

# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



December 2017





Official Provider



## The Road Observer

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

December 2017

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

Vol 20.10

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### Advanced Tests

**Congratulations this month to car member**

**Heather Howard**  
who achieved a F1RST pass.

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

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### New Members

This month we welcome to the Group motorcycle member Andrew Whiteley. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

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### Cover picture

The November picture was taken on the Woburn Road just as a group of North Down Cycling Club members were passing. No-one, not even Annie, was able to identify the location. I thought the church (Christ Church, Carrowdore) was a real give-away.

This month's cover is topical given the problems with the low bridge at Clandeboye but this is a different bridge. Can you identify it? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and of course a mention in the Road Observer.

## **Important note for all Observers**

Any Members who are currently Senior Observers or Group qualified will lose that qualification after 31 December 2017. If you wish to continue to Observe either as a National Observer or a Local Observer you will need to be re-qualified under the new IMI arrangements.

**Observer training sessions for all existing Observers, Observers currently in training and for any prospective Observers will be held in the Boathouse at 7.15pm on Tuesdays 23 and 30 January 2018 .**

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### **Dates for your Diary (to end of April)**

9 January 2018 - STAC enrolment  
6 February - STAC 1 - IPSGA  
13 February - Group night - computer simulated racing  
27 February - STAC 2 - Human factors  
6 March - STAC 3 - Core driving skills  
13 March - Group Night - Presentation from the Forensic Service  
27 March - STAC 4 Bends and cornering  
3 April - Easter Tuesday - no meeting  
10 April - Group night - visit to Excelsior cinema, Comber  
24 April - STAC 5 - Roundabouts and junctions

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Associate Members should ensure that 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.

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### **Christmas dinner**

The December Group Night was our Christmas dinner once again held in Carnalea Golf Club and was enjoyed by a total of 54 members and guests. This year we decided to change the arrangements for the ballot so that we were able to offer a couple of good prizes and the main prize was an overnight stay in Benedicks Hotel in Belfast complete with a bottle of champagne.

Lucky winners were Lisa Carson, Raymond McCartney (father of Alan) and the big prize went to Jean Gillespie (wife of Alistair). Congratulations to all. As in previous years, nobody went home empty-handed -there was a tin of de-icer for everyone. Pictures of the night below (3 opportunities to enjoy David's Christmas shirt):



*Raymond McCartney*



*Lisa Carson*



*Jean Gillespie*

## Certificate presentation

Oliver Morrow passed his Advanced Driving test in October and was presented with his certificate by David at one of our meetings in the Boathouse.



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## Winter conditions

Winter brings with it difficult driving conditions, so this is a good time to remind everyone how to drive safely when the temperature drops below zero. When we expect freezing conditions we normally get a weather warning from the Met Office, however you should always take extra care when travelling in winter. IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, is offering advice to motorists to better cope with driving on road surfaces that are covered in frost, ice or snow:



- If the weather conditions are severe in your area, you should take notice of police advice and simply do not travel. However, in exceptional circumstances if you must go out then make sure you drive safely with extra caution on icy roads.
- At least triple your stopping distance and approach every junction expecting to stop well before the stop or give way line (it can take up to ten times as long to stop according to Highway Code advice). Every steering, acceleration or braking input should be as smooth and gentle as possible and select 2nd gear when you pull away in icy conditions (less torque will help prevent wheel spin).



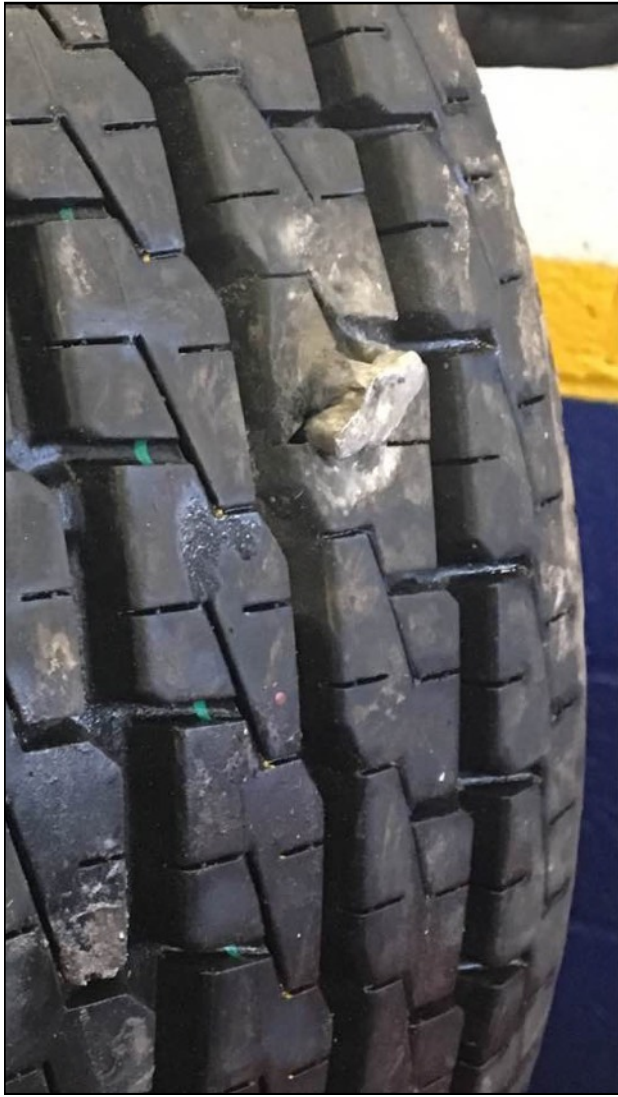
- Salt will often make the windscreen, headlights, number plate and rear parts of your car very dirty. Cars without headlamp washers, for example, will lose an estimated 40% of luminosity and possibly all their focus in about 20 miles on a damp, gritted motorway. When travelling long distances it is advised that you stop regularly at service stations to clean your windscreen and headlights with a clean cloth. Or keep a filled bottle of water in the car boot to give your lights, windows and mirrors a quick wash over – a handy investment is to top up your windscreen washer reservoir when needed too.
- Never ignore any warning lights. If one appears then get it checked out sooner rather than later. Being stuck on the side of the road is never good, but breaking down in freezing conditions is a high risk situation.
- Always carry a winter driving kit including an ice scraper, de-icer, blanket, torch, shovel, something to eat and a fully charged mobile phone.
- When driving on a busy road avoid overtaking a gritting lorry as the road ahead may not be treated yet. If you have any doubt, don't risk it. And make sure to never overtake a snow plough in heavy snow conditions.

- While roads may be gritted to give you better traction, some areas may not be completely treated which can leave ice patches exposed. You should therefore drive at a steady pace, ensuring the safety of you and your passengers. On the roads you use regularly, watch out for water running across the carriageway as this can wash away salt.
- It's important that you keep your car clean throughout the winter as the salt in grit can cause corrosion to any exposed parts. Ensure that you thoroughly wash the underneath of your car when you can to stop salt from settling.
- Don't forget to wash/rinse alloy wheels too; the smallest scratch can quickly become a large corroded area.
- Just because the winter sun is out does not mean the roads might not be icy. Micro climates of icy patches will linger in areas such as bridges and exposed sections, where the sun has not yet reached.
- Keep the tread on your tyres above 2mm (ideally 3mm), the more tread you have the more water they can cope with. Letting your tyres get down to the legal limit of 1.6mm is not recommended, and don't forget you can always consider winter tyres if you are in an area where they will benefit you. The following link will give good safety tips <https://www.tyresafe.org/tyre-safety/>



Richard said: "Preparation is the key to avoiding a dangerous situation whilst driving in snowy or icy conditions. Don't rely on the performance of your car systems to get you out of trouble – allow time, make sure you have good visibility all round and carry the right equipment. If conditions are extreme remember the best advice is not to travel."

And finally.....



The outside view of a puncture in a tyre with plenty of tread left .... and the inside view. New tyre please.

Thanks to Colin for the pictures (not his car by the way).

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And finally, finally .....

"Roads were made for journeys, not for destinations" (Confucius)

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Merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year to all our members and their families. Hope Santa brings you something you like (sorry a Porsche won't fit on his sleigh).

**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.**