

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



October 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

October 2019

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

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Test Passes

No test passes this month

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

September cover picture

This one had a few members scratching their heads. A lot of first thoughts were that it was Strangford to Portaferry but the lighthouse in the picture caused confusion. The answer is that it was the Carlingford Lough ferry from Greencastle to Greenore. Congratulations to Norman Shearer, Guy Thomson, Annie McFarland and Alan Leonard (who also got the name of the lighthouse - the Haulbowline). A mention is also due to David Harcourt and Simon Beckett who suggested Warrenpoint and I'll give them the benefit of the doubt that this is the ferry they meant.

This month's cover is a bit more difficult so a clue is that it is in Donegal. It's a great single track road (with grass growing in the middle in many places). Just the sort of place Kyle likes to take the bikers! And no, it's not Glengesh which featured as a cover a couple of years ago.

Dates for your diary

22 October - STAC 4 Bends and cornering

29 October - STAC 5 - Roundabouts and junctions

5 November - STAC 6 - Overtaking

12 November - Group Night - Susan Spratt, British Horse Society (Note: venue changed to Donaghadee Community Centre)

26 November - STAC 7 - Motorways and dual carriageways

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.

29th Annual General Meeting

Chairman's Report

David's Chairman's report covered the main events of the year highlighting the range of speakers at the Group nights, and our outside visits - to the cinema in Comber, to Crumlin Road Gaol and the ice-cream run to the Rhinka in Islandmagee. He also referred to loss of Guy Thomson (double masters car and bike) from our Associate training as Guy has become an Examiner. In the last 12 months we have had 28 Associates enrolling with us and a total of 14 test passes up to the end of August, 9 of which were F1RSTS.

Membership report

Simon's membership report referred to the change in the way Group membership subscriptions are done,



moving from two subscription dates depending on when a Member joined, to a single date of April. This year the change has meant pro-rata payments but from April 2020 everyone will be on the single subscription (£18)

date of 1 April. This change will reduce the administrative burden on Simon. GDPR means that we cannot hold personal data on anyone who is not a paid up member and in future Members who have not (despite reminders) renewed by 31 August will be regarded as having opted out of Group membership. Total membership now stands at 106 an increase of 17.8% over last year. Membership numbers are 56 car, 33 bike, 15 dual category and 2 honorary.

Treasurer's report

Gareth was not available to present the treasurer's report so Simon did a double act. The Group maintains a strong end-of-year balance sheet and has continued to benefit from regular, healthy cash flow from membership renewals & Advanced Driving & Riding Courses. The majority of Members now pay their subscriptions by bank transfer.

| | | |
|---|---|----------|
| Opening balance (carried from September 2018) | - | £1564.81 |
| Annual Income | - | £3850.00 |
| Annual Expenditure | - | £3556.61 |
| Annual Surplus | - | £ 293.39 |
| Closing Balance | - | £1858.20 |
| Fixed Assets | - | £ 294.99 |

Referring to significant items of income and expenditure he pointed out that clubhouse rental remains a significant cost but is essential for our classroom programme.

Catering expenses encompass Tuesday night tea/coffee, occasional Bike Observer training events & AGM catering

The Group Lap-top, I-Pad, Light-Pro & 1-way radios were purchased in 2015. All 4 assets are being depreciated using a straight line depreciation over 5 years. Tea towels & ceramic cups were bought last year to save on recurring expenditure for disposable cups on Tuesday evenings, and is being depreciated using straight line depreciation over 2 years. Other group assets remain usable but their depreciation is completed.

Committee Elections

David handed over to Ronnie Brown to conduct the elections to the committee for 2018/19:

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chairman: David Harcourt | Treasurer: Gareth Hughes |
| Secretary: vacant | Leslie Ashe |
| Simon Beckett | Colin Hay |
| Bruce Steele | Kyle Thomson |

Other Committee members are Ronnie Brown, Lisa Carson, Annie McFarland, Frank Robertson, John Seawright

Presentations

David presented the awards. The Two Jaguars for car member of the year went to Martin Watterson. The motorcycle award, the Crystal Helmet, went to Davy Kane and the Crystal Obelisk to Leslie Ashe who is standing down after 7 years as Group Secretary. Brian Gillies was also presented with his certificate for achieving a F1RST on his motorcycle test. Unfortunately Angela couldn't be with us at the AGM and David told Brian he missed out on a hug from her. David offered Brian a hug instead!!





Guest speaker - Davey Mulligan

Davey who runs Cornerstone Off-Road Motorcycle Academy spoke to us about his 40 years on 2 wheels off-road and 4 wheels leading to his current position running the Off-Road Motorcycle Academy.

His early experiences were from his father's milk float and later his father's TK Bedford lorry where he had to stand to work the clutch. He purchased a 1966 Bultaco trials bike for £180 and this rewarded him with his first bike injury to his eyebrow. By 1979 he was running a Datsun 100A (complete with furry dice!), he had a 1977 Maico and joined the police cadets. A year later he had a 1978 Yamaha 250E and in 1981 came first in a support race to the World Sidecar Championships.



By 1982 he was driving police V8 Land Rovers which required huge biceps as they had no power steering and his car had graduated to an Toyota Celica ST2000. To purchase an engagement ring in 1983 the bike had to go and marriage followed in 1984. However, his biking career was not finished as a surprise Christmas present was an ex factory 490 Maico.

On the 4-wheel front his transport in 1986 was a 1-litre Talbot Samba (bit of a comedown from the Toyota) but this was replaced in 1987 by a Ford XR2 (for younger readers this was a hot hatch based on the Ford Fiesta). He had also acquired a Mercedes van (hand painted with a 4-inch brush) to transport the bike and which he used to drive on a daily basis to work and back. 1988 saw the arrival of a Ford Orion (the saloon version of the front wheel drive Escort hatchback).

1989 he took the police bike test at a time when the police were using the BMW R80. He also took the police advanced driving test which involved 4 weeks intense training in 2.8 Ford Sierra 4x4s. During a race in 1990 on a 250 Suzuki he had been red-flagged and when he stopped he discovered that he was the only competitor to make it up a hill!

By 1991 personal transport was a Mk1 Golf GTi and he had a relationship with Russell Off-Road Motorcycles where he would prepare second-hand bikes for sale and in return he would race one of their bikes at the week-end.

Between 1990 and 1996 he had to deal with 9 serious road traffic accidents involving stolen cars saying that there is no joy in joy-riding. By 1996 he was back on the police bike based in Lisburn and in 1989/99 the bikes were Honda Transalp 600's. By 2001 he was back in the police Land Rovers, but this time they had power steering. The police bikes were used for closing the roads at the Ulster Grand Prix from 1996 to 2002 but in 2002 Davy suffered the loss of a close friend and colleague. Come 2006 he was medically retired having suffered PTSD from witnessing so many traumas and also related to 3 close friends who had committed suicide.

His recovery was helped by going back to clubman racing and undertaking a number of rehabilitation courses including achieving a teaching certificate. On the motocross side he was working at motocross training schools in Spain doing maintenance on the bikes. He is also running the Cornerstone Off-road Motorcycle Academy near Larne which provides motocross training and caters



for different age ranges down to the very young.

The death of a lady in Collin Glen when she was hit by an off-road bike was a trigger for a motorcycle awareness project funded by the Department of Justice from assets recovery money using money seized from criminals. The Department of Communities has provided a trailer, bikes and safety equipment.

The idea is to help reduce the ongoing anti-social problem of illegal, damaging and potentially dangerous use of off-road motor vehicles on open ground within estates and other sites, by educating young people in motorbike safety and giving them a safe place in which to learn how to ride. It is aimed at groups of young people in locations identified as experiencing problems with this type of anti-social behaviour across Greater Belfast and Lisburn, to encourage the safe use of off-road motorbikes. Davey's Academy is supporting the project's delivery. There are 3 parts to the course, classroom sessions, working on bikes and riding. Of the 15 young people who started the course 12 finished and Davey remarked that the outcomes for these young people have been massive.

Davey concluded by talking about the lifelong friendships he has developed referring in particular to Gordon Crockard and more latterly with Jonathan Rea for whom he was a mechanic on the practice bikes after Jonathan won his fourth world championship. He said that working with Jonathan Rea was a privilege as was working at the other end of the spectrum with the kids and young people.

In recent years we have had representatives from IAM RoadSmart HQ as our guest speaker at the AGM but this year Davey providing an interesting, entertaining and inspiring talk was a welcome change from the dry format of the AGM and the usual HQ statistical presentation. It was a great talk and we wish Davey all the best for the future for both his work at the academy and in educating young people in the safe use of off-road motorcycles.

Deer

In this country we are used to coming across sheep or cattle on the road. What other animals may you encounter on your journey?

Observation and anticipation are key to all sound decisions you make whilst driving, and how to avoid animals is no different. IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, has put together some tips to keep you safe when driving through deer territory (and this includes parts of North Down - you've seen the signs - your editor has seen deer crossing the bottom of Bradshaw's Brae):



- Collisions with deer are statistically higher during the autumn months due to this being their mating season. According to the Government, deer are at a higher risk between sunset to midnight, also the hours before and after sunrise. October through to December is considered a high-risk period.

- If you see deer (or other wild animal) warning signs, be sure to slow down and be on high alert. It is likely they will cross the road in this area.

- Deer are herd animals so if you see one, it's likely there are more. Stay vigilant, if one steps out in front of your car, more may follow.

- Be prepared to stop and try to warn following drivers with early brake lights or hazards.

- Try not to swerve to avoid hitting deer – you may drive into a ditch or oncoming traffic.

- You will most likely brake hard to avoid colliding with an animal, be aware that the traffic behind may not be as alert as you.

What to do if you've hit a deer or see an injured animal on the roadside:

- Drive to a safe place and pull over

- Call the police to alert them of the animal and be precise about where it's located • Do not approach the animal - it may cause further injury or another accident.



• Richard Gladman said: “A collision with any animal is unpleasant and we should make every effort to avoid this. A collision with something as large as a deer will be catastrophic. It will likely cause injury to vehicle occupants and itself. It will definitely cause damage to your vehicle - even if it's as small as a Muntjac. Slow down a little and remember we are sharing the wildlife's habitat and not the other way around.”

Autumn

It's now officially autumn so we're going to take a look at some of the hazards you may come across. Follow these tips by IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, to make sure you stay safe whilst driving throughout autumn.

- Check your battery before the winter arrives. In winter we often place a strain on the battery with lights, heated screens, seats and the air conditioner to demist and keep us warm. If there are any sign of your car battery struggling now, it's likely to let you down as it gets colder
- Prepare for darker mornings and evenings. You'll be doing a lot more driving in the dark when autumn hits, so ensure you're confident whilst driving in the dark
- That low winter sun can be an issue so keep a pair of sunglasses in the car and also make use of the sun visor too. If you are dazzled, slow down immediately
- Now is the time to check your antifreeze levels. The good thing about antifreeze is that it contains additives that prevent corrosion and rust, and during the summer it helps keep the engine from overheating
- Top up the windscreen washer with de-icing additive - the colder it gets the stronger the solution needs to be
- Check your windscreen wipers. If they begin to blur the front/rear window or begin making an awful squeaking noise, it's time to replace them with new ones
- Have a look at your car headlights. It is dangerous for you and for the other road users if your lights do not work properly. Changing a bulb is often a complicated job these days so do it at home and not at the roadside
- Leaves or pine needles on the road can turn into a mushy film which obscures potholes, road markings and increases stopping distance. Anticipate problems when you approach woods and trees and slow down until the road is clear
- Watch out for animals. October through to December is considered the highest risk of deer collisions in the UK, so take notice of any wildlife signs that you come across and take extra care
- There may be more distractions over the next few months with events taking place, such as halloween night. There may be fireworks going off so ensure you're alert for any scared animals that may run into the road. Also, you'll have some ghouls and ghosts walking the streets so be sure to look out for them





Richard said: “As the temperature drops, your car is a nice cosy place to be when it is working properly - sound preparation will help your journey go smoothly.

“Frosty mornings and falling leaves might be picturesque but they can cause all sorts of problems, particularly for two-wheeled road users. Give motorcyclists and cyclists more room and anticipate their actions.

“Drivers also need to stay alert for blocked drains and localised flooding at this time of year. Your aim should always be to have a clear view of the changing seasons around you, and for other road users to be able to see you.”

And finally.....

Spotted on Facebook:



And from a court case in the USA:

ATTORNEY: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

WITNESS: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

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