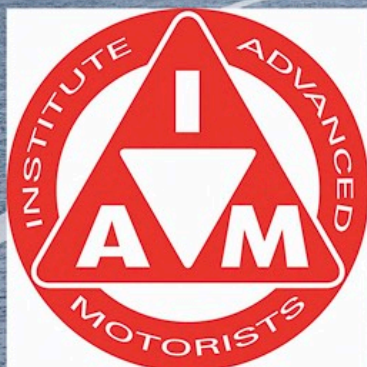
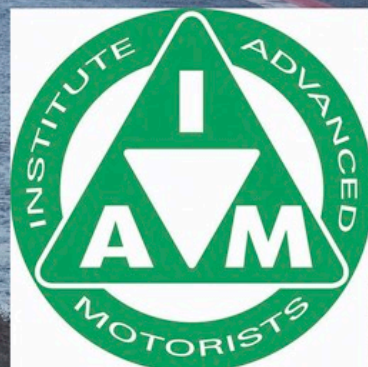


# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



December 2018





## The Road Observer

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 2018

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

Vol 21.10

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 member Ashish Kumar. We hope you not only gain from being a member of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

---

### Test passes

No test passes to report this month.

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

---

### Cover Picture

The November cover was Cushendall where the A2 takes a sharp turn left. Congratulations to David Harcourt, Guy Thomson, Shaun McKittrick and John Seawright. A special mention for Angela Bell's attempt - "I feel it's near Bushmills". The Curfew Tower on the left of the picture was built by then landlord of the town, Francis Turnley, in 1817, to confine riotous prisoners. Dan McBride, an army pensioner, was given the job of permanent garrison and was armed with one musket, a bayonet, a brace of pistols and a thirteen-foot-long pike (according to Wikipedia).

Do you know the location of this month's cover? It's an easy one. No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer.

## Dates for your diary

8 January - STAC enrolment  
5 February - STAC 1: IPSGA (Information Position Speed, Gear, Acceleration)  
12 February - **Group night** - speaker Andy Day - surveillance vehicles  
26 February - STAC 2: Human Factors  
5 March - STAC 3: Core driving skills  
12 March - **Group Night** - 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** - TBA  
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

**Observers, Trainee Observers and anyone thinking of becoming an Observer: please note Tuesday 29 January is an Observer training evening in the Boathouse for cars and bikes.**

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.

---

## NDAM Christmas Dinner

This year we returned to Carnalea Golf Club and had the advantage of the private room upstairs. We had 52 members and guests including a good representation from the bike side. David had once again come up with another novel way of reminding everyone of their menu choices. Each person had a personalised jigsaw with symbols indicating their meal choices.

We had the usual ballot (included in the cost) with 4 prizes ranging from a M&S voucher (Heather Long), a presentation case of Rioja (Annie McFarland), a voucher for Harbour & Co in Donaghadee (Gina Greenfield) and the star prize, a Champagne Sunday gift voucher for Benedicts in Belfast which was won, much to his surprise, by Associate Member Alan Leonard who said he never wins anything and which proves there is a first time for everything. However, nobody went home empty handed - there was a pack of de-icer, screenwash and an ice-scraper for everyone.



Ballot prizes presented by David in his now customary Christmas Hawaiian shirt.



*Heather Long*



*Annie McFarland*



*Gina Greenfield*



*Alan Leonard*

Altogether it was a great evening, good food and craic. Our thanks go to Simon Beckett for organising the venue and looking after the finances and to Guy Thomson for organising the prizes.

---

### **Suddenly.....**

**by Shaun Cronin IAM RoadSmart regional service delivery team manager (Southern)**

My mind occasionally turns back to Christmas 1990, 14 December to be precise on a very cold early turn. An ordinary routine patrol day now etched forever on my memory. This was to become a defining career moment, attending my first fatal road crash. As a police officer I had achieved my dream job, I was now a traffic officer.

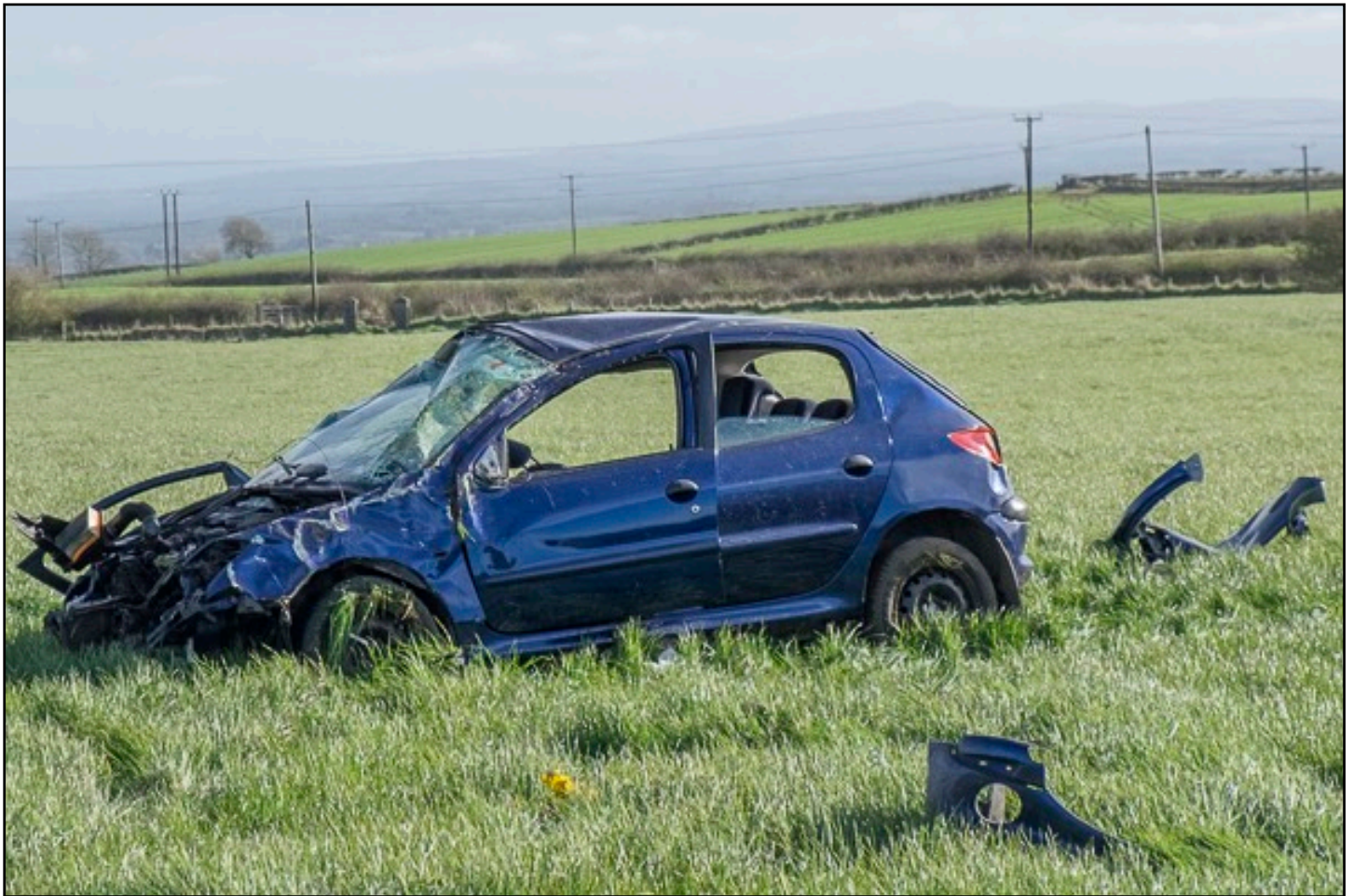
I had attended numerous sudden deaths in the preceding five years, but with that white cap and bright yellow coat came a big responsibility: the job of investigating why people had died on the road.

It is possible to train in all the aspects of the law, become proficient at dealing with collisions, but nothing in reality can train you for that first time you have to search someone, now a lifeless body, who has been involved in a catastrophic collision, for something to confirm their identity.

Then once you find out who they are, you are making that dreaded trip to a front door and in an instant, your words will change a family's life forever.

Over the years I investigated numerous collisions from slight bumps to fatal crashes, and in the main people had those collisions for the following relatively simple reasons, sometimes for more than one of these reasons:

- Speed on approach – the big one, just arriving at situations too fast for the circumstances with no time to react to road or traffic conditions
- Cornering – see above and often with no idea how to assess them correctly
- Overtaking – most are never taught this skill so they learn by experience
- Distractions – once it was tuning the radio or changing the cassette – now mobile phones
- Intoxication – from both alcohol and drugs



Have you ever noticed when people talk about a driving or riding incident that happens on the road, they use that word – ‘suddenly’. But was it?

Was it really suddenly, or was there something to be seen or anticipated? You listen now when people go to great lengths to tell you their personal story and you will hear what I mean. ‘Suddenly all the traffic stopped in front of me.’ ‘Suddenly he just pulled out from the junction.’ ‘I was overtaking and suddenly a car appeared.’

In advanced driving and riding we use the term TUG to refer to the information that is around us, i.e. we take, use and give information at all times to make an informed driving and riding plan.

We use the information to plan what can be seen, what cannot be seen and what we can reasonably expect to develop. So ultimately we observe, anticipate, prioritise, decide and act accordingly for the prevailing circumstances.

So if we all did this much better would there be zero collisions? Well probably not quite, as to err is human and humans are behind the wheel or the handlebars. Personally, I suspect there would be a hugely significant reduction in people being killed or seriously injured.

Another one to watch out for is those who are exercising their rights. 'But it's my right of way' I hear them cry and profess it wasn't their fault that the other vehicle 'suddenly just pulled out' into their path.

We don't actually have a right of way but we do have a priority over others depending on road signage and markings. But you know what ... there is nothing worse than being 'dead right.'

As it doesn't matter if you are in the right but dead - as you will still be dead.

Instead of thinking 'it's my right of way' we really should be thinking: 'What is my plan to mitigate the possibility of them pulling out in my path,' 'Can I do anything to help the situation' etc. etc.

That is much better than being dead. As being dead is very final and someone has to come and deal with that.

In closing I want everyone to reflect on those two things, the 'suddenly' and being 'dead right.'

Neither actually need to happen. A driving licence is a privilege earned not an absolute right and we all have a duty to equitably share the road space with each other.

No one wants to receive 'that' knock on the door at this time of the year, or at any other time for that matter. I speak for those police colleagues still serving, in saying that they actually don't want to have to knock on your door either.

---

## Vehicle safety technology

Through a link on the IAM RoadSmart website I came across this interesting article about vehicle safety technology. It highlights some developments and is critical that not all manufacturers are fitting existing technology to their vehicles as standard equipment. The link contains a video showing autonomous emergency braking (AEB) being tested. Well worth a look.

<https://www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/matthew-avery-of-thatcham-research-on-vehicle-safety-technology/>

---

## Speed cameras

And on the subject of technology, those who attended the Group Night when we had the Road Safety Partnership to talk to us and show us around one of their camera vans, will be aware that they said that they currently did not have the proven technology to use the cameras at night. They have been spotted recently testing at night on the Upper Newtownards Road in Belfast. No information about when cameras with night time technology will be introduced but you have been warned that they are probably on the way! *Thanks to Colin Hay for the information.*



---

## Winter tips

With white frosty mornings also comes icy roads ... that's why Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart, has put together some advice on how to deal with driving and riding on ice - and keep Jack Frost at bay.

- Only drive if it is really necessary. In very bad weather it is better to stay in or take public transport rather than risk an accident. Always check the weather and road conditions on your route before setting off; if police advise not to travel, then do not risk it.
- Make sure you know how the demister settings on your car work and how to adjust them properly. If you are riding, a clean scratch-free visor with a properly fitted insert will help you stay mist free. (Editor's note: keep your air conditioning on to the keep windows clear.)
- Never pour boiling water on the screen as the sudden temperature change may cause cracks. Prevention is better than a cure so if possible cover the glass overnight with cardboard or an old sheet to prevent freezing or invest in a windscreen cover. (Editor's note - remember to use the de-icer and scraper you got at the Christmas dinner!)



*Ice patterns on windscreen*

- If you haven't done so already, get an anti-freeze check at your local garage or fast-fit centre. Keep your washer bottle topped up with an even stronger concentration of de-icer.
- It might sound like old news, but you may need up to 10 times the distance to stop in icy conditions - increase your following distance to account for this. If a car has to stop suddenly or worse still, an crash occurs, you will need that extra time to react and stop.

Richard said: "As ever, preparation and planning are the key to worry-free driving when the mercury plummets. Plan your route carefully as major routes are likely to be treated with salt and less likely to be icy, although this might still form in dips and on bridges and in shaded areas. Leave more time for your journey, respect the conditions and don't rush. Factor in delays and give yourself plenty of time to clear the ice properly from all the windows of your car."

---

### **Bike runs**

Due to extremely inclement weather the December bike run to Harrisons was cancelled. However, rather than miss out on brunch a hardy crowd set off in cars! Kyle recommends the Farmer's Fry.

---

**And finally** ..... from accident reports etc:

- I'm sorry officer for speeding, but without my glasses I can't hardly see the speedometer.
- There was no damage to the car as the gate post will testify.

---

**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**