

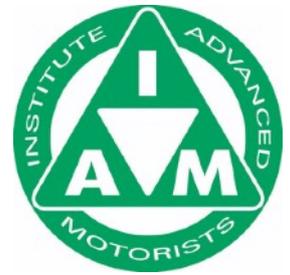
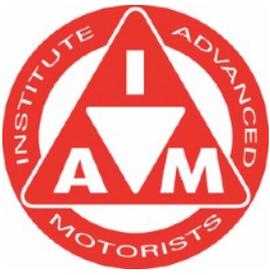
The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



May 2022





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

May 2022

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New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car member Stewart Campbell and motorcycle member Gary Barr. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Test Passes

Congratulations this month to

Campbell English

Campbell achieved a F1RST pass having scored 1 in every category.

April cover picture

The April cover picture was North Street in Ballycastle. Congratulations (in order of receipt) to Thomas McVeigh, Ralph Magee, Alistair Gillespie, Norman Shearer and Ivan Greenfield.

Do you know where this month's cover is? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the next Road Observer. Submit your answers to: secretaryndam@gmail.com

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC nights in the Boathouse for car Associates and the regular bike runs (notified by email to bike members) we have a varied programme for the Group Nights.

31 May - Driving practice
7 June - Driving practice
14 June - Drive/ride for ice cream at the Rhinka, Islandmagee

9 August - STAC enrolment and demonstration drives
6 September - STAC session 1
13 September - Group night - TBA
27 September - STAC session 2
4 October - STAC session 3
11 October - Annual General meeting - guest speaker TBA
25 October - STAC Session 4
1 November - STAC session 5
8 November - Group Night - TBA
22 November - STAC session 6
29 November - STAC session 7
6 December - STAC session 8
13 December - Christmas Dinner

Please note that the Boathouse will be closed for refurbishment in July, August and September. We have asked the Council for an alternative venue and we will keep you informed when we know more.

STAC - Short Term Associate Course for drivers.

May Group night

Most of us live either in an urban environment or not far from one with the result that light pollution restricts our view of the night sky. Sometime when you are well away from sources of light, say at least 20 miles, and the sky is clear of clouds you should take time to let your eyes get accustomed to the dark and just look at the wonder of the night sky. Better still, look at it through binoculars or, if you have access to one, an astronomical telescope.

Our May Group night was a Zoom presentation by Mark Jarvis, a colleague of our Chairman David Harcourt, on the subject of astrophotography. Mark has been a keen photographer for many years and his photography covered many genres. He began his talk with examples of his photography including a lightening storm over Eastbourne where in the course of an hour he captured 14 flashes. Also included were from the Eastbourne women's tennis tournament, Beachy Head, the Olympic torch relay, landscapes, macro photography (close-ups of flowers, water droplets etc) and airshows at Eastbourne and Farnborough. You can see examples of his work from the following link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/digiquest>

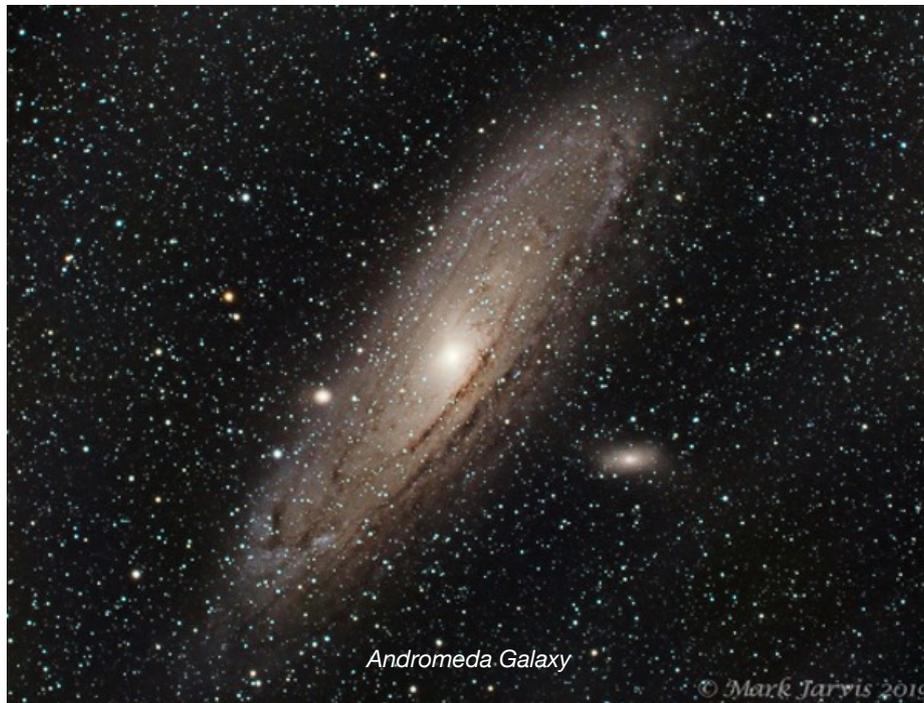


While photographing at an airshow he managed to get the image above of a Typhoon with the moon in the background which awakened his interest in astrophotography. He explained that with a basic tripod and a digital camera you can get images of starscapes and star trails.

Things get a bit more complicated if you want to take pictures of planets and of deep space. The problem is that it requires long exposures and also multiple exposures. As you know the earth rotates and the position of the stars and the planets in the sky are constantly changing. This means that you need a device which moves the camera in time with the rotation of the earth. It also requires other specialist equipment such as a dew heater which prevents the lens from fogging up during long exposures on cold nights and also camera sensor cooler to prevent the sensor overheating during long and multiple exposures.

To photograph really deep space a dedicated telescope with a sensor is required and because of the low light levels reaching the telescope it is necessary to take multiple exposures which are then stacked together in software to give the final image. Examples of some of these are below. For example, the Horsehead Nebula was 20 x 5 minute exposures and the Whirlpool Galaxy was 60 x 1 minute exposures.





Other interesting things to photograph are the planets and various meteor showers that pass the Earth annually and also comets.



Mark included a picture of the comet Neowise that was in our skies in 2020.



He also showed images of solar flares and sun spots on the surface of the sun but he made the very important point and that is that you should **never** look at the sun through binoculars or a telescope. He also showed us images of aircraft transiting the moon, and on the next page the International Space Station (ISS) also transiting the moon. The picture of the ISS even shows faintly the solar array needed to provide its electrical energy.



Mark showed us many fascinating images, too many to show here, but if you want to see more visit his Flickr pages at the link above. One important piece of basic advice if you are interested in trying some of this is to have lots of patience, some tea and warm clothing because you will be out in the dark for some considerable time. Many thanks to Mark for giving us an insight into an amazing interest.

Managing Roadworks



Roadworks can slow down your journey, cause major disruption and bring havoc to your day. With 6,590 traffic incidents reported on UK roads between 2016 and 2020, navigating the maze of roadworks on our highways has never been more important. IAM RoadSmart's Head of Driving and Riding Standards, Richard Gladman, has some top tips to help make navigating them a little bit easier.

On the motorway

Motorway roadworks are one of the most common challenges we encounter. The reduced speed limit is there for your protection, as lanes are often narrower. Remember, too, that the separation gap on a fast-flowing road can't be ignored because the traffic is bunching up: at 50mph the gap should be at least 44 metres, or about 10 car lengths. If the speed limit is reducing in front of you, plan early and show your brake lights if the following traffic does not seem to be slowing.

Neighbouring narrow lanes

In a narrow lane, the last place you want to be is alongside an articulated vehicle. Not only are you potentially in a blind spot, but any curve in the road could mean its course changes and it could move into your lane. If you are already at the speed limit, slow down to create a space alongside - this will allow you to create a safety gap, and then you can match your speed to maintain it.



Breakdowns and incidents

Should you breakdown in roadworks the safest place to be is most likely in your car. Make sure you've activated your hazard lights and call for help by dialling 999. Major roadworks often have dedicated numbers for breakdown help, so call those if possible. If possible go left and if you can get out of the vehicle safely, leave the hazard lights on and don't lock it, then get to an area of safety behind the barrier and wait for help to arrive.

Rural roadworks

On a country road, be particularly alert when passing road works to avoid incidents or injury to those working on the road. Workers will have their concentration elsewhere and may inadvertently step out of their work area. They may be wearing ear defenders or operating loud machinery, so a horn note may be ineffective. Keep your speed low and always be prepared to stop.

Temporary lights

When approaching roadworks with temporary traffic lights on red, slow the traffic behind you with early brake lights. If there's no traffic behind, keep the brake lights on until there is a car behind you. If the obstruction is just out of a bend, position yourself to be seen before the bend and bridge the gap (if you're the first vehicle, the light may not change until you activate their sensors, so this may not be possible).

Give way

Roadworks aren't always protected by traffic lights or signs. In which case, the courteous thing to do is give way if the obstruction is on your side of the road. If you can time your arrival well, you can expect some co-operation from oncoming traffic if you're well into the gap before they arrive. If there's a likelihood of workers or machinery reducing the gap, try not to share it with oncoming traffic.



Richard Gladman said: "Many of us have experienced the frustration that roadworks can cause and with trying to catch up on planned roadworks since the pandemic started, road closures and other obstructions can be a common occurrence of our journeys. It's important to know how to navigate roadworks to keep ourselves and others safe."

April Group Night

This was a visit to James Black restorations located at Ballinderry near Lisburn. The company specialises in the restoration of vintage Rolls Royce cars. They were recently featured in the media having been awarded a half-million pound contract for the restoration of a 1912 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost for an important overseas client. This is a spectacular place and we were the first group to see the new ceiling in the garage if you could call it a garage.



James has a fantastic rapport and knowledge of classic Rolls Royce Cars and a collection to drool over, oh and a few bikes as well. We had some lovely eats and tea and coffee and history of Rolls Royce then out to the various garages to view cars and parts at stages of restoration. Some lovely cars and I am sure history to go with them. A very interesting visit and we would love to go back again. If we do organise another visit it is one not to miss.

Many thanks to Ivan Greenfield for organising the visit, to Kyle for the words and to James for a memorable evening. Below is a selection of pictures taken at the event courtesy of Kyle Thomson and William McAteer:





And finally.....Buying fuel

In the last week, at a filling station which will remain anonymous, I decided to fill up my fuel tank (before the price went up again). I duly filled the tank and went in to pay. I offered my credit card for a contactless payment and it went through. At this point the attendant said OK and turned away to do something else (I was the only customer at the check-out). As he turned away I asked him for a receipt and, almost reluctantly, he turned back to press a button on his screen, printed the receipt and handed it to me.

I was halfway across the forecourt back to my car when I heard a voice shouting "Hey, did you pay?" I turned round to see another member of staff approaching. I said "Are you speaking to me?" He asked the question again and of course I was able to produce the receipt from my pocket. Without a word of apology he said that's OK and walked off. Great customer relations!

I'm sure that if I hadn't had the receipt, the information in the till would have confirmed the appropriate payment had been made because the amount was still shown on the pump at which I was parked. However, it might have taken a while to sort out, especially if the station was busy with customers queuing to pay, never mind the embarrassment of being accused of not paying. So the moral is - always get a receipt.