

# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



January 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

January 2024

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

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### Test Passes

No test passes to report this month.

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

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### New Members

This month we welcome new car member David Marsh. We hope you not only gain from being a member of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

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### December Cover Picture

The December picture was of the Hollywood Road in Belfast looking towards Gelson's Corner. (Am I showing my age by this reference to the junction of the Hollywood Road and the Belmont Road where the Strand cinema is located?). The tower in the background is St Mark's Church Dundela.

Congratulations this month (in order of receipt of answers): Norman Shearer, David Harcourt, Gareth Hughes, James O'Brien, David Hughes and David McFall.

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](mailto: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.

The Committee is in the process of putting together the programme for the first half of 2024 and further details will be available when Group night activities are confirmed.

6 February	STAC session 1
13 February	Group Night - Illustrated talk "A photographic journey" - Leslie Ashe
27 February	STAC session 2
5 March	STAC session 3
12 March	Group Night - to be announced
26 March	STAC session 4
2 April	Easter Tuesday - no meeting
9 April	Group Night - to be announced
23 April	STAC session 5
30 April	STAC session 6
7 May	STAC session 7
14 May	Group Night - to be announced
28 May	STAC session 8
4 June	Additional driving practice
11 June	Group night - ice-cream run to 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.

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### Winter driving



After a mild December, we had our first real taste of winter recently with low temperatures and snow. IAM RoadSmart, has some tips for driving on road surfaces that are covered in frost, ice, or snow:

- \* If the weather conditions are severe in your area, you should take notice of police advice and simply not travel. However, in exceptional circumstances, if you must go out, then make sure you drive safely with extra caution on icy roads.



- \* At least triple your stopping distance and approach every junction expecting to stop well before the stop or give way line; it can take up to ten times as long to stop, according to Highway Code advice. Every steering, acceleration, or braking input should be as smooth and gentle as possible, and you should select second gear when you pull away in icy conditions.
- \* Salt will often make the windscreen, headlights, number plate, and rear parts of your car very dirty. Cars without headlamp washers, for example, will lose an estimated 40% of luminosity and possibly all their focus in about 20 miles on a damp, gritted motorway.
- \* When travelling long distances, it is advised that you stop regularly at service stations to clean your windscreen and headlights with a clean cloth. Or keep a filled bottle of water in the car boot to give your lights, windows, and mirrors a quick wash over. A handy investment is to top up your windscreen washer reservoir when needed too.
- \* Never ignore any warning lights. If one appears, get it checked out sooner rather than later. Being stuck on the side of the road is never good, but breaking down in freezing conditions is a high-risk situation. If you are unsure what the lights mean, consult your vehicle handbook.
- \* Always carry a winter driving kit, including an ice scraper, de-icer, blanket, torch, shovel, something to eat, and a fully charged mobile phone.
- \* When driving on a busy road, avoid overtaking a gritting truck, as the road ahead may not be treated yet. If you have any doubt, don't risk it. And make sure to never overtake a snowplough in heavy snow conditions.



- \* While roads may be gritted to give you better traction, some areas may not be completely treated, which can leave ice patches exposed. You should therefore drive at a steady pace, ensuring the safety of you and your passengers. On the roads you use regularly, watch out for water running across the carriageway, as this can wash away salt.
- \* It's important that you keep your car clean throughout the winter, as the salt in the grit can cause corrosion to any exposed parts. Ensure that you thoroughly wash the underneath of your car when you can to stop salt from settling.
- \* Don't forget to wash or rinse alloy wheels too; the smallest scratch can quickly become a large, corroded area.
- \* Just because the winter sun is out does not mean the roads might not be icy. Microclimates of icy patches will linger in areas such as bridges and exposed sections where the sun has not yet reached
- \* Keep the tread on your tyres above 2mm; 3mm is ideal. The more tread you have, the more water they can cope with. Letting your tyres get down to the legal limit of 1.6mm is not recommended, and don't forget, you can always consider winter tyres.

IAM RoadSmart Chief Examiner Richard Gladman says, "Preparation is the key to avoiding a dangerous situation while driving in snowy or icy conditions. Don't rely on the performance of your car systems to get you out of trouble; allow time, make sure you have good visibility all around, and carry the right equipment. If conditions are extreme, remember, the best advice is not to travel."

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### Tyres during winter

As Richard Gladman has pointed out above you need to keep your tyre tread depth above 2mm and ideally above 3mm. The following pictures illustrate what could happen if you don't.



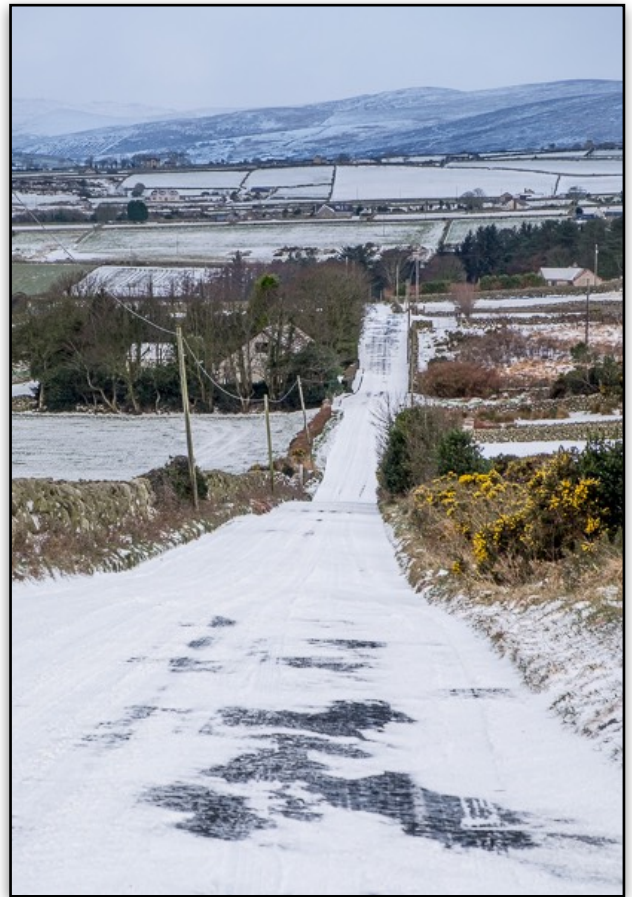
In this case the nearside front tyre is worn down to the tread wear indicators ie no more than 1.6mm.

I have used both winter tyres and all-season tyres and for the amount of snow and ice we get here in North Down and on trips to the Mourne, Scotland and Yorkshire in winter I find the all-season tyres have so far coped with what ever conditions I have encountered. I was able to negotiate the hill opposite, up and down, on the all season tyres.

There is also the advantage that, as the name suggests, you can keep them on the car all year round, unlike winter tyres which have a softer compound and should be changed for summer tyres in warmer temperatures.

The all-season tyres I use are Michelin Cross Climate tyres but of course other makes are available. Watch the following video which compares different all-season tyres and a comparison with a summer tyre and a winter tyre:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rFce9IE\\_aA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rFce9IE_aA)



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## Cyclists and speeding

Did you know that speed limits do not apply to cyclists, unless governed by local bye-laws? They only apply to motor vehicles - defined as being mechanically propelled.

However, it is an offence to ride a cycle on a road or other public place without due care and attention, or without reasonable consideration for other persons using the road or place (Art 43 of The Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995).

Offences against the person Act 1861

“S.35 Whosoever, having the charge of any carriage or vehicle, shall by wanton or furious driving or racing, or other wilful misconduct, or by wilful neglect, do or cause to be done any bodily harm to any person whatsoever, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable, at the discretion of the court, to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years.”

I understand that S.35 would apply to cyclists (and to carriages!) but note it only applies where bodily harm has been caused!



## Collision

Try to avoid ending up like this. I was travelling towards Donaghadee before sunrise last week on the last day of the icy spell and spotted this car off the road. It was too dark for pictures so a couple of hours later I stopped off on the way back home in daylight.



This was on the A48 - Six Road Ends to Donaghadee at a crossroads with the Kylestone Road and Hogstown Road.

Probably significant damage underneath as it knocked over a concrete sluice valve marker post which can be seen in blue in the last picture.



Hard to say what happened. The main road is straight for some distance. For vehicles emerging from either side road visibility is poor (both side roads have Stop signs). I'll leave you to speculate.

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**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**