

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



Summer 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

Summer 2022

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New Members

In this issue we welcome to the Group motorcycle member Tanya Oram. 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

Vikki Smyth - a F1RST

Linda Byrne

and to Chairman **David Harcourt** who re-qualified his car Masters with a distinction.

May cover picture

The May cover picture was the A2 in Kilkeel at the Lower Square. Congratulations (in order of receipt of answers) to Stewart Campbell, James O'Brien, Ralph Magee, Norman Shearer, Ivan Greenfield and Gary McKie.

Do you know where this month's cover is? 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

Boathouse refurbishment

In the middle of June we were required to vacate the Boathouse in Groomsport to enable the Council to carry out a refurbishment, which amongst other things will involve new fixtures and fittings in the kitchen. However, when the contractors visited the building they found that there were serious structural defects - essentially the wall facing the village was in danger of collapsing into the carpark.



The Council has made alternative arrangements for us to meet in the Minor Hall in the Community Centre in Donaghadee until the Boathouse is available again in October. There is car parking adjacent to the building but as this is a busy community centre this can fill quickly. Alternative parking places are shown below.



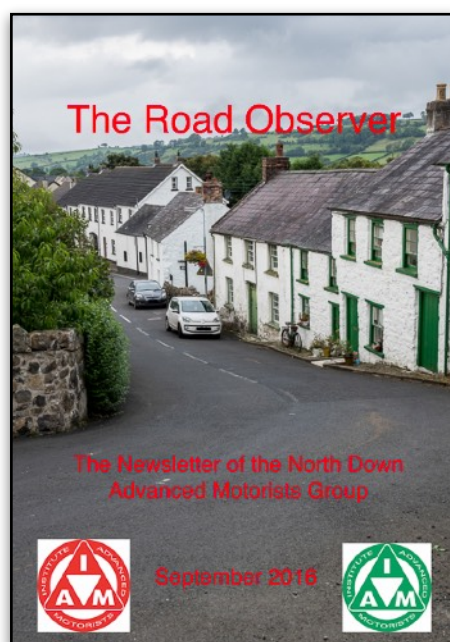
Dates for your diary

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.

- 9 August - STAC enrolment and demonstration drives (Donaghadee Community Centre)
- 6 September - STAC session 1 (Donaghadee Community Centre)
- 13 September - Group night - Evening drive/rides including observed drives/rides and refreshments - details to follow
- 27 September - STAC session 2 (Donaghadee Community Centre)
- 4 October - STAC session 3 (Groomsport Boathouse)
- 11 October - Annual General meeting - guest speaker Dr Ash Kumar (Groomsport Boathouse)
- 25 October - STAC Session 4 (Groomsport Boathouse)
- 1 November - STAC session 5 (Groomsport Boathouse)
- 8 November - Group Night - We are hoping to arrange a visit to the Transport Museum's new store
- 22 November - STAC session 6 (Groomsport Boathouse)
- 29 November - STAC session 7 (Groomsport Boathouse)
- 6 December - STAC session 8 (Groomsport Boathouse)
- 13 December - Christmas Dinner venue TBA

June Group Night

A drive or ride for ice-cream. What better way to spend a summer evening (ok a bbq with alcohol would also appeal but we have to be sensible!). A number of cars and bikes assembled at the Boathouse, which was by then surrounded by scaffolding, while others made their own way direct from home. I did an observed drive to the Rhinka but to give Stewart my Associate a more varied route we went via the M2, Ballynure and Glenoe. If you haven't been to Glenoe it's worth visit if you are in the area. It has a great waterfall (spectacular in autumn) and the village itself is interesting as it is built on a steep slope with a couple of sharp bends. It featured as the cover picture in the September 2016 Road Observer.



Unfortunately the weather could have been kinder, it was June after all. It was cool but it was just as well it was dry because the Rinkha didn't have tables and chairs outside this year. The ice-cream was just as good.

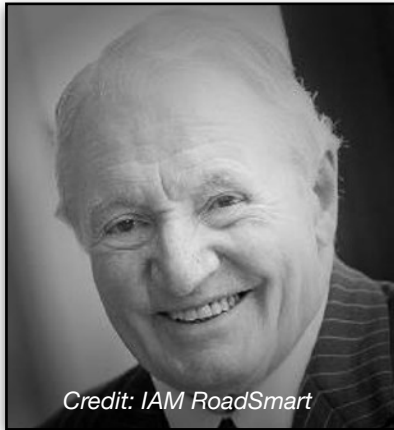
Some pictures from the evening:



Paddy Hopkirk

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Paddy Hopkirk MBE, former rally driver from Northern Ireland, and Mature Driver Ambassador for IAM RoadSmart since 2016.

Paddy was a loyal, enthusiastic, and hard-working Ambassador for our charity and members and he leaves behind an incredible legacy of motorsport and business success; he won the Monte Carlo in 1964 (see Mini below) and Acropolis Rallies and was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List 2016 to recognise his achievements in motorsport and education. He showed great commitment and passion for passing his knowledge on, and he made a particular impression on young drivers.



Paddy passed away peacefully at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Buckinghamshire on Thursday 21 July 2022, and he will be greatly missed by friends, family and colleagues.

Tailgating



Being followed too closely by other drivers is the behaviour that distracts motorists most on our roads, latest research reveals.

A survey commissioned by IAM RoadSmart, asked 1,000 motorists to rank a series of occurrences on how distracting they are, with one in three (30 per cent) of the drivers surveyed deeming tailgating to be the most distracting factor.

The research comes in the wake of figures from National Highways revealing that tailgating is a factor in 1 in 8 crashes on their road network.

Neil Greig, Director of Policy and Research at IAM RoadSmart, commented: “The sight of a fellow driver in your rear-view mirror following too closely can be very disconcerting, and our survey shows it is the leading cause of driver distraction on Britain’s roads.

“However, it is clear that tailgating is not just a minor inconvenience, with figures from Highways England revealing that far too many people are being left scared, angry and frustrated by the aggressive and reckless behaviour of tailgaters.

“It is worth remembering that you will cover 62 metres every two seconds when travelling at 70 miles per hour, meaning you need around 96 metres to stop, making adequate stopping distances absolutely critical to curtail the tailgating problem.”

Tailgating was closely followed by children or other passengers as the second most distracting occurrence, with one in four (26 per cent) agreeing that having others in the car can affect their ability to focus on their driving.

The survey also revealed that traffic is also a significant source of distraction for motorists, with one in five (21 per cent) rating this as a factor that disconcerts them.

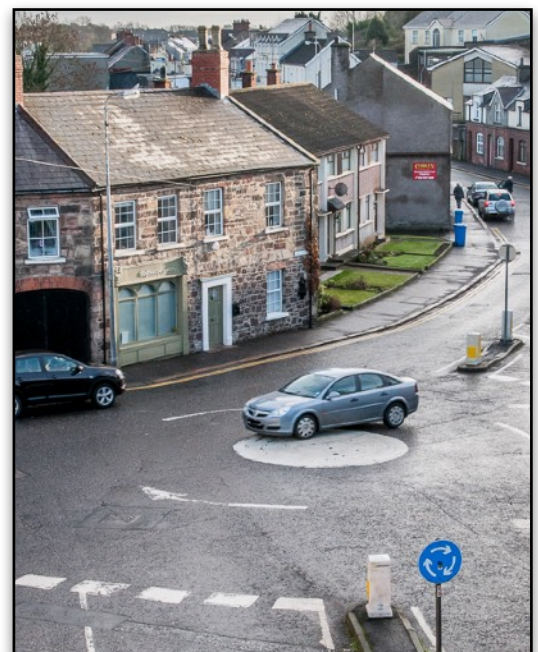
Neil concluded: “Whether it be from reckless behaviour from another road user, or even a screaming child, distractions while driving can come in many different forms. Drivers should always take control and do all they can to mitigate for them. This way, together we can all ensure Britain’s roads are as safe as they can possibly be.”

What’s the biggest distraction while driving?	
Occurrence	Respondents who ranked as biggest distraction
Tailgating	30%
Children / other passengers	26%
Traffic	21%
Road works	10%
Infotainment	7%
Music	6%

Roundabouts

As an advanced driver or biker you should know how to deal with roundabouts, unlike the driver in the picture. As a reminder, the Department for Infrastructure has produced a handy leaflet setting out clearly the rules and how to negotiate roundabouts. Here is a link which you might find useful and which you could pass on to friends and family:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Road%20safety%20education%20leaflet%20-%20Roundabouts%202016.pdf>



Driving safely on country lanes

The key piece of advice from Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's Head of Driving and Riding Standards for driving on country roads is to remember the environment you are in.



Credit: IAM RoadSmart

And perhaps the second biggest piece of advice is, don't swerve to miss animals or birds that might run or fly out in front of you...don't kill yourself to save a rabbit: We've published this advice before and received a lot of push back – particularly from a lady who said what we'd essentially said was 'kill the rabbit'. And actually, I 100% stand by that advice if it's a choice between you, any other occupants of your car, and the rabbit.

However, wouldn't it be better not to put ourselves in the situation where we had to make that choice and simply respect the countryside and the creatures that live in it?

Share the road

When you're driving in the countryside you should of course expect rabbits and other wildlife, such as deer, to run out in front of you...if you drive around a corner and there's a line of ducks crossing the road, none of us is heartless enough to want to run them over. So wouldn't it be nice if when we came around the corner, we were driving slowly enough not to have to choose between the ducks and crashing the car?

Drive at a pace that allows you to share the road with its regular residents...one day that line of ducks is going to be a combine harvester (*or a muck spreader - see picture*)... and that would hurt.

You should always be able to stop in the distance you can see to be clear on your side of the road – and have a clear view of what's on your side of the road. That's part of road craft we teach people on our courses - but of course the word missing is 'comfortably'.

When I was a police officer teaching trainee officers about driving to emergencies, I told them their stop didn't need to look pretty, they just had to bring the car to a halt: At IAM RoadSmart, I tell members that not only do they have to stop, but stop comfortably.

Look out for warning signs

And if you're coming up behind a flock of sheep, or horses, you have to realise you're going to be there for 20 minutes or so. It's their environment – not yours – you have to be prepared to share. Slow down, take in all the information about what might be around the corner. UK roads are actually pretty good at that.

If there's a warning sign about horses, someone has put it there for a reason. There might not necessarily be horses on the road at that moment, but perhaps a bridleway crosses close by, or there's a riding school. The sign is saying 'heighten your awareness to horses'. Similarly, if there's a sign with a tractor on it, you know that somewhere close, a tractor or combined harvester will be coming onto the road frequently.



If I see a church steeple in the distance, I don't just think 'oh there's a lovely church', I'm thinking 'steeple, people' and that I'm approaching a village and the speed limit is going to change. I'll be thinking about it and ready for it.

But going through a small village at 30 mph is actually still quite fast, especially if there are chickens or ducks. Look out for hand-written signs. It might not be an official road sign, but someone has taken the time and trouble to create it and put it there. Use it to your advantage.

There are usually other indications that you need to be more vigilant. For instance, if there's fresh horse dung in the road, you know the horse is close by. If that dung is flattened out, the horse was there earlier, and might be coming back.

If there's one cyclist, you know it's likely there will be more – they often ride in twos or more.

Single-track roads

When it comes to a single-track roads, remember you should be able to stop in half the distance you can see. You can go quickly on the straight stretches but should be much slower on blind bends.

Look at the edges of the road. If they are broken up, you know that large vehicles, such as tractors have been there. Make a note of the passing places as you drive past them and be prepared to reverse to let a tractor or other farm machinery through.

Don't forget

To sum up: Share nicely; be prepared to stop in half the distance you can see – and put the word 'comfortably' in there. Take in all the information that's there to help you drive safely on country roads and respect the fact that other people and animals live there.



9 counties photo rally

From Simon Beckett's account on our Group's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownGroupIAM>

18 June saw us attempt to complete a 9 counties photo rally. 7 bikers set off from Sprucefield at 7.30am and ventured to Dromara, Armagh, Co Monaghan, Co Cavan and then near Florence Court for lunch.



We said goodbye to 2 riders at this point and 5 of us continued north to the top of Donegal before making our way back towards Coleraine.

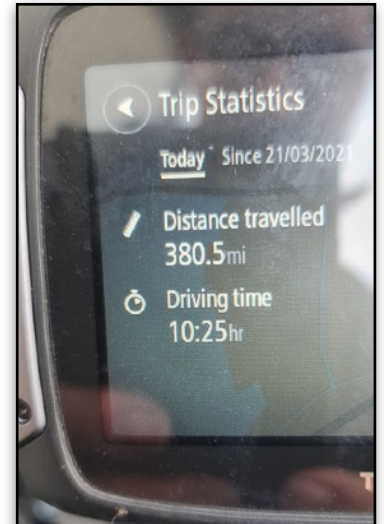


Unfortunately we couldn't have predicted the standstill traffic in Letterkenny (both ways) or the road works for the Pomeroy point. So we decided to cut our losses for the day and head back from Maghera having already covered over 300 miles by that stage alone.

We got lucky with the weather, only a couple of showers. The roads were fantastic, some nice little gems just over the border in Cavan.

Well done to all who came and took part today. We will organise a couple of runs to get the last 2 points that we missed (Co Tyrone and Co Antrim).

I know I covered 380 miles door to door today, I'm sure a couple of others will have covered more. Time for feet up and relax, won't be moving too far tomorrow...



A few more pictures are available on our Facebook page - link above.

And finally.....

Staying with the bikes - how many things do you see wrong with this? Spotted on Facebook



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