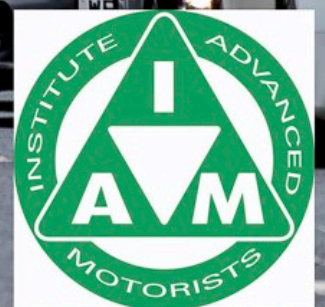


The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



October 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

October 2017

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

Vol 20.8

Group Contact - David Harcourt

Tel No 07760 578444

[e-mail: david.harcourt@gmail.com](mailto:david.harcourt@gmail.com)

New Members

This month we would like to welcome to the Group car members Karen Boutros, Bill Moore and Sheila Palmer. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Advanced Tests

Congratulations this month to motorcycle member

Glen Wilson

Sadly, motorcycle member Garth Maxwell passed away shortly after passing his motorcycle test.

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

Congratulations also to Jen Brownlie and Alan McCartney in becoming our latest IMI Qualified Observers

Garth Maxwell

Shortly after passing his Advanced Motorcycle test on 5 October Garth was admitted to hospital and sadly passed away on 18 October.

Garth was an active and enthusiastic group member and he rarely missed a group monthly bike run.

The picture shows Garth geared up for the January bike run which took place in frosty conditions. He will be sadly missed by the members of the motorcycle section.



September cover picture

The September cover picture was the Knock dual carriageway at Tudor Drive looking back towards the top of the Cregagh Road. Well spotted by Angela Bell, Joyce Cairns, Ronnie Fails, Alistair Gillespie and Ivan Greenfield.

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.

- 24 October - STAC 5 - Roundabouts and junctions
- 31 October - STAC 6 - Overtaking
- 7 November - STAC 7 Motorways and dual carriageways
- 14 November - **Group Night - Tabletop rally - see covering email**
- 28 November - STAC 8 Manoeuvring
- 5 December - Additional driving practice
- 12 December - **Group Night - Christmas dinner - Carnalea Golf Club**

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 was successfully held in Carnalea Golf Club in 2016 and the Committee has decided to return there on 12 December 2017. This evening is open to relatives and friends of members. As usual we will ask you to make your menu choices and payment in advance. Menu details and the cost will be circulated shortly.

2017 Annual General Meeting

We had a good turnout for the AGM. Our guest speaker was Ken Keir OBE Chair of IAM Roadsmart, and we had visitors from Cornmarket and Lisburn (Motorcycle) Groups, Belfast Group, Mid-Ulster Group, and Staff Examiner Charlie Stewart.



Proceedings opened with the Chairman's report. Chairman David was away and sent his apologies but he did provide a Chairman's report which Gareth delivered. David apologised for not being able to lend Gareth a better shirt (for those not in the know, David has what appears to be an unending collection of Hawaiian shirts) but Gareth countered that he had better taste in shirts.

David's report covered the progress the Group had made in adopting the new standards and course materials, commenting that in his view it was the same standard with some of the fussiness removed so that we can focus on road safety.

His report went on cover the range of speakers, the number of activities undertaken by the Group in the last year and highlighted that we had 13 test passes - 6 on the car side and 7 on the bike side. A satisfying number of these were F1RSTS. Also we have carried out 11 car and one bike taster sessions of whom 6 have gone on to sign up for the Advanced driving course.

Membership Secretary Frank opened with his usual reminder to embarrass anyone who hadn't yet paid their Group subscription. For technical reasons the Autumn renewal letters issued late and the final score of members is still changing. At the time of "going to press" we had a total of 76 members plus 3 honorary members - 44 car members and 32 bikes. Frank commented on the fact that the January 2017 STAC attracted only one new member despite the Christmas discount and the Group cash-back plan. The current STAC has attracted 8 car Associate members which is encouraging.

Gareth took the floor again to present the Treasurer's report. He took us through the income and expenditure and the balance sheet and reported that the Group maintains a strong end-of-year balance and has continued to benefit from regular, healthy cashflow from membership renewals and from Advanced driving and riding courses. The main item of expenditure is the rental of the Boathouse for our drivers classroom programme and for the monthly Group nights. Since November

we no longer have to pay for a room for our monthly Committee meetings as we have been able to make use of facilities in Carnalea Golf Club free of charge. He also noted that significant numbers of members are paying their Group subscriptions by bank transfer.

Presentations

Our guest speaker Ken Keir made the presentations of the annual awards. The Two Jaguars Award for car member of the year went to John Seawright, Annie McFarland received the Crystal Obelisk and the motorcycle award, the Crystal Helmet, went to Kyle Thompson. He also presented Joyce Cairns with her test certificate.



John



Annie



Kyle



Joyce

Committee elections

Gareth handed over to Ken Keir to oversee the elections to conduct the elections of officers and committee members for the 2017/18 year:

Chairman: David Harcourt	Treasurer: Gareth Hughes
Secretary: Leslie Ashe	Frank Robertson
Simon Beckett	Ryan Corry
Alistair Gillespie	Colin Hay
Stephen Massey	Alan McCartney
Annie McFarland	Guy Thomson
Kyle Thompson	

Having concluded the formal proceedings, Gareth handed over to guest speaker IAM Roadsmart Chairman Ken Keir OBE. Ken began by thanking all those present for their work as volunteers for IAM Roadsmart. He said that a lot of Groups feel that the work they do isn't appreciated but he said that the IAM would be nothing without the Groups. He explained that the organisation is a charity with the objectives of improving the standards of driving and riding, the improvement of road safety, the promotion of road safety and finally the administration of a nationally recognised advanced test.

He then explained the background to the members of the Council of Trustees and emphasised that they are also volunteers - they are not paid. They are responsible for the well-being and governance of the charity, they approve the budget, major projects, monitor progress and results and ensure that the charitable objectives are being met. They do not get involved in the day-to-day running of the organisation - responsibility for that rests with Sarah Sillars and the management team.

IAM Roadsmart is the largest charity dedicated to road safety with a total membership in the region of 92,000 and some 20,000 people actively involved as volunteers. No other organisation in the UK has as many local groups. However, it faces the same challenges as other organisations with an ageing membership and the difficulty of recruiting young people who are not prepared to be in clubs.



The organisation's strategic goal is to be the number one organisation for Government, stakeholders and industry as the recognised authority for driving and riding standards and expertise. Each year some 1700 people are killed or seriously injured (KSI) on the roads and there are 180,000 casualties in minor accidents (almost 500 per day) and to address this a consortium of key stakeholders headed up by Sarah Sillars will shortly be announcing a target for the reduction of the number of KSIs. One area of focus is to create road safety momentum in areas where there is a high number of accidents.

IAM Roadsmart conducted research which identified a number of areas of concern amongst drivers. These included other road users, bad weather, night driving, traffic levels and congestion, parking and navigation, and transporting young children. One area of concern for female drivers was driving in and parking in multi-storey car-parks. Ken remarked that one Chief Constable in England described training for the basic driving tests as preparation for the test, not preparation for driving. To meet the needs of already qualified drivers who do not wish to do the advanced test IAM Roadsmart is developing online training which will be backed up by training modules.

And for existing members he spoke about the new Fellow membership which was launched in June 2017 and has had 200 expressions of interest and 20 sales to date (including our own Graham Deane who was featured in the latest issue of the Roadsmart magazine). A bus company in England has signed up 800 drivers to undergo this 3 year retest scheme. Currently negotiations are under way with insurance companies to see if they will take Fellow membership into account when setting premiums.

The final area of his talk was about the development of driverless cars and on a show of hands it was clear that amongst the audience there was a desire to continue to be in charge of their vehicles rather than the other way round. However, as a contrast he remarked that in flying him to Belfast the pilots probably did very little of the flying. With 90% of accidents being down to human error, automation in driving will come. However, as Graham mentioned in his talk last month, there will be times when the

vehicle automation systems cannot cope or fail, in which case the driver must take over. This will require a whole different approach to driving and driver training. As to the timescale for full automation he said that the average life of many modern cars is 12-14 years and these would have to work through the system before the majority of cars on the roads are autonomous.

As usual when we have an engaging speaker, time was against us. Ken finished by once again thanking us as volunteers who give up our time and experience to help the advancement of road safety. Gareth thanked Ken for taking the time to come over to Northern Ireland and is a recognition of the commitment of IAM Roadsmart to the work of local Groups. He also thanked Annie for arranging the refreshments.

Winter tyres

Winter tyres are not suitable for all year round – regular tyres give better performance when temperatures are higher and roads dry – but they do make sense for drivers living in more remote areas where winter conditions are likely to be more severe for longer or for those who feel they have to travel no matter what the weather.

An alternative to changing tyres is to carry snow chains or snow socks to fit when the snow gets deep. Snow socks are made of a strong fabric which grips snow – they stretch to fit over the tyre.

Either of these can be used with standard tyres and they fit quite easily into a corner of the boot, or garage in summer. The weather we experience in the UK is nowhere near as severe as many other countries, but motorists in the hardest-hit areas may feel reassured to have the extra grip winter tyres afford.

But weigh up the expense. A full set of winter tyres will cost £400 - £500, and most drivers won't detect any significant difference in grip until the temperature is freezing. Most importantly, if conditions are really treacherous you should just consider postponing the journey and staying at home. Even if the mercury drops to below zero, safe and sensible driving will mean you shouldn't have any cause for emergency stops, and so little need to test your tyres to their limits.



Summer tyre



Winter tyre

Whatever tyres are fitted, regular checks of tread depth and pressure are even more important in winter. Performance in snow, ice or sub-zero conditions will reduce significantly if the tread depth falls below 3mm. Pressure should be checked with the tyres cold – that means they should have been driven no more than a mile.

Do not be tempted to reduce pressure to increase grip. Tyres with low pressure do not have any more grip and are prone to overheating and blowouts.

I have had a set of winter tyres fitted to my car over the last 4 winters. OK so we didn't get much snow here over that period but on a snowy winter trip to Scotland they came into their own, giving confidence driving on snow covered roads and, in particular, managing to climb an icy hill where my brother lives when he was unable to get his car out. They also provide greater reassurance in the wet. It's a nuisance having to get them changed twice a year so the ideal thing would be to have a second set of wheels with the winter tyres or try cross-climate tyres which are supposed to provide some winter benefits as well as able to be used during the warmer months.

The link below will take you to an Auto Express video comparing summer and winter tyres in the snow and the wet:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIP_34ltdWI

Autonomous Emergency Braking

A coalition of road safety and motor industry bodies, including IAM RoadSmart, are encouraging private and fleet car buyers to insist on Autonomous Emergency Braking when they buy their next new car – a measure which could save hundreds of lives on our roads.

The coalition is highlighting a simple but effective way to reduce death and injury on every journey. Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) systems apply the brakes to avoid an impending crash with another vehicle, pedestrian or cyclist. It is estimated that pedestrian and cyclist sensing AEB systems could potentially save 1,100 lives and 122,860 casualties in the UK over the next ten years.



If more car buyers insist on these systems Thatcham Research calculate that they could deliver an extra saving of 308 fewer deaths and serious injuries by 2025 and save society £138million.

Sarah Sillars, chief executive officer of IAM RoadSmart, said: "Road safety is a shared responsibility and if individuals and fleets ensure their new cars are fitted with AEB we can all make a contribution to safer roads for vulnerable users now."

The shape of things to come..... Tesla S at a charging point, Mougins, France



And finally..... while on the subject of tyres

How's your knowledge about tyres - try the test in the link below-

<https://www.tyresafe.org/tyre-safety-test/>

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