b> |
| 22nd June, 2010       | STAC - Further Driving Practice                               |
| 29th June, 2010       | STAC - Further Driving Practice                               |
| <b>July</b>           | <b>No Meeting</b>   |
| 24th July, 2010       | Saturday at 9.30am Karting Challenge                          |
| <b>10th Aug, 2010</b> | <b>Group Night - Car Maintenance</b>                          |

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