

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



September 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

September 2019

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

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New Members

This month we welcome to the Group car members Catherine Duncan, Paul Corrie, Shannon McIlroy, Ian Morrow. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Test Passes

Congratulations this month to bike members

Martin Fell

Robert Mitchell

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

August 2019 cover

I thought this would be an easy one as it features on many car observed runs on a STAC night. Also the road sign for cows combined with a bus stop featured a while ago as the "And finally ...". feature. It was the A48 approaching Six Road Ends from Donaghadee. Congratulations to Norman Shearer, Angela Bell, Guy Thomson, Annie McFarland, Bruce Steele and David Harcourt.

This month's cover is something a bit different but can you identify where it is? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and of course a mention in the next Road Observer.

Dates for your diary

24 September - STAC 2 - IPSGA (Information, Position, Speed, Gear, Acceleration)
1 October - STAC 3 - Core driving skills
8 October - Group Night - AGM - speaker Davy Mulligan - Cornerstone Off-Road Motorcycling
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
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.

September Group Night

Ross Davidson was our guest speaker for September. His was a story of what can go wrong and it doesn't go much more seriously wrong and still be able to tell the tale. Ross suffered a life-changing accident on a Honda scooter called Betty in Thailand in 2017.

He started by going back to his childhood when as a 4 year old he came across "The Ultimate Motorcycle Book" which covers the history of motorcycles and their specifications. He was hooked.

Aged 10 he had his first crash, riding a 75cc Yamaha at a friends farmhouse, when he came off into stones on a bank. This didn't deter him and aged 17 against his mother's wishes he paid a £500 deposit on a bike promising to pay the rest. However he made a mistake of leaving the keys in his pocket where they were discovered by his mother. His father reassured him that he would talk her round but unfortunately his father didn't win the argument and Ross lost his £500 deposit.

Later when he was working in a bar and was generally depressed, he decided to go to Thailand. He used motorcycle taxis to get about Bangkok and he showed a video he shot while riding on the back of of one through the mayhem of night-time Bangkok traffic.

With a friend he visited some of the more remote parts of the country on "Betty" visiting isolated villages where elephants roamed between the houses. He talked about the sense of freedom when he was out on the scooter.



On the evening of 8 December he received a call from a friend called Amy who was unhappy about the male she was in the company of and asked Ross to collect her. When he got there he had a some beers (more than a few he said) to appear friendly with the male and eventually they made their exit. Ross had only one helmet which he gave to Amy. Riding back wearing shorts, a t-shirt

and flip-flops at about 30mph his flip-flops got stuck in the gears. Amy managed to jump off the back and sustained nothing more than a scratch on her arm. For Ross it was a different story, he hit a tree and severed his femoral artery (the main arterial supply to the thigh and leg), smashed bones and had a bleed in his brain.

Being in a remote area it took some time for an ambulance to arrive but a tourniquet saved his life. It took 3 and a half hours for the ambulance to reach a hospital where he eventually had surgery 13 times and many blood transfusions. On top of this he suffered sepsis 3 times. Because of the loss of the blood supply to his right leg he underwent two amputations, the first just above the knee and a second another 10 centimetres higher.

He openly admitted he suffered from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and that he found the recovery process tough. However, not just for himself but also for family and friends.

After 6 weeks confined to bed he got a wheelchair and this was the start of recovering his independence. He related a story about when he was in the Royal Victoria Hospital and on opening a family sized box of Maltesers he managed to scatter them all over the floor. He was unable to reach them, was reluctant to call a nurse to pick them up and discovered that he could lift them individually with his toes - this was a turning point bolstering his independence. The wheelchair gave Ross the opportunity to get himself about and as he got stronger he ventured further within the Royal late in the evening, eventually visiting other floors and he had the opportunity to socialise with other patients in the hospital. The wheelchair also allowed him to visit Musgrave Park independently for physiotherapy and rehabilitation. He was fitted with a prosthetic leg and was walking for the first time 5 months after the accident. 12 weeks ago he acquired a more hi-tech prosthetic which has microprocessors and servo motors to enable him to walk and move more naturally without having to throw the prosthetic forward as he walks. And yes, his prosthetic leg needs recharging! This has made a great difference but he would like to upgrade to one which is waterproof!



As a former rugby player, around this time he was asked if he would be interested in sport and in particular wheelchair basketball. He agreed to give it a go and joined the Knights Wheelchair basketball Club. Wheelchair basketball has been a major part of his rehabilitation and he has travelled all over Ireland to take part. It gave him a new sense of identity and his journey continues as he has a place available for a year of wheelchair basketball in the Sheffield Steelers academy and he is going into his second year studying psychology at the Open University.

Ross was brutally honest that the accident was entirely his fault. He had been drinking and his clothing was unsuitable for being on a scooter. His message to everyone is enjoy the road but be safe, surround yourself with people who care, communicate with people closest to you, keep track of your diet and take up sport or maintain an exercise routine.

We had a quite lengthy and fascinating question and answer session with Ross. We appreciated him being so open about himself, about what happened and how he is using his strength and determination to forge a positive future for himself.

IAM views on mobile phone use in vehicles

IAM RoadSmart says it's time to bust the myth of multi-tasking behind the wheel, to ensure drivers are fully aware of how dangerous a hands-free mobile phone can be.

The report Road Safety: Driving While Using a Mobile Phone states that “using a mobile phone while



driving is dangerous, with potentially catastrophic consequences,” IAM RoadSmart says there needs to be much stricter controls on the use of hands-free mobile phones in cars – and they remain a major distraction to the task of driving.

However, the charity said that it cannot see how any ban can be enforced, with a lack of police numbers meaning drivers feel they won't get caught.

The House of Commons Transport Committee has issued its report on the use of hands-free mobile phones with MPs calling for tougher restrictions, enforcement and education on the issue.

Official statistics show that in 2017 there were 773 casualties; including 43 deaths and 135 serious injuries, in collisions where a driver using a mobile phone was a contributory factor.

The figures show that the number of people killed or seriously injured has risen steadily since 2011, however alarmingly the rate of enforcement has dropped by more than two-thirds since then.

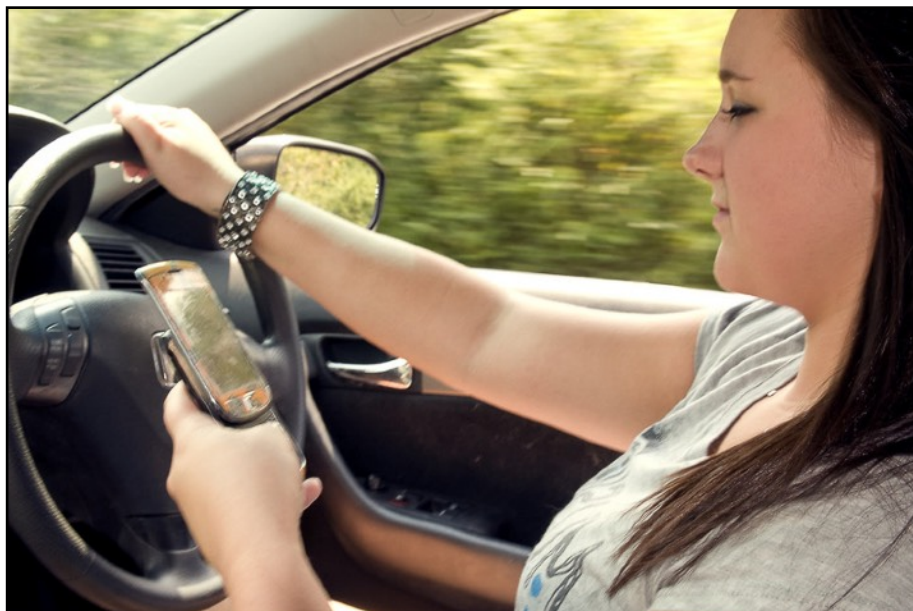
Two years ago, motorists caught using a hand-held phone have faced a punishment of six points on their licence and a £200 fine – a doubling of the previous penalty.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart director of policy and research, said: “IAM RoadSmart strongly welcomed the House of Commons Transport Committee report as it fully confirms what we have known for some time – multi tasking is a myth and any form of smartphone use at the wheel is distracting.

“Clarifying the law so that any use of a phone that involves holding it or placing in the driver's lap is made illegal should be a top government priority. It doesn't matter if it's for music selection or social media updates, it all increases risk behind the wheel particularly for new drivers.

“New laws and tougher penalties are welcome but will only work if the fear of being caught is increased. This can be done through more high-profile policing but could also given an immediate boost by issuing clear guidelines for the use of mobile speed cameras to prosecute any driver they spot with a phone to their ear.

“The final piece in the jigsaw for IAM RoadSmart would be a revamping of the mobile phone awareness course with every first offender being sent on one to see and feel the real impact of their behaviour.”



He added: “Technology is changing however, and with the introduction of call blocking while in motion and other such measures, we would support the legislative change to ban hands-free to match hand-held.”

IAM RoadSmart also called for the greater use of education campaigns to ensure drivers are aware of the risks of a hands-free call.

Presentations

Angela Bell, Group Member and the NI Group Co-ordinator presented F1RST certificates to Justin Patty and Martin Watterson:



September bike mega run

We started out with 9 eager souls at the Applegreen on the M2, leaving promptly at 8:00am to head for our first stop in Mosside. A small gathering at the bronze dog for some photo's and then off to find an old railway bridge near Limavady. The road was so good we got carried away and forgot to stop finding us heading towards the Dungloe photo stop of another bridge. This one proved harder to find and had various trips along roads with grass up the middle and the satnavs trying to send us down some dirt tracks and peoples lanes. Having found it and then getting on our way towards Castlederg where we were searching for The Garvagh Hall, some fantastic roads, some on purpose and some at the suggestion of the satnav, however it was an eagle eyed Kyle who spotted the sign saying "Garvagh" and turned us round to find the hall. The weather had held off until then with glorious sunshine along the North & North West, it would get a little wetter for the next few stops.



Mosside bronze dog on the left



Our next stop was in Belleek where we were looking for "the sofa" at the Pebble in the Pond, this time the sat nav worked and brought us straight to the point. After various poses, snacks and sorting waterproofs we were off again, this time on the long trek down to Cavan. Our subject this time was a monument to some local musicians in Kilcogy, finding this one was easy enough, however trying to leave the trusty satnavs were trying to send us in circles, so we followed the signs for Cavan and then Monaghan knowing that the next stop was in Newbliss. After some great roads we reached the



Newbliss Church of Ireland and were able to catch our breath for a little while with some photography and traffic dodging.

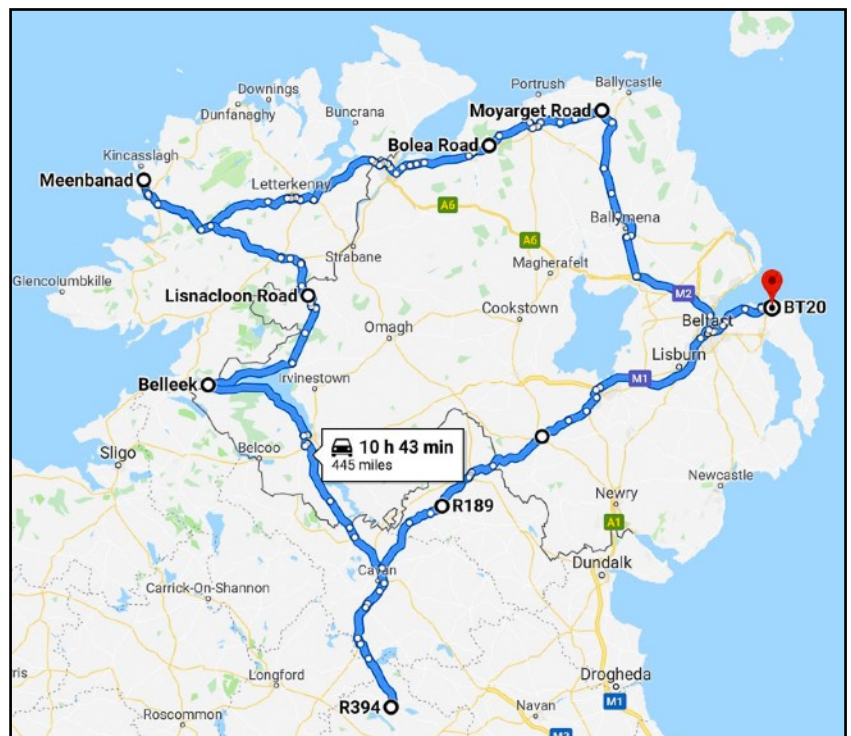


Light was getting away from us at this stage and the final stop in Killyleagh was looking doubtful. Our next stop was going to be the Master McGrath statue in Lurgan and as it was on the way back we thought we just had to complete that one before hitting the motorway and the final ride back to North Down. As we entered Sydenham everyone stared going their separate ways and I'm sure there are a few tired people, not to mention some very dirty bikes to be cleaned.

Some interesting observations about our mix of bikes for the day

- 1 The BMW GS adventure still needed one fuel stop for the run
- 2 The VFR can handle some almost off road conditions (just about)
- 3 Phil was glad he didn't bring the sportsbike
- 4 The 650 Versys was able to cover 260 miles before the light started flashing.

Departure time was 8:00am at the Applegreen service station on the M2, we arrived back in Bangor around 9:30pm having covered approximately 450 miles for the day. Not our usual type of run and great to see such an eager turnout with quite a few braving it to the end.



We are always looking for people to lead runs for us, if you would like to volunteer to take a run please let Kyle or Simon know.

Thanks for Simon Beckett for organising and for the report and pictures.

Challenge for the car side - any takers to organise a social run?

And finally.....

Spotted in the Long Hole carpark in Bangor - BMW 2800CS in immaculate condition (1971 registration).



Interesting sign spotted by Lisa Carson:



Captions please

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