

CLASSIC SCENE



April 2021



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Classic Scene is published on the
Thursday preceding the monthly meet-
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Cover Picture

The Ford Consul 3000 GT from The
Sweeney. Plus Cars and Coffee and a
Ford Mustang that received an an-
noyingly good review in Donnie's Air
an Rathad talk last month.

Welcome to the April Newsletter

Again there's not much to report this month because of this pesky lockdown. There is no Out and About feature, however I have been enjoying 1970's classics via TV's classic show, The Sweeney. Apart from the star of the show, a bronze Ford Consul 3000 GT (Sorry Dennis and John) I like the incidental cars in the background. It gives a better idea of your average motor (London speak for car) back then.

A recent Top Gear was themed on cars your Dad drove, essentially nostalgia for your old family cars. It was good telly and miles away from Clarkson ragging a super-car round a test track. In my family it was the cars my Mum drove as we spent more time in them. We went Renault 4, Renault 6, Renault 5 - all cars I'm still fond of. Then it was a Maxi which wasn't great, a Peugeot 405 estate that would do 100mph and later on a sporty Peugeot 309 SRi and an MG Maestro, just when I was at driving age! My Dad had a Hillman Husky, and a series of Land Rovers.

There were no supercars in the area back then and a Porsche or Lamborghini were just poster cars. Now we regularly see motoring exotica on the roads. If you ever saw one, maybe on a motorway trip it was a big wow moment. These days, sadly the only new car that makes me wow is a Tesla.

I have seen a bunch of lower end electric vehicles on my commute recently and they generally seem to be poorly driven, not that my driving is anything special. Faces against the wind screen, poor lane position, hogging the outside lane at 5mph below the speed limit being serially under taken. But not your Tesla driver. In the 1970's your Tesla driver would have had driving gloves, yellow shades and a big moustache and we'd all be jealous of him. (Other genders are available.)

This newsletter wouldn't be complete without mentioning the passing of two TV legends. Murray Walker was THE voice of British motor sport but I guess he had a good innings. Sabine Schmitz was the queen of the Nürburgring and was a bundle of energy and joy on motoring shows, but was taken too soon. Very sad.

On a more positive note it's the 60th anniversary of the Jaguar e-Type. That doesn't seem that long ago (or I'm getting old!), and I guess it shows that the classic car movement is relatively young.

In my garage it is still slow but steady progress on the VW T5 van's bodywork. I'm getting tired of it now so standards are dropping (further!) One interesting but annoying thing was on driving the van out the garage for a bit of sand blasting, there was a terrible clonk from the front right suspension. It sounded exactly like a broken suspension spring. But how could that be? I haven't been anywhere? I was in denial until a bit of blind exploration up the wheel arch pulled out a spring fragment. Well that's another job to do then. I guess the spring must have already been cracked and just waiting to fail.

Well here's to a more relaxed pandemic and getting out in our classics,

Your Editor, Calum.

Chairs Bitty

It was a good evening last month. The talk from Donnie was filled with fun anecdotes and a couple of PowerPoint slides to illustrate these stories. I did not realise just how popular Air an Rathad was in Scotland. His story of how he got to be a presenter on the program is one of being in the right place at the right time. There is hope for us yet.



March has weather wise been much quieter than previous months, although I have not had as much time as I hoped for to be out in the garden. Just one weekend of tidying up, little bit of pruning and emptying of the brown bin. Stuff in there had been quietly mouldering away since the autumn, but as most of the content is made up of weeds and orange lily (nice, but it is taking over one corner of the garden) I decided that we would still dispose of it at the amenity site. This is where the Landy comes in as all the stuff ("without soil" as we are being constantly reminded at the amenity site) gets loaded into the back and off we go. We are now waiting for a nice weekend so we can give the grass its first cut. It is starting to look rather straggly with paths to the compost bin, garage and bird feeders.

I think that sometime in the next few weeks I will spray another application of vinegar to the driveway to discourage the liverwort that is trying to make a comeback in some places. I will have to find a small spring first as the original one in the spray head succumbed to metal fatigue. That or buy another spray head to fit on the bottle. I mentioned this to Alice, who promptly went out with the vinegar bottle and sprinkled it directly on the area. It used rather a lot of vinegar.

Alice was also talking about painting our side of the fence that the neighbours put up some years ago. At the time our neighbour painted it some shade of blue which is now wearing off. I had half thought of some landscape mural, but my skills with that kind of painting tends to be limited to paint by numbers in colouring books. Any artists out there?

Our Merc incurred some expenditure this month apart from fuel. The MOT is due shortly and tyre tread on the rears was getting near the wear bar. Alice took the car down to our contact in Tain the other day and with a set of new tyres, the Merc is ready for the new holiday season. With suggested lifting of restriction to "stay in your local authority area" due soon, we have a distinct advantage over other authorities. We can potentially travel a 100 miles **and** still stay in our area. Unless the government changes their mind. But I can do with a change of scenery.

This month we have an online talk by one of our previous chairs – Chris Silver. For all you railway buffs out there, or those who like steam engines or anyone interested in local history, the subject is the Black Isle Railway, which ran from Muir of Ord to Fortrose.

See you there,

Trish.

Cars of The Sweeney



Well you know we haven't been getting out much and there haven't been many shows to go to, but I have been enjoying old cars via a different kind of show. TV shows. If I remember right I may have mentioned something about cars in Roger Moore's 'The Saint' in a previous newsletter. This month it's the turn of 70's classic 'The Sweeney'. "We're the Sweeney son, and you're nicked." I was inspired to write this after a Mk1 Triumph 2000 made an appearance. I always thought they we're odd looking, I mean eye catching.

Anyway, where better to start than with NHK295M the iconic 1974 Ford Consul 3000 GT seen chasing many a Jaguar S Type with a police driver, Regan riding shotgun and Carter in the back.

This car still exists and has recently been through a no expense spared restoration. See the front cover.



The Sweeney was produced by Produced by Thames Television subsidiary, Euston Films and it seems they had a purchasing deal with Ford as Carter's car a 1974 Cortina 2000XL Mk3 had the consecutive registration number NHK296M.



The model of the Sweeny car is a popular quiz question as it is often assumed to be a Granada where in fact it was a Consul 3000 GT. Except, quizmasters, the car in later episodes *was* in fact a Granada. Left to right below, RHJ997R 1976 Ford Granada 3.0 Ghia Post Face Lift Ghia. NWC301P was a 1976 Granada 3.0S in I believe Stratos Silver and just as the programme got a bit square (geddit?), the last was VHK491S, a 1978 Ford Granada

3.0S. The VHK prefix is interesting as it was the same prefix as the early 'The Professionals' cars. In the third picture I like how you can see the back end of an Allegro sticking out. The mundane background cars are as interesting as the star cars but you would use an Allegro as a getaway car? No.





And this is the car that inspired this article. GVS46H is a 1967 Triumph 2000 on a false plate. I was struck by the ugliness of Mk1 nose but also remember it being literally a stand out feature when I was a (very) small boy. When this car appeared as a Flying Squad car on the Sweeney I was a bit confused by it's age and it's marque. However, by TV magic it seems to keep pace with the Consul

GT and the Jaguar S Type they were chasing even the leading the main Ford at times. I wonder why?



Oh, I see why. It got pretty smashed up along with the old S Type in this chase. And what car can a Detective Inspector in '70's London afford to run? In one episode we find out. UYV967F is Regan's own, a 1967 Cortina Mk2 Super.



This rusty arched 1977 Renault 16 (RYP765R) was actually new. I guess it wouldn't do to make a *French* car look good. Other notable cars are this 1975 Morris 1800 - pre Princess but Wedge shaped! A rare sight even then.



KPX303J is a 1974 Zodiac Executive and from Vauxhall CXY478 is a 1964 Velox. Look at that roll and tyre tuck.





RVC425H a 1970 Triumph Stag, proved to be a perfect bad boy done well car. HOY515N a 1975 Hillman Hunter Delux Estate seemed an unlikely police car but Carter was always going to drive a Capri wasn't he? Then there is the odd rare thing. ULF4M is an Australian Chrysler CH aka Chrysler by Chrysler.



And last but not least. Jags Jags Jags. Grace, pace and space for the swag. The getaway car of choice and kind to the budget as the S Type would have been fairly cheap to buy in the mid '70s. Right. Next time you're bored, put the Sweeney on TV and see what classics you can spot.



As promised, Donnie Mackay's talk about life as a TV car show presenter didn't disappoint. For those that missed it, here's a wee summary. It was better live though.

Before his 15 minutes of fame he worked amongst other things as a freelance camera mount technician and spent a few weeks working on the most popular of all car shows, Top Gear, you guessed it mounting camera's. At one point he was having trouble getting a camera to stick on some fancy car (can't remember what) and he was advised just to drill a hole in the car as the manufacturer would accept the damage. As much as it says about Top Gears attitude to their cars, Donnie as a Lewis born car nut didn't get the drill out but persisted with his mounting skills. He was also able to give us some juicy inside information on the famous Richard Hammond dragster crash, but I can't print that for legal reasons.



Donnie got into TV presenting after appearing on the Me and My Car spot (obviously stolen from this newsletter!) on Air An Rathad. As a natural chatter-box he was quickly asked if he would like job as a presenter as the current petrol head Calum Iain was planning on leaving.

His car was this Audi Coupe.

Even now Donnie is of the view that having a viewers car spot on the show keeps it real and connects with the viewers more.



This eye catching yellow car is the Transformers Bumblebee Chevrolet Camaro. If you don't know what that is (I don't) find a child to ask. Donnie described this car as being exactly what you'd expect. Big and wafty.

The McLaren 570S was interesting but not maybe in the way you think. As the crew turned up at the hotel the original car had technicians all round it with laptops out. McLaren's PR person was laying on some patter as he ushered them into the hotel. There was obviously something wrong. Donnie snuck out of the hotel and had a talk directly to the engineers. The car just wouldn't start and they had been at it all day. They were offered a different car. This grey one.



Driving a car like this you get a lot of attention. Too much attention in fact which is one of the reasons Donnie wouldn't want a supercar. After giving it some beans, he found the engine top end sounded very rattly and thought maybe he'd broken it. When he returned, he mentioned the noise. Apparently they all do that when they're hot. Who knew?

Eyeline Media have insurance for all their crew, so unlike some other car shows, other members of the team get a shot at driving the car around maybe between locations or back to the hotel, That's nice.



What's this? A red Mustang. We know someone with one of those don't we? The little jealous part of my was wanting it to be slated like Bumblebee above. But it wasn't. It was given annoying positive comments and we were told it was well put together car and a tight driving experience.

Then there was bit of Male bonding between Miles and Donnie. "Oh you've got the V8. Nice."



Test driving this Ariel Nomad didn't go entirely according to plan. The boy from Lewis looks at the off road buggy and thinks, "Aye I know what to do with this." (except in the Gaelic obviously) and has a wee bit of a pre-drive chat with the Ariel team. There was much camaraderie and talk of driving it like it was intended to be. During a

filming session you wear a radio so the crew can contact you or stop you if there are any problems. Unfortunately with the roar of the engine and clattering suspension you can't always hear it. Which was doubling unfortunate as the suspension wasn't supposed to be clattering like that. At the end of the take Donnie returned to the crew to meet a disgruntled Ariel team. A tyre had come off and was damaging the mudguard. Apparently you weren't supposed to drive it quite like a mad off road Lewis man. It turned out the car had another promotional visit booked next and it was their only demonstrator. Oops.

After being surprised at just how good the Ford Mustang was Donnie was expecting big things from the Ford Focus RS but it was disappointing - mainly because it didn't want to go in a straight line. The wheels weren't sitting evenly in the arches so it was thought it was bent out of alignment. Maybe Top Gear had had a shot of it?

Speaking of which the first Rolls Royce Dawn the pro-



gramme were expecting to review didn't make it. The Top Gear Team had take it to the Sahara and ragged it. There is a huge market for these cars in the Middle East. Who know what Top Gear did to it but it had to be container-ed back as it was wrecked. Rolls Royce then had to strip it and rebuild it from scratch. Donnie says the Rolls

Royce Team were a delight to deal with and the Dawn was an impressive car. It even has a GPS gearbox so it can change down before approaching a hill. Take that those of you who think a heated steering wheel is flash!



The Alfa Romeo 4C [A car I have often admired at Cars and Coffee- Editor] was expected to be just OK. Perhaps a result of mediocre reviews? However it was an unexpected joy to drive with mid engine handling. Being an Alfa Romeo though you might need to remember your RAC card!

The highlight of the TV series could well have been the trip to the Arctic Circle border in Sweden for some ice driving. The first clue that they were in the land of rally royalty was the Audi Quattro of Stig Blomqvist in the hotel lobby. Was it really his car? Yes it was.

The ice driving was hosted by racing driver Mikaela Åhlin-Kottulinsky and her rally driving mum Susanne Kottulinsky.



It was late season and the ice had to be tested for thickness. They lost a tractor the previous year! Having had some previous rallying experience Donnie was no beginner in handling a car in these slippery conditions.

At that was the end. As with all good talks, we were left wanting more.

Donnie is of the view that it would be possible to make another Scottish car show as the manufacturers fall over themselves to get the publicity so it can be done fairly cheaply, in TV terms. Here's hoping.



Cars and Coffee



So it's been a year since the last Cars and Coffee and there's no sign of it starting up soon. Even if we can gather in crowds of 50 it is almost impossible to control numbers at such a light touch, 'organic' event. Cars and Coffee is the brain child of our member Miles Vincent and was planned as an casual meet up (with coffee!) for the more sensible car enthusiast hence Sunday mornings. It is run under the wings of the HCMC as it is organised by HCMC members and is seen as a way of getting younger car enthusiasts engaged with the club or the classic scene in general. Except perhaps in winter there is a good mix of modern performance cars and classics (with or without performance) and a strong presence from the VW Air-cooled scene. It's amazing the crossover in interest between 'types' of owners. Here we have a quick look back at the last four years. It all began on February the 10th 2017 at the V8 Café in Inverness. And quickly grew into a success.



Whilst it was always about the cars, we did have a few charity fund raiser for Moray Firth Radios Cash for Kids appeals and for the BBC's Children in Need.



After a while the numbers became too much for the V8 café owners so a new venue was found at Roller Bowl down near the Inverness Royal Academy, premiering on Sunday 12th August 2018. We have been made very welcome there.



We even had a second birthday party.

The last actual Cars and Coffee at Rollerbowl was in early March 2020.

And afterwards there were reports of one or two people feeling unwell. That was the beginning of the pandemic and lockdown and it is feasible that there was corona virus afoot. In April we managed a virtual event sharing Facebook posts from your driveway, or wherever you could. Than that was it postponed and apart from a few

(surprisingly excellent) 'Drive and Wave' events. We don't have a date for starting up again until we are allowed to meet in significant numbers, but it will be back.

In the meantime, here are a few of my favourite cars from the HCMC archive.



A Mini takeover on the 15th September 2019.



HCMC April Club Night
Black Isle Railway Talk by Chris Silver

Thursday April 1st 07:30 PM

By Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bbc.zoom.us/j/99447513533>

Meeting ID: 994 4751 3533

This will be a short talk followed by a round robin catch up of your car related stories if you have any.