

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



January 2023





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

January 2023

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

Vol 23.1

<https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownGroupIAM>

Group Contact - David Harcourt

Tel No 07760 578444

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

New Members

This month we welcome new car members Michael Keenan, David McFall and Mark Patterson. 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

No test passes this month but good luck and safe driving and riding to any Associates approaching their test.

December cover picture

This was a section of the Portaferry Road just before Newtownards Sailing Club. Congratulations (in order of receipt) to David Harcourt, Norman Shearer, Ralph Magee, Angela Bell, Ivan Greenfield, Annie McFarland. Biker Norman also provided a commentary on this section of road: *Bimbling down the Portaferry Road, on my GS, I drop down to 5th, out to the crown, steady throttle; anticipating the opportunity to straight line into the tighter left past the Sailing Club, now down to 4th slight right and into the much tighter left.....blah, blah.*

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: leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com

Dates for your diary

All dates relate to the Groomsport Boathouse at 7.15 pm unless otherwise stated

- 7 February - STAC session 1
- 14 February - Group Night - 10-pin bowling at the Dundonald Ice Bowl 7.30pm
- 28 February - STAC Session 2
- 7 March - STAC Session 3
- 14 March - Group Night - Visit to Transport Museum warehouse - details TBA
- 28 March - STAC session 4
- 4 April - STAC session 5
- 11 April - No meeting - Easter Tuesday
- 25 April - STAC session 6
- 2 May - STAC Session 7
- 9 May - Group Night - TBA
- 23 May - STAC session 8
- 30 May - Test preparation and driving practice
- 6 June - Additional driving practice
- 13 June - Group night- Drive/ride for ice-cream at the Rhinka, Islandmagee.

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.

Sheila Palmer BEM

With deep regret I have to inform members of the death at the age of 92 of car Associate Member Sheila Palmer following her battle with cancer. Sheila joined us in 2017 with the aim of improving her driving so that she could continue to drive to support her disabled son and also take her "younger" elderly friends to various doctor and hospital appointments. While she never reached test standard her driving did improve to gave her the confidence to continue.

Not that Sheila was lacking in confidence. I took her out for her initial mature driving assessment and during the drive she told me about being on a zip-line on a church outing. Nothing strange about that except that she was 85 at the time. And that typified Sheila - she was a real live wire and would try her hand at anything. She played a full part in the Group's activities and I recall her comments after one of our sessions at Eddie Irvine's virtual racing. She said to me that she really enjoyed it even if she hadn't a clue what she was doing!

Sheila was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's New Year's honours list in 2020 for services to Glenraig and the Royal Airforce Association to recognise her fund-raising activities (her late husband Bill had been in the RAF during WWII).





Sheila will be missed by our our car members and we pass on our sincere condolences to her family and friends.

Potholes



The recent snow and heavy rain that many of us experienced have left behind a trail of destruction with potholes filling our roads. Before the snow had cleared, social media was flooded with pictures and complaints of bathtub-sized holes. All big enough to cause serious damage to motorists. It's estimated that it could cost more than £12 billion to fix the roads with potholes. But who is held responsible for repairing the damage?

Richard Gladman, Chief Examiner at IAM RoadSmart, has given his top tips on what you should do if you were to hit a pothole. As well as who may be responsible for the bill.

Check for any damage

When most of us are driving or riding we'll be surrounded by other vehicles. So it's important to mention that swerving to avoid an oncoming pothole can be incredibly dangerous.

If you hit a pothole, even at a low speed, it can cause damage to your vehicle. It's important you pull over when it's safe to do so to inspect any visible damage to your wheels and tyres. Also, listen out for any new noises your vehicle may be making. If you can't see any visible damage, and you believe it's safe, continue your journey. Keep checking to make sure your steering wheel remains centred and isn't pulling to one side.

If your vehicle doesn't seem right, get it booked into a garage as soon as possible.



Report the pothole

Even if you don't need to claim damages to your vehicle, you should always report the pothole as the next motorist to encounter it might not be as lucky. In Northern Ireland, the point of contact is NI Direct Government Services. You can claim for damage to your vehicle here: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/report-pothole-or-other-surface-defect>.

Repair your vehicle

With the cost-of-living crisis impacting many of us, it's always a good idea to get several quotes first if your vehicle needs a repair. Always remember to keep a copy of your invoices and receipts to support your claim.

Making a claim

You may be able to claim compensation from the councils (in NI from the Department for Infrastructure) as they have a responsibility to fix potholes if they know about them. It's their role to keep the roads safe for motorists. So make sure you write to them and include as much detail as possible. You may wish to attach photographs of the pothole, the damage it caused, and remember to send copies of the invoices and receipts. The website link above sets out the detailed requirements for making a claim in Northern Ireland.

Richard Gladman said:

“If you can safely avoid driving into a pothole then, of course, it will be better for you and your vehicle. But if you do have to then go through it as slowly as possible to avoid damage. Sometimes we do get caught out and the crash you hear and feel always sounds as if you have broken something. Check it is safe to continue and if you have any doubt at all then get it professionally checked. A damaged tyre will fail more readily at speed and damaged suspension will be putting extra stress on the whole car. If you do report a pothole it will make a possible claim easier for the next driver who encounters it. But more than that it may just get it repaired and prevent there being a next time.”

Below is a further example of what can happen. This time not a pothole but the result was still damage, this time to a tyre which had to be replaced. Luckily my car at the time had a spare. With my current car with no spare wheel, this would be a recovery as the bottle of sealant would not fix this sort of damage - and they call this progress!

The cause - a broken drainage gully. It happened in the dark and I didn't see it because I was temporarily blinded by the headlights of a bus going the other way and in addition I had moved to the left as the bus appeared to be encroaching on my side of the road as it negotiated the corner.



Motorcycle Show

After a 4 year break the Motorcycle Show returns this year at the Eikon Centre near Lisburn. For more information, including ticket prices visit <https://excaliburpress.my.canva.site/motorcycle-plus-show-ni-4-5-feb-2023>



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