

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



Summer 2025





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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 2025

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Test passes

Congratulations this month to

Neil Anthony

on passing his advanced car test

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

Cover picture

The May cover picture was of the Temple Roundabout on the A24 between Carryduff and Ballynahinch. What makes it notable is the statue on the middle of the roundabout depicting Formula 2 double world champion Brian Reid and is to commemorate the Temple 100 road races which ran between 1921 and 1999.

Congratulations to David McFall, Richard Walker, Neil Anthony and Norman Shearer. Also apologies to David Harcourt for accidentally (honest!) omitting him from the list of correct answers to last month's cover picture.

Do you know where this month's picture was taken? There is now a prize to aim for as well as the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, getting a mention in the next Road Observer. The prize is a year's Group membership to the Member who gets the greatest number of correct answers in the year to October 2025. Submit your answers to: leslie.ashe.LA@gmail.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.

12 August	Car section enrolment night - demonstration drives
2 September	STAC 1 - Human factors and IPSGA
9 September	Group Night - to be announced (TBA)
23 September	STAC 2 - Core driving skills
30 September	STAC 3 - Bends
7 October	STAC 4 - Junctions and roundabouts
14 October	Group Night - Annual General Meeting
28 October	STAC 5 - Overtaking
4 November	STAC 6 - Motorways and dual carriageways
11 November	Group Night - TBA
25 November	STAC 7 - Manoeuvring
2 December	Additional driving practice
9 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.

June Group Night

Behind the scenes it was all a bit on/off in the week leading up to Tuesday 10 June. The plan was to have a drive/ride to the Rinkha for ice cream. However, because of the period of poor weather in early June The Rinkha was closing at 8pm rather than it's normal 9pm over the summer. After a discussion with the management they agreed to remain open for us for a short period after 8pm to allow us time to get there.

In the event the weather improved and the management began it's summer opening hours that week. The evening itself turned out sunny although there was a chill in the wind. Some 20 of us attended including a couple of car Associates who got observed drives from Groomsport and back. In my case Charlie got the "benefit" of an observed drive to Glenoe and on to the Rinkha along some "interesting" B roads. The ice cream was as good as ever.

A bit of history for you courtesy of David Hall and a website "Wartime NI":

The Rinkha is a family-owned ice-cream parlour and general store dating back almost a century. They cater to the shopping needs of the local community in Islandmagee, Co. Antrim but visitors come from far and wide for the delicious ice-cream.

The business has remained in the family for 4 generations since Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Hawkins founded a small general store in Islandmagee, Co. Antrim in 1921. Known as The Gobbins Stores, it was



here that the Hawkins family developed their much-loved ice-cream recipe. In 1921, the ice-cream hand-turned in wooden churns.

In 1935, W.J. Hawkins branched out with some ambitious ideas for the time. Despite the relatively small population of Islandmagee, Co. Antrim and the surrounding area, he opened a dancehall on the current site. Next to the hall was a large area for car parking despite the few vehicles on the roads at the time. A local historian Dixon Donaldson put forward the new name of 'The Rinkha' coming from the Irish phrase meaning a place to dance or a place of mirth.

W.J. Hawkins' son Billy took over the family business and set up a small shop and café on the same site as the dancehall. At the same time, ice-cream production moved to Middle Road from The Gobbins Stores.

During the Second World War, the vision of W.J. Hawkins paid off. With hundreds of members of the United States Army based at nearby Redhall, Ballycarry, Co. Antrim, the dancehall proved a popular spot in wartime. British and Belgian troops also had bases throughout the area. As well as attending the regular dances held by The Rinkha, the U.S. Army from time to time hired the dancehall for their own events. Visitors to the store today can still see the old "No Jitterbugging" sign.

While the dancehall scene in Northern Ireland died off following the showbands era in the 1960s and 1970s, The Rinkha still stands. Thousand of visitors each year enjoy the homemade ice-cream and a browse around the many items in the store.

Hopefully we will be back next June.

Motorcycle Section

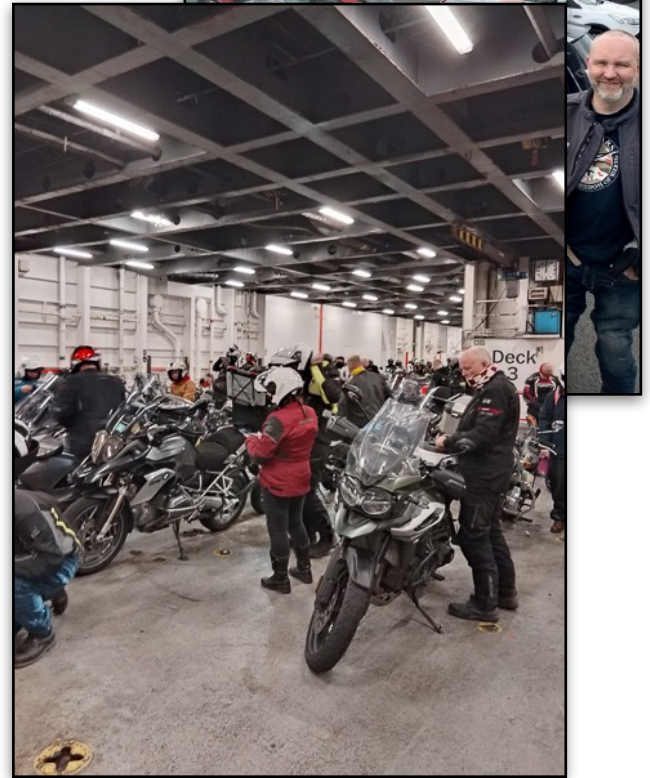
Three events to report.

For the **June ride out** our Advanced Motorcyclists set off on a fantastic run, meeting at Jordanstown Loughshore Park, Newtownabbey. From there, we rode through Broughshane to Waterfoot, taking in the stunning views and winding roads of the Glens of Antrim.

The route, expertly planned by Brian, was met with great enthusiasm, with feedback including "Cracking roads" and "Great run today." It was the perfect way to enjoy the beauty of Northern Ireland's countryside while sharpening our advanced riding skills.

Thanks to everyone who joined the ride – it's always a pleasure to share these adventures with such a great group of riders.

Also in June NDAM bikers had an incredible day out as they took the ferry across to Scotland for a scenic day trip! The return ferry for bike and rider was just £25, making it an affordable and adventurous ride across the sea.



The group explored some stunning spots in Scotland, including Whithorn, Ayr, and Portpatrick – and they even took the sunshine with them, leaving us in Northern Ireland with pouring rain! It was a fantastic day of riding, sightseeing, and great food – all in the company of fellow bike enthusiasts. Definitely a trip to remember.

For July's ride, we had a fantastic day out exploring some of the best roads Northern Ireland has to offer. Our journey started a little later than planned at McDonald's in Ards, but we quickly got back on track and headed straight to the Portaferry ferry.



While waiting for the boat, the team set up their radios to communicate during the ride. The latest update meant we had to switch back to the previous channel—technical hiccups are always part of the fun!

Once off the ferry at Strangford, we enjoyed the slow but fascinating sight of the ferry trying to make headway against the incoming current. From there, we headed to Downpatrick, then to Clough, Newcastle, and finally Kilkeel.



In Kilkeel, we stopped for a bite from the deli menu, had a nice chat, and soaked up the great weather. The route itself was simple but with guaranteed good roads—just what we all need for a relaxing ride. The fantastic weather was a big plus, allowing us to leave and return dry—a rarity we're always grateful for.

What you are up against on the roads.

As advanced drivers and riders we are all too aware of the dangers on the roads and we do our utmost to keep ourselves and other road users safe by adopting advanced driving / riding practices and being observant.

A couple of recent reports from the Police highlight some of the things anyone is likely to encounter on the roads at any time.

North Antrim

Maydown Road Policing Interceptors detected a motorist travelling at 107mph on the Frosses Road, near Ballymena. When stopped, the driver stated they were in a hurry to be somewhere. Regardless of the reason, this level of speed poses a significant risk to all road users. The motorist will now have to explain their actions to the local Magistrate in the coming weeks.

We urge all drivers to slow down. Please consider the safety of every road user - pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, and agricultural vehicles and drive responsibly at all times.



Credit: PSNI

Ards and North Down

Officers have been out across the district conducting proactive patrols.

Throughout one evening we have carried out the following activities:

- 20+ Checkpoint breath tests conducted under the Road Traffic Order.
- 1x Person arrested for driving with excess alcohol, they provided a roadside reading of 75 (legal limit is 35).
- 2x Fixed penalty notices issued for excess speed on Gransha Road and South Circular Road, one vehicle travelling at 56mph in a 30mph zone and the other travelling at 64mph in a 40mph zone.
- 1x Fixed penalty notice for a defective light.
- 1x Vehicle seized for no insurance.
- 1x Fixed penalty notice for no insurance.
- 2x Persons detected in possession of a class B controlled drug. One of these will be reported to the Public Prosecution Service and the other has been dealt with by way of an out of Court disposal.

Casualty rescue, Giants Causeway

On a recent trip to the North Coast of County Antrim I called in at the Giant's Causeway in time to witness the final part of a Coastguard rescue. Someone suffered a dislocated shoulder on the steps up to the cliff top at the Causeway and had to be rescued by helicopter. The person was winched up to the Coastguard helicopter sent from Prestwick in Scotland and transferred to an ambulance at the Giants Causeway visitor centre.

A helicopter from the NI Air Ambulance also attended the incident but was not required. It's good to know that these services are available should you ever need them.



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