

# CLASSIC SCENE



**January 2009**

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**The next 'Classic Scene'**  
**GOES TO THE PRINTER**  
on the Monday of the week  
preceding the next meeting  
Please send articles by e-mail or typed.

## Archivist

**Ranald Smith**

The club has an extensive archive of information relating to all aspects of classic car ownership including technical advice etc. To access this, please contact the archivist, Ranald Smith, at Hawthorn Cottage, 2 Burn Road, Inverness IV2 3NG  
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### Cover picture

*Ian takes John Mackenzies Austin  
seven Special for a spin*

## THE CHAIRMAN'S BIT

It's minus 9 outside and as I write this we are in the middle of a power cut so I'm shivering inside as well, just as cheerful as the economy in fact. The parlous state of the motor industry got me thinking about the volumes the big manufactures are geared up to produce. The first time I started sub-contracting in my early twenties was, to the then new, Ford engine plant at Brigidend. We were installing a cylinder head machining line for the Escort range of engines. There were 19 machines each between 20 or 30 metres long all connected in series by lengths of conveyor called automation which held stock against the next machine and changed the orientation of the part if it was required. The aluminium cylinder head entered the first machine as a rough casting, transferred through the line finally emerging from the last machine fully finished ready for engine assembly. Why so long? Simply so each machine's cycle time could be kept to around 20-25 seconds. Once full the line would be producing 1 finished cylinder head every 25 seconds or so. In practice well over 2,500 in a day. And of course the number of complete engines would be a similar



figure. I could never figure out where all these engines went because I didn't know anybody then who could afford a new car!

For the benefit of newer members the club holds an annual auction night at the January meeting (this year on Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> Jan at the North Kessock Hotel). Bring along any motoring related items you no longer need and would like to offer for sale. Actually it does not have to be motoring related – any old tat will do. Your auctioneer Bryan will be trying to keep control, be warned he is very handy with a gavel!

**Michael**

## This Months Meeting

Thursday 8th January at 7.30pm

Annual Motoring Auction at the North Kessock  
Hotel

## EDITORIAL

Hello,

Thanks for all the input for the events diary - It's starting to fill up nicely. On the subject of recommended suppliers, perhaps someone out there can help John MacKellaich in his search for an upholsterer. He has been told about 'Storm' at Forres - can anyone recommend them? also Gordon Maitland in Turrif - does anyone know his work?

We've got a caption competition this month on the back page and I'll print the best entries in next month's newsletter. No fantastic prizes, just the 'honour' of your name in print...

I've spoken to the editor of the 'Motors North' section of the Inverness Courier, and he's very interested in covering the 'Drive it Day' event on Sunday the 20th. This is an ideal excuse to waken your car from its winter slumber and get it roadworthy.

One of my motoring highlights this month was driving Frank Tedds 1926 Wolseley 10



around the streets of Grantown. It's very liberating when you come to a junction as there's no indicators or anything to worry about, just steering!. Flat out down the high street in third at an indicated 25 mph! and the sun even shone on us - marvellous!

If you don't see me at the monthly meetings, you can write to me at the address inside the front cover, or email me direct.

### Callum



### SIGN OF THE TIMES

When the Road Sign Designer at a Welsh Council recently E-mailed his

request for a translation of the English; "No entry for heavy goods vehicles. Residential site only" he received a reply in Welsh and promptly had this sign manufactured and installed!

However, the Translator had been away from his desk at that moment and the response had been an automatically generated one by his computer, saying in Welsh; "I am not in the office at the moment. Send any work to be translated!"

# Local Events Diary

Here are some details of 2009 local events that may be of interest to our members

## April

26th FBHVC “Drive-it” Day. Details nearer the time

## May

## June

7th Fraserburgh Vintage Car Rally 12-5pm

1st Motorfun classic rally with fun run. George West, Rally Sec 01343 543716

15th Tain Vintage Vehicle Rally

## July

12th/13th Scottish Transport Extravaganza at Glamis Castle

13th Forres Theme Day

19th Knockhill Classic SpeedFair

## August

3rd Moray Muscle Show

10th Historic Wheels Rally—Brodie Castle

23rd/24th Auto Spirit—Culzean Castle

30th Fortrose Fun Day

## September

6th Dingwall Street Fair

7th Motor Mania—Grantown on Spey

13th Dingwall Street Fayre

20th/21st Selkirk Rally

23rd Laigh o' Moray Vintage Association's rally and family fun day at Inchkeil Steading, Roseisle. Tel Danny Duncan 01667 455078 or Gordon MacKenzie 01343 541665

27th/28th Fraserburgh East to West Commercial Run

*If you notice any errors or omissions, please let the editor know.*

## A Different World

They say there are two rules when buying a classic; never buy the first one you see, and always buy the best you can afford. When buying my DB7 I broke the first one (again), but definitely not the second. Let me tell you the story.

There are three marques that “ring my bell”; Triumph, most of which I’ve owned or driven at some time; Jaguar, of which I’ve owned a few, and Aston Martin, which until now was just a dream.

I was on holiday in Switzerland, and I had taken a copy of Classic & Sportscar with me to read. Feet up on the balcony overlooking the Lauterbrunnen valley, glass of wine in hand, I read it from cover to cover, including all the adverts. I began to notice the ads for Astons, and DB7s in particular. (To be honest, I’ve always wanted a DB6, but the price of them has gone stratospheric- £100K+ for a good one!). Turning to speak to the Sex Goddess who I’d taken on the trip with me (OK I was pissed) I said “You know, I think Aston Martin DB7s have bottomed out in price, and now might be the time to buy” “Wonderful, my Prince” she purred “but come and make love to me” (hey this wine is strong). OK maybe not quite like that but you get the picture.

I was due to fly to London for a meeting which would only take half a day, thus leaving me a morning free to do some “shopping”. There were two DB7s in the glossy ads, and when I returned home I made detailed enquiries about them both over the phone as well as looking at the pictures on the internet. One was silver and apparently mint. Not the best colour I thought, and difficult to live with if indeed it was mint. I settled on the Mendip Blue one at Nicholas Mee & Co, which was described as “affordable and useable”.

I phoned to make an appointment, and to ask directions to the garage from the nearest tube. “Oh just ring us on the mobile when you get to

Shepherd’s Bush and we’ll come and collect you!” was the reply. I was beginning to sense that this was a different world I was entering. I duly arrived at Shepherd’s Bush, and was collected in the company Discovery by Neal, the sales man. Arriving at Brackenbury garage, the DB7 was sitting outside all ready for me. To be honest, the difficulty was always going to be not buying it. Ian Callum’s design is gorgeous enough in photos, but to see it in the flesh.....get thee behind me Satan! It’s mine and I want it!!!!!! There are certain cars and certain colour combinations that work well, and the Mendip Blue with ivory leather certainly works for the DB7.

A little bit of tyre kicking was followed by a road test, which though brief, was ample time for me to decide to sell my soul to the devil if need be. Returning to the garage I inspected the “history”. Loads of bills (big ones) which was frightening and reassuring at the same time. In particular I was looking for two bills, one for rebuilding the suspension, and another for rebuilding the air-conditioning. These both need done by 50,000 miles on the DB7. You’d be pretty hacked off if both these needed done on your Renault Megane or whatever at 50K, but apparently that’s “normal” for a DB7. And so to the price. “The car is advertised at £26,950” said Neal. “Yes, I can read” I replied. “Twenty-five?” “No, but if you could go to twenty-six we could have a deal” “Done” and we shook hands. Thirty seconds, and it was done and dusted, or so I thought. “OK, if we could take a £5,000 deposit” said Neal. I gulped. I had vaguely thought that a grand would suffice, but we settled on 10% which I reckoned the credit card would stand. I went off to my meeting, but I couldn’t really pay much attention to the subject matter. (It was boring anyway).

The next thing was to arrange to collect the car. I booked flights to London for Jane and me, and then started to arrange insurance. I got a couple of quotes in the five to six hundred

pound area, but Privilege reckoned they could do it for £400. It all sounded good but they came back to me asking what make the security system was. "It's Aston Martin" I told them. "Yes, but what make is it?" "Aston Martin" "Yes sir, but what make of security system?" "Aston Martin". This actually went on for over a week, until they decided on the day before I was due to fly to London that the system wasn't Thatcham approved and they wouldn't accept the risk. I then phoned Lockton who are the Aston Martin Club preferred insurers, and although they were fifty quid dearer it was all straight forward (Yes I know, I should have gone to them straight away, but I thought I was saving a bit with Privilege) We flew down on the morning flight to Gatwick, and took the train and tube up to Hammersmith where once again we were collected. Whilst I finished the paperwork, Jane took some photos of the garage. Once again it's a different world, and the DB7 is obviously the wannabee Aston. Brackenbury Garage is more than just a sales outlet, it's a proper workshop, and some of the cars are just mind-blowing. In particular there was a totally mint DB6, yours for £120K, and a DB4 GT which was being completely reworked for the owner to make it the ultimate driving machine, and money was obviously no object. Before we left Jane took the cheesy handing-over-the-keys photo, and then we were off.

I've driven in London often, but this time was particularly nerve wracking. It's bad enough in any city, but with a car you don't know, especially negotiating bits like the Hangar Lane gyratory with artic trucks vying for space with you is bad enough, but the Aston has a lot of bump steer with those big tyres and Hammersmith Council could do with accelerating their pot-hole filling programme. It was a great relief to hit the M1, and we pushed up to Rugby for lunch, carefully keeping to 70 all the way. The weather had been fine, but after lunch, back on the motorway we hit torrential rain, and I'm not afraid to admit that I took it down to 50mph in the inside lane (yes Fiestas were

flying past me!). We made an overnight stop in Lancaster, and then continued home with a brief stop in Glasgow to see our son who lives in Drumchapel ( I watched the car out of his window the whole time!).

So what's it like to live with?. Well the first thing I discovered is that it wouldn't go into the garage because the ramp is too steep for the nose cone which is very low. I've fixed this temporarily with some slabs in front of the ramp, but it means I'm going to have to mix a couple of tons of concrete to change the slope of the ramp.

On the road? Well because of the bumpsteer, single track roads with potholes are a nightmare (like where I live!!). On the A9 and motorway the problem is that even a Nissan Micra can do ninety now, and if you get drawn into the "I'm-faster-than-you" game, you end up at speeds that will lose your licence, so you just have to relax and let them pass you. But, on good A roads, with some sweeping bends.... up to Gairloch, Ullapool, Dornoch, Lairg; the Highlands have some of the best roads for driving in Britain, good surfaces, sweeping bends through beautiful scenery, and mostly deserted, and in the Aston it's like getting your...(gosh, can't print that, but you get the picture). As for bills, I haven't had any yet, but I'm hoping that the six cylinder car lives up to it's reputation of being reasonably modest to maintain (compared to other Astons, that is). Time will tell. Watch this space!.



## VOLVO-MAN PARKS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD TO TELL A TALE

Most of us admit that the engine bay of a modern car has become a no-go area. However, two episodes recently reinforced that view for me.

The first was quite simple. I went down to AutoSave to get some disc pads. I marched up to the counter and asked for a set of pads, front and rear, for a Volvo V70. The chap enquired which engine size, and I had to admit I didn't even know there were different engines fitted. "Yup" he replied, and after fiddling with his computer he added "and the pads are different". "OK" say I, "I'll just pop out and check which one it is". I looked at the boot. V70. OK I know that. I grabbed the handbook out of the glove compartment. (Random thought; who stores gloves in a glove compartment??). Ok handbook. Hmmm, plenty on how to put on seat belts, but no clues on engine size. OK, lift

the bonnet. The engine covers said VOLVO (well I know that), but nothing else. I checked all around the wings and bulkhead. Nothing. Zilch. Zero!! Rather than admit to being a clueless twat to the parts man I slunk away. I found the information in the logbook later, but so much for being a competent amateur mechanic!

The next episode illustrates how high-tech the whole thing has become. The Volvo started missing occasionally at low revs, and the two lights came on. One was the engine management system and the other was labelled ETS (What!) or Electronic Throttle System (not much wiser). I put the car down to my local garage who put it on their diagnostic machine and told me it needed a throttle body, which is the modern equivalent of a carburettor. I told them not to do anything about it because I had a contact at Volvo who could get me the parts



**Forres Theme Day July 2007**

at a reduced price. I made enquiries, and was told that although the part could be supplied, it would really have to be fitted by Volvo because there was a software download that had to be done with it. Before I could get around to booking the car in, it beat me to it by conking out on the way to work a few days later. I had to get AA'd to Arnold Clark, and I was bracing myself for a big bill. However, Volvo phoned that afternoon, and said the car was ready, and that there was no charge!. What had they done I enquired. "Just the software download" was the reply! I was extremely grateful, but I also realised that this lies at the heart of the issue. The main dealers have access to all the software patches that may be required, but the smaller garages are now out of the loop. Volvo are only concerned with Volvo diagnostics, but the small garages are trying to keep up with all makes and models which is a high on impossible task.

There may be light at the end of the tunnel

however. I was relating this story to a young petrol-head the other day, and he said "but you've got a lap-top haven't you?" "Well all you need is OBD2, and a lead, which should set you back about fifty quid" "Huh? OBD2.....?" "On Board Diagnostics 2" (Of course, silly me) "All cars after 1999 have to be OBD2 compliant, Google it, and you'll get the lead on E-bay" (where else).

Also, I have read that in America, you can now buy a device the size of a mobile phone, which plugs into the socket. This downloads the information, and then you connect via a USB lead to the Internet and it goes off to a site, which interrogates it, and gives the likely cause, and a likely repair cost. You have to subscribe to the service so it would appeal more to someone who was fixing cars as a paying hobby, but it does mean that with time the under-bonnet mysteries will be revealed.

**B.M.**



## FBHVC "Drive It Day" 2008

Over the last couple of years, "Drive It Day" has provided an opportunity for many member clubs to hold events in support of FBHVC's work.

The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Club is most grateful for this support and urges organisers to remember that the purpose of DID is for us to be seen and appreciated by the public. There is, however, a fine line between that and being seen and hated: we must ensure all our events fall on the right side of the that line, so please avoid extremes such as high speed chases or convoys of slow moving vehicles that no-one can pass.

The 2008 Drive It Day takes place on Sunday, 20 April.

The Highland Classic Motor Club is organising a run to show support for this event. We'll be assembling on Stadium Road outside the new HSBS building at 10.30 am and then driving a short tour of the city centre. This will be followed by a route out of Inverness ending at the Old North Inn. We have got the local press involved so the bigger the turnout the better.



"By all means heckle, but please, no spitting!"

A farmer named Seamus had a car accident.

In court, the lorry company's fancy hot shot solicitor was questioning Seamus. 'Didn't you say, to the Garda at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine,'?' Asked the solicitor. Seamus responded, 'Well, I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favourite cow, Bessie, into the...'

'I didn't ask for any details', the solicitor interrupted. 'Just answer the question. Did you not say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine!'?'

Seamus said, 'Well, I had just got Bessie into the trailer and I was driving down the road....'

The solicitor interrupted again and said, 'Your Honour, I am trying to establish the fact that, at the scene of the accident, this man told the Garda on the scene that he was fine. Now several weeks after the accident he is trying to sue my client. I believe he is a fraud. Please tell him to simply answer the question.'

By this time, the Judge was fairly interested in Seamus's answer and said to the solicitor, 'I'd like to hear what he has to say about his favourite cow, Bessie'.

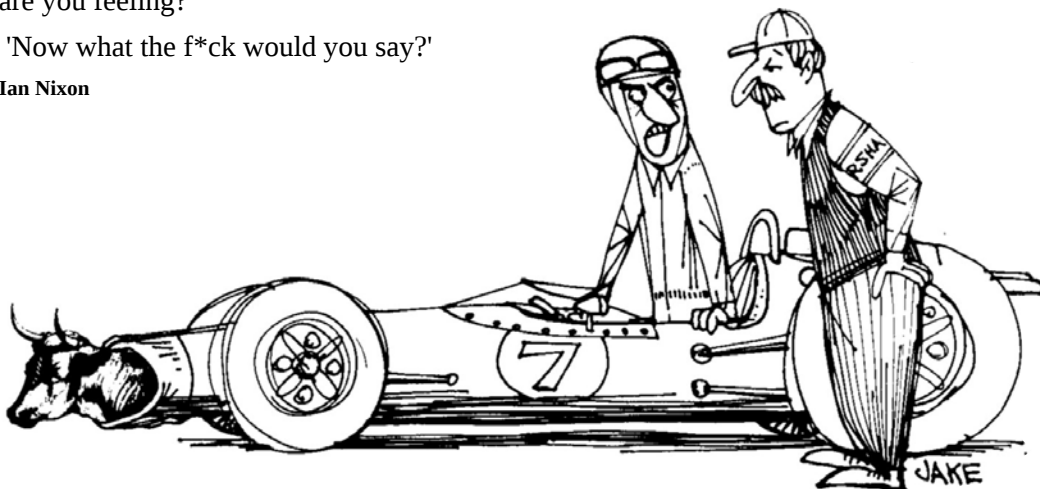
Seamus thanked the Judge and proceeded. 'Well as I was saying, I had just loaded Bessie, my favourite cow, into the trailer and was driving her down the road when this huge lorry and trailer came through a stop sign and hit my trailer right in the side. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into the other.

I was hurt, very bad like, and didn't want to move. However, I could hear old Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible shape just by her groans. Shortly after the accident a Garda on a motorbike turned up. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning so he went over to her. After he looked at her, and saw her condition, he took out his gun and shot her between the eyes.

Then the Garda came across the road, gun still in hand, looked at me and said, 'How are you feeling?'

'Now what the f\*ck would you say?'

Ian Nixon



"Just what makes you think that I went off course?"

## MILES'S MEANDERINGS

Isn't it amazing, the stuff that comes out of our children's mouths now and again, or in most of your cases it's probably grandchildren, mine never cease to amaze me.

Take one morning, last month, it all started with the simple task of getting my three-year-old Son to put his pants on (although anyone having tried to get a small person dressed will actually know that this is never a "simple task").

All I did to try and hurry up the process was mention something about the bird that was colourfully-cartooned across the front of them. How could this innocent sounding observation, in the scheme of things, have led to such complete Father-Son out and out warfare at 7am I hear you ask?

Because it was a bloody "Toucan!" that's why! It couldn't have been a jolly Robin or maybe a perky Parrot, but no it had to be a solitary sodding Toucan. You try convincing a very independent and single-minded three-year-old, at 7 am, who does not want to get dressed in a hurry, that a single Toucan is not in fact called a "Onecan" when neither of you is willing to back down about it!

Until, inevitably, Mummy arrives to defuse the situation, pointing out that "of course it's a Onecan darling, why would Daddy think it was called anything else..." which seemed to do the trick almost immediately. Why didn't I think of that? (as Mummy also pointed out to me!)

Anyway, the next part of the day involved an enlightening trip in the new family car. Enlightening as to the drastic difference between the type of modern motoring that we experience from our fabulous new Euroboxes and the type of fabulous motoring experience that we get from our beloved Classics.

There I was cruising up the A9 duel-



carriageway towards the Tore roundabout (Yes some of the A9 actually is duelled, although only a paltry 7 miles of it at this point and, in my experience, usually with one lane coned off for some inexplicable reason during rush hour!) probably at a little over the recommended National Speed limit (temporary since the 70's I believe), when the little voice of my seven-year-old daughter piped up from the rear of said Eurobox's exquisitely quiet, if slightly grey cockpit.

"Can't this thing go any faster Daddy?" Followed, now by the chant of a three-year-old shouting "Faster Daddy, faster Daddy, faster Daddy!" (Oh for the roar of a slightly blowing exhaust manifold accompanied by the drone of a failing wheel bearing and the wind noise of a hurricane to fill the confines of the exquisitely quiet, if slightly grey cockpit!) First difference.

My protests about us travelling at an already rather rapid, all be it effortless and obviously un-exhilarating speed must have fallen completely on the deaf ears of youth when she retorted "Quite frankly Daddy I could run faster than this!".....so I dropped her off at Tore!

The modern motor does leave us rather detached from the exhilaration of the driving experience that we choose to enjoy from our more Classic modes of transport.

I may be unable to make the hairs on the back

of my children's necks stand on end with a burst of speed in the family hatchback, but at least I can still reduce a grown man to tears by arriving at a suburban cross-roads doing 25 mph in a Classic Mini! Oh the joys.

Anyway the route that I am going to recommend that you get your Classic kicks from this month is a little run that I had the pleasure of doing recently, while nipping into the hills to service one of my more remote customers. You even get to drive across a Dam!

What you do is pop up the A835 to Contin and just as the road swings right at The Achilty Hotel to leave the new 40 mph speed limit, you hang a left. It's exactly on the corner opposite the hotel.

Beware, you are now on a single track road and your mobile phone will not work for the next sixteen miles of this loop. So if you break down, it will be just like the good old days, pre-mobile phones. You will just have to do what you would have done then and send the wife off across the field to call the AA from the rather abandoned-looking croft house that you can just make out through the downpour that has inevitably just started. (Remember, though, to relieve her of her tights, so that you can attempt some sort of cackhanded repair whilst she is away).

Follow this charming road into the hills and at about 7 miles you will pass the rather elegant Little Scatwell Lodge and then if you plough on a couple more miles up through the woods you will arrive at the equally spectacular Meig Dam. Ascending carefully down the tight hairpin you can pause for a

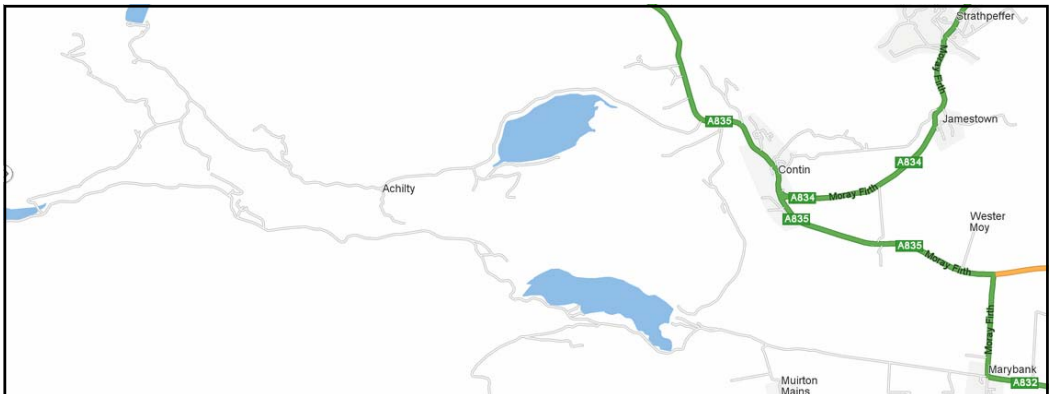
photo opportunity and then drive across the Dam. A thrill every time.

At this point, the braver of you, with more time on your hands, could turn right here and take a run to the top of Stathconon (A Glen For All Seasons) but watch it as it is a deceptively long way. Plan this one in to a longer run.

So, take a left at the end of the Dam. This will take you back down the river Conon. In about a mile, on a newly tarred surface, you will pass the Scatwell Houses and then flow nicely on through an area of recently forested trees giving you some lovely views along the way. The Orrin Hydro Works will appear on the left and if you stop at the gates and retrace your last 200m on foot you'll find a lovely future Highland Heaps example that resides there beside the loch. A rather crusty Mk 1 Escort.

Your run is nearly complete now, just the last swing along side the river down to Marybank to join up with the A832. From here you can either turn left, and pop straight back on to the A835 or again, for the more adventurous (or if you happen to live in that direction) you can carry on in the direction of Muir of Ord on the back road.

There you have it. To anyone that I have just directed past their own front door or along their daily commute I apologise, but I do love this wee loop and hopefully some of you may not know of it and can take time out to enjoy a new view from your Classic of the Highlands.



# Highland Heaps

Restoration projects spotted in and around the Highlands.  
(Apologies if your 'pride and joy' is featured here!)



*MASHED MORRIS*



*A35 RESIDING IN TOY TOWN DISTRICT OF INVERNESS*



*IT'S OVER FOR THE ROVER*



*CAREFULLY OWNED BY ONE ISLE OF SKYE MINISTER*

*If you're brave enough to want to rescue one these 'heaps', contact Miles for more information*

# Club Regalia

AVAILABLE NOW!

Sweat Shirts

Polo Shirts

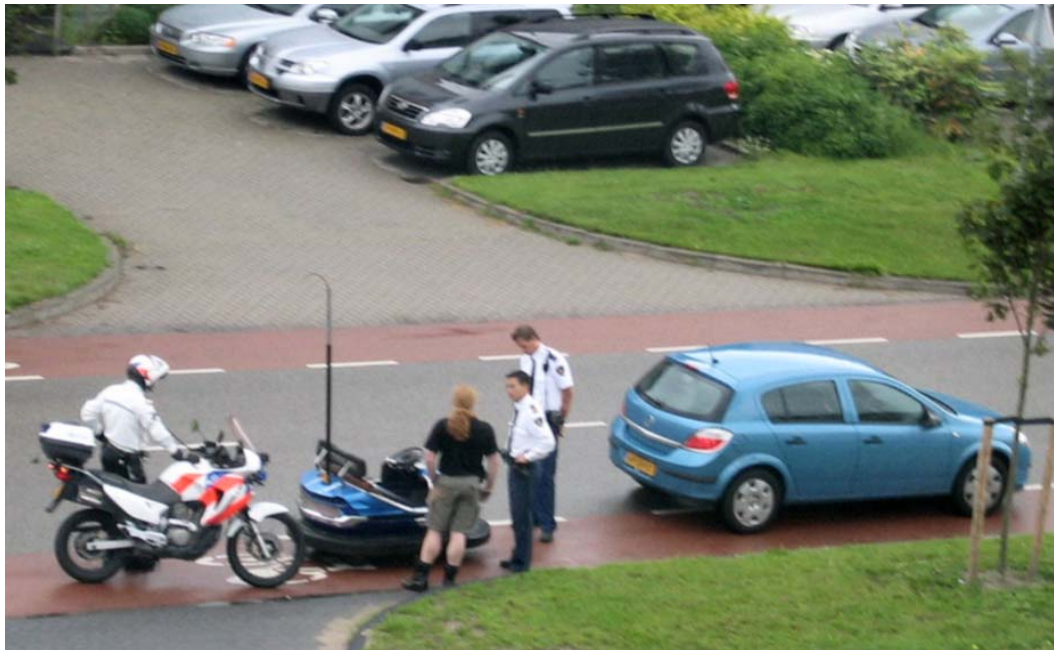
Fleeeces

Exclusive Club Wear available now in a dazzling variety of colours, all at give away prices. These wonderful garments will make you the envy of all your friends and neighbours. Strangers will ask for your autograph, and beautiful women will hurl themselves at your feet and beg for sexual favours (honest!) They're warm too.

See **Bryan** at next meeting to order yours!

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## Caption Competition



(Send your captions to the editor before the next issue of the newsletter)