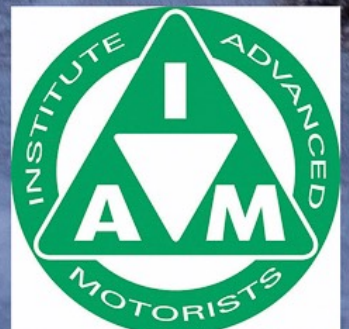


The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



November 2017





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

November 2017

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

Vol 20.9

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Advanced Tests

Congratulations this month to motorcycle member

Jim O'Brien

and to car member

Oliver Morrow

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

Congratulations also to Annie McFarland and Stephen Massey on becoming our latest IMI Qualified car Local Observers

Important note for Group qualified Observers

Any Observers who are currently Group qualified will lose that qualification on 31 December 2017. If you wish to continue to Observe you will need to be re-qualified under the new IMI arrangements.

October Cover picture

This was Tate's Avenue in Belfast as viewed from the Lisburn Road. Congratulations to bikers Shaun McKittrick and Norman Shearer for spotting it.

Can you identify the location of the cover picture in this edition? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the Road Observer.

Dates for your diary

Please note the revised running order for the STAC sessions.

28 November - STAC 8 Manoeuvring

5 December - Driving in tricky conditions

12 December - **Group Night - Christmas dinner - Carnalea Golf Club**

The Christmas dinner is the last meeting of 2017.

9 January 2018 - STAC enrolment

6 February - STAC 1

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.

Christmas Dinner

This will be in Carnalea Golf Club on Tuesday 12 December and is open to all Members, partners, relatives and friends of Members. The cost is **£25 per person** which includes a fun ballot. The menu, which you can find at the end of this newsletter, offers the usual Christmas fare together with a number of alternatives if you can't face another turkey and Christmas pudding menu!

David Harcourt is collecting names (please provide full names as it is sometimes difficult to identify individuals from email addresses), menu choices and money!

We need your number attending and their menu choices in advance and no later than Tuesday 5 December.

You should aim to give this information to David either on Tuesday evenings 28 November or 5 December at the Boathouse in Groomsport (or by email to David at NDAM-Groomsport@outlook.com) by 5 December at the latest.

You should also let David have your money in advance please. If you cannot attend on Tuesdays he would be pleased to receive a cheque - his address is 5 Wyndell Heights, Newtownards BT23 7GZ. Cheques should be made out to North Down Advanced Motorists.

Hoping you can attend what is always an enjoyable evening.

November Group Night

Originally planned as a table-top rally we had a late change of programme substituting a quiz but never fear we will have a table-top rally again.

Before the quiz got under way we had an important item of business.

Tribute to Garth Maxwell

As reported in last month's issue, on 5 October at the age of 78 Garth Maxwell was successful in his Advanced Motorcycle test. Sadly he was admitted to hospital shortly afterwards and passed away on 18 October before he could be presented with his certificate.

A keen motorcyclist and with a passion for motorsport both as a technical scrutineer and competitor, Garth enrolled with North Down Advanced Motorists a year ago. He was an active and enthusiastic Group member regularly turning out for the Group runs in all weathers and as an engineer he was always ready to offer advice when members had technical difficulties with their bikes.

At the November group night, Chairman David Harcourt delivered a tribute to a packed hall of Garth's family, motorcycle friends and colleagues before his framed Advanced Riding certificate was presented to three of his daughters by his Examiner Paul Sheldon.



The Quiz

Colin put together a quiz of 30 questions on aspects of advanced driving, the highway code, road signs etc. The format was multiple choice answers for each question (some of which were tongue in cheek). It was designed to test Members' and Associates' knowledge in a non-competitive way and the answer session gave rise to constructive and informative discussions on the correct answers. It was an entertaining evening and hopefully we all learned something from it. Many thanks to Colin for putting this together at short notice.

Advanced driving and riding course discounts



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 he or she to start the advanced course with them.

Sarah Sillars, IAM Roadsmart Chief Executive Officer

We received the following message from Ken Keir, IAM Roadsmart Chairman

"It was agreed at the time of Sarah Sillar's appointment as CEO that she would leave after three years in the role. I wish now to inform you that she will be relinquishing her position with effect from 4 May 2018. As I am sure you will agree, Sarah has done a remarkable job for us in the necessary change of the IAM by focusing and improving dramatically the following:

- Customer focus (particularly a younger profile)
- Rebranding (now IAM RoadSmart)
- Communications and awareness
- Organisation and improved management
- Relationship with the groups
- Research and standards
- Bringing IAM RoadSmart back to the table of influence on road safety
- Improvement of the balance sheet
- Relocation of the offices to Welwyn Garden City



We have started the interview process for a new CEO and whoever we appoint will inherit the good platform established by Sarah which in turn will give us the opportunity of developing IAM RoadSmart as a major influence on road safety. We will keep you updated as progress towards the new appointment develops.”

Bike Observer Training

A training day for North Down motorcycle Observers was held on 11 November. A great day with lots of information for our Observers, Trainee Observers and possible Observers to digest.

A very interesting and informative day with presentations by Charlie Stewart Staff Examiner, Guy Thomson and Don McQuillan. National Observers Guy and Don gave us both interesting and informative presentations on all aspects of being a better motorcyclist and Observer using the tools the IAM has provided ie IPSGA, the system of motorcycle control and everything that goes with it.

Charlie provided very useful information on what he expects a Local Observer to demonstrate for progression to National Observer.

Attendees were Local Observers Simon Beckett and Kyle Thomson, Trainee Observer Michael Wood, candidates for Local Observer training Ross Cameron, Glen Wilson and Norman Shearer and Group Chief Observer Colin Hay.

During the event Charlie did the honour of presenting test pass certificates to Ross Cameron and Glen Wilson.



Charlie with Ross.....



and with Glen

Many thanks to Don McQuillan for providing a superb venue for the course. And thanks to Kyle for the report and pictures.

Car Observer Training

As from 1st January 2018 all Observers have to be IMI (Institute of the Motor Industry) qualified and as noted on page 2, Group Observer qualifications lapse on 31 December 2017. We now have a reasonable number of IMI qualified Observers and the Committee has decided that we will use a couple of Tuesday evenings in January in advance of the new STAC for car Observer training for already qualified Observers, those in training and those contemplating becoming Observers. The aim will be to ensure that our Associates get the maximum from their observed runs and that there is consistency in the information and guidance provided by Observers.



With that in mind we are asking all our car Observers, trainee Observers and anyone wishing to become an Observer to note their diaries for two training evenings on Tuesdays 23 and 30 January at the usual time in the Boathouse.

November bike run

Simon Beckett led the 11 bikes (10 + him) from Ards to the Sweet Pea cafe at Annetts Garden Centre, Warrenpoint via Ballynahinch, Dromara, Rathfriland and Hilltown.

This was a great turnout on a cold but bright November morning.

Guy Thomson led the return run via the A2, Clough, Downpatrick, Killyleagh and Comber.



Many thanks to everyone who came along and participated in the craic and hopefully it didn't take too much elbow grease to get all the bikes clean again.

The last run for 2017 is scheduled for Saturday 16 December, but there will be an opportunity to meet up in the interim at the NDAM Christmas Dinner on 12 December. Thanks to Guy for the report.

Winter preparation

Tim Shallcross, IAM RoadSmart head of technical policy offers advice on getting your car ready for the winter season.

It's that time of year. Too late for holiday advice, too early to panic about blizzards or shortage of road salt, so every motoring organisation and journal will be dusting off the "Prepare your car for winter" press release.

Check the lights, inspect the tyres, test the antifreeze... heard it all before? Of course you have; the same advice has been trotted out every year since the Cortina was a best seller and the Mini was a small car.

Cars change and technology moves on. Let's assume you know how to check your lights and tyres; instead, here are a few tips to keep you and your 21st century car on the winter roads with everything working the way it should.

Washers. Yes, fill the washer reservoir with washer fluid and check the spray nozzles are clear, but don't forget the headlamp washers. If your car has Xenon lights (also called HID), there will be high pressure washers, usually under a flap in the front bumper. These must be working, otherwise you risk dazzling other motorists when the lens gets dirty. To check them turn on the headlamps, operate the windscreen washers and get a friend to watch the lights or look for the spray which you'll see over the front of the bonnet.



Light level switch. Talking of dazzling other drivers, if you don't have Xenon lamps, you will probably have a headlamp level switch, usually numbered 0 to 4. You're supposed to turn the switch according to how the car is loaded. Many of the complaints about dazzling headlights are because people forget to adjust the level. 0 is usually just the driver and no luggage, 4 is for a full load, but check the handbook for your car.



Leaves. Leaves never used to hurt a car but they can now! Lift the bonnet, look in the engine bay around the area of the bonnet hinges. You'll see a chamber on each side that collects water as it drains from the windscreen. These chambers have drain holes in the bottom to keep them dry, but leaves can block the drains. If water stays in the chambers it can leak into the car, often soaking sensitive electronic bits, leading to very expensive repairs. Get any leaves or other debris out of the chambers and if water is present, root around until you find the drain holes and unblock them.

Steamy windows (not the Tina Turner kind!). Get some soapy water and kitchen roll or a clean microfibre cloth and clean the insides of all the windows. Getting them squeaky clean will dramatically reduce the glare from the low autumn sun on morning and evening drives and it will make the windows much less likely to mist up in damp weather. It also means you'll waste less fuel because you won't need to turn on heated windows and air conditioning in a bid to clear them.

Cabin air filter. Today's cars have a filter for the air entering the car through the heater. Often called the pollen filter, it can often get overlooked at a service and if it's full of dirt, your heater will be much less efficient. Worse still, if it's wet – which can happen if you don't clear those leaves out of the chambers – your windows will constantly mist up as the heater pumps damp air into them. Changing the filter is usually a simple DIY job - look in the owner's handbook – and the filters are quite cheap and widely available online.

Notes for Associates

Be very aware of road surfaces at this time of the year. Farm traffic leaves mud on the road and combine this with rain and or wet leaves and you have a potentially dangerous surface. Reduce your speed, increase the distance for stopping, and aim to brake, steer and change gears smoothly as possible.



Advice on VAG (Volkswagen Audi Group) DSG or S Tronic gearboxes

For many years now our advice in relation to 'automatic' gearboxes has remained the same when waiting at traffic lights – it has always been 'apply the handbrake and keep drive engaged.' This was regarded as best practice on a generation of gearboxes where more wear was caused during the gear selection than would be caused by allowing the torque converter to idle with mild load on it.



Things have moved on in the area of automatic gear selection and some systems we regard as 'automatic' are actually more akin to a manual gearbox with assisted selection. We have recently had some communication regarding the issue of what to do during a prolonged stop with the DSG or S Tronic boxes as fitted to VAG group cars (VW, Audi, SEAT, Skoda). Conventional advice may well result in premature clutch wear (the engaged gear system will be slipping a clutch to prevent movement) and the advice given by VW is to apply the handbrake and select neutral if stationary for some time. This is to minimise wear to the system.

The activation of stop start systems is also different from manufacturer to manufacturer and what will allow the operation in a BMW may not work in a Toyota. To promote safe effective operation of not only the ever developing gearboxes, but also the environmental aids it is essential that an associate reads the vehicle and gets information with regards best practice for their particular vehicle specification.

It is not possible to offer a one size fits all piece of advice, it is as likely to vary from model to model and definitely will be different when you change manufacturer. If after reading the manual an associate is still unsure I would point them in the direction of the manufacturer's forums which have in depth discussions on such points readily available. ***By Richard Gladman, head of driving standards***

Christmas Dinner Menu 2017

Smoked Salmon, Tiger Prawn and Egg Salad with Marie Rose Sauce
Duck Terrine with Spiced Tomato Chutney, Dressed Leaves & Melba Toast
Duo of Melon and Pineapple Cocktail, Fruit Coulis & Citrus Sorbet
Traditional Home Made Vegetable Broth and Crusty Roll

Roast Stuffed Turkey & Ham served with Cranberry Sauce and Pan Gravy
6 Hours Slow Braised Beef with a Shallot, Wild Mushroom & Tarragon Jus
Pan Fried Fillet of Salmon with Garlic Butter & Asparagus
Vegetarian Lasagne & Salad

All Come With Selection of Potatoes & Vegetables

Mixed Winter Berry Pavlova & Fresh Cream
Christmas Pudding & Brandy Sauce
Vanilla Panna Cotta, Pineapple Carpaccio & Short Bread
Raspberry & White Chocolate Cheesecake

Mince Pie, Tea or Coffee Included
£25

And finally.....

More excuses made to police and or included in insurance reports:

- I had been shopping for plants all day and was on my way home. As I reached an intersection a hedge sprang up obscuring my vision and I did not see the other car.
- The pedestrian had no idea which direction to run, so I ran over him.

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.