



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.

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).

October Group Meeting - AGM

13 October, 2009

Trevor welcomed everyone to the Group Meeting/AGM. He then gave our guest speaker, Mervyn Bates, an especial welcome and invited him to present Observer Qualification Certificates to Peter Osborough and Jim Monaghan. He also presented a Membership Certificate to Carey Crawford

Trevor then asked Mervyn to present the Two Jaguar Trophy to the 'Member of the Year' - John Bingham. Mervyn in his remarks to John stated that this presentation gave him particular pleasure as he had known John for a number of years.

Trevor and Norah then reminded everyone about the Marie Curie Ladies Driving Challenge and encouraged all those who could attend to be at Kirkistown by 9.15am for the briefing.

This led on to the start of the Annual General Meeting. After the formalities of the Absentees, Minutes and Matters arising from the Minutes had been taken care of, Trevor gave the Chairperson's Report. In this report he noted that the Group was in good shape and had followed an active programme of events. He then thanked the Office-bearers and Committee Members for their support throughout the year.

Angela then gave the Membership Report on Frank's behalf. In it she stated how healthy the numbers were both in the Full Membership and Associate categories. She also noted that the number of Qualified Observers was around the 40 mark with 5 Observers in training.

Trevor then gave the Financial Report on Adrian's behalf which again concluded that the Group was in a healthy state financially.

Mervyn then, at Trevor's request, conducted the election of Office Bearers and Committee Members for 2009-2010. The big change this year was that Trevor was standing down after three years in the Chair. In his place the Group elected Ivan Jackson.

Wendy McCormick and Adrian Clarke were re-elected Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Trevor, Norah, Lynn and David were re-elected onto the Committee.

The Group's newly elected Chairperson, Ivan then took his place and his first duty was to thank Mervyn for so ably conducting the election of Officebearers and Committee Members.

Mervyn was then asked to address the Group. He started off by recalling the history of the Group and his association with it. He joined the one and only Group in N. Ireland at that time - the Belfast Group. He passed his test and became a full Member of the IAM in 1976. In the mid-eighties he became Regional Organiser for Northern Ireland where he tried to encourage more links with the groups in Scotland. Another of his intentions was to try to get more groups formed in Northern Ireland and the fact that there are now groups in the North West, Mid-Ulster, Ballymena and East Antrim and, of course, North Down is a tribute to the hard work and dedication that he put into this. Because of his hard work the IAM presented him with the Fred Welch Rosebowl in 1992 which is awarded annually to the full member who has contributed most to promoting the aims and objectives of the IAM.

Unfortunately because of his job Mervyn had to give up being an active member of the Group but occasionally he will come along and give us an insight into the Law and how it can affect those who fall foul of it in terms of their standard of driving. For the last part of his talk he presented the Group with three case studies all related to the new offence of Causing Death or Grievous Bodily Injury by Careless Driving. This sparked off a lively debate which had to be called to a halt due to time limitations. Ivan thanked Mervyn for his extremely interesting talk and concluded by reminding the Associates that their next STAC night was on 27th October.

Inches from death!!

(This report is from Nicky who, in his own words, is very keen to recount to the ND Group Members an incident that happened to him recently. Ed)

Ever had a life threatening experience on the road?

I did! Came within inches of certain death!!!

Most scary moment of my entire life!!!

Happened to me on Saturday 3rd October! Two seconds more and I reckon I would not be alive right now to recount this tale!! That I'm here at all, I put down firmly to the ongoing training and advanced driving skills that I learned since joining North Down Advanced Motorists in November of last year!

On reflection, things, sometimes really little things, seemingly unconnected things, all fit unbelievably into the "greater picture" of life! But we don't see it at the time!

It all started back in 1978 when I was living in Bristol. I had two demo runs with a friend of mine who was an advanced driver and a just before I could join that group I broke my ankle and never went back!

I love sailing with a passion and last year at Strangford Lough Yacht Club, I bumped into Angela Bell who I hadn't seen for many years and she started sailing with me. She told me she was an advanced driver and that re-ignited that long lost ambition of mine to do the IAM test. And that is why I joined the group!

Anyway, on that day, racing was cancelled due to severe gales! My usual route home was from Balloo to Ballygowan and thence to Belfast. But that road has been closed for many months for repairs and so I followed the detour towards Saintfield. About 5 miles down that road, there is a staggered junction with a church on a hill and there I turned right onto the Carrickmannon Road towards Ballygowan.

The car in front of me was driving quite slowly. I had considered overtaking it, but the road conditions were such that overtaking was impossible. So my speed was slower than usual. There were a lot of cars parked along the left hand side of the road beside the Chestnut Inn and I had to pull in to allow oncoming vehicles to pass.

Looking well ahead, I saw potential danger - two cars parked close together on the left side of the road just before the blind crest of the hill ahead! To get round them would mean overtaking up the hill straight into the path of any oncoming traffic! Coming from the other direction, vehicles would be totally blind until they reached the crest! Travelling at speed on a reasonably straight country road this was a blind crest from both directions!

The car ahead of me overtook without incident!

In the past I would have driven up quite close to the two cars before attempting to overtake them. But I've learned that safety is everything, so I deliberately started my overtaking manoeuvre quite a distance back from the obstruction. That gap saved my life!!!

Call it premonition, call it sixth sense, call it whatever you like - I felt *unusually* apprehensive about the manoeuvre I was about to undertake, particularly since my Citroen XM is quite wide! So changing down into second gear and sounding the horn, I accelerated hard and just as I pulled out across the centre line of the road, a dark coloured car travelling at speed flew over the crest of the hill, straight towards me!! Literally split seconds to react! How I managed it I'll never know!! Yanked the wheel viciously to my left, still accelerating hard, swinging my car with inches to spare out of the line of the oncoming vehicle back into the safety space directly in front of me and slammed on the brakes in an emergency stop!!! For a split moment I thought my life was over!! Was shaking like a leaf!! Took me some time to recover my composure!

I totally believe my life was saved by a combination of little incidents that prepared me for this moment and that would never have happened had I not joined North Down group and *that* would never have happened had I not met Angela last year! So although she may not see it this way, she unknowingly saved my life!!!

All things happen for a reason!

(Anyone else who feels that they have an experience they would like to let the Group know about please contact me at editor.northdown@amni.org.uk - Ed)

Marie Curie Ladies Driving Challenge

Saturday, 17th October, 2009

What a super day! We were blessed with brilliant weather, an excellent crowd and lots of 'craic' Over 200 ladies took part and, listening to them as they went from event to event, they all seemed to have had an exceedingly good day's fun. By the time the money comes in the organisers hope to have raised over £38,000. Well done!

Dates for Your Diary

3rd Nov, 2009	STAC 18/6 Classroom and Driving Practice Session
10th Nov, 2009	Group Night - Talk from Motorcycle Racing Support Doctor
24th Nov, 2009	STAC 18/7 Classroom and Driving Practice Session
1st Dec, 2009	STAC 18/8 Classroom and Driving Practice Session
8th Dec, 2009	Group Night - Christmas Dinner at Daft Eddie's
12th Jan, 2009	Group Night - TBA
9th Feb, 2009	Group Night - "Night at the Movies" - Comber Cinema

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

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