

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



December 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

December 2019 <http://www.amni.org.uk/groups/northdown/>

Vol 22.11

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Test Passes

Congratulations this month to car members

Molly O'Kane
Maureen Cromie (F1RST)

and to motorcycle member

Brendan Dempsey (F1RST)

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

November cover picture

For the first time your editor wins. Nobody identified the location. It's the river bridge on the Glen Road heading towards Comber, just after crossing the Ballystockart Road. It's a steep approach to a sharp right-hand bend and in the past I've seen a car sitting in the river!

Do you know the location of this month's cover? Once again it's County Down. No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer.

Dates for your diary

14 January	Enrolment of new Members - demonstration drives, taster sessions
4 February	STAC 1 - Human Factors
11 February	Group Night - electric cars
25 February	STAC 2 - IPSGA - information, position, speed, gear, acceleration
3 March	STAC 3 - Core driving skills
10 March	Group Night - Speaker Valerie Millington
24 March	STAC 4 - Bends and cornering
31 March	STAC 5 - Roundabouts and junctions
7 April	Group Night - Visit to private cinema
28 April	STAC 6 - Overtaking
5 May	STAC 7 - Motorways and dual carriageways
12 May	Group Night - Bikes in the carpark
26 May	STAC 8 - Manoeuvring
2 June	Test preparation and driving practice
9 June	Group Night - ice cream at the Rhinka, Islandmagee
23 June	Additional driving practice
30 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.

Group Christmas Dinner

Once again we were back to Carnalea Golf Club for the NDAM Christmas dinner on our December Group Night. Numbers were down a bit on last year but we still had 35 members, their guests, and special guests Examiners Charlie Stewart, Guy Thomson and Stephen Sherry.

David (once again adorned in his Christmas Hawaiian shirt) made the laser etched name plates which had each persons menu choice on the other side and a neat line of perforations so that they could be folded to sit on the table.

The food was good and plentiful and we had a ballot for a couple of prizes. Second prize of a bottle of gin was done by drawing names out of a hat and went to your humble editor.

The ballot for the first prize was conducted in a novel way. Everyone was asked to stand and put their hands on their head or on their tail. A coin was tossed and the losers had to sit down. Those left standing went through the same process and it was repeated several times whittling down the numbers until only two were left. After a some confusion when both finalists put their hands on their heads there was a re-run and the first prize of a champagne Sunday in Benedicts in Belfast went to Gina Greenwood. Ivan - get Gina to do the lottery - that's 2 years in a row she has won a prize.

Altogether it was a great evening, good food and craic. Our thanks go to Simon Beckett for organising the venue, to Ronnie Brown for collating numbers, menu choices and looking after the money and to Guy Thomson for organising the prizes.

Some pictures from the event follow:



Gina Greenwood collecting her prize



Examiners: Guy, Charlie and Stephen

Winter driving

Winter brings difficult driving conditions, so this is a good time to remind everyone to drive safely when the temperature drops below zero.

Following is some advice from IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, to help drivers cope with road surfaces covered in frost, ice or snow.

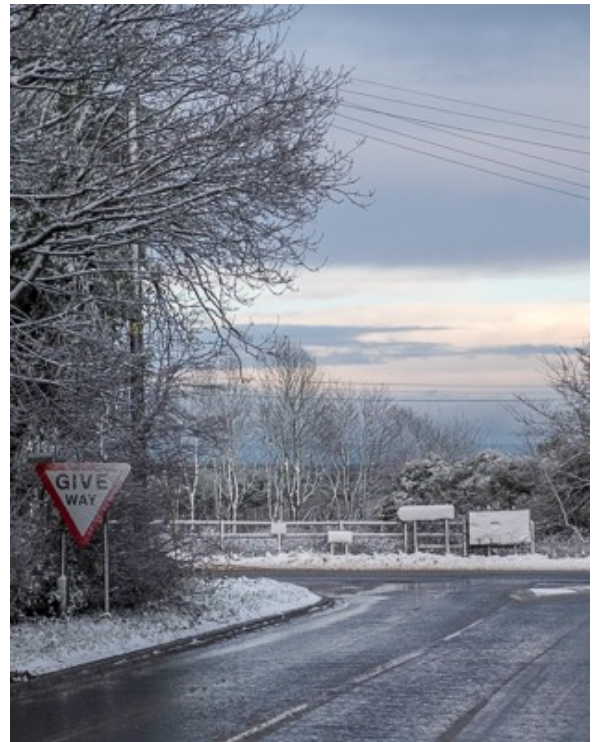
The Met Office will usually issue a weather warning when freezing conditions are expected, and it's important to take extra care when travelling in this season.

1. If the weather conditions are severe in your area, you should note police advice and avoid travelling. However, in exceptional circumstances if you must go out then drive with extra caution on icy roads.

2. Triple your stopping distance and approach every junction expecting to stop well before the stop or give way line. It can take up to 10 times as long to stop in icy conditions according to advice from the Highway Code. Every steering, acceleration or braking input should be as smooth and gentle as possible, select second gear when you pull away in icy conditions as it will create less torque and prevent wheels spinning.

3. Salt will often make the windscreen, headlights, number plate and the rear of your car very dirty. Cars without headlamp washers for example, will lose an estimated 40% of power and possibly all their focus in about 20 miles on a damp, gritted motorway. When travelling long distances 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 boot to give your lights, windows and mirrors a quick clean. Top up your washer fluid regularly during the winter.

4. Never ignore any warning light that appears on your dashboard. If one appears get it checked out as soon as possible. Being stuck on the side of the road is annoying but breaking down in freezing conditions is a risk.



5. Always carry a winter driving kit including the following:

- Ice scraper
- De-icer
- Blanket
- Torch
- Shovel
- Something to eat and drink
- A fully charged mobile phone
- A reflective triangle
- High visibility jacket

6. 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 never overtake a snow plough in heavy snow conditions.

7. While roads may be gritted to give you better traction, some areas may not be completely treated which can leave icy patches. Drive at a steady pace, with your safety and that of your passengers in mind. On roads you use regularly, watch out for water running across the carriageway as this can wash away salt.

8. Keep your car clean throughout the winter as the salt in grit can cause corrosion to any exposed parts.

9. Wash and rinse alloy wheels too; the smallest scratch can quickly cause corrosion.

10. Just because the winter sun is out don't assume 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.

11. Ensure your tyres have at least 2mm of tread, ideally 3mm. The more tread tyres have, the more water they can cope with. Don't let tyres wear down to the legal limit of 1.6mm. Consider winter tyres if you think they might help. 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."



Road Signs

Sometimes Associates confuse two common roadsigns - road narrows and dual carriageway ends. Here are the two together:



Road narrows



Dual carriageway ends

And finally.....here are links to two short videos which may be of interest

Karting on ice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge1qCNJP2kE>

The evolution of the Porsche 911: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pz8IGLgFE2s>

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