

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



September 2024





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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 2024

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

Vol 24.8

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

Group Contact - David Harcourt

Tel No 07760 578444

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

Test Passes

No test passes to report this month

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

New Members

This month we welcome car members, Jamie Morrow, Riaan Maass, John Bell and Philip Gibson. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

August Cover Picture

The August cover picture was Shane Street in Randalstown with the Randalstown viaduct in the background. The viaduct was completed in 1856 to carry the railway over the River Maine and on to Cookstown. The structure was designed by Charles Lanyon, best known as the architect of Queen's University and the Harbour Commission Office in Belfast. The railway line was closed to passengers in 1950 but continued to be used for freight until it was totally closed in 1959.

Congratulations (in order of receipt) to Mark Patterson, Ralph Magee, James O'Brien, William McAteer, David McFall, Ivan McStea (Belfast Group), Guy Thomson and Norman Shearer

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

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

1 October	STAC 3 - Bends
8 October	Group Night - Annual General Meeting: Guest speaker from K9 Rescue
29 October	STAC 4 - Junctions and roundabouts
5 November	STAC 5 - Overtaking
12 November	Group Night - RNLI lifeboat visit
26 November	STAC 6 - Motorways and dual carriageways
3 December	STAC 7 - Manoeuvring
10 December	Group Night - Christmas dinner

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. 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.

September group night

We deserted the Boathouse for a drive/ride to The Pheasant between Lisburn and Ballynahinch. A total of 17 members and Associates attended, some from the Boathouse carpark whereas others made their own way. As usual a number of the bikes did a group run and on the car side there were two Associates who had observed drives there and back.

Your editor was one of the car observers and because we didn't take the quickest route, sticking to the country roads we were last to arrive and as a result most of the tray bakes were gone but at least they did leave tea/coffee and biscuits. Also we noticed that the bikers had grouped together in one snug and the car drivers in the other. Never the twain shall meet 😊. It was an enjoyable night and an opportunity to socialise (well at least among our own kind!).



September bike run

Owing to a few logistical issues with our normal 3rd Saturday run, the bike section took to the roads a week earlier, on 14 September.

12 riders departed from McDonald's in Ards, using the main roads to complete a circuit of South Down, taking in Comber, Killyleagh, Downpatrick, Strangford, Ardglass, Killough, Tyrella and finishing at the ever-popular French's in Clough.



We were lucky with the weather – bright and sunny with dry roads all along the route. We even managed to find a route with virtually no traffic – a special bonus on some lovely, sweeping bends between Tyrella and Clough.

Following our turn-out at the Pheasant the previous Tuesday evening, we feel we are building momentum within the section – and hope to undertake a longer run in October, possibly to the Glenelly Valley in the Sperrins. Keep an eye on the group chat for details, folks!

Sincere thanks to everyone for coming out and to Ralph and Don for organising.

Unfortunately, we didn't have Ivan with us this time, so our photo is limited to the grub part of the day. Still, there'll be plenty of opportunities for photos that include motorcycles the next time. Won't there, Ivan? Thanks to Ralph for the report.

Stay Safe on Chilly Autumn Mornings: Essential Tips to Prepare Your Car for the Cold

As summer fades into Autumn, 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 de-mist 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 illuminating.

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, worn wipers can result in poor visibility if they need replacing do it now. Falling leaves and sap may also lead to a build-up of debris, so make sure your screen wash is topped up to clear this.



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.

IAM RoadSmart's Chief Examiner, Richard Gladman 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. If you are on two wheels remember a combination of a damp road and wet leaves is like riding on ice"

Country roads

Despite being tucked well in to the hedge, this baler is still well over on the other side of the road. When going into a corner are you prepared for meeting something like this?



Alvis

Spotted this beautiful Alvis at Mount Stewart a couple of weeks ago and couldn't resist a photograph. I checked the Alvis Registry online and discovered that it is a 1935 Alvis Speed 20 SC drop head coupe, 2.7cc with a 4 speed synchromesh gearbox. The coachwork was built by a company called Charlesworth and they only made 32 of them. A rare find.



And finally.....

Speed or safety - you choose! One genuine and, in case you hadn't guessed, one spoof spotted in the carpark at the Boathouse.



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