

# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down  
Advanced Motorists Group



September 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

September 2023

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

Vol 23.8

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

Group Contact - David Harcourt

Tel No 07760 578444

[e-mail: david.harcourt@gmail.com](mailto:david.harcourt@gmail.com)

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### New Members

This month we welcome new motorcycle member Roger Clegg and car member Leah Taylor. 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 Members

**George and Sam Gaw**

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

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### August cover picture

This was the railway bridge over Antrim Street in Lisburn. Congratulations, in order of receipt, to Stewart Campbell, David Harcourt, Gareth Hughes, Ernie Foster, James O'Brien, Mark Patterson, Norman Shearer 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.

26 September - STAC Session 2  
3 October - STAC Session 3  
10 October - AGM Guest speaker from the NI Air Ambulance  
24 October - STAC session 4  
31 October - STAC session 5  
7 November - STAC Session 6  
14 November - Group Night - Visit to NI Aviation Society  
28 November - STAC Session 7  
5 December - STAC Session 8  
12 December - Christmas Dinner - Carnalea Golf Club

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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## Autumn tips

We're beginning to experience darker and chillier starts to the day, and soon we'll be driving and riding home from work in the dark which confirms to many that autumn is officially here. It's important to adjust riding and driving preparation and style to match the hazards that autumn can bring

### Bikes

IAM RoadSmart want you to enjoy riding your bike for as long as it's safe to do so, and that's why Richard Gladman, Chief Examiner at IAM RoadSmart, has put together some riding safety tips for you to bear in mind before hopping on your bike this autumn.



### 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. Severe weather can present different challenges, and it's not just winter weather which can wreak havoc on the roads.

## **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 are coming from!). It's worth investing in the right clothing to protect you in all weathers, let's face it no one wants to spend the day drying out from the morning commute.

## **Prepare for the glare**

The sunshine is still quite bright, and this can make riding a bit challenging due to the low sun. However, you can use the flip-down visor within your helmet, or the peak if you're an adventure-type rider. While inserts in your visor can be helpful, they may also magnify glare. Don't forget to clean and check your visor regularly, as minor scratches may not be noticeable on sunny days but can become problematic on those darker rides with rain and headlights.

## **Check before you travel**

Remember to 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, so by spending a few minutes checking the basics will help prevent those unexpected breakdowns.

## **Staying seen**

We recommend wearing florescence or reflective gear; not to everyone's taste but pink high visibility clothing works best. This added piece of clothing may load the dice in your favour. Be aware of motion camouflage, a phenomenon where an object can remain below the detection threshold when coming straight towards you and 'suddenly appear', so take a second look for bikes and position deliberately if you are the bike.

## **Enjoy the ride**

Riding is meant to put a smile on your face, so do everything you can to keep you safe on the road so you can enjoy the ride. Encourage your non-motorcyclist friends to turn the well-known phrase SMIDSY (Sorry Mate, I Didn't See You) into SMART (Saw a Motorcyclist and Reacted Today) by reminding them to look out for motorcyclists on the road.



**Richard said:**

“Motorcycling is supposed to be fun and on a bright autumn day a blast in the country can be a real pleasure. Plan your ride to fit around any adverse weather warnings and kit up properly so your concentration is at its best. Plan for not being seen, the low sun can make you almost invisible to a car driver, and planning for the worst is better than hoping for the best. Finishing the ride with a smile and 2 hours' worth of cleaning is a proper winter treat.”

**Cars**

Despite summer arriving late, the days are getting shorter so it's important to adjust driving preparation and style to match the hazards that autumn can bring. IAM RoadSmart has some top tips for drivers dealing with the changing seasons.

**Check your lights**

It's dangerous for drivers and other road users if your lights do not work properly and with autumn meaning fewer daylight hours you need to be able to rely on correctly working and adjusted lights.

**Is the battery working properly?**

In the autumn, strain is placed on the battery with lights, heated screens, seats and the air conditioner to demist and keep us warm when the temperature finally drops. If there are any signs of the battery struggling now, it's likely to let you down as it gets colder. Signs your battery is dying include difficulty starting the car and the battery warning light on your dashboard come on.

**Don't get dazzled**

Clean your windscreen inside and out, as the sun's glare can intensify if the glass is grimy. Repair chips or scratches and clean your windscreen wipers, as they are likely to have been used less in the summer and worn wipers can result in poor visibility. Falling leaves may also lead to a build-up of debris, so make sure your screen wash is topped up.

**Antifreeze**

It's important to use antifreeze year-round as it helps to protect your vehicle from corrosion and decay. If you don't know which is best for your car, check your vehicle handbook.

**Be weather ready**

Autumn usually brings lower temperatures and many other conditions like fog, wind, rain and ice. It's always a good idea to check the weather forecast before setting off so you have an idea of what to expect and keep some warm and wet-weather clothing in your car just in case it changes.

**Richard said:**

“As the temperature drops, your car is a nice cosy place to be when it is working properly – sound preparation will help your journey go smoothly. Drivers also need to stay alert for blocked drains and localised flooding at this time of year. Your aim should always be to have a clear view of the changing seasons around you, and for other road users to be able to see you.”



The following is an amusing “rant” from a photographer colleague who lives in the far North-west of Scotland but there is an important message in it at the end.

### **What’s happened to motorcyclists?**

Real motorcyclists I mean. Lean, mean, leather clad rough diamonds. The each trouser knee worn smooth by brushing the tarmac from laying the bike flat through a series of S bends. Nowadays on the NC500, you’re just as likely to be held up by a hog on a Harley as by a beige Bolero caravanette driven by Derby and Joan. It’s September in the Highlands. The Invasion of the Coffin Dodgers. It was the same in the Lakes and likely Cornwall as well.

I’ve got a few old pals who still ride motorcycles, and I’m fairly sure they don’t hold back. They’ll still slice through traffic like a knife through butter. Even if they might not fit through some of the gaps as easily as they did.

So many of the bikers at the moment go round a corner in stages. I have more of a lean on coming out the pub. And they track the white line on right handers. So if they do lean, their heads are going to bounce off my door pillar. And it’s a Volvo door pillar. How not to corner:



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**And finally.....** Spotted somewhere in Ireland - it’s your choice!



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