



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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Congratulations this month go to -

Verity Walker

on becoming a Member of the Institute.

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

This month we would like to welcome, as new members of our Group, Richard Dorman, David Hammond, Steven McQuillan, Jim Noble and John Quinn. 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).

Group News

Our Chairperson, Ivan, and his wife Margaret, have gone to pastures new i.e. Somalia on the East coast of Africa. Ivan intends helping out in the local university imparting some of his renewable energy expertise and knowledge to the Somalian people while Margaret hopes to provide some very valuable nursing care..

We wish Margaret and Ivan every success in their endeavours and we hope to see them on their return.

Marie Curie Ladies' Driving Challenge

This will take place this year on Saturday, 16th October, 2010 at Kirkistown Race Track. We really need 50+ marshals to help the event go smoothly. So if you are free on the day come along with spouses, friends, grown-up offspring, etc., and enjoy a great day's entertainment. The banter is excellent and there is a free lunch for all helpers.

Please contact Angela at angelabell696@yahoo.co.uk and let her know if you or any of your friends can attend. Also if you are coming please try to be at Kirkistown at 9.00am for the briefing.

Group Night, 14th Sept 2010

PSNI Air Support

Angela started off by welcoming DI Brian Cairns along to our group. He started off with the history of the unit which is based at Aldergrove. It was formed in 1992 and was originally based around a fixed-wing aircraft. In July 2005 it received its first helicopter - an EC135 and very recently it has taken delivery of a second helicopter - an EC145. In terms of manpower the unit consists of Brian, 4 sergeants, 21 observer constables, 1 chief pilot and 10 pilots.

Brian then went through some of the bureaucracy involved in running such a unit and keeping it operational. He stressed that all this was necessary to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

He then described the role equipment that is carried on board. The first item he mentioned was the camera which costs in the region of £500,000. This is an extremely useful piece of equipment as I'm sure most of us have seen on TV programmes such as 'Police, Camera, Action' and 'The Interceptors' where the helicopter camera can not only zoom in and identify suspects but it can switch to infra-red mode (sensitive to 0.1 of a degree) and pick up the heat signatures from people even if they are hiding in bushes at night-time.

It also has a very powerful searchlight called a 'NightSun' with a 30 million candlepower lamp. It is so powerful that it will not operate below 200ft but if it was lit while the helicopter was on the ground it would burn the grass.

The machine is also equipped with 'SkyShout' which is really a very powerful public address system.

Another piece of equipment that the 'copter has is a microwave downlink antenna which allows images to be sent in real time from the aircraft to the ground from anywhere across the Province.

The helicopter is used for aerial evidence gathering, searching, public order management, traffic management, pursuits, scenes of crime management and photography.

Unfortunately, between Brian's talk and the barrage of questions the allotted time went so quickly and in no time Angela was thanking him for his extremely interesting talk.

Freeloading students: pack safely

Driver safety may not be the first thing you think of when preparing for uni, but the IAM has urged students to prepare properly before moving their worldly possessions across the country this month.

Peter Rodger, IAM Head of Driving Standards, said: "The roads are already filling up with heavily-laden, small, second-hand cars, and student drivers face risks such as fatigue, objects blocking their view and unfamiliar roads.

"When you're packing a car with enough stuff to last you a year it's easy to lose interest and throw the last few small items in loose. But bad packing can be dangerous if you brake, and you could be prosecuted if your baggage looks unsecure.

IAM advice for the drive ahead:

- Pack belongings securely - loose objects can be distracting and if the driver needs to brake sharply unsecured items could fly forward and hit those sitting in front.
- Where possible pack heavy items in the boot, and as low as possible.
- Loading a car until it's ready to burst can obstruct the already dangerous 'blind spot' view further, making the driver more vulnerable when changing lanes. Loads should be made as small as possible and positioned to enable a clear view. Students should take essentials on the first trip and ask their family to bring more items later if they don't all fit in.
- A long drive can lead to fatigue, so drivers should get plenty of rest beforehand. For the journey wear comfortable, loose clothing. The driving seat should be adjusted to a safe upright position and the heating/air-conditioning set to a cool - not cold - temperature. You should take a break at least every two hours, and driving at night should be avoided.
- Having a full car will use more fuel; keep an eye on the fuel level to make sure you don't suddenly run dry. Running out of fuel on a motorway puts your safety at risk, and it will be very expensive to call out help to top you up.
- Check tyre pressures before setting off. Tyres on a full and heavy car usually require higher pressure. The right pressures prevent unnecessary wear, excess fuel consumption and potentially dangerous blow-outs.
- Driving on unfamiliar roads can be unnerving. Sat navs can help and enable the driver to re-route quickly and relatively easily, but can be expensive. It's always best to plan the journey before hitting the road, using a map or online journey planner.

Message from Keith Patterson

Our New Regional Coordinator for Region 8

Hello to all the North Down group readers. So what does a regional coordinator actually do then? Well, I volunteer as the IAM representative for this region (NI) and act as a communications channel between the groups here (6 in total) and IAM head office. A big part of the job is encouraging cross-group communication, and co-ordinating activities such as karting, skills days and attendance at car/bike events. I'm a bit new to the post, so I'd love to hear from you if you have any good ideas for how we as advanced motorists can make a greater impact here in Northern Ireland. Drop me an email at coordinator@amni.org.uk with your ideas.

AGM - 12th October 2010

This is your chance to elect the office bearers and committee you want and to hear about the work that has been going on all year. It will also be a chance to meet the new Co-ordinator for Region 8 (Northern Ireland). (See above).

Dates for Your Diary

- 28th Sept, 2010 STAC(2) - Class and Driving Practice
- 5th Oct, 2010 STAC(3) - Class and Driving Practice
- 12th Oct, 2010 **Group Night - AGM + Keith Patterson (RC)**
- 16th Oct, 2010 Marie Curie Ladies Driving Challenge
- 26th Oct, 2010 STAC(4) - Class and Driving Practice
- 2nd Nov, 2010 STAC(5) - Class and Driving Practice
- 9th Nov, 2010 **Group Night - Paul Matthews - Oakland Insurance**

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