

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



August 2022





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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

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New Members

In this issue we welcome to the Group car members Graham Scott, Michael Jewitt, Chloe McKee, Michael Connolly, Billie Wilson, Sam Boyle, Callum Skeffington, and Chris Kerr. 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
motorcycle member

Glen Hamilton

who achieved a F1RST pass with top marks in every category
and to car member

Shannon McIlroy

Summer 2022 cover picture

The summer cover picture was a very wet Ballynahinch. Congratulations this month to (in order of receipt) Ralph Magee, James O'Brien, David Harcourt, Norman Shearer, Davie Hall and Ivan Greenfield.

Do you know where this month's cover is? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the next Road Observer. Submit your answers to: secretaryndam@gmail.com

Boathouse refurbishment

In the last issue I advised that we would not get back into the Boathouse until the beginning of October. We have since been advised by the Council that because there is stonework on the affected wall a firm of stonemasons is required to effect the repairs and the earliest they can start the contract is 1 September. It is likely therefore that we will continue to meet in Donaghadee Community Centre until Christmas. We will keep you posted about any changes.

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC (**S**hort **T**erm **A**ssociate **C**ourse) nights for car Associates and the regular bike runs (notified by email to bike members and also on Facebook) we have a varied programme for the Group Nights. Unless otherwise stated meetings will be held in Donaghadee Community Centre.

- 9 August - STAC enrolment and demonstration drives
- 6 September - STAC session 1
- 13 September - Group night - Return visit to James Black Restorations (details to follow)
- 27 September - STAC session 2
- 4 October - STAC session 3
- 11 October - Annual General meeting - guest speaker Dr Ash Kumar
- 25 October - STAC Session 4
- 1 November - STAC session 5
- 8 November - Group Night - Drive/ride out (details to follow)
- 22 November - STAC session 6
- 29 November - STAC session 7
- 6 December - STAC session 8
- 13 December - Christmas Dinner venue TBA

IAM RoadSmart Masters re-qualification by David Harcourt

I recently had an intense morning with the examiner as I renewed my National Observer and my Local Observer Assessor qualifications, which I made all the more difficult for myself by requalifying my IAM RoadSmart Masters on the same day. The NO and LOA qualifications, overseen by the Institute of Motor Industries, are the official IAM credentials for observing, to ensure we work consistently to the IAM standard and prepare associates accordingly. But what is the Masters?

IAM RoadSmart offer the [Masters](#) as the highest standard of civilian driving or riding ability in the country. It is only available to members, and there are no exemption criteria regardless of background and existing qualifications. It is a tough test of up to 100 miles on unfamiliar roads, with the expectation of extremely brisk progress at every available opportunity. It has been described as “police blue light equivalent, but within the speed limit”, but I cannot vouch for that as I do not have a police background. The examiner expected me to use every single available horsepower to get briskly and purposefully to the speed limit any time the opportunity presented. That particular expectation made my test more difficult as my car is powerful with very strong acceleration, but it’s big, heavy, not agile, leisurely with its gear changes, and does not deliver the power well except in a straight line. That is, my test would have been considerably less difficult in a more modest vehicle.



As with the IAM RoadSmart test, I met the examiner at a public place, and he took a few minutes for admin, though he made short work of that as we've both lost count of the number of times he has tested and retested me. Though associates might be nervous about meeting the examiner on test day, I'd like to point out that there is some comfort in anonymity, while there's another layer of nerves and potential embarrassment when you're re-qualifying with someone you know. Indeed, in preparation for my tests, I had a practice run the previous week with one of our more experienced observers, and the drive was a bit short of my desired standard, which I think amused him as much as it embarrassed me. At the end of that run, my observer asked "what's this button for?", and it's a suspension setting I seldom use, but it reminded me to set it on test day to stiffen the suspension for a more responsive drive.



For my Masters test, we did about 90 minutes of motorway, dual carriageway, town and country, with some extremely challenging B and C roads, where the visibility was restricted by overgrown verges and the size and weight of my car was a significant disadvantage. At times I was driving on the crown of the road to avoid potholes, which he noted "made the drive a lot smoother on what were challenging roads; most impressive". At one point a truck emerging from the right did not take account of my approach, so I had to brake firmly as he carried on regardless and crossed into my lane. We later emerged from a side road onto a B road, behind a learner. As there was no prospect of an overtake, I settled into a comfortable following position so as not to crowd the learner, but after several miles there was an overtake window of just a couple of seconds, which I was unable to use as I was a couple of car lengths too far back to grab the opportunity. That missed overtake is probably the best illustration I can offer as to the standard of a Masters drive – a single missed overtake cost me three marks, one each for Planning, Overtaking and Progress.

Anyway, I am very pleased that I passed with distinction, and my certificate is in the post. I received my Masters Test Report later the same day, and it has very detailed and constructive comments on the drive, which he described as having lots of 'Sparkle'. Sparkle is hard to define, but we know it when we see it. It's when all elements of the drive come together to deliver a joyful, progressive drive, more than just a journey from A to B. The cover letter for my test report offers congratulations, and asks that "if you enjoyed the challenge of the Master Driver programme that you recommend it to your friends and family." I was nervous on the day, but it was a very satisfying achievement, so I would encourage you to consider the Masters as your next personal challenge, and we have lots of experience within the group to help you sparkle.

Filtering on a motorcycle

Filtering is the act of overtaking slow moving or stationary traffic by travelling between lanes and it's completely legal if it is done safely. Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart, is on hand to give his expert advice to filtering safely and helping all road users to know the rules around filtering.

There are lots of different names for filtering, including lane-splitting and white-lining, but what we can all agree on is the main reason why motorcyclists do it – it's to avoid congestion.

One of the many benefits of riding motorcycles is the fact that you can avoid congestion on two wheels much easier than you can on four, and that's thanks for filtering.



Credit: IAM RoadSmart

Rules around filtering

All road users should be familiar with the Highway Code, and under Rules for Motorcyclists, Rule 88 states, 'Manoeuvring: You should be aware of what is behind and to the sides before manoeuvring. Look behind you; use mirrors if they are fitted. When in traffic queues look out for pedestrians crossing between vehicles and vehicles emerging from junctions or changing lanes. Position yourself so that drivers in front can see you in their mirrors. Additionally, when filtering in slow-moving traffic, take care and keep your speed low.'

Then in Rule 160, where the advice is aimed more at other drivers, it clarifies this with, 'Once moving, you should be aware of other road users, especially cycles and motorcycles who may be filtering through the traffic. These are more difficult to see than larger vehicles and their riders are particularly vulnerable.'

So, it's clear that the Highway Code has specific provisions that cover filtering on UK roads.

How can I filter safely?

When done correctly filtering is something that is safe – with the bonus of saving you time. There is no point filtering through traffic to cut down your journey time if you're putting your life in danger.

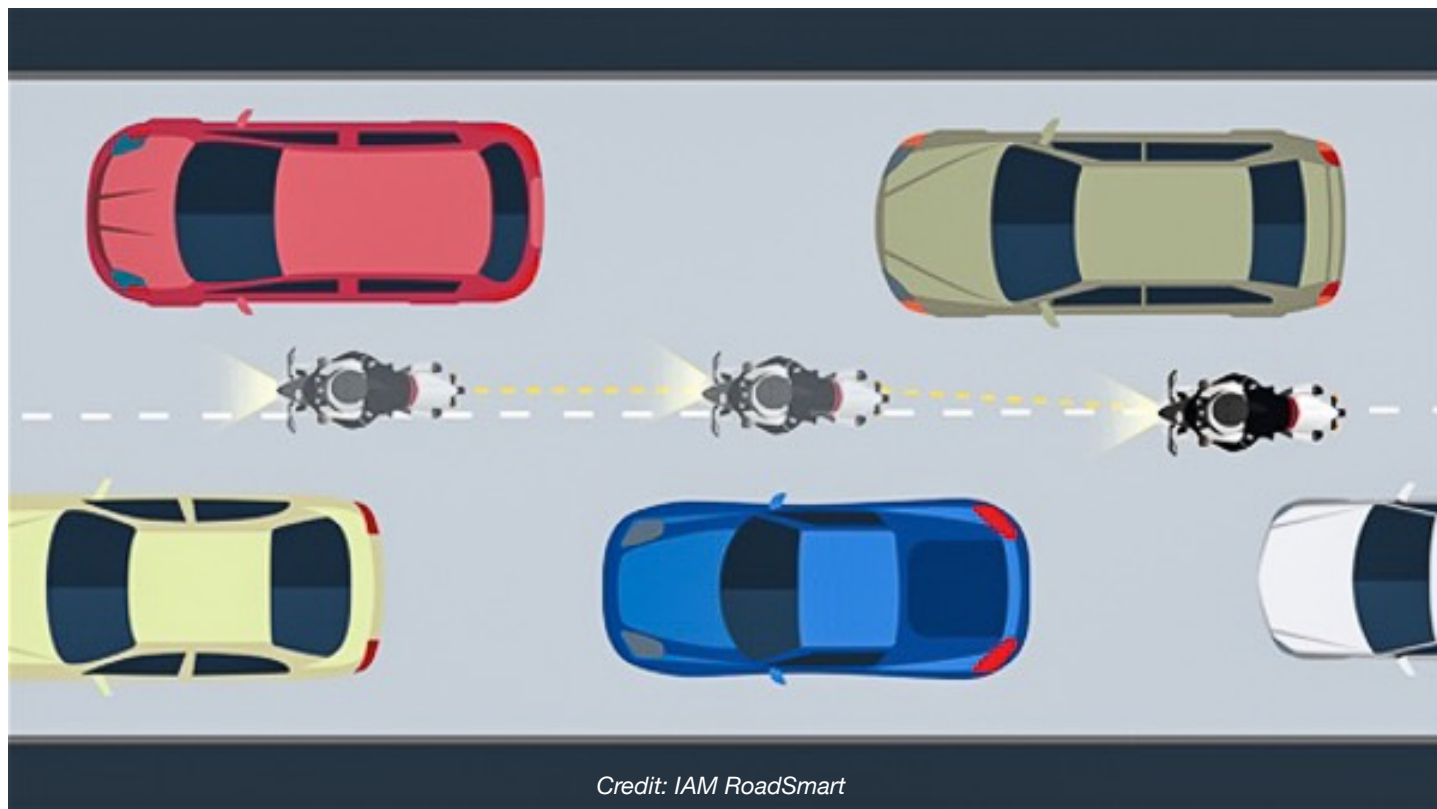
Staying safe whilst filtering is key so make sure you assess the risks. Keep calm and don't feel pressured to filter at a certain speed. Keeping your speed down not only allows you more time to brake if any unexpected event unfolds, but it also means you have more time to assess what's going on around you. Remember, you know the width of your motorcycle and only you can make those decisions.

When filtering it's also worth being aware of vehicles leaving big gaps in front of them, they may be just slow on the uptake, or there could be a junction, pedestrians, cyclists, or another driver about to emerge and fill the gap. Be careful of junctions offside too, a late decision by a driver to turn out of the traffic may be your downfall.

Keep the speed difference between you and the other traffic sensible and if traffic starts flowing again be ready to safely join the flow.

Is filtering dangerous?

If bikers remain vigilant and careful, filtering can be safe. All bikers are legally free to filter, however, this should be done with caution, awareness, and consideration to traffic rules. Do not cross solid lines to filter unless an exemption applies.



Credit: IAM RoadSmart

Although filtering has way more pros than cons, there are a few down-sides to watch out for. One of them being blind spots – somewhere no motorcyclist wants to find themselves.

Moving past multiple vehicles on a bike will mean you're constantly moving in and out of drivers' blind spots. Maintaining a comfortable distance between vehicles is important here and consider drivers who may not have seen you.

What happens if I have a crash whilst filtering?

Your insurer will almost certainly obtain a police report and associated witness statements before they decide who was to blame and in what proportions. Each case turns on its own facts as the starting point to establish what is known as 'primary' liability which is deciding who was primarily to blame. It's then for that driver to prove that you have some blame.

Richard says: "Filtering is part of the appeal of travelling by motorcycle, when done safely with a good awareness of other traffic it is an efficient way to make your journey. Be aware of pedestrians if in a built-up area, stationary traffic is inviting for a quick bolt across a road without ever looking for a motorcycle that may still be moving. As the speed of the traffic increases it may be that your filtering becomes inappropriate overtaking, keep it sensible to stay safe."

How many things do you see wrong with this?

The final picture of the summer edition was found on Facebook. I asked the question "How many things do you see wrong with this?" It was a rhetorical question not expecting an answer. However, Member Ivan Greenfield felt compelled to respond. Below is the picture and Ivan's response:



I feel compelled to respond to the photo of the biker titled "how many things do you see wrong with this?"

It is without doubt that this rider is less likely to hurt his head than any other part of his body, though even that is debatable; is that half of an American football stuck on the top of his helmet? He is clearly travelling at considerable speed and an open face helmet provides absolutely no protection from flying insects or any gravel or grit thrown up by other vehicles. Hitting a fly at 30 or 40 mph is not something you wish to repeat but falling off at these speeds is not likely to be repeated any time soon if you are only wearing flip flops, shorts, T shirt and no gloves, the photograph suggests speed well in excess of 40mph.

The bike is a BMW using a horizontally opposed twin cylinder power unit and is a model I owned for a little over 12 months. It is not difficult to reach the edge of the usable tread area on these bikes and I do not believe I ever managed a lean angle such as is demonstrated. The left hand cylinder head looks like it is about to touch the road, fractionally before the toes of the riders left foot. When this happens the wheels will tend to lift off the road as the 'vertical downward' forces are shared between the tyre and the cam cover (this keeps dirt and dust away from the cam and valve gear and helps retain oil in the engine internals. Looks like that is about to change). There will be large quantities of flesh deposited along the road surface and up the bank on the outside of the corner. Now, provided the rider does not come to an abrupt stop on the front of another vehicle or some random road furniture and there is enough left to gather up, paramedics arriving on the scene will survey the area looking for his pillion. The ones that his pillion foot rests suggest he may have had with him. This takes resources away from the immediate casualty, which I imagine may be critical to the riders future health.

It is hard to decide how IPSGA has been applied, it is more suggestive that IPSGA or any other system is alien to this rider. Without a wider view it is impossible to tell if a view through the corner is available, if the best road position has been followed, if the speed is appropriate (the lean angle would suggest not), as for stopping "comfortably" on his own side of the road, within the distance he can see to be clear, well I would have my concerns.

The pillion foot rests Up or Down has always fascinated me. I have copied one of the many posts on the internet and social media below just as it was posted

I came across this short article on a facebook post and although it doesn't credit the author I felt that I was able to quote it here as it is in the public domain:

Riding with the rear pegs down.

This superstition takes a lot of forms and meanings but is usually brought up for discussion after an older rider tells a newer biker they should only have the rear pegs down if someone else is riding on the motorcycle with them.

The most basic superstition has a rider giving the dreaded motorcycle gremlins a place to put their feet while riding along and waiting to cause mischief. This does lead us to question whether your Ride or Guardian Bell isn't strong enough to ward off the gremlins before they have an opportunity to get comfortable with your rear pegs.

Another version warns a biker they invite spirits to ride with them by leaving the passenger pegs down while riding solo. It's an interesting superstition as riders are asked to do just that if they are involved in a funeral procession for a biker who has passed away. As with humans, bikers should be picky which ghosts they let ride with them it seems.

The most humorous response to this superstition are the bikers that tell you the only reason keeping the rear pegs down is bad luck and comes from something definitely living. Having a biker's other half ask who they've been letting onto the back of their motorcycle seems too much of a curse to let the rear pegs be anything other than up when riding solo.

I personally put the rear pegs up if Janet is not going to be riding with me but that is not through any superstition, just a habit and I had not heard of the tradition of leaving them down during a funeral procession either.

It's an interesting topic for discussion though.

And finally.....

The ageing process can be unforgiving but look on the bright side - you might decide to have one of these!



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