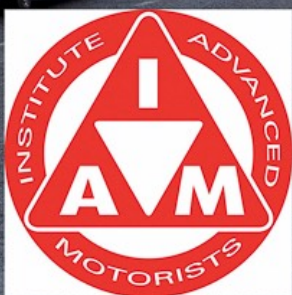
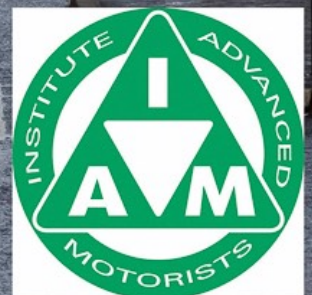


The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



February 2019





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The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists Group (Group 8199)

Helping to Improve the Standard of Driving and Riding on the Roads in Northern Ireland and the advancement of road safety

February 2019

<http://www.amni.org.uk/groups/northdown/>

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Group Contact - David Harcourt

Tel No 07760 578444

[e-mail: david.harcourt@gmail.com](mailto:david.harcourt@gmail.com)

New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car members Roisin Gallen, Michael New and Ruben Nield. Also motorcycle members Roberta Thompson, Graham Florence, Brian Gillies, Robert Mitchell, Tony Phillips and Andrew Wilson. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Test passes

No test passes this month. Good luck and safe driving and riding to any Associates approaching their test.

January Cover Picture

This one caused a lot of head scratching. There was a clue to the general location in the apple symbol at the top of the lamp-posts - apple country in County Armagh. The location was Main Street in Loughgall. Only two correct answers from Shaun McKittrick (is there anywhere Shaun hasn't been?) and David Harcourt.

Do you know the location of this month's cover? This is an easy one to follow last month's head-scratcher. No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer next month.

Dates for your diary

26 February - STAC 2: Human Factors
5 March - STAC 3: Core driving skills
12 March - **Group Night** - Jackie McDowell from Bike Safe
26 March - STAC 4: Bends and cornering
2 April - STAC 5: Roundabouts and junctions
9 April - **Group Night** - Visit to Excelsior Cinema, near Comber
23 April - no meeting (Easter)
30 April - STAC 6: Overtaking
7 May - STAC 7: Motorways and dual carriageways
14 May - **Group Night** - Visit to Crumlin Road Gaol
28 May - STAC 8: Manoeuvring
4 June - Test preparation and additional driving practice
11 June - **Group night** - TBA - possible driving event
25 June - Additional driving practice

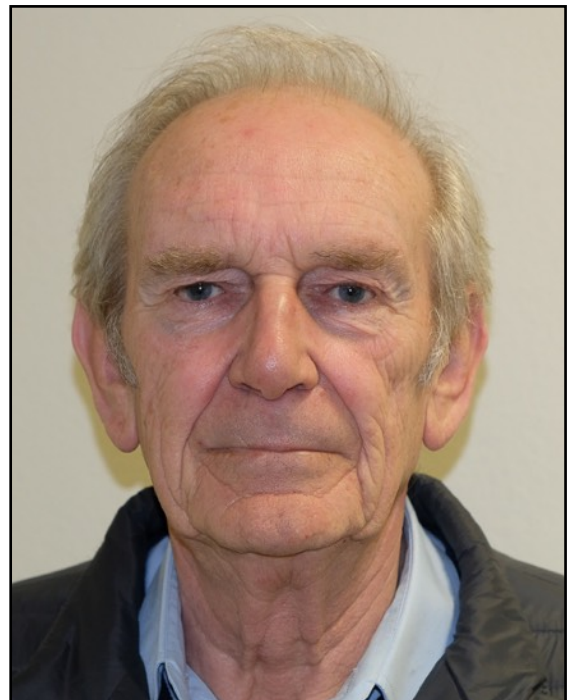
STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Associate Members should ensure that you are familiar with the relevant section of the "Associate Handbook" before each STAC night so that you can get the most benefit from the theory session as well as your observed drive.

February Group Night

Our February speaker was Andy Day. Andy's background includes 30 years with the City of London Police where he spent time in CID, in the surveillance squad, and on the forensic side, including as a fingerprint expert (where the suffix to his personal number was 007). On retirement from the police he was a senior lecturer in forensic science at the London Southbank University and he also appeared in crime prevention programmes on the BBC and ITV. So a wide and varied experience.

The main focus of his talk was on how the police went about surveillance activities, including the use of cars and motorcycles but as he admitted himself that he would do it, he digressed into other areas of police work, including the reduction in resources at a time of new types of crime emerging eg cyber crime.

Andy began with a discussion on CSI on TV. Using as an example a popular American CSI programme he said that he had spotted 10 mistakes in the first 10 minutes. He used an example of a gun suspected as having been involved in a crime being found na skip. How many times do you see the results of a CSI team becoming available in a matter of hours. In real life nothing is touched until it has been photographed from every angle. The next step is to ensure that it is safe. It can then be removed and subjected to a range of tests including fingerprinting and DNA which would yield results if the criminal had not used gloves, as well as ballistic tests. All of this can take up to 10 days to produce results that can stand up in court.



Returning to the subject of surveillance he referred to the popular image of 2 officers in a car observing a suspect. Two in a car simply would not work. Proper surveillance of a suspect would involve a minimum of 4 cars with 2 people in each together with a motorcyclist. This enables the

police to cover every possible eventuality by following on foot whatever direction the suspect takes. If the suspect gets on a bus the officer on foot cannot follow so the motorcyclist can take over. Up to 12 people may be involved in each shift.

A running commentary on what is happening is relayed to all involved by radio but with criminals monitoring police frequencies the use of mobile phones and using codes combats this. A log of everything that happens, including any change of appearance by the suspect, is maintained for court purposes. Police officers usually carry a hat in their pocket to enable them to change their appearance in case they have been spotted. He related the instance of his son who was on surveillance and nipped into a shop to don a hat and wondered why others in the shop were looking at him strangely. He had gone into a shop selling Preston North End football kit and had donned a Chelsea hat!

The cars use for surveillance appear normal with no special aerals visible to identify it as a police car. A tow bar and a roof rack completes the picture of normality. The aerals are concealed within the roof rack. Observation vans with one-way windows were also used and these contained a chemical toilet. Vehicles used for surveillance are based in an innocuous building in an industrial area rather than in a police station where they would be more easily observed and identified by criminals.

Drivers involved in surveillance have to complete a 2 week driving course before they can be involved and some go on to do a three week advanced police driving course at Hendon.



Credit: kenjonbro

Turning to the methods used by criminals he said that if 2 cars were required for a particular job criminals would steal 5 and leave them placed strategically. A particular criminal had 2 identical Range Rovers so that on a drive by it appeared that he was at home. When eventually arrested in Spain he was found to have 7 different passports.

Credit: Tobias Leeger



He went on to describe a couple of major cases he was involved in. One involved surveillance of a house in Richmond with a garden running down to the Thames and a cabin cruiser docked there. The owner was suspected of using the boat to pick up drugs from another vessel in the the English Channel. Andy was observing the house through binoculars from across the river and saw someone digging a hole and burying something in the garden. Not drugs this time - it was the contents of a cat litter tray!

Another case involved terrorist guns and explosives and in the course of surveillance in a forest an officer slipped down a bank and got too close to the suspects. However, he remained unobserved and using radio clicks with the rest of the team (1 click for yes and 2 for no) he alerted the rest of the team who managed

to get a local farmer to drive his tractor up and down a nearby road in a low gear making lots of noise to cover any sound of the officer retreating. The terrorists were eventually apprehended and convicted resulting in a commendation for the team.

Andy's talk was interesting and informative. His digressions from the main subject of surveillance were illuminating, revealing the excitement, the hum-drum and the sometimes amusing aspects of police surveillance. I for one could have listened to more.

Observer and Associate handbook/logbook changes

IAM RoadSmart has announced the launch of the updated IAM RoadSmart advanced driver and rider logbooks. Richard Gladman, head of standards, will be letting us know about the changes in detail but in the meantime they are preparing to deliver the new style logbooks to observers and examiners. Please note current associates can continue to use their existing logbook as the versions are fully compatible. New associates will be issued with the new style logbook from the start of February; timing subject to final print delivery dates.



To make sure all observers receive an updated logbook a bulk delivery is being sent to every group containing the appropriate number of logbooks for current observers in the group.

We have no information about what changes have been made and will keep you up to speed on this as soon as we know.

POWDERY car checks

Last month we include an article about POWDERY checks for bikers. This month it's the turn of car drivers.

Petrol: Have you enough petrol/diesel/battery charge for your journey? If you are driving an electric vehicle do you know where you can get a charge either on the way to/from or at your destination?

Oil: Many modern cars have a facility to check the oil level from the dashboard. Check it on a regular basis rather than waiting for the low oil symbol to appear. For other vehicles this should be a weekly check using your dipstick. If you only do short journeys, especially in winter, watch out for a yellowish deposit around the dipstick or inside the oil filler cap - this is a sign that there is water in the oil from the combustion process which will reduce the oil's effectiveness.



Water: Regularly check your coolant level and your windscreen washer reservoir level. Coolant should be topped up with an approved coolant - not water. Your windscreen washer bottle should be filled with washer fluid which will help prevent freezing in winter and help remove traffic film from the windscreen.

Damage: A quick look round the car will reveal obvious damage but pay particular attention to any possible damage to lights and mirrors. Also make sure your lights are clean.

Electrics: regularly check the operation of all your lights, including indicators, brake lights and number plate lights. Inside the car, know what the lights on your dashboard mean. When you start the engine the only light that should remain on will be the red handbrake warning light. If a light comes on when you are driving, red symbols generally mean something requires urgent attention, the engine should be switched off and there is a possibility that the car should not be driven. Yellow means something requires attention but the car can still be driven. In both cases check your handbook.

Rubber: many modern cars have tyre pressure monitoring systems to save you getting out the tyre pressure gauge. If you don't have this facility you need to check your tyre pressures weekly and

don't forget to adjust the pressures to correspond with the load in the car. Regularly inspect your tyres for tread depth, uneven wear, cuts and bulges. As tyres age their exposure to UV light cause the rubber to become less flexible and hairline cracks can start to appear at which point you should consider replacing them even if the tread depth is more than the legal limit of 1.6mm. Also check the condition of the rubber on your front and rear wiper blades.



You: finally are you fit to drive? Are you under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including prescription drugs some of which may make you drowsy. Can you still read a number plate at the prescribed distance of 20 metres? Are you tired and is your mental attitude appropriate to deal with what you might encounter on your journey.

Safe driving!

HGVs

Driving in front of, or even behind, a large lorry can be daunting. But there's no need to panic as Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of riding and driving standards, is here to help with seven top driving behaviour tips to keep you at ease on the road.



- When you're driving along the motorway, you'll notice many lorries with foreign number plates. Bear in mind that the driver will be sitting on the left hand side rather than the right, so you may be difficult to see and the driver may be acclimatising his lane position in the UK. Take extra care when passing and allow more space if you can.
- We've all heard the saying "if you can see their mirrors, then they can see you." But an HGV can have up to five mirrors, and the driver is only limited to looking at one at a time so they may not see you. Hold back and you will eventually be visible in their mirror.



• Identify when there is a likelihood of the HGV changing lanes. Is there a slip road coming up which will be joining traffic and may force a lane change? Or if there is an HGV in lane two, are they likely to change back into lane one? Be accommodating by hanging back and allowing them to pull into the lane they are looking to move into.

• At one point in time, we've all experienced heavy spray from an HGV in front of us. You can control this by extending the distance between yourself and the lorry. The Highway Code suggests at least four seconds in the rain but if needed, make it more. Not only will it prevent your wipers working overtime, it will also improve your vision beyond the HGV.

- An articulated lorry will track sideways in a right-hand bend on the motorway and on a roundabout, so avoid being beside it. A good rule of thumb is to be safely in front of or safely behind, but never beside an HGV when entering a roundabout.

- If you see a queue of traffic in front of you and have an HGV behind you, introduce your brake lights early to pre-warn the driver behind and slow down gradually. This will let the HGV driver extend their braking distance and stop in plenty of time. On a motorway or dual carriageway, hazard lights can be used to show drivers behind you of any issues further in front (Highway Code rule 116).
- Despite being legally limited to 60mph, an HGV can only physically go a maximum of 56mph on the motorway. So if you do see a HGV on the right hand lane, give them a helping hand by slowing down and letting them into the left lane. Allow them to pass more easily if you can.

Richard said: “As any HGV driver will tell you, they sometimes need a bit of extra space to move down the road. Visibility can be restricted, and no amount of mirrors will allow all of the blind spots to be monitored all of the time. By applying some simple rules and sharing the road space, we can make life easier for all of us. On a roundabout they will need more than one lane so let them have it; a few seconds delay will be worth it if you prevent a crash. Walk that mile in the other man’s shoes and understand what we may need.”



Road Rage

We have all come across road rage at some point in our driving lives. When it happens, it can leave you feeling intimidated and scared. But with a bit of planning you can prevent the situation altogether as no one sets off on a journey intending to have an argument with another driver, often the road rage is the culmination of a bad day. Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, provides a few top tips about how to avoid being a victim of road rage, and what to do if it escalates.

Note: If you have friends or family who drive, please share these tips with them to help them stay safe on the road.

- If there’s conflict between two parties, there’s a likely chance you’ve both played a part. This doesn’t mean you should react. Try to take yourself away from the problem – let the other driver go on ahead. Even if you feel wronged, letting the other party go will make no difference to the rest of your day
- Is someone being confrontational or aggressive? If so, don’t make eye contact and don’t react visibly. Try not to think about them so that the incident doesn’t affect you afterwards.
- If the other party is still being aggressive to you and you are in fear of your own safety, call the police
- If the other party approaches you in your car, can you drive away safely? If you can, consider doing so. But don’t rush off and drive like the getaway driver in a film, or if you think the other driver is going to chase you. If they are chasing you stop in a busy public place and call help



Credit: Sheriffmitchell

- Do you have a passengers who can film any behaviour on a mobile phone? This will help in terms of evidence. Remember to include the registration number of the other vehicle involved.
- Don't open your door, don't open your windows fully and don't start or get provoked into an argument, try to stay calm.
- If you were at fault, admit it and apologise. It may be enough to diffuse the situation quickly. And do not do anything that can be interpreted as retaliation. Even if you weren't at fault, is the argument really worth it?
- Hopefully by now the matter is over and you are driving away. Do acknowledge that this incident will have affected your behaviour. If you feel upset or emotional pull over and get some fresh air or walk around if you need to before resuming your journey.
- Find some distraction like listening to the radio - move your mind deliberately onto something else – deliberately driving well would be a good example – but don't dwell on the incident.



Richard said: "Road rage does not affect everyone every day. If you're finding it is happening very often, you might want to think about how you engage with other road users.

"Unlike pedestrians walking towards each other; who can easily get a feel of what the other person will do, where they might go or the mood they're in, you have no such opportunities cocooned in your car."

He concluded: "No-one need experience road rage, but it is up to each of us to ensure it stays that way." "So it is important not to be antagonistic or obstructive, perhaps making a person already having a bad day boil over."

And finally..... how quickly are the basics forgotten.



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