

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



February 2018





Official Provider



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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

February 2018

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Group Contact - David Harcourt

Tel No 07760 578444

[e-mail: david.harcourt@gmail.com](mailto:david.harcourt@gmail.com)

Advanced Tests

No test passes to report since the January issue.

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

New Members

This month we welcome to the Group motorcycle members Sharon Wood, Ian Cross, Christopher Tweed, Michael Gould and Matthew Bell. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Cover picture

The January cover picture was the T junction between the Ballymiscaw Road and Whinney Hill at Craigantlet. I thought more might have identified it but perhaps the snow obscuring the signs made it look unfamiliar. Congratulations to Angela Bell and Shaun McKittrick for spotting it.

This month's cover is back to an urban scene. Can you identify it? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and of course a mention in the Road Observer.

Dates for your Diary (to end of May)

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

11 April - (Wednesday) Group night - visit to Excelsior Cinema, Comber (Please note date change)

24 April - STAC 5 - Roundabouts and junctions

1 May - STAC 6 - Overtaking

8 May - Group Night - car detailing

22 May - STAC 7 - Motorways and dual carriageways

29 May - STAC 8 - Manoeuvring

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.

Mike Quinton appointed IAM RoadSmart CEO

Chairman, Ken Keir and the Trustees are delighted to confirm the appointment of Mike Quinton, as CEO of IAM RoadSmart, from 23 April 2018. Mike has had a successful career in the insurance industry and has more latterly been the CEO of NHBC (National House Building Council). Mike will join the team two weeks before Sarah Sillars leaves on 4 May, so that there is a full and detailed handover. Mike lives locally to Welwyn Garden City and will be starting immediately after returning from his honeymoon.

Of the appointment Ken said: "I genuinely believe that we have found someone who will take up the reins from Sarah and will continue evolving the good work which has been done over the last three years."



Mike has already confirmed some of the activities he wishes to undertake in the first 100 days of his appointment, not least of which is meeting local group representatives, identifying where the growth opportunities are and being out and about with our key stakeholders and influencers.

February Group Night - Room2race

The February group night was the usual mayhem on the race track for our evening of racing on computer simulators at Eddie Irvines. We had 6 races in touring cars on different tracks including the Ostereichring in Austria, Brands Hatch, the Hungaroring in Hungary and Interlagos in Brazil. Each race consisted of 5 practice laps which determined grid positions for a 5 lap race.

Racing on computer simulators is a great way to forget all about advanced driving or at least the sort promoted by IAM. It's time to "put the pedal to the metal" and hope your memory of the circuit and the correct lines to take allow you to put a different form of advanced driving (including nudging a fellow competitor off the track) into practice. A crash with a competitor, a visit to a grass or gravel run-off area or a heavy impact to the armco barrier at the edge of the track results in



nothing more than a loss of a place or two in the race or perhaps a loss of reputation! There were plenty of incidents, including someone who shall remain nameless to protect a reputation, who proceeded to drive the wrong way around the track after a crash causing consternation and swift avoiding action all round.



David Harcourt's machine suffered a terminal (no pun intended) failure which meant he was given one of the more expensive 3-screen machines for the rest of the races and claimed it was harder to drive. Your scribe rolled twice in one practice session resulting in a poor lap time and a place at the back of the grid. From this position I was able to avoid the carnage at the first corner and was able to thread between the crashed cars. I still finished down the field!

Points are awarded for positions in each race and the overall winner (again) was Ivan, with Stephen second, and Oliver third, closely followed by Simon, Lisa (who claims to be no good at this) and Angela. As for the rest - the less said the better.

It's all absorbing and the two hours disappeared in a flash. More pictures below:



Concentration or a pose?



NDAM "grid girls" Lisa, Sheila and Angela



Stephen, Ivan and Oliver

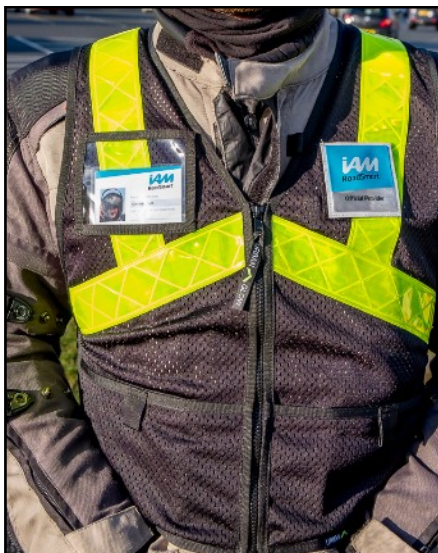
Hi-Viz vests for Bike Observers

High-viz is a watchword for motorcyclists. Given the time spent by our bike Observers on their own machines when doing observed runs we felt that we should do our bit to keep them as safe as possible. All our bike Observers have now been kitted out with high-viz vests which, in addition to improving their visibility, provides some publicity for the IAM and the North Down Group.

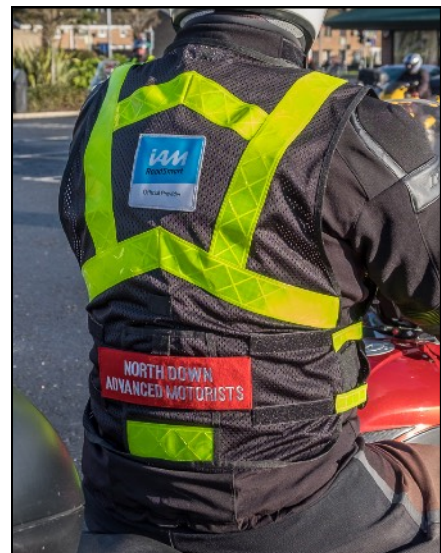


Bike Observers Kyle, Simon, Guy, David and Don

16 members took part in the February ride out including 5 Observers turned out in the new kit. The run was through highways and by-ways of County Antrim, via the Dark Hedges, to a destination in Ballymoney for brunch. On the way back some Associates had the benefit of observed rides.



Front view



Back view



Pre-ride briefing

The Bike Show

IAM RoadSmart had a stand at the Bike Show (2-4 February) at the Eikon Exhibition Centre on the Maze site. Volunteers from all the bike groups in Northern Ireland helped to man the stand and over the course of the show 29 bikers signed up for Advanced Riding courses during the event and one more later. As five of these came to North Down the hi-viz vests for Observers will be getting a lot of extra use.



Area Service Delivery Manager Scott Tulip and Guy

Sharing the road with HGVs

Driving in front of, or even behind, an HGV can be a bit daunting. But there's no need to panic as Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of riding and driving standards, is here to help with seven top driving behaviour tips to keep you at ease on the road.

If you have friends and family who are unaware of advanced driving techniques, please share these tips with them to help them stay safe on the road.



- When you're driving along the motorway, you'll notice a lot of foreign HGV number plates. Bear in mind that the driver will be sitting on the left hand side rather than the right, so you may be difficult to see and the driver may be acclimatising his lane position in the UK. Take extra care when passing and allow more space if you can.

- We've all heard the saying "if you can see their mirrors, then they can see you." But an HGV can have up to five mirrors, and the driver is only limited to looking at one at a time so they may not

see you. Hold back and you will eventually be visible in their mirrors.

- Identify when there is a likelihood of the HGV changing lanes. Is there a slip road coming up which will be joining traffic and may force a lane change? Or if there is an HGV in lane two, are they likely to change back into lane one? Be accommodating by hanging back and allowing them to pull into the lane they are looking to move into.
- At one point in time, we've all experienced heavy spray from an HGV in front of us, you can control this by extending the distance between yourself and the lorry. The Highway Code suggests four seconds in the rain but if needed, make it more. Not only will it prevent your wipers working overtime, it will also improve your vision beyond the HGV.
- An articulated lorry will track sideways in a right hand bend on the motorway and on a roundabout so avoid being beside it. A good rule of thumb is to be safely in front of or safely behind, but never beside an HGV when entering a roundabout.
- If you see a queue of traffic in front of you and have an HGV behind you, introduce your brake lights early to pre-warn the driver behind and slow down gradually. This will let the HGV driver extend their braking distance and stop in plenty of time. On a motorway or dual carriageway, hazard lights can be used to show drivers behind you of any issues further in front (Highway Code rule 116).

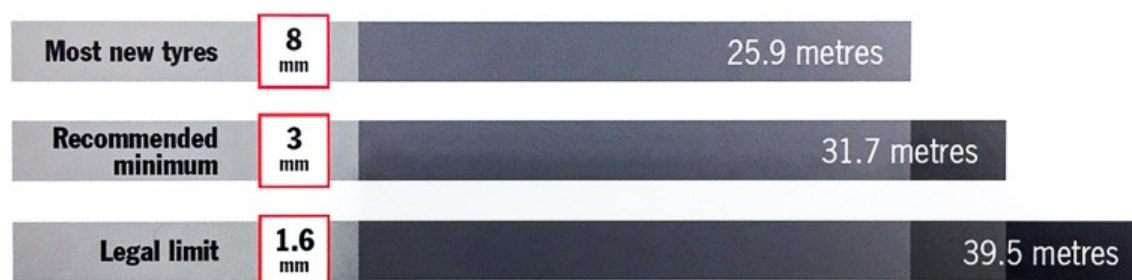


- Despite being legally limited to 60mph, an HGV can only physically go a maximum of 56mph on the motorway. So if you do see a HGV on the right hand lane, give them a helping hand by slowing down and letting them into the left lane. Facilitate the pass if you can.

Richard says: “As any HGV driver will tell you, they sometimes need a bit of extra space to move down the road. Visibility can be restricted, and no amount of mirrors will allow all of the blind spots to be monitored all of the time. By applying some simple rules and sharing the road space, we can make life easier for all of us. On a roundabout they will need more than one lane so let them have it, a few seconds delay will be worth it if you prevent an accident. Walk that mile in the other man’s shoes and understand what we may need.”

A reminder about tyre tread depth

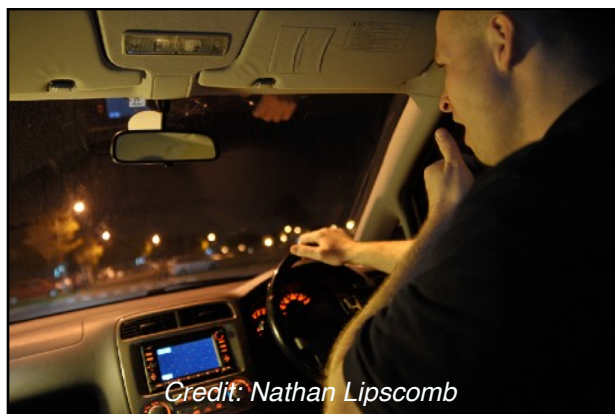
The chart below demonstrates the increased stopping distance with reduced tread on wet roads.



Driving when tired

Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, shares some tips on how to avoid the dangers of falling asleep at the wheel.

- Extreme tiredness can lead to micro-sleeps. This is a short episode of drowsiness or sleep that could last a fraction of a second or up to 30 seconds. A car driving at 70 mph will travel 31 meters per second, giving plenty of time to cause a serious crash during a micro sleep.
- The effects of losing one or two hours of sleep a night on a regular basis can lead to chronic sleepiness over time. So ensure you are well rested and feeling fit and healthy before you set off.
- Make sure you take regular rest breaks to split up the journey when driving on a long, boring stretch of a motorway. It's good practise to stop at least every two hours and it's essential to take a break before the drowsiness sets in.





- If necessary, plan an overnight stop. If you feel too fatigued to carry on driving, then book yourself into a hotel at the next service station and sleep it off. Wake up fresh with a good breakfast, and carry on your journey. It's good to note that a caffeine high may be a quick fix, but it is not a long term solution and certainly no substitute for proper sleep.

- You're bound to be tired after a full day at work, so avoid setting out on a long drive after you have finished for the day. It's best to start your journey earlier on, and when you're more alert.

- If possible, avoid driving between the two peak times for sleepiness. These are between 3am and 5am and also between 2pm and 4pm.
- If you have taken prescribed medication, then seek advice from your GP as to whether you should be driving or not. If bought over the counter, then read the instructions on the pack or speak to a pharmacist.

Richard says: "Even the fittest of us need regular sleep to perform at our highest standards. Driving requires full concentration at all times and if you are tired, your ability to concentrate is reduced. Our internal body clock (circadian rhythm) is usually set to deal with our normal lifestyle, extra care needs to be taken when driving during a time we would normally be at rest. Stop, rehydrate and rest if you need to."

And finally.....

This was at Dundonald East Point last week. A parked car burst in to flames from the engine bay and managed to badly damage neighbouring vehicles with the little inferno. The car (Mokka as I'm sure you guessed) was only a couple of weeks old.

(Thanks to Colin Hay for the picture)



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.