

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



April 2024





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

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

April 2024

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<https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownGroupIAM>

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Test Passes

Congratulations this month to car Member

Tina Lannin

and to bike member

Anatolie lordache

Good luck and safe driving or riding to any Associates approaching their test.

New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car member Thomas Hair, also existing bike member Anatolie lordache having done the bike test wishes to do the car test. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

March cover picture

This was the A48 from Six Road Ends to Donaghadee - travelling from the Six Road Ends this is a series of crests just before Donaghadee. Congratulations this month (in order of receipt of responses) to Guy Thomson, David Harcourt and Norman Shearer.

Do you know where this months picture was taken? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and of course, you will get a mention in the next Road Observer.

Submit your answers to: leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC nights for car Associates and the regular bike runs (notified by email to bike members and also on Facebook) we plan a varied programme for the Group Nights. All meetings will take place in the Boathouse at Groomsport Harbour car park unless otherwise stated

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|----------|---|
| 30 April | STAC session 6 |
| 7 May | STAC session 7 |
| 14 May | Group Night - talk from William McAleese from Rider Airbags Ltd, Helite's all-Ireland mobile agent. Discounts are available to IAM members. |
| 28 May | Extraordinary General Meeting to approve the 2022/23 accounts followed by STAC session 8 |
| 4 June | Additional driving practice |
| 11 June | Visit to the Ulster Aviation Society |

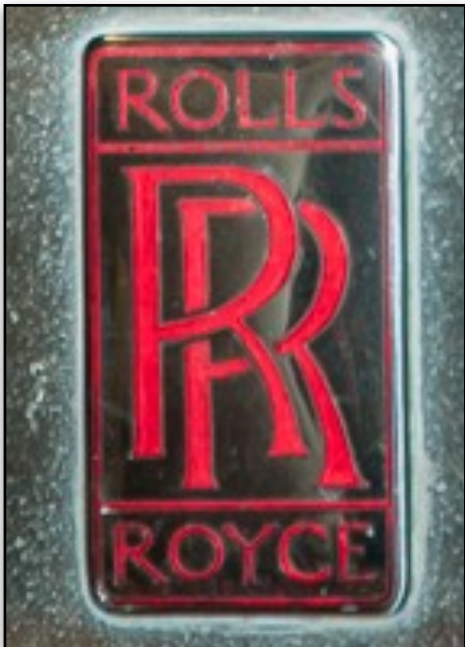
STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Associate Members should ensure that you are familiar with the relevant section of the "Associate Handbook" before each STAC night so that you can get the most benefit from the theory session as well as your observed drive.

APRIL GROUP NIGHT

Our April Group Night was a talk by Paul Muir, a past group member, who went on to become a Fellow of the IAM, a classification only introduced at the time and which only one other person in the Group became.

Paul was at the Group to tell us what it is like to own a Rolls Royce. Paul went on to give a brief history of the two men who gave the company the famous names. How they came from vastly different backgrounds but were both trained engineers. Their desire for perfection rose from, on one side, wanting to take existing items and make them better and on the other wanting to provide the best available.

Paul went on to describe some of the unique details of past vehicles, for example twin calipers on a single brake disc. Then how the more modern cars used the best items already available such as the hydraulic suspension system as used by Citroen. The gearboxes were of American origin, a well tried and tested unit considered bullet proof.



He talked about the quality of used cars for sale. Yes you could purchase a 40 year old car for £5,000 or £25,000, the former likely requiring £20,000 of work and parts while the latter may be in tip top condition and ready for the road with out any additional work or parts. Obviously regular servicing was still a requirement and the parts required were mostly available from any motor factor.

The evening finished with a series of questions covering running costs, fuel consumption, fuel tank capacity, insurance costs etc. The answers were a surprise when compared to a modern average car. It has been suggested that we should ask Paul back for the benefit of those unable to attend and the many that would like to hear the presentation again. Many thanks to Paul for an interesting talk.

Groomsport Roundabout

I read recently that the resurfacing work at the Groomsport Roundabout will cost £460,000. Maybe I'm not observant enough but I didn't see anything wrong with it. There are roads in a much worse that need some serious attention.



In the February issue we highlighted the state of our roads and included a quote from Infrastructure Minister John O'Dowd: *"I am now in a position to announce an additional £8.1million of funding for my Department's Structural Maintenance Programme to deliver additional resurfacing schemes and continue to address the poor condition of our road network."*

This will all take time and in the meantime the item below is IAM RoadSmart advice on how to avoid potholes.

Potholes

While potholes can be unavoidable, here are some IAM RoadSmart tips to help minimise pothole panic.

Are you alert?

One of the simplest ways to protect you and your vehicle is to stay sharp and focused when driving and watch your speed. Be extra cautious when driving at night.



Keep your distance

Try to maintain enough space between you and the vehicle in front. This will allow you to clearly see the road ahead and keep an eye out for any rough surfaces. Only where possible and safe, drive around puddles too as there could be holes hidden beneath patches of water.

Editor's note

The two photographs on the previous page are of the same bit of road. The one on the left shows at the whole of the flooded road and the one on the right shows a large pothole filled with water.

Make sure your tyres are in good condition.

One effective way to reduce the risk of damage to your vehicle is to ensure your tyres are in good condition and have the correct pressure. You can find more advice about tyre safety [here](#).

Sharp braking can make things worse

Sharp braking for a pothole not only creates risk of a collision if the vehicle behind is too close, but it can also make impact with the pothole worse. Brakes will put added energy into the wheel which can cause greater damage. You are better off braking gently prior to going over a pothole and gently coasting.

Get a grip.

Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel. When most of us are driving or riding we'll be surrounded by other vehicles. So, it's important to mention that swerving an oncoming pothole can be incredibly dangerous.



Damage

If you hit a pothole, even at a low speed, it can cause damage to your vehicle. It's important you pull over when it's safe to do so to inspect any visible damage to your wheels and tyres. Also, listen out for any new noises your vehicle may be making. If you can't see any visible damage, and you believe it's safe, continue your journey. Keep checking to make sure your steering wheel remains centred and isn't pulling to one side. Aside from punctures, potholes tend to cause most damage to suspensions and shock absorbers.

Detail it and report it

Take notes – Park somewhere safe and write down all the details of the incident including the location of the pothole and, if you can, its rough size and depth. If your car is damaged, you may be

able to claim compensation. Check here to see who you need to contact. Remember, if the highways authority is unaware, then it will take longer to fix.

Give cyclists a wider berth

Drain and manhole covers are often on the left-hand side of the lane, which is where cyclists tend to position themselves. If a cyclist needs to take evasive action to avoid a pothole, it's far safer for them to have extra space.

IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy and Standards Nicholas Lyes said: "Potholes are not only a nuisance for drivers, but for those on two wheels they are a road safety hazard. Sadly, the state of our roads is becoming something of a national embarrassment.

How to report a pothole in Northern Ireland

The NI Direct website contains detailed information on how to report potholes. Click on this link to find out more: [Report potholes](#).

Old image of Belfast Looking down Royal Avenue



Image from the Northern Ireland Historical Photographic Society

Trolleybuses and trams. Is the driver of the black van in the centre giving a right turn hand signal or expressing his frustration - maybe road rage is nothing new!

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