

# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



November 2019







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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

November 2019

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

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### New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car member Stephen Patterson. 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

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

Congratulations to Kyle Thomson and achieving his motorcycle National Observer qualification

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### October 2019 Cover picture

The October cover picture was one that I thought nobody would get but I was wrong. Congratulations to motorcycle Member Norman Shearer who correctly identified it. The location was Granny Glen in South-West Donegal. Head out of Ardara towards the beach at Maghera and turn left at the carpark for the beach. More of this later.

This month's cover is more local - all I will say is that it is in County Down. Can you identify it - no prizes but the satisfaction of good observation and of course a mention in the Road Observer.

## Dates for your diary

3 December - STAC 8 - Manoeuvring

10 December - Group Night - Christmas dinner, Carnalea Golf Club.

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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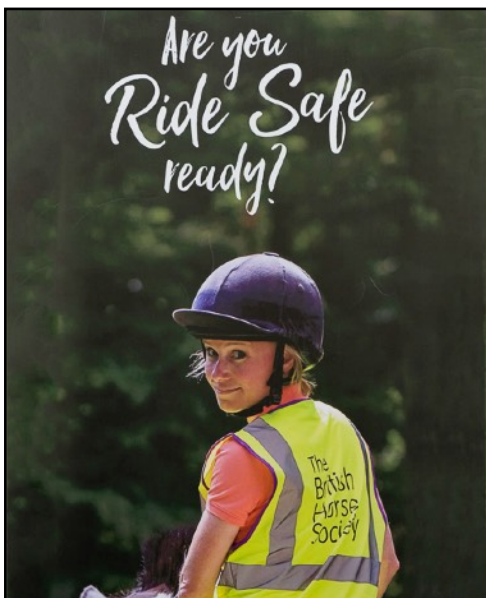
## Meeting horses on the road

With some refurbishment of the Boathouse taking place we were moved to Donaghadee Community Centre for the November Group Night.

Our guest speaker was Susan Spratt NI manager of the British Horse Society (BHS) who spoke to us about best practice when encountering accompanied horses on the road. BHS is the largest equestrian society in the UK with 106,000 members of which there are 3,800 in NI.

To put into perspective the issue of horses and vehicles on roads Susan told us that in the last 9 years across the UK 3737 incidents have been reported to BHS and that in the same period 315 horses have died and 43 humans have been killed. 73% of vehicles pass too close to horses.

Most horse riders would prefer not to ride on the roads. However, a lack of off-road access means using roads is a necessity for many riders. 90% of riders on the roads are simply travelling from stables to a safe place to ride. Riders have the same right to be on the road as motorists, cyclists or any other user group. With a bit of understanding and consideration on all sides, there's room for everyone to use the roads in harmony and safety.



It's important to understand that horses are prey animals and their usual response to danger is flight. This means that however well-trained and calm a horse normally is, they can still be unpredictable and frightened by something they perceive as a threat. This is their natural instinct and means a horse's reaction to a threat is to try to escape the situation. A horse's range of hearing is greater than a human to higher frequencies (over 33kHz in the horse compared with under 20kHz in humans) although a horse may not be able to hear the lowest frequencies audible to humans.

They use their hearing for three primary functions: to detect sounds, to determine the location of the sound, and to provide sensory information that allows the horse to recognise the identity of these sources. Horses will react to unexpected or loud noises.

The basic rules when you catch up on a horse are

- as soon as you see a horse slow down ( the rider should be wearing a high-viz jacket and helmet so will be easier to spot)
- don't rev your engine or sound your horn
- always be able to see tarmac between your car and the horse's hooves
- a horse has a blind spot directly behind so move out slightly to the left or right to enable the horse to see you
- where possible allow a car's width between your vehicle and the horse as you pass
- do not exceed 15mph when passing
- drive slowly away after you pass the horse



If the road is too narrow to pass or if your encounter with the horse is on a blind bend the rider will usually trot the horse to a location to provide more space/forward vision.



If you meet an oncoming horse the same basic rules about noise, speed and distance apply and if on a narrow road it may be best to stop completely to let the horse go past.

A common complaint about cyclists is that they ride two abreast making it more difficult to pass. If horses are two abreast there is usually a good reason. The horse on the left is probably inexperienced on the road, is in training and needs the reassurance and calm of the horse on the right when encountering traffic. Be patient, the opportunity to pass will come.

Susan brought along a video to demonstrate the bad and the good approaches when meeting horses on the road. She also had a virtual reality headset to view the video. The video (including a 360 degree view for part of it) is available by clicking on the following link: [BHS video](#) (scroll down to the virtual reality film).

You may have noticed on the video that the incident took place on a right-hand bend with double white lines. A quick reminder of the rules. The Highway Code (rule 129) states that you may cross the line if necessary, provided the road is clear, to pass a stationary vehicle, or overtake a pedal cycle, horse or road maintenance vehicle if they are travelling at 10mph or less.

Our own members contributed to the discussion. John recounted an incident when riding a recumbent bicycle in the west of Ireland and encountering two horse drawn caravans. John's presence spooked both horses, probably for the reason that they had never come across a recumbent bicycle before (and nothing to do with John personally!). Simon also recommended that when on a motorcycle approaching an oncoming horse you should stop and remove your helmet so that you present yourself something that the horse is familiar with.

The following link is to a BHS video which summarises the above points: [BHS summary video](#)

Many thanks to Susan for a timely reminder about how to deal with horses on the road.





# Fatigue

As part of IAM RoadSmart's campaign to raise awareness of the issues surrounding older drivers in the UK and to offer support and guidance to those driving in later life, head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, shares his tips on ways to stay alert and avoid tiredness, not just amongst older people but for all drivers.



*Credit: Courtesy Photo*

- Older people can be more susceptible to fatigue so tiredness can prove a real problem. Extreme tiredness can lead to micro-sleeps, whatever your age. This is a short episode of drowsiness or sleep that could last a fraction of a second or up to 30 seconds. A car driving at 70 mph will travel 31 meters per second, giving plenty of time to cause a serious crash during a micro-sleep.
- The effects of losing one or two hours of sleep a night regularly can lead to chronic sleepiness over time. So, ensure you are well rested and feeling fit and healthy before you set off.
- Make sure you take regular rest breaks to split up the journey when driving on a long, boring stretch of motorway. It's good practise to stop at least every two hours and it's essential to take a break before the drowsiness sets in.
- If necessary, plan an overnight stop. If you feel too fatigued to carry on driving, then book yourself into a hotel at the next service area and sleep it off. Wake up fresh with a good breakfast and carry on your journey. It's good to note that a caffeine high may be a quick fix, but it's not a long-term solution and certainly no substitute for proper sleep.
- Older people can get tired quickly, even when they haven't been physically exerting themselves for long periods of time. So, avoid setting out on a long drive near the end of the day. It's best to start your journey earlier, when you're more alert.
- If possible, avoid driving between the two peak times for sleepiness. These are between 3am and 5am and between 2pm and 4pm.
- If you've taken prescribed medication, then seek advice from your GP as to whether you should be driving or not. If bought over the counter, then read the instructions on the pack or speak to a pharmacist.

Richard says: "Whatever your age, you need regular sleep to perform at your highest standards. Driving requires full concentration at all times and if you're tired, your ability to concentrate is reduced. Internal body clocks (circadian rhythms) are usually set to deal with normal lifestyle patterns, so extra care needs to be taken when you're driving during a time you would normally be at rest. Stop, rehydrate and rest if you need to. This is particularly true for those who are driving in later life, but the rule applies to all."



## South West Donegal

Going back to the October cover picture, I had the opportunity in September to take a couple of days on my own to pursue my interest in landscape photography and I chose to visit South-West Donegal. Not only was I able to do the photography but I also had the opportunity to drive a variety of roads including many miles of single track roads with grass growing in the middle! Unlike Scotland where single track roads have many passing places and which are marked by a passing place sign, in Ireland you have to make it up as you go along and find your own passing places.

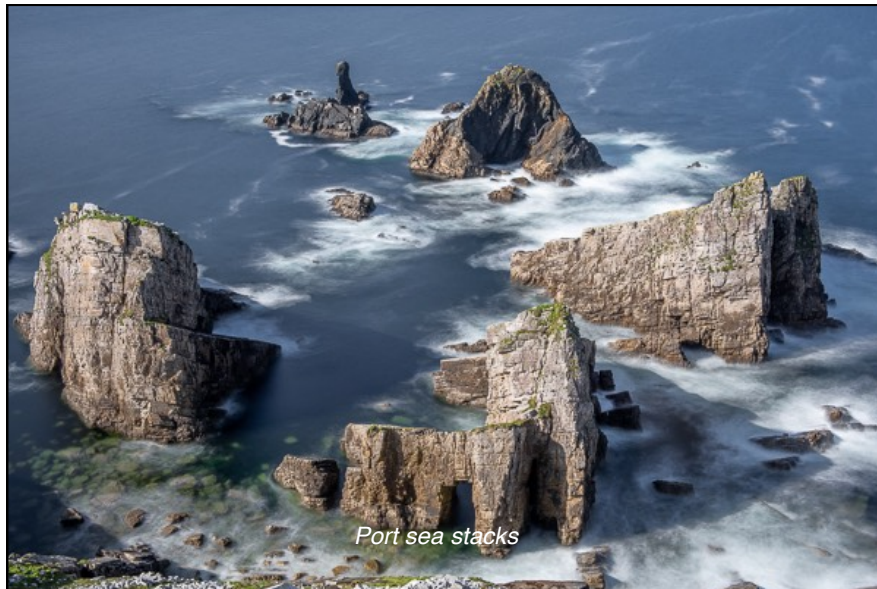


It's a great area to visit and on the map I have identified a few places of interest with photographs below. In addition to the scenery, there is also the folk village at Glencolumbkille and the "fleshpots" of Killybegs.





The drive out to Port is entirely on a single track road and you have to come back along the same road. But it's worth it if you like an abandoned village and a wild coastline with cliffs and sea stacks.







Donegal weather can be fickle but just think if we had guaranteed long hours of hot sunshine the place would look a lot different with hotels and apartments lining the beaches. PS The SW Donegal tourist Board is not sponsoring this item!

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**And finally**.....continuing with the horse theme - spotted on Facebook:



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