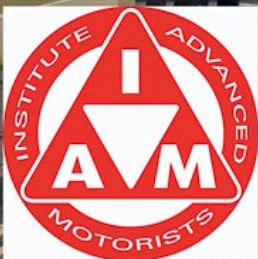
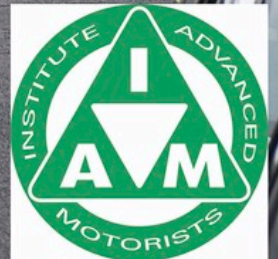


# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



November 2018







## 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

November 2018

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

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### New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car member Alan Leonard and motorcycle member Anthony Smyth. 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

No test passes this month but congratulations to motorcycle members

**Ross Cameron and Jim O'Brien**  
who have qualified as Local Observers

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

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### Cover Picture

The September cover was the mini-roundabout at the junction of Gray's Hill, Dufferin Avenue and the Brunswick Road in Bangor. Congratulations to Shaun McKittrick, Norman Shearer and Annie McFarland for spotting this one.

In case you think the covers are too North Down centric this month's is one from a bit further afield. No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer.

## Dates for your diary

27 November - STAC 7  
4 December - STAC 8  
11 December - Christmas Dinner Carnalea Golf Club  
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15 January - STAC enrolment  
5 February - STAC 1

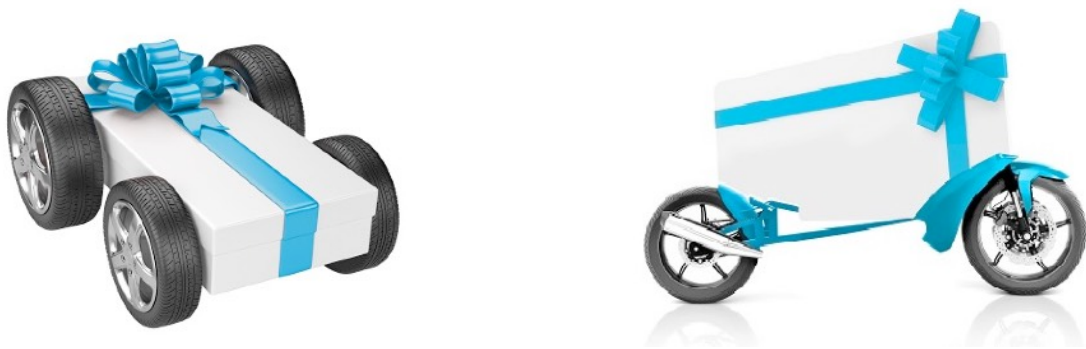
Further details of the 2019 programme will be available in the December issue.

**Observers: please note Tuesday 29 January 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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## Christmas Discount and Cashback



Looking for a Christmas gift for someone?

IAM is offering a 10% Christmas discount on Advanced driving and riding courses reducing the cost from £149 to £134. North Down is going even one better - we will offer an additional £35 cashback for **new** Associates who follow the course **and take the test**. This brings the cost down to £99 and would make an ideal Christmas present.

To obtain the HQ discount, apply online and just enter the promotional code gv10 during checkout, to purchase at the discounted price of £134 (saving £15 on the normal price). Alternatively call IAM HQ at 0300 303 1134.

The voucher packs are sent to you, the purchaser, so that you can pass them on as a gift. The vouchers come presented in gift envelopes! The recipient simply needs to add a dash of commitment to learning and developing new skills.

All vouchers are redeemable across the UK and valid for 12 months from the date of purchase and so can be redeemed when convenient. All the recipient needs to do is to call the activation number on the voucher, quote the reference code and then provide us with their contact details - it's as simple as that.

Once IAM has activated the voucher the recipient will be sent the course logbook and will be contacted by the local group to invite the recipient to start the advanced course with them.

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## 2018 Annual General Meeting

The turnout for the AGM was down a bit on previous years but our numbers were bolstered by visitors from the Belfast Group (cars) and the City of Belfast Motorcycle Group. We had a number of apologies and David made particular mention of Annie McFarland who was still in hospital following a road traffic collision the previous week. In wishing her a speedy recovery on behalf of the Group David mentioned that Annie had made arrangements for the catering for the AGM and even before she got to hospital she was concerned to make sure that suitable arrangements would be in place in her absence. In the event Becky Harcourt ably, assisted by Guy and Alistair, and a few others ensure that members and visitors were well fed. Many thanks to all for helping out.



David's report covered the highlights of the year, covering the activities on our Group nights, the work of the Committee in keeping the Group running smoothly, the contribution of our Observers and our good record in relation to test passes. In the period since the last AGM the Group had a total of 16 passes, equally split between cars and bikes. A further breakdown of the numbers showed that the cars had achieved 4 F1RSTS while the bikers excelled with 6 F1RSTS.

Frank presented his membership report stating that membership is up compared to this time last year. Renewals from the September round are still trickling in but at the time of the AGM it stood at 86 (45 on the car side and 38 bikes together with 3 honorary members). Frank pointed out that on some of the STAC nights we were a bit stretched to ensure that everyone got a drive and encouraged former Observers to attend.

Gareth presented the Treasurers report which showed that the Group's finances remained in a healthy state. He took us through the income and expenditure line by line explaining the changes from one year to the next. The main items of expenditure were the cost of renting the Boathouse for the STAC nights and Group nights and also the purchase of high-viz vests for our motorcycle Observers which benefitted from a £500 contribution from IAM RoadSmart. The cost of the Boathouse is offset to an extent by savings from using a free room at Carnalea Golf Club for our monthly Committee meetings. He also noted that around 50% of members now renew their annual subscriptions through electronic banking.

## Presentations

Our guest speaker, Pat Doughty from IAM RoadSmart presented the awards. The Two Jaguars Award for car member of the year went to William McAteer, Sheila Palmer received the Crystal Obelisk and the motorcycle award, the Crystal Helmet, went to Simon Beckett. He also presented Alistair with a certificate of appreciation in recognition of Alistair's long service to Group and in his many roles over the years as Observer, Committee Member, Newsletter Editor and for Associate Liaison.



*William*



*Simon*



*Sheila*



*Alistair*

## Committee Elections

David handed over to Regional Group Co-ordinator Angela to conduct the elections to the committee for 2018/19:

Chairman: David Harcourt	Treasurer: Gareth Hughes
Secretary: Leslie Ashe	Simon Beckett
Ronnie Brown	Lisa Carson
Colin Hay	Annie McFarland
Frank Robertson	John Seawright
Guy Thomson	Kyle Thomson



## Pat Doughty

At the conclusion of the formal proceedings David handed over to guest speaker Pat Doughty Charity and Operations Director at IAM RoadSmart. Pat explained that in taking forward the IAM's main objective of Road Safety the organisation considers human factors, vehicle design, road infrastructure and legislation and, of these, human factors is the main focus. This is taken forward through advanced driver and rider membership, corporate training schemes, offender retraining and lobbying.

Just as a point of interest with the Christmas season fast approaching, he pointed out that some 17% of those caught over the legal limit for drink driving were caught the morning after. So while you are sensible enough to leave the car at home please consider if you really are fit to drive the next morning.

Advanced driving and riding courses are taken by people who make the conscious decision to improve their driving or riding and their success depends on the goodwill, knowledge, passion and expertise of volunteers in Groups. Overall membership has reduced by some 2000 since 2016 and the number of test passes has also reduced by some 800 since then which is thought to be largely caused by the reduced number of Observers qualified under the then new IMI accreditation arrangements. Pat said that IAM sells about 6500 driver/rider packages each year and that some Groups have waiting lists of people wanting to undertake driver and rider training. Some 2000 gift vouchers are sold each year and of these only 50% are actually converted to advanced courses.



The fall in membership is due to the imbalance between older members passing on and not being replaced by younger members. The average age of members is 60+ and one quarter of the membership is over the age of 70. The average age of those joining in the last 3 years is 49. There is a need to recruit many more younger members.

Having set out the corporate position, Pat turned his attention to autonomous cars pointing out that 90% of collisions have a human factor element. He pointed out that it is coming to bikes as well with both BMW and Triumph working on this.

As an aside you can see a Youtube video of the BMW being tested by following this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaZITsoj0Hc>. A couple of interesting points emerge from this, first the bike on its own ignored a stop sign on the road but perhaps its recognition of road signs wasn't being tested. Secondly, the engineer at the end of the video said that they were using their knowledge to develop further comfort and safety systems. The commentary finishes by saying "self driving motorcycles on the roads remain, of course, science fiction".

Pat showed a timeline of advances in vehicle assistance systems beginning with anti-lock brakes in the 1970s, airbags in the 1980s, electronic stability in the 1990s and advanced driver systems in the 2000s and suggested the 2020s would bring full autonomy. He pointed out that the average age at which cars reach the end of their life is 13 years which will mean there will be a mix of autonomous cars and ordinary cars for some time after autonomous cars become available and this will bring new challenges for driver training.

Having completed his presentation Pat answered questions from the audience. Replying to criticism of the format of the advanced driver/rider handbooks he defended the format, particularly mentioning the inclusion of sections on modern technology, but said that a new version would be available next year covering some issues omitted from the current version.

On the subject of driving standards he was asked whether there were any plans to reissue or to issue a revised version of "Common Confusions". This document was very helpful to Observers and Associates as it gave clear guidance on a number of points where there was a divergence of views. Pat said that the content of common confusions had been incorporated into the current driver and rider handbooks but this was challenged on some specific issues. He said that he would speak to Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards about this. It was pointed out that NDAM had already written to Richard on this topic a couple of months ago and while we had received an acknowledgement, a substantive response was outstanding.

On the administrative side of running Groups, it was pointed out that Groups were not permitted to use DTE (the IAM RoadSmart database) for record keeping, except in relation to courses, with the result that Groups have to set up their own database. He said that DTE was being revised and in the future Groups will be able to use it as their database.

The discussion could have gone on for some considerable time but as usual time was our enemy and we were well past our 10pm deadline before David would up the meeting and thanked Pat for his presentation and for responding to our questions.

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## Bike runs

### October

Great turn-out of 18 bikes, including 3 pillion, from the usual starting point of McDonalds in Newtownards across the from Portaferry to Strangford to the Maghera Inn in Maghera (County Down - about 3 miles from Dundrum). Great weather, good roads and food. To quote William - "A grand day out".

### November

Ten bikes were out for a run to Church Cafe Bistro in Rostrevor for brunch. Weather conditions werera bit less clement with 30 metres visibility in places on the Yellow Road (Between Hilltown and Rostrevor). Thanks to Kyle and Simon for the pictures.



*NDAM taking over the ferry!*



*Brunch in Rostrevor*



## Riding in inclement weather

Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, gives advice on riding during inclement weather.

We always advise never to ride in bad weather conditions, however, this is sometimes unavoidable as your morning journey may be full of bright sunny skies which can then turn into unexpected wind and rain during the afternoon.

### Rain

- Ensure your screen and visor are in good condition and consider using an anti-fog insert or product.
- Deep water may cause aquaplaning. If this happens, gently close the throttle and retain a firm grip on the handlebars, do not brake or attempt to steer as any input is likely to be excessive when the grip returns. The grip will return within a short time. If possible, avoid standing water.

### Snow and ice

- The best advice is to avoid riding in snow and ice, however, if you do get caught out in it, beware of micro climates in shaded areas where ice will form first. If you are riding in the snow your machine will have much reduced grip and take longer to stop. Brake only in a straight line and be gentle with the throttle. Weight on the foot pegs will improve the centre of gravity.
- Coarse steering input may induce a skid. Be smooth with steering in order not to break grip. If you have to steer, do it gently until you are back to the course you wish the machine to follow, and try not to brake whilst cornering as the bike will slide.
- Be aware of the effect of extreme cold. Make sure your motorcycle kit is fit for the job as concentration is adversely affected by the cold.



### High winds

- Keep in mind the wind will change when passing a high-sided vehicle so ensure you give them sufficient space, and if you see them being affected by the wind, don't pass.
- Be especially careful if crossing exposed bridges where wind conditions will change.



Richard said: "Motorcycling should be fun, planning to ride in extreme conditions is likely to take the fun out of the ride.

"If you are travelling in wet and windy conditions make sure you have kitted up properly, the first drop of rain that gets in will open the floodgates. Snow and ice are not conducive to two-wheeled travel, what is fun off-road is challenging on-road and best avoided.

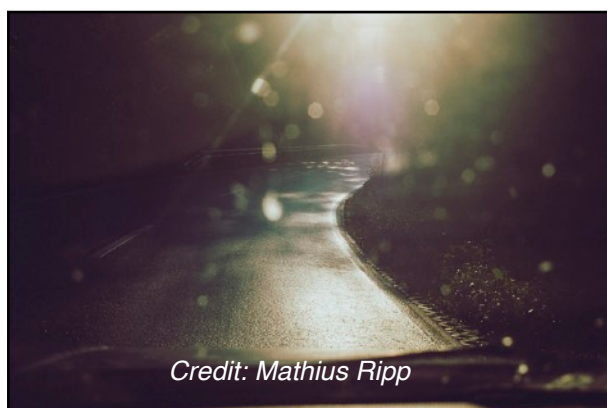
"If the temperature is forecast to be close to freezing when you leave, how will it be for your return?"



## Often overlooked road safety issues.

Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards for IAM RoadSmart, advises you on how to stay safe on the road with 'six of the best'.

- Slow down around schools and keep an eye on speed limit signs as these may change down to 20mph. This may not be rocket science but it's easily forgotten when you repeat the same morning commute every day. If you want to be on time simply leave earlier and check a route planner beforehand.
- Seatbelts are a must. Passengers over 14 are responsible for their own seat belts but it is you as the driver who will be stopped for this. So take charge and tell them all to 'belt up'. Bear in mind that loose items in a car can become projectiles in a crash as can an unrestrained passenger. Keep your car tidy and store bags or tools securely in the boot.
- Keep to the speed limit. Rushing from junction to junction or hold up to hold up is often counterproductive. Why hurry up to wait? A 50 mile journey at 80mph will save you at most six minutes compared to the same distance at 70mph. Is it worth the stress and the extra fuel? Remember we have speed limits, not targets.
- The dangers of hand-held mobile phones are well-known but taking or making calls by Bluetooth can be just as distracting. If you switch the phone off when you get behind the wheel you can concentrate fully on perfecting your driving skills.



*Credit: Mathius Ripp*

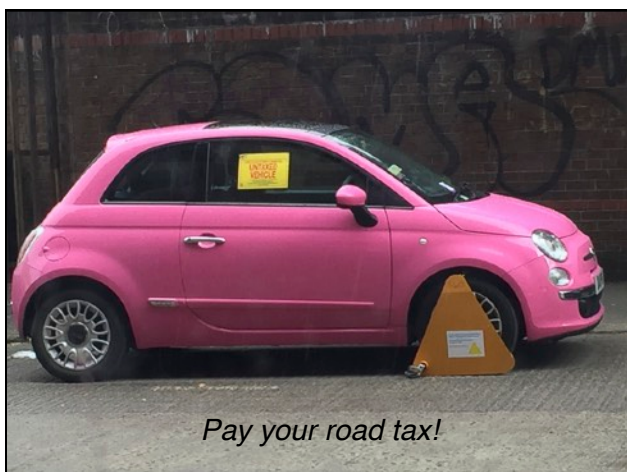
- Dazzle from low sun is a factor in more crashes than dazzle from headlights. Keep your windscreen clean and don't put those sunglasses away just yet.

- It is legal for motorcyclists to filter through traffic, so give them space and never try to deliberately block them. Before changing lanes, check your mirrors and blind spots carefully before you make your move.

Richard said: "Most delays on our main roads are caused by accidents and breakdowns. Prevention is so much easier than cure. Check the car over before your journey, keep your distance, manage your speed and we can all have an incident free week, year and lifetime."

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**And finally.....** (thanks to Angela for the pictures)



*Pay your road tax!*



*Poor parking - couldn't even get the intersection of the lines in the centre of the car!*

**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**