

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



May 2023





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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

May 2023

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New Members

This month we welcome new motorcycle member Victor Mallon. 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.

Test passes

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

April Cover Picture

For a while your Editor thought that he would win this one but eventually we had two correct answers. The picture was taken in Connemara - on the Sky Road looking back towards Clifden with the 12 Bens in the background. Congratulations to David Hughes and David Harcourt for spotting it.

I thought more would have got it as this view is often used in tourist publicity material for Connemara and Clifden. Also, I know that the motorcycle members have been over this road on one of their weekends away. Perhaps they did the Sky Road tour clockwise in which case this view would have been behind them.

Do you know where this month's cover is? It's a bit closer to home. 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

- 23 May - Driving practice
30 May - Test preparation and driving practice
6 June - Additional driving practice - a drive to the Rhinka in Islandmagee for ice-cream. **This evening is open to all car and motorcycle members either to start at the Boathouse or make their way direct to arrive at the Rhinka around 8pm.**
13 June - Group night- Visit to Bangor inshore lifeboat station
21 June - (Wednesday) Return visit to the Transport Museum storage facility

Please note that the Boathouse will not be available from 30 May onwards as the STAC sessions have been completed and we will be concentrating on additional driving practice. We will meet in the car park at the Boathouse at 7.15pm and pair-up Associates with Observers. On 6 June we will have observed drives to and from The Rhinka which will provide an opportunity for motorway driving.

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.

May Group Night - Table quiz

From a total of 20 participants we formed up into four teams: two representing ourselves in the North Down Group and one each from City of Belfast Advanced Motorcyclists and from the Southern and Mid-Ulster Group. Answers could be challenged and if the challenge was incorrect a point was deducted. An additional point could be awarded for a challenge that the judge (ie Chairman David Harcourt) appreciated. The judge's decision was final on matters.



There were 8 rounds on the following subjects.

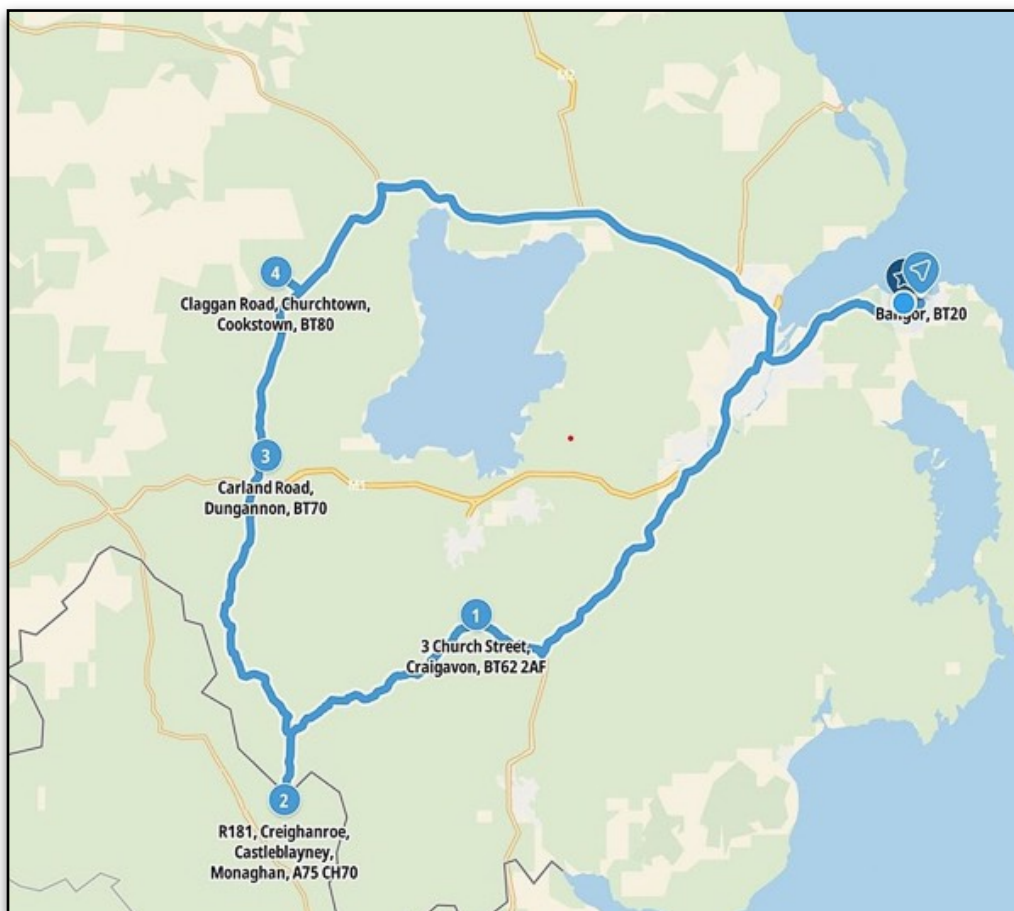
- general knowledge - 10 x 1 pt
- car logos - 20 x ½ pt
- meaningful comparisons - 5 x 3 pt
- made in Northern Ireland - 10 x 1 pt
- Road Observer cover images - 10 x 1 pt
- cars on screen - 10 x 1 pt
- geography - 10 x 1 pt
- movie and tv quotations - 5 x 2p

There was a lot of head scratching and lively competition between teams. The eventual winners were “Agatha Quiztie” (Southern and Mid-Ulster) with 44½ points followed by “Haven’t got a clue” (NDAM) with 41½ points, “The Woodentops” (NDAM) with 35½ and bringing up the rear was City of Belfast Advanced Motorcyclists with 34½.

A very enjoyable night which almost ran up against our deadline for exiting the Boathouse (10pm). Thanks to David for organising the quiz and to a couple of our Members for providing some of the rounds (we recused ourselves from the relevant rounds).

May bike run

For those who don't follow the Group on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownGroupIAM> below is the report on May's bike run by Simon.



Many thanks to everyone who took part in the monthly run on 20 May. We had 9 bikes at the start of the day with a few dropping off as we went through the route, leaving us with 6 at the end.

Our route saw us leave Newtownards and head towards Tandragee, we managed to stay off nearly all the main roads and only a couple had grass up the middle, this got us to our first stop at the War Memorial. A few photos taken, some refreshments and then we said goodbye to Ivan as he headed back home. Our next stop was supposed to be the old railway station at Creighanroe, however as usual we drove right past it... no problem, just gives us an excuse to go back and enjoy the roads there again. We headed back into the North again and rode to Caledon where we stopped for lunch, some of us enjoyed our picnics and others went to Cafe Rose, a familiar haunt for bikers. Many thanks to Guy for the flat whites for the picnickers.

After lunch we said goodbye to Ed and Glenn as they headed back and we made our way to the County Tyrone photo stop, the Carland Crane. Thankfully this was an obvious one that we couldn't miss. Another short run up the road to County Londonderry and aiming for Claggan Elementary School for the last photo of the day. Arguments with the sat nav for this one, in the end nice brown signs pointing us to Claggan Presbyterian Church were useful and got us where we needed.

Having had lots of B roads, C roads and single lane roads with grass up the middle we decided to take the most direct route back towards Bangor. As enjoyable as the back roads are I think we were all glad just to make a little progress on the way back via the motorway.

Door to door mileage for me today was 190 miles, great day out. A big well done to Anatoli for his first run out with the group. He coped well learning the drop off system and being chucked in with some challenging roads too.

Hope to see a good turnout for the next run in June.

We are always open to suggestions for runs and for other observers to take a turn at leading or planning the runs.

Many thanks to Simon for organising the run and for the report.



Hands free driving

You have probably read or seen articles in the media about the introduction of hands free driving in England, Scotland and Wales.

In summary on certain specified motorways (over 95% of the motorway network) you can drive hands free and the car's systems will keep you in lane and monitor the traffic around you, slowing if necessary (as adaptive cruise control operates at present). The car monitors your eyes and reminds you to watch the road, with an audible warning if your eyes wander (it can also pump the brakes to alert you). If you fail to watch the road it will slow and can actually stop (*Editor's note: not sure about stopping in the right hand lane of a motorway!*). It cannot handle lane changes and for these the driver has to take control.

It's currently available on 2023 Ford Mustang Mach-E models. It is free for the first 90 days but thereafter there is a £17.99 monthly subscription.



Rather than me summarising all of the Ford press release have a read at it from this link: <https://media.ford.com/content/fordmedia/feu/en/news/2023/04/13/ford-brings-hands-free-driving-technology-to-motorways-in-great-.html>. This also contains videos of the system in operation. The map below shows the network of motorway roads where you might encounter hands free driving:



In addition, the introduction of self-driving buses in Edinburgh has been announced. The project, named CAVForth, is a joint project of Fusion Processing Ltd, Stagecoach, Alexander Dennis, Transport Scotland, Edinburgh Napier University and Bristol Robotics Lab which is part funded by the UK Government's Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles, will be the first registered bus service in the UK to use full sized autonomous buses. A fleet of five Alexander Dennis Enviro200AV vehicles will cover a 14-mile route, in mixed traffic, at up to 50mph across the iconic Forth Road Bridge from Ferrytoll Park & Ride, in Fife to Edinburgh Park Transport Interchange.

The service commenced operation on 15 May and will operate a frequent time table with the capacity for around 10,000 passenger journeys per week. Each autonomous bus will have two members of staff on board: a Safety Driver in the driver's seat to monitor the technology, and a 'Captain' in the saloon to take tickets and answer customers questions.

(Editors note: Buses used to have a conductor - now that person is called the Captain! Seems odd to have got rid of conductors and now bringing them back with a different title. Presumably in due course the driver will collect fares and the captains will find themselves out of a job.)

For a video on the service click on this link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-qP1X1eotI>

Longer trailers on GB roads

According to the Government longer lorries will be introduced to Great Britain's (GB's) roads to support the government's priority to grow the economy, boost productivity, slash road emissions and support supply chains.

Legislation was laid on 10 May 2023 to safely roll out the vehicles on roads from 31 May. The longer lorries will be able to transport fast-moving consumer goods and retail products, as well as waste packaging, parcels and pallets.



These new lorries will move the same volume of goods, but will use 8% fewer journeys than current trailers. This will generate an expected £1.4 billion in economic benefits and take one standard-size trailer off the road for every 12 trips.

As part of efforts to grow the economy and cut emissions, government is changing regulations to allow longer trailers on GB roads, which it estimates will save 70,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere.

These longer trailers, known as longer semi-trailers (LST) measure up to 2.05 metres longer than a standard semi-trailer and can be towed by a lorry.

The move follows an 11-year trial to ensure LSTs are used safely on roads, and operators will be encouraged to put extra safety checks and training in place. The trial demonstrated that LSTs were involved in around 61% fewer personal injury collisions than conventional lorries.

Vehicles which use LSTs will be subject to the same 44 tonne weight limit as those using standard trailers. These new vehicles are also expected to cause less wear on the roads than conventional lorries due to the type of steering axle used.

Operators will be legally required to ensure appropriate route plans and risk assessments are made to take the unique specifications of LSTs into account.



You won't see these longer lorries on NI roads. However when travelling in GB and considering an overtake of a lorry be prepared for the fact that it could be 2 m longer than anticipated.

From Government Q and A

Do longer semi-trailers have greater tailswing than standard size semi-trailers?

The degree of tailswing is likely to depend on the axle configuration. In practice, a variety of different axle configurations are in use.

Whilst we are aware there could be increased tail swing of up to 0.74 metres, the longer semi-trailers still need to comply with manoeuvrability requirements set out in national Construction and Use legislation.

There are currently several vehicle types already in circulation that potentially exhibit similar characteristics.

The worst case identified in the TRL research was still within the performance of other types of road vehicle.

How good are you at towing?

Think you can park your caravan or trailer? I came across this video of a competitive towing competition - an auto test while towing a caravan. It's well worth a watch.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MN_AxxHFRU0

And finally.....

Number plate spotted recently on a white Tesla in Bangor: AD10S BP

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