

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



August 2024





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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

August 2024

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Test Passes

Congratulations this month to car Member

David Marsh

who achieved a F1RST pass
and to to motorcycle Member

Brian Ewart

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

New Members

This month we welcome motorcycle member David Morgan and car members Anneliese Whiteside, Philip Gibson and John Bell. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Summer Cover Picture

The cover picture in the last issue was Church Street Rostrevor in the direction of Hilltown. Congratulations this month (in order of receipt) to David Harcourt and Norman Shearer.

Do you know where this months picture was taken? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and of course, you will get a mention in the next Road Observer. Submit your answers to: leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC nights for car Associates and the regular bike runs (notified by email to bike members and also on Facebook) we plan a varied programme for the Group Nights. All meetings will take place in the Boathouse at Groomsport Harbour car park unless otherwise stated

3 September	STAC 1 - Human factors and IPSGA
10 September	Group Night - Drive/ride to the Pheasant between Lisburn and Ballynahinch for refreshments. Details to follow.
24 September	STAC 2 - Core driving skills
1 October	STAC 3 - Bends
8 October	Group Night - Annual General Meeting
29 October	STAC 4 - Junctions and roundabouts
5 November	STAC 5 - Overtaking
12 November	Group Night - TBA
26 November	STAC 6 - Motorways and dual carriageways
3 December	STAC 7 - Manoeuvring
10 December	Group Night - Christmas dinner

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.

Supercar Thrills for North Down IAM RoadSmart Members!

David Harcourt and Tina Lannin, members of North Down IAM RoadSmart, attended a Supercar Driving Experience near Antrim in early July.

David started with the Aston Martin V8 Vantage, which was a very nice luxury car, delivering some 550bhp through the rear wheels, so it threatened to be a bit twitchy on a wet track. He concentrated on learning the circuit and didn't really get a chance to enjoy the car.

The Ferrari California T, classic red, had about 100 fewer horses, but they were all Italian thoroughbreds and very eager to go. The cockpit was nicely laid out, and the soundtrack was amazing. He really enjoyed it, but it did confirm an assertion he made previously, that by the time he could afford to drive a Ferrari California, he would look ridiculous in it.

His final car was the Mercedes AMG GTR in a very bold green wrap. After queuing for about 20 minutes in torrential rain, he noticed that the picture on the pit lane wall was a



Tina in the Ferrari

Nissan, so he had to re-queue, though this time under cover. His turn came up really quickly, and the instructor asked for feedback on what he had driven so far, and any interesting driving experiences previously. He recounted his previous Masters test, in torrential rain, in a borrowed car,

and he said "I think you're going to have fun with this". He was right. RWD, 577bhp, and a ridiculously long bonnet, the car looked cumbersome from the outside and he wondered how it would take the chicane, but with four wheel steering it was surprisingly agile. The instructor could

see he knew the circuit and had sufficient car control, so he allowed him to drive enthusiastically despite the rain and standing water. David was getting wheelspin on the straights so he kept it smooth on the corners to avoid any embarrassing deviation from the racing line. This was his absolute favourite car, but very difficult to drive. He couldn't contort himself to reach the console controls with his left hand, and had to stretch across with his right hand to select gears and parking brake.



David and Tina with the Mercedes

her next car, the Lamborghini Gallardo, during which time the weather cooled and the rain made the track a more challenging drive. She didn't enjoy the unforgiving handling and braking of the Lamborghini Gallardo at all. Her final car was a Porsche GT3 RS which turned out to be a dream machine, with an instructor who also had a hearing loss and (helpfully) a very loud voice. Tina's own car is a Porsche 986 which she has

David is glad he did it, but he's unlikely to do it again. There was a lot of waiting, but it gave him an opportunity to speak to other car enthusiasts. Every single one of them who had driven the Lamborghini Gallardo had been disappointed. They described a cramped cockpit, awkward pedal position, poor visibility, and heavy, imprecise controls. If the opportunity came up for him at a good price, he wouldn't drive multiple cars, he'd take the AMG and buy extra laps.

Tina started with the Ferrari California T and enjoyed the light steering very much as she tentatively learned her way around the track. She had an hour's wait for



Tina in action

tracked at Kirkistown, and she felt very much at home in this car. She enthusiastically flew around the track, even managing a tight overtake, and a few more laps were added on. Tina enjoyed the experience overall and would like an opportunity to drive their other Porsche, a 997.

Check your tyres

Tyres start to break down as they get older. The material they are made from can become hard and brittle with age, from exposure to UV light and from lack of use eg storing a car for long periods without it moving. All of these either singly or together can lead to cracks. Another source of cracking of sidewalls is bumping up and down kerbs.

Our Chief Observer Colin Hay spotted a serious case of cracking /splitting on a car driven by one of his son's friends - see pictures below. To say that driving on this tyre was dangerous is an understatement. With advice from Colin the car was off the road until the tyre was replaced. The split extended almost the full circumference of the tyre. Look at the state of the wheels - perhaps if the owner washed the car by hand from time to time the tyre problem might have been spotted.

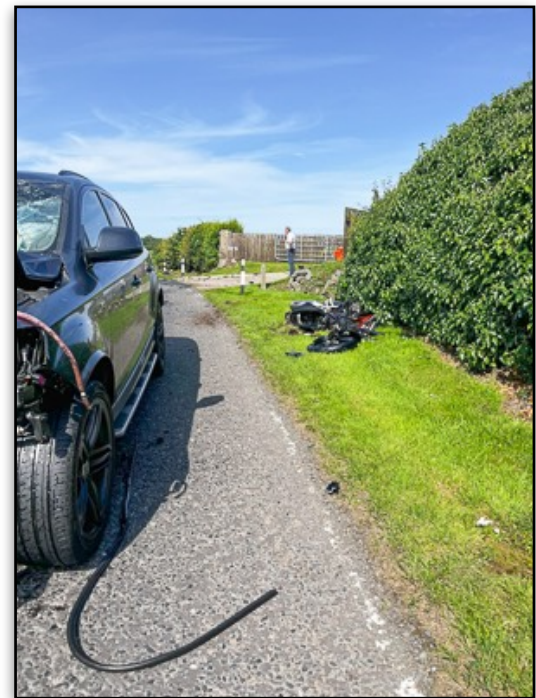
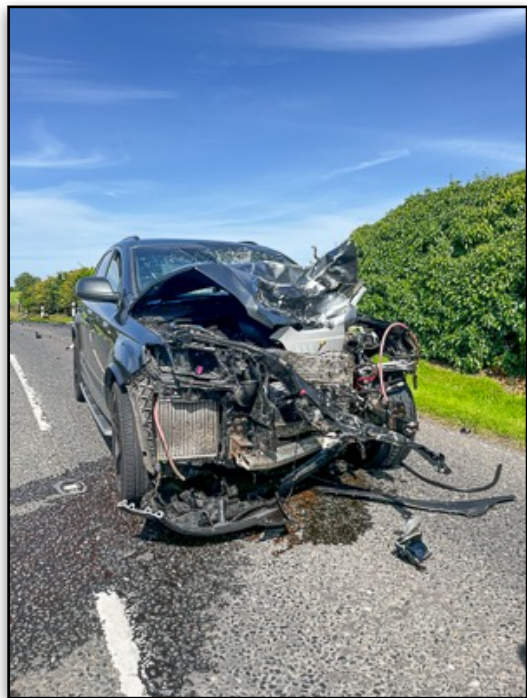
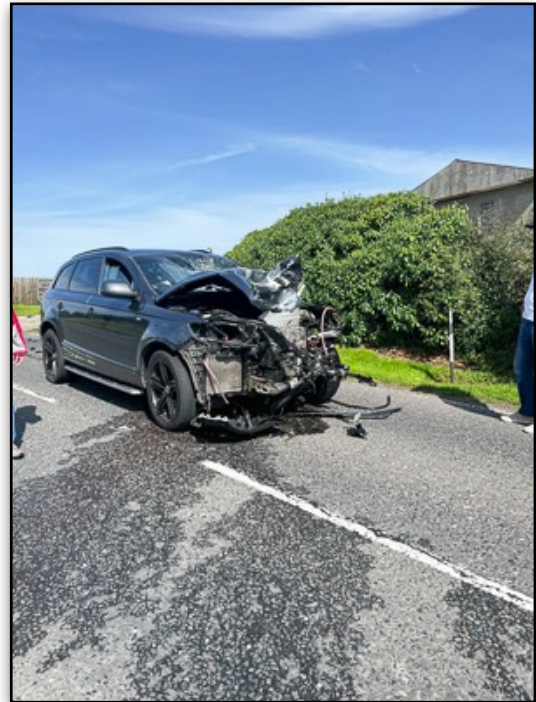
Remember to check your tyres regularly, in particular look for cracking in the sidewall and the tread if the tyre is more than 4 years old.



Fatal collision report by Tina Lannin

I was driving home from Supercar Sunday at Bishopscourt and was on the Killyleagh Rd. 3 motorcyclists flew past me at very high speed. I remember feeling horrified at how fast they were and I automatically slowed down.

What followed happened so quickly. I was coming up to a bend on the crest of a hill. Suddenly an oncoming car appeared in front of me and it had just stopped (Audi Q7). I wasn't going fast and came to a gradual stop, there was plenty of space between myself and the Jaguar behind me, so we were fine. I put my hazard lights on and ran over to the driver to help him out, he was very shocked and dazed. He said he was alright and went to sit down on the verge.



The other drivers behind me realised there was a problem and stopped and also got out. I was running around looking for the rider and found him behind the fence and he was dead. I remember he had light blue socks on but I don't remember him wearing a helmet or leathers. Maybe the helmet had come off. I saw his boots on the grass verge, one on each side of the road. The bike had pretty much broken in half and bits were all over the road, half the bike was against a reflective post which had been uprooted and flattened.

I went back to the road and told the other drivers the rider was dead, someone called the ambulance and police. The ambulance arrived around 5 minutes after, the police 5 minutes after that, and we all gave statements. I went to meet a friend nearby for a few cups of tea to help calm down before I drove home.

From the photos, it looks like the rider hit the car more on it's left side as the windscreen was smashed in off-centre, then the bike hit a post on the wrong side of the road. The rider was catapulted over the fence. The crash was so loud that a farmer in the field heard it. I'm not sure if I just missed coming upon it or if I've blocked it out or if I was concentrating on the road and didn't see the impact.

I think the other 2 motorcyclists just carried on their way.

Many thanks to Tina for this account of a harrowing experience and hopefully none of our readers have to go through anything similar.

Classic Car Day

In early June there was a classic car day at Stormont. The huge number of cars on display was matched by the crowds. We all have our favourites, whether a car we drove early in our driving history or the one that we would have loved but couldn't afford or would still love to have and be unable to afford or justify owning. Below is a selection of some that caught *my* eye.



Porsche corner



Triumph TR4



VW 1600 Fastback



Opel Kadett



Ford Anglia 105E



Austin Healey 2600



1934 MG PA Midget



Motorcycle run

On Saturday, 20th July, the bike section met at Loughshore car park, Newtownabbey, for its monthly run. The forecast was mixed, to say the least, but on departure the drizzle was light and unassuming. We were hopeful!

The route saw us climb via Troopers Lane towards the top of the Antrim Plateau, heading out west of Larne towards Glenarm, before heading back up the glen to the 'back' of Slemish via Carnalbanagh and Buckna, then over the top again to Ballyclare and back to Loughshore.

When tested on a beautiful Friday afternoon the day before, the route offered fabulous views across the Plateau, but Saturday's forecast turned out to be horribly accurate and conditions turned ugly and challenging on the top, with visibility marred by heavy rain. It was no surprise to hear conversations around successful 'de-misting' techniques for glasses and visors over coffee on our return. That said, all challenges were successfully managed, and at just over 60 miles, we weren't out for too long.

Thanks to Ralph for planning and leading the route, and to Guy for taking on the 'tail-end'.



Spectating sheep



Oil slick!!



Pothole!!

Tailgating

Recently I was driving at 70mph in lane 1 on the M2 northwards in very light traffic. I saw a white Audi catching up with me in my lane and I was keeping an eye on it as I was expecting it to overtake, which given the volume of traffic would not have been a problem. Instead the driver slowed to match my speed and tucked in behind me. At times it was so close I couldn't see the car's number plate in my mirror.

After a couple of miles I was catching a Nissan Note which was probably doing somewhere in the region of 60 mph. In good time I signalled that I was overtaking and moved into lane 2. Having completed the manoeuvre and returned to lane 1 I was pleased to see that the Audi had decided to latch on to the the back of the Nissan Note. However that was not to last and shortly the Audi pulled out to overtake, accelerated and moved into lane 1, again far too close to my car.

This continued as far as the Ballymena off-slip where thankfully the Audi turned off. It is difficult to understand the thought processes of the driver, if there were any!

Do's and don'ts if you find yourself being tailgated

What to do

- Don't let the tailgater's poor driving negatively influence yours. Continue to drive safely and cautiously, aware of but not affected by their presence.
- Keep 2 seconds or more behind the vehicle in front of you to give you more time to react to what is happening in front of you and hopefully prevent the tailgater from colliding with you. This means if there is a problem ahead, you're essentially protecting the tailgater (and protecting you from being tail-ended) — because there is far less risk of you having to slow down suddenly.
- Keep a steady speed so they may overtake. If not on a motorway, pull over to the side of the road, or turn off at a petrol station etc, but only if it is safe to do so.
- Ensure the tailgater has a clear idea of your intentions by signalling early and changing your speed well in advance of a turn off or a stop.



What you shouldn't do

- Don't speed up as this will encourage the tailgater to speed up behind you. Continue to travel at a safe speed. Do not allow the pressure from the tailgater to influence you to drive unsafely.
- Don't intentionally slow down to irritate the close follower or tap the brake lights as this can trigger road rage and cause more dangerous scenarios to arise.

Car parking charges

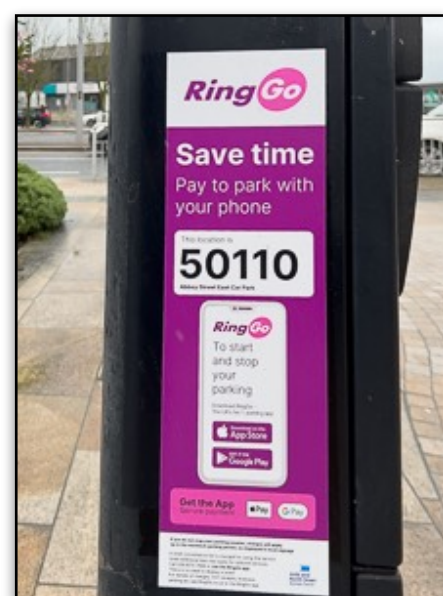
In these increasingly cashless days have you ever turned up at a carpark without change to pay? Recently introduced apps to enable you to pay for parking using your phone are convenient. You download the app to register and pay. However, you need to be aware that there can be charges in addition to the displayed parking tariff:

- A convenience fee

Additional charges may apply for optional services:

- Payment confirmation SMS
- Expiry reminder SMS
- Session stopped SMS

In the Abbey Street carpark in Bangor the machines also say “If you do not stop your parking session, charges will apply up to the maximum parking period as displayed on local signage.”



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