

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



January 2020





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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

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Test Passes

Congratulations this month to car member

Alan Leonard

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

December cover picture

The December cover was another difficult one. It's the Kilkeel Road from Hilltown up past Spelga Dam. The photograph was taken from the Slievenaman Road just before its junction with the Kilkeel Road. Congratulations to Angela Bell and Gareth Hughes for correctly identifying it.

Nobody identified the November cover and with only two getting December I thought I would give you an easy one to start the new year. 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

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

* This event may be known as ísbíltúr which is an Icelandic word for driving to get ice-cream!

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.

Road Rage

Some of us have become victims of road rage at some point in our lives. If it happens it can easily leave you feeling intimidated and shaken. IAM RoadSmart has some useful advice if you ever find yourself in this situation.

- If there's conflict between two parties, there's a likely chance you've both played a part. This doesn't mean you should react. Try to take yourself away from the problem – let the other driver go on ahead. Even if you feel wronged, letting the other party go will make no difference to the rest of your day.
- Is someone being confrontational or aggressive? If so, don't make eye contact and don't react visibly. Try not to think about them so that the incident doesn't affect you afterwards.
- If the other party is still being aggressive to you and you are in fear of your own safety, call the police.
- If the other party approaches you in your car, can you drive away safely? If you can, consider doing so. But don't rush off and drive like the getaway driver in a film, or if you think the other driver is going to chase you. If they are chasing, stop in a busy public place and call for help.
- Do you have a passenger who can film any behaviour on a mobile phone? This will help in terms of evidence. Remember to include the registration number of the other vehicle involved.





Credit: John Greenfield

- Don't open your door, don't open your windows fully and don't start or get provoked into an argument, try to stay calm.
 - If you were at fault, admit it and apologise. It may be enough to diffuse the situation quickly. And do not do anything that can be interpreted as retaliation. Even if you weren't at fault, is the argument really worth it?
- Hopefully by now the matter is over and you are driving away. Do acknowledge that this incident will have affected your behaviour. If you feel upset or emotional, pull over for some fresh air or walk around if you need to before resuming your journey.

Find a distraction like listening to the radio - move your mind deliberately onto something else and don't dwell on the incident.

Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart head of driving and riding standards, said: "Road rage does not affect everyone every day. If you're finding it is happening very often, you might want to think about how you engage with other road users.

He added: "Unlike pedestrians walking towards each other; who can easily get a feel of what the other person will do, where they might go or the mood they're in, you have no such opportunities cocooned in your car."

He concluded: "No-one needs to experience road rage, but it is up to each of us to ensure it stays that way. It is important not to be antagonistic or obstructive, perhaps making a person who is already having a bad day boil over."

Driving single track roads in Scotland



Electricity poles included to provide added interest for Gareth

Scotland is a popular holiday destination for many of us and if you get off the main roads you are likely to encounter single track roads, particularly in the Highland and Islands. What is a single track road? Well, as its name suggests, it is one vehicle width and so particular care is needed when driving these roads. We have some roads like this in Ireland but in Scotland there are many miles of them and often they are the only road serving isolated communities. On my recent visit to Scotland the place where I was based was 15 miles from the main road along a twisting single track road.

How to drive these roads safely.

IAM RoadSmart guidance on normal roads is to be able to stop in the distance you can see to be clear on your own side of the road. On single track roads you need to double your stopping distance to give an oncoming vehicle enough space to stop as well.



Most of these roads are well provided with passing places. There is no set distance between passing places, their location is dictated by the terrain, sometimes you will find them only 50 yards apart, sometimes much further apart if the road is straight. Sometimes on particularly twisty roads where you are hemmed in by a rock wall on one side and a drop on the other there are none (eg on a section of the “wee mad road” from Lochinver to Badnagyle) so extreme care is required and if you meet another vehicle you may have to reverse a couple of hundred yards to the nearest passing place.



Mostly, passing places are signposted with a diamond or square shaped white sign saying “Passing Place”. In some areas they may be marked by a black and white striped post and in some cases where they are obvious there are no signs.

There are a few basic rules when driving these roads:

- Always pull in to a passing place to allow following traffic to pass.
- If there is oncoming traffic and a passing place is available pull in to the passing place if it is on the left or, if it is on the right stop opposite the passing place.
- Do not park in passing places. If you want to stop choose somewhere where you can get off the road completely.

- If a passing place is on the left on the crest of a brow or a sharp right bend (or both) reduce speed and drive into the passing place until you can see that your way ahead is clear. If the passing place is on the right reduce speed and be prepared to stop if an oncoming vehicle appears.

Beware of animals. Deer are a constant threat and can appear very suddenly. If one crosses the road in front of you there may be others following. You may come across deer at any time but particularly at twilight and also in the winter when they come down to lower levels. You might occasionally meet cattle but the most common problem is sheep which seem to take a perverse delight in standing in the middle of the road completely oblivious to the fact that you wish to get past.

The locals all know how to use these roads efficiently and effectively but during the summer months many of the vehicles you will encounter on these roads will be tourists who cannot be relied on to follow the rules. Caution is the watchword.

And finally, courtesy is the order of the day. Don't forget to acknowledge with a wave of your hand that someone has stopped to let you through or to acknowledge that someone has thanked you.



And finally.....from accident reports

- As I approached the intersection, a stop sign suddenly appeared in a place where no stop sign had ever appeared before. I was unable to stop in time to avoid the accident.
- To avoid hitting the bumper of the car in front I struck the pedestrian.

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