

CLASSIC SCENE



April 2025



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The club has an extensive archive of
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Cover Picture

Smiles per mile.

Welcome to the April Newsletter

Ha! It looks like I forgot to change the month on the front of last month's newsletter. Ooops! Did anyone notice? It's so easy for little details like that to slip through the net, and spell checker.

"Smiles per mile," was a phrase the jumped out of a car chat recently. Isn't that what our love of old cars is all about? I had another incredibly dull hire car (Seat Altea) at work recently and it reminded me of the joyless experience of modern motoring. Whether it's enjoying the shove of a big V8 or the putt-ing along of a wee engine you've rebuilt yourself, classic motoring offers so many opportunities for happiness. It might just be the nostalgic shapes, or smells evoking memories, or the feeling of connection to the bumps and ripples in the road that an old car provides - a driving experience, that brings a smile to your face. Even seeing a classic vehicle coming the other way generates a fuzzy feeling and you have to wave at the driver in recognition. Smiles per mile. You can't beat them.

Running old cars in the bangernomics way can also create similar driving pleasure - a feeling of beating the system. A few jobs later, a car is saved from the scrapyard, and provides two or three or more years of valuable service with the only depreciation/appreciation linked to the price of scrap metal. A Tesla can lose 40% in the first two years. That's a ship load of diesel, or about 80 high mileage Mondeos.

Speaking of which it turns out my Mundane-O had a snapped rear anti-roll bar, a simple fix had one of the bolts not been practically impossible to remove. I ended up cutting it off and welding the bracket back on. It will do for now. It cost me an afternoon, but what would I be doing if I had a 'proper car?' Driving to the gym and then Starbucks? I can tell you I had a great work out (car-isthenics anyone?), including some yoga moves and also improved my welding skills.

Template. I am aware of a request for some kind of template to be made to help with submissions for this Newsletter but I simply haven't had time to look into that properly. The Newsletter is brought to you by the power of Microsoft Publisher and you'd think a simple Microsoft Word template would do the job but then not everyone has access to Microsoft products. On the brief trials I have done, importing and exporting between Publishers and Word, the layout changes length by about 25% and it's difficult to place the pictures in Word. I have also discovered that Publisher is a discontinued product, ending life in 2026 so we could be looking at a Newsletter revamp in any case. Hopefully I'll find some time to look into this properly, and before the 2026 deadline.

Keep driving, keep smiling

Your Editor

(P.S. This edition was written during holiday time for a milestone birthday. Time, tide and Newsletter deadlines wait for no editor.)

Ramblings from the Chair



Hi folks. Firstly I'd like to give you an update on Club stalwart and a founder member, Bryan McIlwraith. For those of you not in the know, Bryan took a stroke at the end of last month. He was immediately airlifted to Ninewells Hospital in Dundee where they successfully operated to remove a blood clot from his brain. He returned to Raigmore shortly afterwards where, at the time of writing, he remains. I'm informed that he is making progress although communication is difficult for him and he has restricted movement in his right foot and, in particular, his right arm. However, there is some talk of him getting home in the not too distant future but much depends on the speed of his recovery. At the moment, he and the family have asked that well-wishers refrain from attempting to visit, perhaps until his speech improves (or until he feels up to seeing people). I'm sure you will join with me in wishing him a full and speedy recovery and offering moral support to his wife Jane, and his three sons. I thank Ranald, (another founder member) who has been a close friend of Bryans for some sixty years, for keeping us up to date on his condition.

In my own garage, I am pleased to report that I managed to refit my newly refurbished petrol tank to the Senator without too much difficulty and renew the fuel hoses to the filter and fuel pump (which, surprisingly, are located immediately in front of the tank below the floor under the back seat of the car). I am further pleased to say that the car started on the second turn of the key – I am guessing that, with the car being fuel injected and having flow and return pipework, the system would have primed itself as soon as the ignition was turned on, a few seconds before the starter was operated. All seems to be well although I have not had it out on to the road yet – I'm waiting until April 1st until the car becomes a 'Historic Vehicle' and the road tax is free.

Our March meeting was an excellent visit to Ross's Garage at Nairn – see my report later in this newsletter – and what a varied selection of recovery vehicles they have. I asked about the headache of keeping maintenance records and was informed that all the details are strictly kept on computer, a bit like that for aircraft, and that, overall, the company requires an extra two vehicles in the fleet to allow for down time on the remainder for servicing, repairs and testing. The cost and logistics of all that is something I had never thought about – it can't be easy. I have four vehicles to maintain and while I try to keep records of the more major stuff (in the respective service books), I have great difficulty in remembering the more minor details. I know I should write it all down but never do – finding a pen/notebook, dirty hands, etc, etc all hampering my good intentions.

April's meeting is at Fortrose Leisure Centre (near the Academy) and is a talk by Professor Ian Basham on his career at the British Geological Survey. As a (retired) Civil Engineer I, personally, will find the subject very interesting. I look forward to seeing you all there – Thursday 3rd April at 7.30pm.

Regards, Richard

An Insight into the NC500 Paul Lindsay-Scott

The other day, I was minding my own business driving home in the Z3 with some shopping, when some other convertibles came up behind me. I let a couple of them past, but they seemed happy for me to join them, and we enjoyed some spirited driving to Cromarty.



They were four friends from Manchester, who had driven up the day before. Some months ago,



they had agreed to take a weeks' holiday to drive the NC500, and would each buy a convertible for a maximum of £1500 to do the run. So Alec, Carl, Charlie and Dean had found an MG TF, Audi TT, Merc SLK and a Mazda MX5 – so my old BMW Z3 fitted in rather well.



Like my car, I'm the oldest! They were heading for Wick to stay that night, and asked for recommendations for stops along the route. I suggested Dornoch as a pleasant stop and with nothing else pressing to do, I ended up going with them.

After a very pleasant run in the sunshine, with some more spirited driving, we arrived and soon ended up at Cocoa Mountain, enjoying their amazing hot chocolate!

Then it was off to the beach for a wander, where Carl tried out his new drone with spectacular results. They then set off to Wick, with a photo stop planned at Dunrobin Castle on the way. The next day they were heading for John O'Groats and across to Durness, no doubt to visit Cocoa Mountain's place at the Balnakeil craft village.

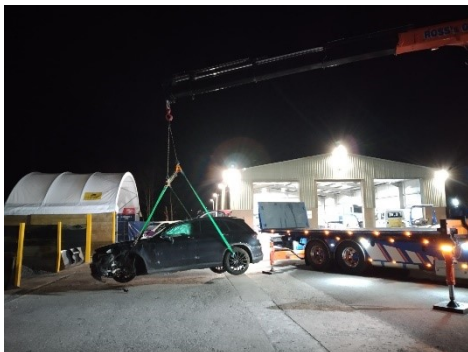
Having talked about the HCMC, we parted company and I returned home to the Black Isle after a lovely spontaneous road trip with some very friendly guys. Having heard positive and negative opinions about the NC500, it was good to share a little bit of the experience with people who had made a real event of it.



Visit to Ross's Garage, Nairn The Chairman

Our March Club meeting was to Ross's Garage and recovery team at their relatively new depot at Nairn which covers all points east. This adds to their main depot at Clava which some may remember, we visited some years ago, and their other satellite yard at Kinraig serving routes to the south. They remain primarily a family firm with a third generation assisting during our visit.

Firstly, we had a demonstration of their largest recovery 'rotator' (think of a Hi-ab on steroids, lots of steroids) which, although looking very new, is actually now five years old. They had a recently recovered large Mercedes SUV which had been rolled and was missing its front nearside wheel (including strut, lower suspension arm and driveshaft), sitting in the yard at a considerable distance from the recovery truck. The operator, using a remote handset so as to be outside the danger zone and able to see that the area was free from hazards (and members of the public!), simply lifted the vehicle, extended the boom to display the trucks capability and then simply swung the wreck round and drew in the boom to lift it on to the flatbed – very impressive and without drama. We were informed that insurance companies now like to be able to salvage as much of damaged vehicles as possible, so the old method of threading a strop through the windows and lifting the damaged vehicle by the roof is very much frowned upon these days. Consequently, there was a spreader beam, with four straps attached to each of the wheels (or, in our case, to what remained of the cars structure where the wheel was missing) so



as not to cause any further damage to the body panels. Next, we were shown their flatbed commercial vehicle recovery truck – looking absolutely massive inside the shed, only to be told that it could be extended by a



further 8m!! The trailer part has a triple axle set, the front one of which can be raised and the rear two can steer – I was told that their amazing drivers who operate it are unfazed by single track roads and tight corners. The unit can take the largest of busses and even the biggest loaded artic, albeit sometimes reversed (or winched) on to keep the height of the tractor unit down to clear overbridges. The



truck has a 1200 litre fuel tank (which apparently it needs!) and a new tyre costs about £1000 (and there are a great number of them!!) The smaller van based 'normal' recovery trucks on show looked very tame by comparison but are still very capable vehicles in their operation and must be a welcome sight to stranded motorists. Ross's will cover anywhere in the country albeit they have agreements with other recovery companies for long distance hauls with Perth being a common swap over point. The com-

pany also operates a seven vehicle car transporter for multi car transport.

In addition to the recovery business, the Nairn depot now operates an aggregate sales and haulage enterprise (with dedicated vehicles in an attractive purple hue). We were shown their automated bagging plant which can fill polythene bags with as little as 20kg loads of gravels and sands, all heat sealed and ideal for the DIY or



garden enthusiasts. The company will buy all forms of aggregates (including topsoil) in bulk from a wide selection of quarries in the Highlands and Moray to suit customer requirements, with some storage at the depot and can make deliveries of various quantities to the local area as necessary.



sary.

Our evening was rounded off with an excellent selection of sandwiches, sausage rolls, biscuits and refreshments – thank you Ross's for your hospitality.

Richard.

Drive It Day Sunday 27 April 2025

The plan for Drive It Day 2025 is still the same. Times to follow when I have them. The suggested route is...

Rollerbowl to Beauly (leaving via Clachnaharry Rd).
Beauly to Muir of Ord
Muir of Ord to Cannon Bridge
Cannon Bridge to Dingwall
Dingwall to Evanton
Evanton to Alness
Alness to Invergordon
Invergordon to Shandwick Inn

This is about 42 miles, and the plan is to briefly stop in Beauly, Muir of Ord and Dingwall for anyone wishing to join the run at these points. The quick route for any cars that need it (I'm not naming any marques or era's here!) is via the A9 and direct to the **Shandwick Inn**, the birthplace of the Highland Classic Motor Club.

Please see the FBHVC website for how to support the event and buy a fundraising 'rally plaque' www.driveitday.co.uk

The View from the West Coast

Douglas Gibson

Hello all:

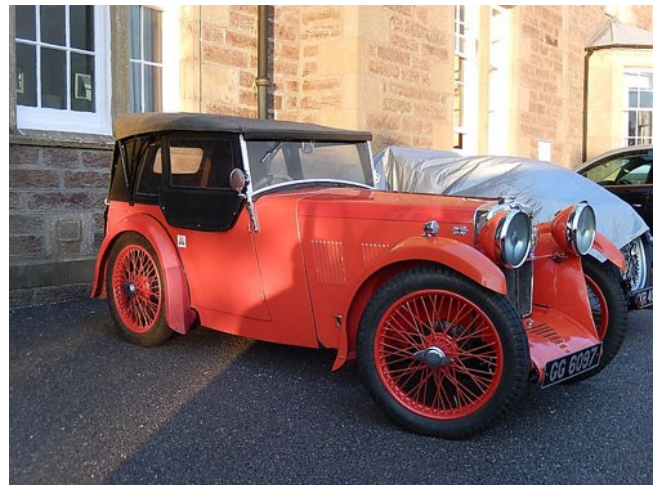
I've been meaning to send in a wee note for some time now about the Classic car scene across here.

My own "Classic" is what I'd call a modern classic, as it's only from the 1990's, but hey. It's a dark blue Alfa Romeo 3.0 GTV, which we have now had for 18 years since buying it from a classic car dealer in Cornwall, where it was the owners daily drive for a while. In my defence, I've also had a 1971 Midget, several 2CV's and a Dyane – two Ambassadors, and a 1966 MGB roadster – a great touring machine, which enjoyed a couple of journeys throughout the length and breadth of the UK, but also took us away on a memorable European trek one year – all the way down to Monte Carlo, then back up through most of the countries in between. And although my father wasn't a car expert at all, he did enjoy a decent motor to travel in – so the family had a succession of Jaguar XJ6's, followed by a DBS Aston and an Interceptor. Both of these were eventually sold for what looks like a pitifully small sum of money these days, because back then, they were really just "old cars"! But the classics have been a subject of considerable interest to me for many years now.

And for us west coast souls, of course, there have always been car rallies and touring groups – since the advent of the North Coast 500, we also now have the occasional "supercar" tour passing through. But even this isn't exactly a new item on the annual calendar. I clearly remember the time that a large contingent of "Ecurie Ecosse" machines visited Inverewe Gardens back in the late 1980's, complete with rare gems such as the Aston Martin Project 215 racer, Nick Mason's 250 GTO, and several lightweight E Types! (That's probably the most expensive tour we've had here, but there have been many others over the years.)

And my goodness, we've had some other fascinating items going through the area over the years....Citroen DS Chapron and an SM, an Ascari, a famous racing Daytona, Paddy Hopkirk's Monte Carlo Mini, Gordon Keeble, an Aston Zagato, 1930's Bugatti, Arnolt MG, a Firenza "droopsnoot"....endless Porsches....A Mazda Cosmo.....the list keeps running on and building every year!

Myself, aside from regular trips around the NC500 and Scotland in general, I've been at various events in Inverness with the Alfa, including a number of the classic vehicle days and several Cars and Coffee gatherings. My personal favourite, though, is the Rosemarkie show! Aside from at least one year I can remember, the weather has usually been quite kind – one year was a scorcher – and the selection of vehicles has been varied



and interesting.

Some of you will know we've also tried regularly to have some of the cars from the east side of the country across as part of the annual Gairloch Gathering – these events are always held on the first Saturday after the schools break up (this year, it's on July 5th). But while we've had a turn out on a few occasions of 30+, the last couple of years it's been down to a mere handful. I'm sure this is due in part to the poor weather, but what this does mean is that we are possibly only going ahead this year if the weather is good – if you have an intention of coming across, please bear this in mind.

The best I can do is to let folk know about a week in advance that it's either going to be blazing sunshine or pouring rain,, but that doesn't assist planning very well.

The weather doesn't only put off the further travelled people, of course – it's been a bit frustrating knowing that there are a number of very local cars and bikes that stay in their garage in wet weather.

I'll not name names or models but if you read this, I'm sure you know who you are!

So, please consider coming across if you can, otherwise this item is very likely to cease altogether!





The owners of the **Muir of Ord Hotel** are promoting a programme of event's in the village over the Easter weekend which will involve local businesses, coordinating a weekend programme of events for locals and visitors alike. There will be live music, entertainment, but most importantly for us classic vehicles on display and on a drive from Muir of Ord to Beaulieu and back.

If you want to represent the Highland Classic Motor Club there is the option of a free stand at the Saturday's Festival of Transport, with the mention of discounted entry to some of the chargeable events for members. We need

someone to take the lead on this for the club (I'm away again,) and if that lead is *you*, all you need to do is contact the organisers by email at ordarms@protonmail.com to arrange it all.

ROTARY CLUB OF INVERNESS LOCH NESS

CLASSIC CAR TOUR-

*Starting and finishing in Inverness
Highland scenery through the
Easter Ross, Glen Convinth and*

NO entry fee !! however, entrants are asked to raise as much sponsorship as possible for charity.

*Principal beneficiary for the 2025 Tour is DEBRA, the "butterfly skin" charity with remainder going to the Charity
Account of the Rotary Club of Inverness Loch Ness which supports local, national and international causes.*

Organised and run by motorsport enthusiasts for motorsport enthusiasts!

*Entry list now open and will close on **May 26th**don't delay!*

For full details, Regulations and Entry Form log into:-

<https://www.lochnessclassiccartour.weebly.com>

*Entry Forms can be downloaded online or by contacting Nicol Manson at nicol.manson@btinternet.com or by
telephone on 07774 695640 (before 8pm please).*

-o0o-



SATURDAY 7th JUNE 2025

*with a 160 mile route through stunning
Black Isle, Ardross, the Kyle of Sutherland,
Loch Ness side.*

Cars and Coffee

Sunday March 9th 2025

I like it when members submit their pictures of Cars and Coffee, as it gives a different slant to my Fords, Minis and Beetles. Here are Jim Mackays photos from a lovely sunny day. Starting with a Ford.



Jim says, "The weather was good and the turnout didn't disappoint. The 1926 Model T was the star for me, all the way from Nairn. The owner has bought a two speed back axle because the two speed epicyclic gearbox doesn't cope well with hills."

I also love the Model T, particularly the patina, but there was more to enjoy besides that.



This is a Honda CBX1000. It looks like someone has installed a Jaguar engine in it! That must have been ridiculous back in the 1980's, and probably still is.

A Ferrari of some sort (!) Not much use on the farm Jim, unless it came with a PTO and a three point linkage. You'd be first at the mart though.





If yellow is your favourite car colour, you were well catered for. Plus there were these...



Bashed Mashed Wrecked

(I'm going for a sensationalist tabloid look here.)

At another event in Inverness also called Cars and Coffee, there was a bit of an inci-

dent, with this BMW hitting a wall after performing a series of doughnuts. The spinning around and around seemed to be going quite well until the transition from spinning wheels to traction flicked the car sideways. The Police are involved and charges have been made, also not forgetting, the trial by social media.

This is a strong reminder to discourage any kind of showing off at or near our event, or we may attract the wrong sort of attention. So far we've done very well.

Our cars are having a touch of winter blues and yes, that is all of them. But let me tell you about the Merc.

In late January the Merc had a moment where it refused to start. You turn the key, lights come on then nothing happens. Swapped to the spare keys and all was well. Suspecting the key battery, we replaced the batteries in both keys as we could not remember when this was last done. All well for a few more days until it again refused to start. Took the key out, swapped it again for the spare key and all is well. This funny behaviour continued for a few more days and then on AGM night it took almost 10 minutes and many tries until the car finally started.

Some searching online revealed similar stories of not starting, but also of engines cutting out mid journey – many relating to the Mercedes brand, which made me very nervous about driving the Merc. Alice ran a diagnostic check on the car, but nothing conclusive came out of that. Lots of old fault codes that had not been cleared yet and one relating to the ignition, but not very descriptive.

Off the car went to our mannie at the garage. He suspected a problem with the “stepper motor” and ordered up the part. When we came to collect the car a week later – it takes time for parts to arrive these days – he had had another look at the car and identified the ignition switch itself. Let me explain.

The ignition switch is in a wee box and includes the usual electronic gubbins. The motherboard, although clipped in, is not fixed which allows for some movement. I think by now most Merc vehicles use this design. Unfortunately, a design flaw means that the gubbins with the connector out to the loom sits in a fixed place in the casing. Over time, as a result of inserting/removing/jiggling the key about, movement of the motherboard weakens the soldering joints for this connector, which eventually give way.

And right enough, when our mannie at the garage removed the switch, the motherboard and connector component had parted company. Fortunately, there are folk about that will resolder this and the motherboard/component have been sent off for repair. At time of writing we are waiting for its return.

And before you say, why did you not solder it yourself? Saves time and money. True, if you have a fine enough tip on your soldering iron and a steady enough hand to ensure you don't burn other stuff on the board. We're not chancing that and neither was our mannie at the garage.

Trish.

(Editor: This item was meant for last month, but was missed for editorial reasons. The editor was away with work.)

HCMC Events

3rd April 2025 A presentation by Dr Ian Bashem who had a career with the geological survey. The Committee Room at Fortrose Leisure Centre (by the school) has been booked for 7.30

13th Apr 2025 The Highlander Track 'n' Show North of Scotland Kart Club, Littleferry, Golspie. Tickets from thehighlandereventmanagementltd.com A day of Fast Cars, Food & Entertainment.

18th Apr 2025 Wake Up Weekend Muir of Ord 18th-21st April. Live Music, Classic Vehicles, Food & Drink over 4 Venues. Details at www.wakeupweekend.co.uk

27th Apr 2025 Drive It Day. Rollerbowl to the Shandwick Inn. More details including times to follow. Keep an eye on the website.