

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



February 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

February 2017

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

Vol 20.2

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New Members

This month we would like to welcome Motorcycle Associate Member Phil Roche and Motorcycle Member and Local Observer Ian McCoy on his transfer from Cornmarket Advanced Motorcyclists. 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.

Advanced Tests

Congratulations this month go to car member

Kitty West

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

Cover picture

The December cover picture was the Knock Dual Carriageway looking towards Forestside at the junction with the Glencregagh Road. Congratulations to Angela Bell, Annie McFarland, John Barry and Guy Thomson for correctly identifying it.

Can you identify the location of this month's cover? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer.

Dates for your diary

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 - details will be circulated later

18 April - Easter Tuesday - No meeting

2 May - STAC 6

9 May - Group Night - Table-top rally

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.

February Group Night - A photographic Journey (*subtitle - from motorsport to landscape, film to digital*)

Given that the February Group night was on St Valentine's day we had a reasonable turn-out of Members who did not succumb to the domestic and commercial pressures of dinner in crowded restaurants at inflated prices :-)

Instead they were treated (if that is the correct term) to a photographic tour from our Group Secretary Leslie beginning with his early years of motorsport photography in what many now call the golden years of rallying when the Circuit of Ireland actually meant that and not a quick sprint round a couple of counties. We were reminded of some of the classic cars from the Mini and Hillman Imp to Mark 1 and 2 Escorts, Porsche, Fiat Abarth, Vauxhall Chevette, Lancia Stratos, Audi Quattro, Peugeot 205 and many others.

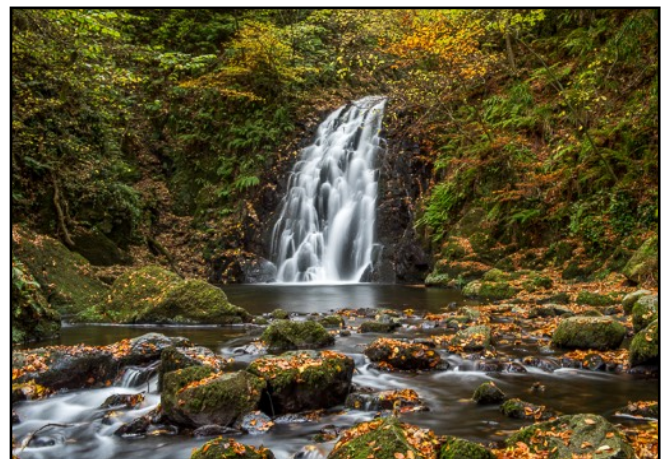




One of Leslie's all-time favourite rally pictures - Billy Coleman - 1986 Circuit of Ireland - Glendun stage, Co Antrim

His photographic interests were not just about motorsport and covered hillwalking and his current interest - landscapes. He showed a selection of pictures from Scotland, the Lake District, Arizona, California, Oregon, New Zealand and of course Iceland which he has visited a number of times. Also on view were pictures from Ireland including Donegal, Wicklow, and Connemara. He explained that the difficulty of photographing when you are away is that you are stuck with whatever the weather throws at you and this was illustrated by pictures of Monument Valley with blowing sand and a beach on the Oregon Coast with fog.

Back nearer home you have the opportunity of visiting a location on different occasions increasing the possibility of photographing a scene or an object in different light or simply at different times of the year.

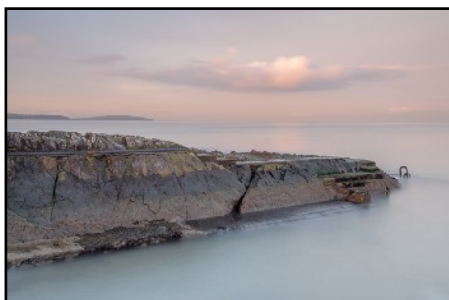


Glenoe waterfall in summer and autumn colours

He emphasised that you don't have to go abroad to exotic places to get interesting photographs although sometimes the location does help. There are an infinite number of locations with the potential for good photographs within a 30 minute drive of home. It's a matter of looking, seeing and training your eye to possibilities. To illustrate the point he showed a number of pictures taken around Strangford Lough, the County Down coast, Crawfordsburn and the North Down Coastal Path.



Crawfordsburn

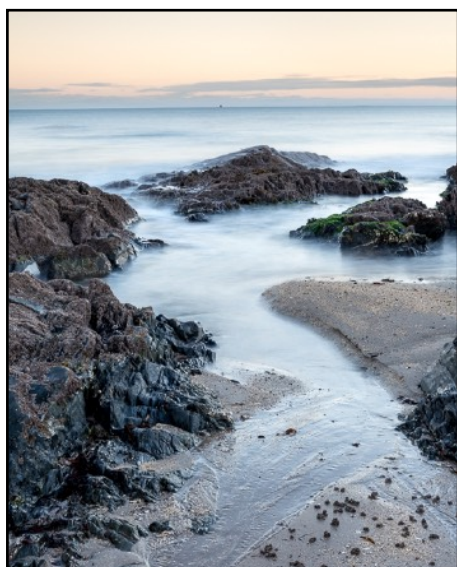


North Down Coastal Path



Strangford Lough

In some respects photography has become very complex with cameras requiring 500 page User Manuals, software that can take forever to learn and then there is the whole issue of storage of your pictures and how to find that particular one you are looking for. On the other hand, photography has never been so accessible. It's estimated that almost 1.3 trillion photographs will be taken in 2017.



Groomsport

The majority of people now carry a smartphone and the camera in the latest models are well up to creating very good photographs. A real camera is more versatile than a smartphone camera (although phones are improving by leaps and bounds) and if you don't want to get into the complexities of exposure etc modern digital cameras will have an auto mode so all you have to do is select the subject and press the button. What's the best camera - the one you have with you!

The facility to view the picture immediately after it has been taken has provided the opportunity to delete that one where uncle Fred has looked the wrong way at the critical moment, where the camera was focussed on the wrong thing or where the exposure was wrong and the whole picture is either too dark or too bright to make anything out.

Going back a couple of decades, how did we look at photographs? The aficionados generally shot slides which meant the often neck-breaking task of holding the slides up to the light or hauling out the screen and slide projector. Guaranteed to put anyone off but for the most committed. Everyone else looked at prints and many went to the trouble of putting the prints into an album.

These days everything is either stored on your phone, your laptop or in the cloud. You may be able to find your way round your thousands of pictures but if you were to lose your phone you have lost your pictures unless they are backed up. Or, heaven forbid, if you are run over by the proverbial bus how would anyone get access to your important pictures. Think about doing some prints and putting them into an album. Better still, for a modest outlay, there is any number of companies which will create a printed book of photographs for you. Yes, it takes bit of time and you will have to make choices about what to include and more importantly, leave out. However, an album or book of photographs will probably survive longer and be more accessible to you and future generations than pictures in digital storage.



Bike Ride-outs

January

9 bikers braved the 2° C weather for a run through some frosty roads in County Down. They left Ards around 9:45 and went through Comber to Ballygowan, Saintfield, Ballynahinch, Dromara, Moneyslane, Rathfriland, Hilltown and a nice run into Rostrevor through the mountains. Some great scenery due to the cold weather.

A good feed was had by all at the Kilbroney cafe. Then Kyle Thomson treated us to some drone flying before heading on our way back.



Note frost on the roof in the background

February

A good turn-out of 14 bikes. Starting from Jordanstown Loughshore carpark the route took in some Antrim Glens and coastline finishing up at the Bay Café, Ballycastle, for brunch. Bit slippery in places as some will account for, with plenty of mud on the roads thanks to the tractors. There was a suggestion on Facebook that Guy will assist in cleaning bikes!



Stop at Glenarm on the way to Ballycastle

Thanks to Simon Beckett and Kyle Thompson for the reports and pictures

Fuel Efficiency

Saving money will most definitely be on the agenda for many this year but many neglect the expenses that derive from your vehicle. IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards Richard Gladman gives advice on saving fuel.

Try to keep your driving smooth, gentle acceleration and using the highest safe gear will use less fuel. Ease off the accelerator early for traffic lights if they are red, why hurry up to wait?

Try to avoid driving during the rush hour. Stopping and starting in traffic needs the use of the first gear and a lot of fuel is used to get the vehicle moving again.

Keep your tyres well maintained at the correct pressures, when they are due for replacement there are brands which are designed for extra economy which may be worth considering.

Get rid of unnecessary weight. Cars work just like the human body, your body needs more energy to move around more weight and so does your car, take heavy items out of the car if you don't need to carry them. A roof rack or roof box will increase drag and you will use more fuel to overcome this. Remove it if it is not being used.



Stop the constant back and forth. During this winter season as your engine is trying to warm up it uses more fuel for the first four miles or so. Your engine stays cold when you drive less than two miles and your car will produce 60 per cent more pollution than a warm engine - avoid these short journeys where possible.

Turn off the air-conditioning, it will be working overtime and it uses extra fuel. When the rear window is cleared turn off the rear screen heater, the more electricity your car has to produce the more fuel it will use. **Editor's note:** *However, you need to balance turning off the air conditioning to save fuel with the need to keep the inside of the windows clear of condensation to aid vision - an important safety point.*



Keep your speed low. It sounds pretty standard but driving faster uses more fuel. You can reduce fuel consumption by up to 25 per cent. Try pressing more lightly on the accelerator, often you can maintain the same speed with less pressure on the pedal.

Richard said: "Fuel is expensive and burning fuel is bad for the environment, a few small changes in the way we prepare our vehicles and plan our journeys can make a big difference in our fuel consumption. Sound observation and planning on our necessary journeys will help. Remember that safety and fuel saving can be if we drive effectively."

Fuel prices are on the way up again

And finally.....

- The gentleman behind me struck me on the backside. He then went to rest in a bush with just his rear end showing.
- I had been driving for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.

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