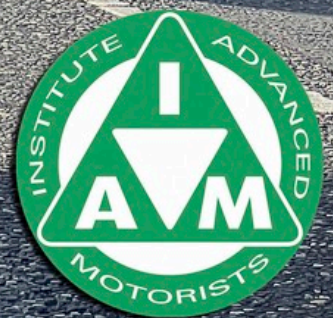


# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



March 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

March 2023

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

Vol 23.3

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

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### New Members

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

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### Test passes

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

Congratulations to Neil Geoghegan on achieving his bike Local Observer qualification.

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### February Cover Picture

This was the A20 Shore Road entering Kircubbin from the Greyabbey direction. Congratulations, in order of receipt, to Jim O'Brien, Ralph Magee, Norman Shearer, Ivan Greenfield, Lisa Thompson and Brian Gillies. Only Lisa and Ivan are car members (although Ivan has been known to be on a bike from time to time!). Bike members get the cover picture much more often than car members leading to the conclusion is that car members need to get out more!

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](mailto:leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com)

## Dates for your diary

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

- 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 for drivers. Car 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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## March Group Night

This was a visit to the storage facility for the Transport Museum where they keep items that have been donated to the Museum but are not currently on display. To make the visit manageable for the Museum staff we were restricted to 20 attendees and as it was oversubscribed it was necessary to hold a ballot to decide who could attend. There were strict rules to follow - no eating or drinking and we were not allowed to touch the exhibits as some have chemical coatings which might be injurious if touched, or contain asbestos, and on other exhibits visitor fingerprints could degrade delicate surfaces.

We received the obligatory health and safety briefing before being split into 2 Groups to tour the exhibits. There was no set itinerary and we were free to wander amongst the exhibits and the staff were on hand to answer any questions. Our Group started with bicycles and horse drawn vehicles, including fire wagons, hearses, milk floats, market wagons, bread carts, some agricultural machinery and (ahem) a night soil wagon - thank goodness for modern plumbing. One thing they don't have is a Raleigh Chopper - do you know of one that could be donated? Next was motorcycles which were stacked on shelving 3 rows high. For me, who knows nothing about motorcycles, the star was an Indian motorcycle pictured below which was in superb condition.

From there we moved on to cars, commercial vehicles and some aircraft parts including a radial engine and a Merlin engine. Some examples I picked out were a McCandless racing car, a Rolls Royce Phantom previously owned by Lord and Lady Dixon that had been converted for use as an ambulance during WWII, a Scammell 3 wheel truck, a International Harvester tractor which has the engine offset to the left to allow vision straight ahead, and a 1965 Shorland armoured patrol car.

The conditions in the storage facility are controlled for temperature, humidity and light (the latter to prevent fading). Some of the exhibits were showing the ravages of time and on some vehicles to describe the rust as a patina would be a serious understatement. The Museum staff have a difficult balance to achieve as to whether restore exhibits against leaving them in the condition in which they were acquired.

Being able to wander at will and to spend time looking at particular items of interest rather than being guided round particular items was a refreshing approach. Many thanks to curator Clare Ablett and her team for providing us with this opportunity. We hope to be able to arrange a further visit for those who were unable to get to this one.



There were too many exhibits to describe and so I will leave you with a small selection of images to provide an overview of what is there to see.









## Observer training

IAM RoadSmart is changing Observer qualifications. Currently there are 2 levels of Observer- local and national. Local Observers are assessed and qualified within a Group whereas National Observers are externally qualified and can observe in any Group. From April 2025 the Local Observer will no longer be recognised and all Observers will have to be nationally qualified. In North Down we are embracing this change and will seek to get all our Observers up to National standard as soon as possible. With that in mind we had a car Observer training/retraining session on Saturday 4 March. Chief car Observer Colin Hay provided an introduction to the changes which are designed to ensure a consistent level of observing across all Groups. This was followed by our Local Observers practising their skills with a National Observer driving on a route set by Colin taking us on a variety of road types out to Carrickfergus and back. More training events will be organised in the future.



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## Aggressive drivers

Most of us have come across aggressive drivers since we first got behind the wheel of a car or sat on a bike. People these days are in a hurry to get from A to B making the roads places often fraught with stress.



What is aggressive driving and riding?

- Running red lights
- Tailgating
- Speeding
- Weaving through traffic
- Overtaking on the inside
- Moving across several lanes at the last second to take a motorway exit

**Richard Gladman, Chief Examiner at IAM RoadSmart, said;**

“One way to prevent situations on the road is to avoid engaging in the behaviours yourself and trying not to give other road users cause to become threatening towards you. Try not to take it personally, the driver or rider may be having a bad day, so it is best to be tolerant and forgiving.”

**Here are some tips to help you keep your cool behind the wheel of your car or bike:**

### **Stay calm**

How you respond to aggressive drivers and the actions you take is what makes all the difference between a pleasant or unpleasant outcome.

### **Plan ahead**

Knowing where you're going and how you're going to get there removes uncertainty. This in turn can prevent drivers feeling tense and minimises the chances of them becoming aggressive.

### **Keep your cool**

Arriving at your destination safely is your number one priority. Do your best to ensure you're in a good frame of mind when driving. If you're upset or distracted by something else, you're less likely to drive safely.

### **Keep off the horn**

Do not sound your horn to 'tell off' the driver for their behaviour as this may lead to retaliation. Only sound your horn to warn another of your presence and their proximity to your vehicle in case they have not seen that you are there. *(Editor's note - also applies to flashing your headlights)*

### **Protect yourself**

Make sure your doors and windows are locked in case the other driver is looking for confrontation. Do not get out of your vehicle.

### **Let them go**

If someone's driving aggressively behind you, aching to get past, find a safe place to pull over and let them go. It'll add seconds to your journey but may save you from being involved in an incident or having an unpleasant confrontation.

### **Report them**

Report aggressive driving to the police (vehicle description, license number, location, and the direction of travel).

### **Acknowledge your mistakes**

Whether you think you are in the wrong, it's often a good idea to simply recognise your mistake to try and diffuse the situation quickly. Be as polite on the road as you would be in any other social situation. You cannot control traffic, but you can control your response to it.

Think about your actions and how they might themselves lead to other drivers being aggressive towards you. We all make mistakes, so if a fellow motorist makes an error, then take a deep breath and move on.

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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**