

# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



November 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

November 2023

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### New Members

This month we welcome new car member Tina Lannin and motorcycle member Brian Ewart. 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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### Test Passes

Congratulations this month to car Member

**David Boyd**

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

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### October Cover Picture

The October picture was Main Street Hillsborough. Congratulations, in order of receipt of answers, to Gareth Hughes, David McFall, Jacqui Keery, Guy Thomson, James O'Brien, Norman Shearer, David Harcourt, Ralph Magee, and David Hall.

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 have a varied programme for the Group Nights. All meetings will take place in the Boathouse at Groomsport Harbour car park unless otherwise stated.

28 November - STAC Session 7

5 December - STAC Session 8

12 December - Christmas Dinner - Carnalea Golf Club

9 January - Enrolment night for new car Associates

6 February - STAC session 1 for new Associates and those from the current STAC who have not yet reached test standard.

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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### Bill Moore

Sadly car Member Bill Moore passed away in his 90th year on 30 October 2023. He was a colourful character no doubt partly formed by his wide range of occupations through his working life. He spent time in the Army serving in South Korea and Hong Kong, followed by working on local farms, eventually becoming a farm manager followed by time working in England for agricultural suppliers before returning to County Down. He was an enthusiastic bowls player (indoor and outdoor) and an enthusiastic member of Kirkistown Golf Club.

As an Associate Member of the Group his observed drives around the local country roads were characterised by his stories about who owned or had owned such and such a farm or house, sometimes to the detriment of his spoken thoughts!

Early in 2020, just before Covid, Bill passed his advanced car test becoming a full Member and once we opened up again after Covid he began training as a car Observer. He was an enthusiastic and well-liked regular attender at the STAC nights and took part in many of the Group social activities.



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### November Group Night

This was originally planned as a visit to the Ulster Aviation Society but it was cancelled because of the cost to the Society of heating their premises at this time of the year. We will re-arrange this for a Group Night in the spring. Instead we had an enjoyable evening of 10-pin bowling at the Dundonald Ice Bowl.

We had 2 lanes and given that this is a social evening it was all conducted in a friendly atmosphere and there was absolutely no sign of competitiveness between the lanes or within the team for each lane. If you believe that please contact me because I have a bridge to sell to you.

In the end it was all very tight at the top of the leaderboard with Campbell and Mark tying in lane 7 just marginally ahead of Leah in lane 8. It remains a mystery to me how a bowling ball sets off on a trajectory heading for a strike and then slowly drifts off to one side and ends up in the gutter without knocking over any of the pins. Maybe I just need to try more often.

Some pictures from the night - names have been withheld to save any embarrassments about bowling style etc but you know who you are!



RESULTS	
Player	Game 1
Campbell	122
Leslie	103
Mark	122
John	118
David	89
Matthew	72
Team	Game 1
Team 7	626
	0
	626

RESULTS	
Player	Game 1
Becky	60
Leah	119
Stephen	112
Ivan	110
Gina	94
Team	Game 1
Team 8	495
	0
	495

## Winter advice from IAM RoadSmart for drivers and bikers:



*Credit:IAM RoadSmart*

### **Drivers**

There's nothing worse than your car not starting on a cold, icy morning, but with a bit of planning, you can make sure your vehicle is ready for the colder months. Richard Gladman, Chief Examiner at IAM RoadSmart, has a handy guide to help you prepare for the colder weather.

### **Battery**

The battery on your car can go flat at any time. Make sure you keep a set of jump leads in your car so you can start your engine with help from another driver's vehicle if you need to.

### **Check antifreeze and screen wash**

Antifreeze stops the water in the engine's cooling system from freezing and overheating, so make sure yours is topped up. Also check your screen wash levels, as something might seem minor, but something as simple as a bird doing its business on your windscreen can completely reduce visibility.

### **Get kitted out**

Always carry a winter driving kit. This should include an ice-scraper, torch, blanket, de-icer and a first aid kit, just in case. Packing water and snacks is also a good idea, should you find yourself waiting for a recovery truck.

### **Light it up**

Less light means, of course, using your headlights more. Check that they are clean; a wipe down with a cloth should suffice, and make sure none are blown or cracked, as not only do they make you less visible, it's also an MOT failure. Don't forget to check your full beam and fog lights as well.

### **Keep your car clean**

Salt will often make your car windscreen, headlights, number plates and rear parts very dirty. You should stop regularly at service stations to clean your windscreen and headlights when the roads have been gritted or keep a filled bottle of water in the car boot to give your lights, windows and mirrors a quick wash over.

### **Seasonal Tyres**

If you often drive in the winter, you should consider buying a set of winter tyres. Even cold, damp roads can dramatically affect the performance of tyres, leading to an increased accident risk.

## Warning lights

Never ignore any warning lights that appear on your dashboard. If one appears, get it checked out as soon as possible. Being stuck on the side of the road is annoying at the best of times, but breaking down in freezing conditions is not only uncomfortable it can also be dangerous.

### **IAM RoadSmart Chief Examiner Richard Gladman said:**

"Autumn and winter can bring difficult driving conditions with heavy rain, strong winds, frosty mornings and snow. Preparation is key to avoiding a dangerous situation whilst driving in bad weather. Don't rely on the performance of your car systems to get you out of trouble - allow time, create a safe space, make sure you have good visibility, and carry the right equipment. If conditions are extreme remember the best advice is not to travel."

### **Editor's note re winter tyres.**

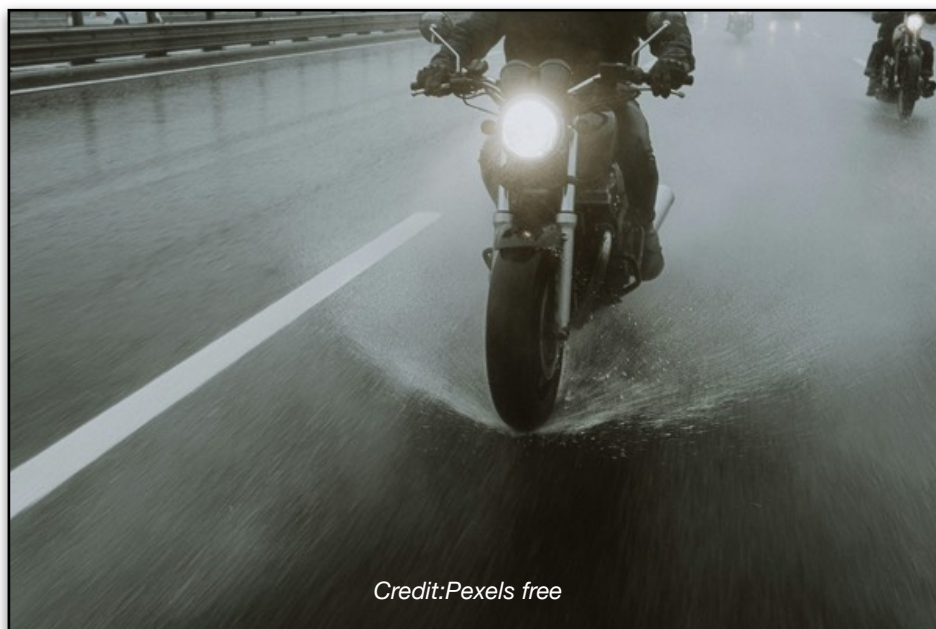
Unless you live somewhere that regularly gets a lot of snow a good compromise is a set of all season tyres. They avoid having to change from summer to winter tyres and back again. Just make sure they carry the "3 peaks snowflake" symbol to ensure good snow performance.



## Bikers

With winter almost upon us you are going to be riding in the dark a lot more.

Think about the weather conditions. It may look sunny when you leave in the morning, but what will it be like on your return journey? This may sound obvious, but it's easy to forget to check your weather app before setting off. Is heavy rain forecast or strong winds? Are you prepared for a sudden change in the weather?



*Credit:Pexels free*

- Wear the correct gear. Once the first drop of rain gets into your motorcycle clothes, the rest of the rain will follow. If you're a rider, you'll know where we're coming from. Staying warm is essential to maintaining concentration, a heated vest or jacket can make a major difference.
- During the morning, the sun can be extremely low and very which can make riding challenging. Bear in mind that your helmet may have an internal flip-down visor which you can use and if you're an adventure-type rider, your helmet may have a peak. If you have

inserts in your visor, although these are helpful, be aware that they can magnify glare. And lastly, go back to the basics and clean and check your visor as those little scratches that you barely notice on a bright day will show up on dark nights and with rain and headlights coming towards you, it becomes almost impossible to see.

- Do your POWDERY checks. It's crucial to keep your bike well maintained throughout the year to help you be the best rider you can be. Consider using a preservative spray to make the cleaning more manageable.
- We recommend wearing florescent or reflective gear, it's not to everyone's taste but pink high visibility clothing works best. This added piece of clothing may load the dice in your favour. Riding is meant to put a smile of your face, so do everything you can to keep you safe on the road so you can enjoy the ride, remember when planning your day, the temperature can drop quickly so plan for the worst. The hazards that you experience after dark are likely to be slightly different to the ones that you experience during the day.

Richard Gladman, Chief Examiner at IAM RoadSmart says, Being in the right gear in colder months means layering up or supplementing our fleece with some plug in kit, being warm allows us the flexibility to enjoy the ride and the comfort to concentrate. And of course, after a nice winter ride we can spend some useful time cleaning the bike again.”

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### Information about the bike section

Ralph, who didn't make the start of the previous month's run because of a mechanical, organised the last run we held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> of November, this was well attended with 14 riders. The route took everyone from Ards to Clough where Frenchs Bistro was used for a breakfast.

Via WhatsApp we have asked the bike members for suggestions for runs etc next year using a poll. The results of this will be reviewed and a plan put in place to get engagement next year.

A session for full bike members who would like to lead a run will be organised shortly to go through all the aspects that are required. This will help take the reliance off the observers as the only run leaders. There is guidance on the Dashboard which can be cascaded.

Observer upskilling, after the Christmas break we will start to organise the upskilling sessions with our current observers, due to the lack of associates some of these Local Observers may be a little rusty on their skills but we would like to see them in some sort of readiness for the start of the main bike season in March/April when people start to take the bikes out of the garage.

And finally..... unusual parking:



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