

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



December 2016





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 2016

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

Vol 19.11

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New Members

This month we would like to welcome new car Associate Member David Brown. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Advanced Tests

No test passes to date this month

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

Cover pictures

The location of the November cover picture was Lisbane looking towards Comber. Congratulations to Angela Bell and Colin Hay for spotting it (Colin probably had a bit of an advantage as he lives in the area. Frank - did you not spot it?).

Can you identify the location of this month's cover - an autumnal scene somewhere in County Down? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer.

Scores on the doors for the cover pictures in 2016 - Annie McFarland and John Barry were joint first with 4 covers correctly identified, Alistair Gillespie and Guy Thomson joint second on 3 apiece and Angela Bell third with 2. Others with 1 each were Ronnie Fails, Ivan Greenfield, Anthony Campbell, Nancy Derby and Colin Hay.

Dates for your diary

10 January 2017 - STAC enrolment

7 February - STAC 1

14 February - Group night - A photographic journey

28 February - STAC 2

7 March - STAC 3

14 March - Inspector Rosemary Leech, Roads Policing PSNI

28 March - STAC 4

4 April - STAC 5

11 April - Group Night - Cinema evening

18 April - Easter Tuesday - No meeting

2 May - STAC 6

9 May - Group Night - TBA

23 May - STAC 7

30 May - STAC 8

6 June - Additional driving practice

13 June Group Night - TBA

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Associate Members should ensure that are familiar with either "How to be a better driver" or the new "Associate Handbook" before each STAC night so that you can get the most benefit from the theory session as well as your observed drive.

NDAM Christmas Dinner

The December Group night was our Christmas dinner. A new venue for us this year was Carnalea Golf Club. A total of 48 Members and guests enjoyed a great meal followed by entertainment in the form of a ballot of car/bike accessories, the majority of which would involve some work for the winners as they were cleaning products. We can expect to see very clean cars/bikes in the coming year.

Many thanks to Stephen Massey for collating the menu choices and more importantly, collecting money, to David Selby for arranging the venue and to David Harcourt for his star turn of lasering name plates complete with menu choices on the back. David is well know for his choice of shirts and T-shirts and his Christmas shirt didn't disappoint. Below is a selection of pictures from the night.



Staff Examiner Charlie Stewart and David



3 bikes need 3 sponges! - Alan



Annie curtsying to David



MC Stephen



How many heroes can you get in one picture? Colin and David



Ryan



Jen and David



Examiner Brian Galbraith



Detail of David's Christmas shirt



Matthew

Review of 2016

This is the time of the year when newspapers, TV and radio compile a review of the year past and this year the RO will join in to review Group activities over the last 12 months.

Membership stands at around 90 split 58% cars and 42% bikes. We had 22 new Associate members joining us in 2016, 10 on the car side and 12 on the bike side. Our test pass numbers are down on last year with a total of 7 passes (3 cars, 4 bikes of which 2 were F1RSTS).

Work on re-qualifying Observers under the new arrangements was slow to start but lately we have made better progress and we now have 4 Local Observers (2 cars and 2 bikes) and 7 National Observers (4 cars, 2 bikes and 1 car and bike). A number of trainee Local Observers are close to completing their training so we expect numbers to increase significantly in the next couple of months.



Charlie Stewart presents David Selby with his Advanced Riding certificate



Ryan, Stephen and David on the podium

Group nights (2nd Tuesday of the month - see dates for your diary) continued with a varied range of speakers and activities. We were away from the Boathouse on 4 occasions - visits to the RADAR centre in Belfast, to the Excelsior cinema in Comber, the Ulster Transport Museum and to Room2race for the usual night of mayhem on the virtual race-track. Visiting speakers included Damian Coll from the Forensic service, Richard Gladman from IAM HQ, and Paul Matthews of Oakland Insurance. We also had a table-top rally organised by Alistair Gillespie.

On the bike side the regular runs out continued throughout the year to locations including the Ards Peninsula, Ballycastle, Newcastle, Antrim Hills and Glens, Lough Neagh circuit and Portstewart. An important part of these runs is the stops for refreshments and the social element and not to be outdone the car side had a drive day over some interesting roads in County Antrim finishing with a meal in Coleraine.

All told, 2016 was a successful year for the Group and the Committee is currently planning a diverse range of activities and speakers for the forthcoming year.



Colin Jamison and David Jackson on the Torr Head road

On a more serious note, road traffic deaths in Northern Ireland stood at 66 to 23 December 2016 and while this is down by 4 at the same point last year it is still too many and reinforces the need for us to spread the message about road safety and to continue our efforts to improve standards of driving and riding in 2017.

Winter - be prepared

It can take a bit longer to get yourself going on a cold, dark winter morning, and getting the car going is no different. Give yourself the time to deal with the extra things involved in getting on the road.”

Here are some tips to avoid seasonal car problems:

- A modern car does not need to warm the engine up before being driven, so avoid wasting fuel by not switching on the engine until you are ready to go. But do run it if you need to use the heater/demister before you move off, so you can start with a nice clear screen.
- Clean any snow off the car’s roof and bonnet as well as windows – it seems obvious when you see it all blow off someone else’s roof, but in the early morning rush it’s easy to think it won’t matter, when it does. What will happen if the snow like this were to slide onto the windscreen?
- When you get in the car, make sure all extras - such as lights, heaters and the radio - are turned off before you turn the key to start the engine. Starting puts a heavy load on the system.



Iced up windscreen

- Clean your windows inside and out (not just take the ice off) – a dirty screen will mist up quicker than one that’s clean.
- Using the aircon helps keep the air in the car drier, and avoid misting up. It seems odd putting air conditioning on in the cold – but it works! Just remember to set the temperature up as well.
- Think about where you park at night. Some places will be less affected by ice on the windows because of shelter from buildings, or protection from trees – you may be able to save yourself some early morning problems by where you park at night.

- Check the battery is in good condition that your screen wash has a freeze-resistant additive, and do any other preparation for winter your car needs.

Frosty mornings can be beautiful to look at – but awful to drive in if you and the car aren’t prepared for them.

And finally - with apologies.....

How did Scrooge win the football game? *The ghost of Christmas passed!*

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire? *Frostbite!*

What kind of motorbike does Santa ride? *A Holly Davidson!*

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.