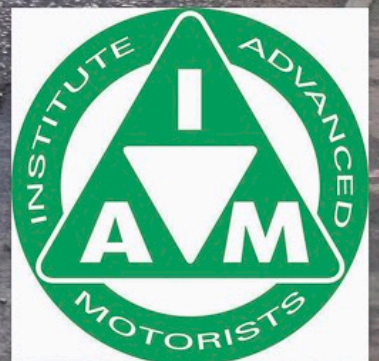


# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



January 2019







## 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

January 2019

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

Vol 22.1

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### New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car members Carole Kielty, Bill Halliday and Michael New. 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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### Test passes

Congratulations this month go to car member

**Kellie Liddle**

who achieved a F1RST pass

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

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### December Cover Picture

This was an easy one. The location was Oxford Street, Belfast looking from it's junction with Bridge End towards the Law Courts (seen on the left) and the Queen's Bridge. Congratulations to David Harcourt, Shaun McKittrick, Norman Shearer (and apologies for leaving Norman off last month's list) Annie McFarland and Guy Thomson.

Do you know the location of this month's cover? Not so easy but there is a clue to the general location in the picture. 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 **P**osition **S**peed, **G**ear, **A**cceleration)  
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** - Visit to Crumlin Road Gaol  
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 at 7.15pm 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.

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## Guy Thomson



We've just had the news that Guy is resigning his position on the committee and his role of Observer with the Group. Congratulations are due because he is taking up the position of IAM RoadSmart Examiner, initially for cars and later for bikes. Since Guy took over the running of the bike side of NDAM it has gone from strength to strength culminating in 6 F1RSTS and 2 passes in the year leading up to last November's AGM. He has also contributed greatly to the work of the Committee and to Observing on the car side.

With a background of being a National Observer for cars and bikes and having achieved a Masters for both cars and bikes (his spoken thoughts are legendary), Guy is well qualified to take on this new role. While he is a loss to the

Group we wish him well as he takes on his new responsibilities and I'm sure we will see him from time to time. We have already put a marker down for a "Meet the Examiner" session once he has properly settled into his new role.

Kyle Thomson (no relation) will be taking on Guy's responsibilities for running the motorcycle section and we wish him well as he takes this on. Arrangements have been made to re-allocate Guy's Associates to other bike Observers.





## New Year resolutions

Every year, our motivation increases after Christmas and we spend the New Year planning our goals, such as getting fitter or eating more healthily, but many gym memberships feel unloved by February. Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, suggests a few New Year resolutions that are easy to keep and will improve your driving and keep you safe throughout the year:

- **New year, new car?** Think about the effect your car can have on the environment. Those short trips have the biggest impact so look into alternatives. If you are looking to get a new car, make sure you research its emissions and road tax costs. Choose one with the latest safety kit such as autonomous emergency braking (AEB) because we all need a guardian angel at times.



•**Eyesight:** The NHS suggests having an eye test every two years. It is your responsibility to ensure you're fit to drive. Getting your eyes tested regularly will also show up any concerns at an early stage. You can check your vision yourself – **can you read a number plate clearly from 20 metres?**

•**Weather:** Heed weather warnings all year around. If the weather is really bad, consider postponing your journey until a more appropriate time, or plan another method of transport if possible.

- **Year-round maintenance:** Clean your windows, lights, mirrors and number plates regularly. You should spend around 10 minutes every week checking your vehicle's fluid levels, tyre pressure, lights, tread depth and windscreen wipers.

- **Eco-driving:** A planned drive is an economical drive. Having a good sense of your vehicle's power and gears will save fuel, and makes it safer to drive. There is no point in racing up to a red traffic light!



- **Anticipate:** Consider what the traffic and other people around you may do, especially at traffic lights, roundabouts and junctions. Observing, anticipating and planning should be at the heart of your driving.
- **Refuel:** Be sure to keep an eye on your tank, especially when embarking upon long journeys. Refuelling early saves you the stress of trying to find a petrol station in an area you don't know. Running out of fuel causes hundreds of motorway breakdowns every year.

Richard says: "The New year is a common time for people to reflect and evaluate their goals for the upcoming year. Why not begin by incorporating your driving behaviour into your list of resolutions for 2019? Why not resolve to make it better this year?"

## New session programme

The second Tuesday of the month is our Group night which is as much a social event as an opportunity to listen to visiting speakers, normally, about some aspect of transport, or to visit places of interest. We have put together a varied programme running through to the summer. February will be a talk by Andy Day on surveillance vehicles (maybe we will be able to spot them after the talk).

March is a talk about Bike Safe. This is an initiative run by police services across the United Kingdom, with support from motorcycle industry partners, aimed at reducing the number of motorcycle related casualties. While it will be of most relevance for biker members, for car members it will create greater awareness of the issues that bikers have to deal with, including us car drivers!



In April we go out to the Excelsior private cinema near Comber and the main event will be a screening of a mayhem road film "Smokey and the Bandit" starring the late Burt Reynolds. May sees us on the road again for an evening tour of Crumlin Road Goal and while we have not yet settled on our June event we are planning something around driving.

A varied programme which will have something for all interests and we hope as many members as possible come along. Details of the arrangements for the trips out will be notified to you in due course.

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## Are you bike ready for spring?

It may not feel like spring, but the winter season is officially over. And this means that many of us are keen to wipe the dust from our bikes and get them into top shape for the sunnier days that we are eagerly waiting for. Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of riding and driving advice, explains the POWDERY checks you should do on your bike before setting off for your first ride of the season.

- **Petrol.** Make sure you fill your tank and top up regularly. If your bike has been standing for a long period of time, old petrol can cause starting problems as it may clog up the fuel system. The best thing to do is drain your old petrol if there is a lot and fill up with new petrol.
- **Oil.** You can check you have the right amount of oil by using a dipstick or sight glass in the side of the engine casing. Remember to keep the bike vertical when checking this by getting someone to sit on the bike whilst you check the oil. Bear in mind that overfilling will also cause damage, so top up slowly and check your fuel level regularly.





- **Water.** This needs to be checked if you have a water-cooled engine. Again, the bike needs to be vertical. If you find that you're low on water, remember never to use tap water as you'll need a mix of water and antifreeze.
- **Damage.** Check for any damage – this could be on your bike, helmets or even your protective clothing.
- **Electrics.** If you're taking your bike out for the first time in a while, it is always a good idea to check your lights and both the foot and hand brake light switches.
- **Rubber.** Remember to check your tyre pressure as well as the condition and tread depth. Bear in mind this could change depending on the amount of weight your bike is carrying. Remember to test this when your tyres are cold, as the reading will be higher when they're hot. The legal limit is 1mm across three-quarters of tyre and visible tread on the rest.
- **You.** If you've been out of practice for a few months, then you may have lost that 'bike fitness'. Make sure you are fit to ride your bike and remember to take it slow and steady until you've got to grips with it.



Richard says: "If you have been out of motorcycling for the winter then get yourself back into it gently. Make sure the bike is roadworthy and routine maintenance is carried out. Allow yourself some time to regain your sharpness and adjust to bike mode. Remember, a motorcycle needs to be ridden with a smile on your face."

POWDERY checks also apply in relation to cars and we'll cover this next month.

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**And finally, just for a laugh.....**



I really wanted to include a couple of pictures of a 3d zebra crossing in Iceland which Colin Hay drew to my attention a while ago. Unfortunately they are subject to copyright and cannot be reproduced here. However, here is a link to an article where you can find pictures:

<https://icelandmag.is/article/photos-video-3d-crosswalk-isafjordur-helps-slow-down-speeding-motorists>

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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**