

# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



January 2018







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

January 2018

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### Advanced Tests

No test passes to report since the December issue.

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

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### New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car members John Morrison and Tom McVeigh together with motorcycle member Ralph Magee. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

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### Cover picture

The December cover picture was the railway bridge over Seapark Road Holywood. Congratulations to Ivan Greenfield, Shaun McKittrick and Norman Shearer.

This month's cover is topical given the January winter conditions. 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)

6 February - STAC 1 - IPSGA

13 February - Group night - computer simulated racing

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.

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## NI Road Safety Awards

North Down Member Guy Thomson was the recipient of this years award for the voluntary sector in the Northern Ireland Road Safety Awards 2017. Guy’s personal achievements include distinctions in both bike and car Masters, ROSPA (cough) Gold in motorcycling. He is also a National Observer for both cars and bikes. His volunteering activity (training advanced driving and riding) has been constant and intense. He continually promotes road safety by conducting regular observed drives and rides and training sessions – preparing Associates for advanced tests and training those who are already at advanced standard to become observers or to achieve the highest level Masters qualification.



Guy seeks to develop drivers’ and riders’ advanced skills, to make them be the best that they can be, to enjoy their riding and driving while at all times having safety foremost in their thought process. Many congratulations to Guy on his award.

## Winter riding and driving

After several years of minimal snow and ice, particularly here in North Down, in mid-January we were treated to sufficient snow to cause a fair bit of disruption to traffic. With parts of the M1 reduced to a standstill and many roads impassable we experienced conditions more usually felt on the mainland.

We provided some advice last month on driving in winter conditions and this month we have information specifically for our motorcycle members as well as more advice for drivers.



### Winter riding

Spring still feels like a million miles away as we ride our motorbikes in these cold, wet, and sometimes freezing, conditions. It's crucial that we take extra care of our bikes during the winter to help them run smoothly and without any issues. IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, advises on the following tips to help maintain your bike:

- Get your motorcycle serviced properly. Leaving your bike in the cold can cause problems such as struggling to start it, and getting your motorcycle correctly serviced

can help prevent issues over the winter period.

- Make sure your tyres are legal. For a bike over 50cc, the legal minimum tread depth is 1mm across three quarters of the width of the tread pattern, with visible tread on the remaining quarter. For a bike under 50cc, the original tread pattern must be clearly visible. Tyres close to the legal limit will not disperse water as well as a tyre with a deeper tread.



*By Clément Bucco-Lechat*

- Be sure that your bike's chain drive has been adjusted correctly. For this, you will need to check the manufacturer's specifications. Keep the chain well lubricated and make sure you reapply chain lube after washing your bike.



- Remember to clean off road salt after your ride, whether this is a 10 minute journey or a long bike ride in the countryside. To avoid corrosion, let the bike cool down and then hose off with clean water. Apply a purpose-made protection spray whilst the bike is clean and damp as this will help to protect it. When applying, safeguard the brake discs, calipers and tyres. Covering the cold discs with cling film will shield them from the spray.

- If you have fitted aftermarket heated grips, make sure they are either switched off via the ignition or that you disable them once you are off your bike as a flat battery will definitely spoil your day. On that note, a trickle charger connected when your bike is not being used will help prevent battery problems.

- When you're riding your motorcycle, it's important to keep warm. If your clothing allows you to get cold, then this can be a huge distraction as you will be focusing on how the weather is making you feel rather than concentrating on the road ahead. Your kit needs to be warm but still needs to allow you to be mobile. Thin layers will work best and you can adjust as the temperature changes.



By Pierre Chapron CC

- Make sure your vision is clear. Pinlock inserts prevents fogging in the visor and these are normally already installed into your helmet by the manufacturer. To add to this, you can purchase a breath guard which can help keep the visor clear. And remember to always clean your visor to make your journey an easy ride. In the absence of an insert, applying washing up liquid on the

inside of the visor and polishing off will help.

- During bad weather conditions, allow yourself much more space for braking. The limited contact patch of your tyres means they are likely to lose grip well before those of the car travelling in front of you. If there is snow or ice on the ground, avoid riding your bike and travel by public transport or car instead.



Anyone tried this?

Richard says “Remember that motorcycling should be fun, and I find there is little satisfaction in riding in freezing conditions. A quick blast on a sunny winters morning may well bring a smile to your face but a freezing cold trip with a constant fear of doom on every roundabout is not what motorcycling is about. Wrap up warm and enjoy when you can but above all stay safe.”

## Winter Driving

Richard Gladman also offers expert advice on driving in snow.

- Best advice is to avoid travelling in extreme weather. If no one is moving, you just add to the problem - so listen to travel advice.
- If you do have to travel in bad weather, plan your journey thoroughly. Think about where you are going and what it will be like all the way along the journey. If you can, avoid travelling on less-used roads or country lanes as these are less likely to be gritted.
- Before setting off, clear all your windows, mirrors and lights fully. Clear off snow piled on the roof of your car and the bonnet too, as it can fall and blow on to the windscreen. Don't leave anything obscured.
- Start your car gently from stationary and avoid high revs. If road conditions are extremely icy and you drive a manual car, you should move off in a higher gear rather than first gear. You should stay in a higher gear to avoid wheel spin.



•It's important you get your speed right when travelling in snow. Never drive too fast that you risk losing control, and don't drive so slowly that you risk losing momentum for getting up a slope.

•Increase your following distance from the vehicle in front of you. It may take up to 10 times as long to stop on snow or ice build this into your following distance – this will give you more time to slow down using engine braking which is less likely to induce a skid.

•Make sure you slow down sufficiently before reaching a bend so you have enough time to react to any hazards that appear as you go round it – and so you do not skid as well. You should have finished slowing down before you start to turn the steering wheel.

- If you break down or have to pull over on a motorway or dual carriageway, you should leave your vehicle and stand to the safe side of it - ideally well over the armco to the nearside of the road, but not in front of it, when waiting for help.

Richard said: "Many of the problems associated with travel during snow could be avoided if people planned in advance. People routinely travel with only the minimum of safety equipment, without realising their journey could be a lot longer than expected.



“At the very least you should have a shovel, torch, blanket, jump-leads and tow rope. You should ensure your mobile phone is fully charged, and the number of your recovery organisation is saved into it. A bottle of water and a snack may also prove useful and don’t set out without knowing the locations of petrol stations on your way.

“This all might sound obvious, but too many of us forget to do any of this. Don’t be one of the ill-prepared, and listen to the weather forecast for the whole length of a winter journey to help you prepare for it.”

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### **And finally.....**

This was spotted in the car park opposite the police station in Bangor in the recent snow and icy spell. Both the Jaguar and the A3 had moved forward down the icy slope from where they were parked.



One explanation is that the brakes were warm when the cars stopped and as they cooled the various parts contracted and partially releasing the handbrake allowing the cars to move forward. This wouldn’t have happened if they had been left in reverse. Another possible explanation is that the surface was very icy - is it possible that the cars slowly slid down the slope on the ice? I made sure mine was in reverse and also that there was some wet (not icy) tarmac under the wheels. A lesson for all.

Whatever the explanation, our trusty Traffic Wardens made sure they both had parking tickets for being outside the parking bays. At least some helpful person put a wooden block under a wheel of the Jaguar to stop it moving any further.

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**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.**