

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



September 2022





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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

September 2022

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New Members

In this issue we welcome to the Group car member Neil Mathews. 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

Congratulations this month to motorcycle members:

Ed Bolster

who achieved a Masters with distinction

and to

Adrian Simpson

who achieve a F1RST pass with top marks in every category

August 2022 cover picture

This was Ballygown in County Down and was taken showing the Comber Road leading to the roundabout. Congratulations to (in order of receipt) Ralph Magee, James O'Brien, Norman Shearer, Davie Hall, David Higher and David Harcourt.

Do you know where this month's cover is - it's a bit further afield? No prizes, just the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, a mention in the next Road Observer. Submit your answers to: secretaryndam@gmail.com

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC (**Short Term Associate Course**) 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. Unless otherwise stated meetings will be held in **Donaghadee Community Centre**.

27 September - STAC session 2
4 October - STAC session 3
11 October - Annual General meeting - guest speaker Dr Ash Kumar
25 October - STAC Session 4
1 November - STAC session 5
8 November - Group Night - Drive/ride out (details to follow)
22 November - STAC session 6
29 November - STAC session 7
6 December - STAC session 8
14 December - Christmas Dinner: venue Carnalea Golf Club

Please note the Christmas Dinner will be on **Wednesday 14 December**

September Group Night

The September Group was a return visit to James Black Restorations for those who missed this earlier in the year. The company specialises in the restoration of vintage Rolls Royce cars.

James Black is very accommodating giving his time to talk about something which is clearly a passion. As you can see from the pictures the original workshop is not what you would expect.

James provided a potted history of how Rolls Royce came to exist as a car manufacturer. Henry Royce had an electrical and mechanical business and made his first car in 1903 (a 2-cylinder Royce 10). Charles Rolls came from a different background, educated at Eton and Cambridge University he graduated in Mechanical Engineering and Applied Sciences.

Rolls owned a motor car dealership and, impressed by the reliability of Royce's cars, they met in the Midland Hotel in Manchester in 1904 and Rolls agreed to take all the cars Royce could deliver.



Initially there were 4 models all marketed under the name Rolls Royce:

- 2 cylinder 10HP
- 3 cylinder 15HP
- 4 cylinder 20 HP
- 6 cylinder 30 HP

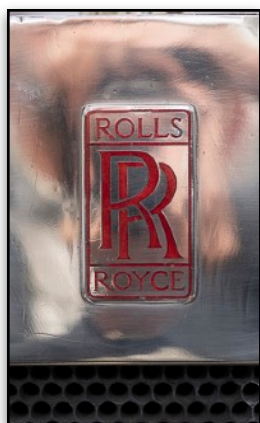


James' talk then focussed on the reliability of early Rolls Royce cars, including their success in the 1913 Alpenfahrt. Rolls was an automobile pioneer having driven cars under the rules which said they could not drive at more than 4 mph and must be preceded by a red flag. He competed in leading races on the continent and took part in long distance trials including winning the Thousand Miles trial in 1900. In the early days of motoring reliability was key and Rolls Royce cars were renowned for this, a prime example being the 1907 Scottish Reliability Trial when a 6-cylinder 40/50 (later known as the Silver Ghost) competed over a course of almost 750 miles (at the time this was twice the annual mileage a motorist would be expected to cover). That car went on to complete over 5,000 miles without having to visit a workshop once.

In 1912 James Radley, a British enterprising amateur driver, entered his Silver Ghost in the 1912 Great Austrian Alpine Tour (Alpenfahrt). His vehicle had some of the modifications introduced for the London to Edinburgh reliability trial in 1911, including cantilever rear springs, large carburettor and a three speed gearbox. The latter proved to be the weakest link. Each car had a driver, 2 passengers and an official to ensure that the rules were followed. Radley had to ask two of his passengers to jump out when attempting the Katschberg Pass because the gearbox was too highly geared causing the car to stall on the steep ascent and so was disqualified.

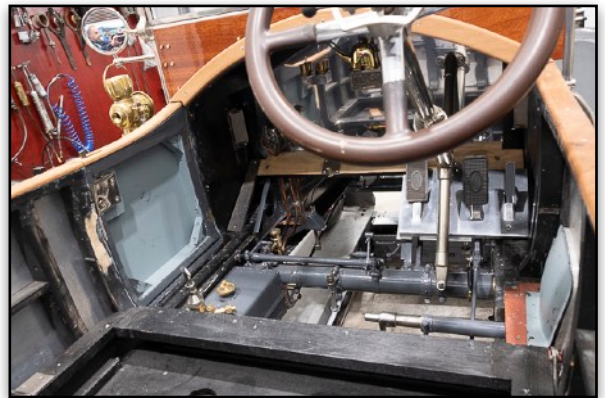
Concerned at losing their reputation as "the best car in the world" Rolls Royce entered 3 cars in the 1913 trial (a total of 1632 miles and over 19 Alpine passes). James Radley drove a privately entered Rolls Royce. All these cars were fitted with a 4-speed gearbox. From the beginning the Rolls-Royces dominated, sweeping up the Katschberg with Radley reporting that he never went below 17 mph on the steepest stretch where he had failed the previous year. The Rolls Royce team came first every day. The event was won by Radley and Rolls Royces also finished 2nd, 3rd and 4th. Rolls-Royce never again felt it necessary to enter competitive events.

James then gave us a tour of his facilities. The main change from when I was last there in 2014 was a new workshop and the hoist that was in the original building is now in the new workshop together with the equipment required to manufacture parts that are otherwise not available.





Not your typical workshop





Finally, James talked about the odd-one-out in the workshop - a 1905 Peugeot with a 700cc single cylinder engine developing 5½ HP. With Guy's help on the starting handle, James powered up the Peugeot and took it for a spin up the driveway and back. Initially very lumpy at idle it smoothed out (a bit!) when driven.



Yet another brilliant event with thanks to James and also to Rosemary for providing the tea, coffee, sandwiches and buns.

Safe Motorway Driving Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards



Speed is a given on a motorway. If you find other traffic going faster than the legal limit of 70 mph, just get out of their way. If you find someone coming up very fast behind you, create space in front of you, so that if someone does something in an emergency, you've got plenty of braking distance for both yourself and the person behind you. Of course, as soon as you can, get out of their way.

Because traffic tends to be moving quickly, anticipation is key. For instance, if you're driving down the outside lane and approaching a car on the inside, which is coming up behind an HGV, you should know that it's likely the car will pull out. The legal limit for an HGV on a motorway is 60 mph, but actually they have a physical limit of 56, so the car is almost certainly going to overtake it.

Likewise, drivers approaching an HGV at say 70 mph tend to look in their mirror – see a car in the distance behind them and assume they've got plenty of time to pull out to overtake. However, in that time they might have already slowed from 70 mph to around 60 mph, not leaving as much time as they originally thought. This is particularly true of people driving cars with radar cruise control, which will literally fit your speed with the traffic in front of you – before you know it, you're doing 50 and you've then got to make a conscious effort to overtake.

Plus, of course, even the best technology is no replacement for good, old-fashioned concentration.



Relax and stay in lane

When a motorway is busy, you often see people weaving in and out of every lane; then you get to a stretch where the traffic is at a crawl, or a standstill, and that same car is actually almost adjacent to you. There's a five-lane section of the M25 and what tends to happen is that everyone is trying to go faster in lanes four and five, while one and two are relatively empty.

The best thing to do is stick to around 50 mph if you can, turn up the radio and relax; if the traffic is moving slowly, accept it. You will all still get to where you are going at broadly the same time. And contrary to popular belief, it's ok to overtake traffic on your offside in congested conditions on the motorway, to keep up with the traffic in front – as detailed in Rule 268 of the Highway Code.

Think ahead

Queuing traffic is of course an everyday hazard on the UK's motorways. Ideally, you don't want to stop, but that means you have to plan a long way ahead. If you see brake lights cascading then that's the time to begin slowing, checking in your mirrors, and coming off your accelerator, while monitoring the traffic behind you too.

If you really do have to stop, you need to be very aware of the traffic behind you, because you need to control it a long way before you come to a standstill. Use your hazard warning lights – that's one of the exemptions in the Highway Code for using them when moving - to get the traffic behind you to match your speed: Ideally, it will feel obliged to roll to a stop before you.

Sometimes, while I don't really need to brake, I just touch the brakes to signal to the cars behind that they need to slow down, and to ensure they are aware of what's ahead.



September bike run

Thank you all who were able to attend this month's run. Brunch at Slims in Draperstown and on to Omagh just a bit of the Sperrins - more to follow in the future. Big thanks to Simon a busy man who took the time out of a busy schedule to look after the tail end and nobody got lost. Remember to check emails and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownGroupIAM> for future bike runs.



When did you last have an eyesight check?

What are the implications of poor eyesight and driving or riding? According to official UK government statistics, in 2020, uncorrected or defective vision was a contributory factor in 10 fatal crashes, 56 serious injury crashes and 99 slight injury crashes.

Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards, has spoken about the importance of good eye health and the need for regular eye tests to keep yourself and other road users safe.

What is the legal eyesight standard for driving and riding?

Drivers and riders must be able to read (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) a car number plate made after 1 September 2001 from 20 metres. It's a simple test so give it a try – if you have any problems then it's worth using a tape measure. Visiting your optician regularly will help you keep a check on your eyesight and general eye health, so make sure you don't miss those all-important appointments.



What are the dangers of driving and riding with poor eyesight?

Taking care of your vision is vital, and good vision is essential for safe driving and motorcycling. The law only sets a minimum eyesight standard, and drivers and riders can be fined up to £1,000 if you do not tell DVLA about a medical condition that affects your driving, and this could result in being prosecuted if you're involved in a crash as a result.

Poor eyesight means you may miss seeing and reacting to hazards, such as road debris, other vehicles and sudden changes in traffic movement, as well as being unable to clearly see road signs. Even drivers with strong eyesight can find it challenging to drive in poor weather conditions or in the dark, so if you've got weak eyesight, you'll be particularly vulnerable to risks on the roads.

What should I do if I feel my vision is getting worse?

The NHS recommends that you should have your eyes tested every 2 years (more often if advised to do so), and since your eyes rarely hurt when something is wrong with them, having regular eye tests is important to help detect potentially harmful conditions. According to ROSPA, conditions such as cataracts cause more significant impairments when driving and riding than most other forms of poor vision, especially at night.

Eyesight problems become more prevalent as we grow older, and older people's driving is more likely to be impaired by eyesight problems. Drivers aged over 70 must declare when renewing their licence that their eyesight meets minimum legal standards. Whilst drivers and riders don't have to provide evidence of this, they could be held liable if they're in a collision and it's believed that poor eye health was a contributing factor.

Do you need to declare it to the DVLA?

Drivers and riders must tell the DVLA if they've got any problems with their eyesight that affects both of their eyes, or the remaining eye if they only have one eye - this does not include being short or long sighted or colour blind.

Richard Gladman said: "It is easy to allow your eyes to deteriorate gradually and develop coping strategies to convince yourself all is well. The problems will usually start as the light fades day to night, and you struggle to pick up movement in the shadows. If this is the case, try the simple 20-meter eye test in those conditions, and it's worth visiting your opticians for advice. If you have been recommended to use glasses or contact lenses when driving, don't take a chance without them - you wouldn't chance it with a missing brake pad, and this is equally important."

And finally....

Spotted on Bangor's Ring Road (photographed from the passenger seat)



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