

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group

April 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

This month we welcome to the Group car member Brendan Rogan and car members Gary McKie and Ernie Foster. 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 4 car members:

Cathy McGimpsey, Sandra Conn, Brendan Rogan and Stephen Patterson

Both Brendan and Stephen passed with a F1RST having scored 1 in every category. Well done all.

March cover picture

The March cover picture was Donegall Street in Belfast looking from its junction with Waring Street. Congratulations (in order of receipt) to Jim O'Brien, Ralph Magee and Annie McFarland.

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

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC nights in the Boathouse for car Associates and the regular bike runs (notified by email to bike members) we have a varied programme for the Group Nights.

3 May - STAC session 8

10 May - Group night talk by Mark Jarvis - Astrophotography

24 May - Test preparation and driving practice

7 June - Driving practice

14 June - Drive/ride for ice cream at the Rhinka, Islandmagee

STAC - Short Term Associate Course for drivers.

April bike run by Simon Beckett



Great run out - 150miles door to door for me. 11 bikes and some nice weather to explore the country lanes down to Slieve Gullion before following the coast to Newcastle and back to Newtownards.

A few surprise roads on the way down, and no I didn't plan the complete green lane covered on grass and rocks, that was a surprise to me too. Safe to say these adventure bikes got to experience more than just tarmac today.

The forest ride was nice today, good visibility and I know there were a few pics taken too, hopefully they'll be shared later on.

Next month run should see us head north for a run up the Antrim coast, destination still to be confirmed, but maybe a picnic at Ballypatrick forest again - check your emails and Facebook for information.



Before you start your engine

Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart talks us through what we need to think about before we've even left home. The most important consideration, ansomething not enough people think about before they jump into their car, is...is it actually fit for the road?

We advocate that you check your vehicle every time you go to drive it. Of course, realistically not everyone is going to do a full check every time, but you'll find that advanced drivers will have a walk around their car, each time before they get into it either at home, or if they've left it parked somewhere; there's no point driving off if you've got a flat tyre.

Members should be familiar with the POWDERY Check:

Petrol – or diesel – and today, of course battery charge – check you have plenty for the journey.

Oil – also brake, gear box, clutch fluid and power-steering fluid all need regular checks.



Water – including your screen wash reservoir, which if empty could cost you a penalty notice.

Damage – is there any fresh body damage – is there anything hanging down below the vehicle?

Electrics – are all your lights – interior and exterior, working and don't forget the reversing light? Does your horn work?

Rubber – regularly check your tyres, pressures treads and make sure there are no cuts and bulges. Always include the spare and keep it at the highest pressure you may need. Also make sure your windscreen wiper blades are ok – not nicked or cracked.



Yourself – if you were drinking the day or night before, are you fit to drive now? Not only should you think about how much you have to drink, but also what time you stopped drinking. You may need more than just overnight for alcohol to be out of your system.

The reality is though that non-advanced motorists in particular are unlikely to do a full POWDERY Check, but at the very least you need to ensure you have enough fuel for your journey – important at the moment when prices are so high. You definitely don't want to get onto the motorway only to realise you've got 20 miles worth of fuel in your tank and need to fill up at a motorway services!

It's also increasingly understood that alongside these physical vehicle checks, it's also important to consider the human aspect of driving. This relates to the Goals for Driver Education Matrix, which examines driver psychology before and during a journey.

For instance, what is the rationale of your journey; if you're going for a drive across the Yorkshire Dales to take in the scenery and enjoy the sunshine, that's a very different rationale compared to driving to sales meeting, which you might already be late for – and you need fuel.

Time constraints will change the way you approach that drive; if you're in a hurry, you may take unnecessary risks. Your focus isn't on the drive, it is on getting to the meeting.

Equally, you might have plenty of time, but before leaving the house you've had a row with your partner or you're your child has forgotten their lunchbox. It's these wider world influences that we should recognise influence how we drive.

For motorbike riders your influence might be your friends. When you're riding on your own, you're not a reckless rider, but if you go out with a group of people who are lunatics, the peer pressure might mean you also ride like a lunatic.

So, alongside those important physical checks to ensure your car, bike or van is roadworthy, it's also important to be conscious of your state of mind before you begin your journey.

Concentration

And following on from Richard's advice, have you ever found your concentration waning when driving or riding? Ivan Greenfield had his helmet camera on during a weekend outing to Connemara. He captured a video of an oncoming vehicle which had drifted over the centre line on a left hand bend clearly oblivious to potential consequences for the line of motorcycles coming the other way. Below is a series of still images from that video.





For the eagle eyed who know the speed limits in ROI, Ivan's speedometer was calibrated to kph.

Did the driver not know the size of the vehicle and where he was on the road, was the driver distracted, was the driver simply not concentrating and did he not know that there were other road users approaching? Make sure you keep your concentration levels up and expect the unexpected when driving or riding.

Get a good night for a good journey

Did you realise that driving while tired can be just as dangerous as doing so while under the influence? The road signs that read, "Tiredness can kill, take a break" – are there for good reason.

There are many reasons why you may not have got a good night's sleep but if travelling, it's crucial to make sure you don't ride or drive tired and to take a break at least every two hours. Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, shares some tips on how to beat driver and rider fatigue.

Driving or riding when tired can impact many things include concentration, ability to stay alert and deal with hazards, look ahead and anticipate dangers, appreciation of speed and reaction times.

Less obvious side effects of sleep deprivation are irritability, nausea, and being distracted.



- Speeding, using a mobile phone, drink and drug driving, not wearing a seatbelt and careless driving are the fatal five causes of crashes responsible for a large proportion of incidents. Fatigue is a serious contributor to careless driving.
- Extreme tiredness can also lead to micro-sleeps. These are short episodes of drowsiness or sleep that could last a fraction of a second or up to 30 seconds. Any vehicle travelling at 70 mph will travel 31 meters per second, giving plenty of time to cause a serious crash during a micro-sleep.
- The effects of losing one or two hours of sleep a night on a regular basis can lead to chronic sleepiness over time. So, ensure you are well rested and feeling fit and healthy before you set off. To reverse the effects, sleep deficit needs to be replenished. One good night's sleep will often not cure it if you are trying to make up a deficit of 10 hours for example, you need to rebalance your body.
- Make sure you take regular rest breaks to split up the journey especially when travelling on a long, boring stretch of a motorway. The simple rule is don't drive drowsy – stop at least every 100 miles or two hours of driving BEFORE fatigue or drowsiness sets in. Make sure the break is at least 15 minutes, getting out of the car and walking around will help.
- If necessary, plan an overnight stop. If you feel too fatigued to carry on, then book yourself into a hotel at the next service station and sleep it off. Wake up fresh with a good breakfast and
- carry on your journey. It's good to note that a caffeine high may be a quick fix, but it is not a long-term solution and certainly no substitute for proper sleep.
- You're bound to be tired after a full day at work, so avoid setting out on a long journey after you have finished for the day. It's best to start your journey earlier on, and when you're more alert.



Credit: Rudyanto Wijata

- If possible, avoid travelling between the two peak times for sleepiness. These are between 3am and 5am and also between 2pm and 4pm.
- If you have taken prescribed medication, then seek advice from your GP as to whether you should be driving or riding or not. If bought over the counter, then read the instructions on the pack or speak to a pharmacist.

Tiredness can also trigger other problems and can also increase erratic driving behaviours due to low tolerance levels. These apply to both you and others on the road and could include:

- The behaviour of other drivers
- Increased workload/the demands of the job
- Poor work organisation and job/role uncertainty
- Poor work/life balance
- Domestic/personal issues.

Countermeasures for combatting Tiredness

The most effective countermeasures are:

- Obtaining adequate sleep (a good night's sleep) before a journey
- Taking a nap before a journey
- Avoiding driving in the early morning or late evening
- Pulling over to a roadside hotel to sleep
- Having a 15 - 20-minute power nap then consuming a caffeinated drink and
- Sharing the drive, splitting the journey in half (provided the new driver is alert).
- Avoid travelling after a large meal.

Richard says: "Even the fittest of us need regular sleep to perform at our highest levels. Riding and driving requires your full concentration and if you are tired, your ability to concentrate is reduced. Our internal body clock (circadian rhythm) is usually set to deal with our normal lifestyle. Extra care needs to be taken when travelling during a time we would normally be at rest. Stop, rehydrate and rest if you need to."

April Group Night



A report on the Group visit to James Black Restorations will appear in the May issue.

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