

CLASSIC SCENE



April 2026



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The club has an extensive archive of
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Cover Picture

This is the hyperbaric chamber at the
Oxygen Works as seen on last
month's club night visit.
It may resemble a diving bell but the
charity are keen to distance
themselves from anything diving
related in case it puts people off from
this effective form of therapy.

Welcome to the April Newsletter

It officially spring as the equinox has passed. This means all those winter plans for your classic drives in 2026 should be nearing completion. Are they? Mine aren't. I did have a red-letter day when the Panda left the garage in a step closer to being on the road and the Sierra went in for some clutch and steering surgery, hopefully in time for the Inverness BID car show. I fully intend to take the Panda on Drive It Day as, although it is far too modern to be a true classic, it has been a labour of love with many man/person/editor hours going into it and I will have saved it before it inevitably matures into a fully-fledged classic

Saving future classics has been in the classic news recently with changes to Vehicle Excise Duty and MOT exemptions coming into force soon. There is more on that later in this newsletter, but the gist is that excessive running costs are going to make some future classics unaffordable and could be seen as a back door scrappage scheme.

My new work shifts have been making it tricky to make the Thursday club nights, but I am starting to find ways to manipulate the rota so I managed to attend the visit to The Oxygen Works, which was very interesting. Shortly after our visit we were offered special access to a Wednesday afternoon session. I was tempted, out of curiosity, and also because I had lost notes that I had taken for this newsletter. It seemed to be polite for someone from the club to be able to take up this kind offer. It did amuse me that the invite said there was no pressure, as I think you will find there are 2 ATA's of pressure involved. You can find out more about the club visit later on in this news letter, but suffice to say the visit was excellent. I have a list of health niggles commensurate with my age so as I shared the chamber with one other I was giving her general blether and talking about a sore knuckle on my right hand. We slowly went 'down' to 33 feet and apart from a bit of ear popping there wasn't much to report. If anything it's just a bit dull sitting doing nothing, but thankfully I had the foresight to bring a book. The oxygen mask took longer to get used to as apart from sounding like Darth Vader from Star Wars, there's a slight resistance to breathing out. It's fine though - just relax. After an hour or so we got a message to say we were coming back up from the virtual depths. Masks discarded, my companion asked how my finger was, then limped off obviously still in some (hopefully reduced) pain due to her health condition. Yeah, I did feel a bit of a fraud. However, afterwards chatting to the office staff, I did feel something - my stiff tense shoulders were loose and pain free, so it definitely works. I was impressed. It was literally a weight off my shoulders.

Of course my shoulders are all tense again as I hunch over a keyboard, writing this newsletter, before the latest ever looming deadline.

Your Editor



Ramblings from the Chair



Last month's ramblings were about the potholed damaged tyre/wheel on my good lady's Golf when she was taking me to the Airport – I was on my way to London to assist my daughter and family to pack their belongings, on their way back to Australia, having been Britain for a year as part of a training programme. London (or the parts I was in!) seems to be having a building boom and I was impressed at a new developments built around the Regents Canal, near Paddington – very flash although I'm not sure I would like to live there. In particular, there is a canal side 'green area' with a great selection of mobile eateries parked up – Citroen H vans there were a plenty, an interesting (and huge) GMC American truck and a three wheeled Piaggio Ape trike at the



opposite end of the scale. However, what struck my attention was, from a distance, what looked like a Commer FC (or PA/PB) van from the 60's or 70's, but there was something not quite right about it. On closer inspection, it turned out to be a Peugeot J7 van in two tone green and cream built between 1965 and 1980 (yeah, I had to look that up). Note the corrugated lower panels, like the H van, to provide some structural strength without adding weight. What I found so fascinating was the similarities in looks and layout to the Commer, so much that I thought there must be some common designers. However, after a bit of research, I believe the similarities are purely coincidental as the Rootes Group (makers of the Commer) were only taken over Chrysler in 1967 and then went on to become the PSA Group (Peugeot/Citroen) in 1977 and now Stellantis in more recent years. Nowadays, Peugeot, Citroen, Fiat, Vauxhall and Opel (and indeed, some Toyota) vans can be considered identical bar minor styling differences and, I believe, are built together in the same factories.



I have had some feedback regarding the slideshow we had immediately after the AGM back in February – I believe it went down very well, - so much so that it is proposed that we do a similar feature at the next AGM. Yes, I know this is some 10 months away now, but it can only be as good as the photographs provided by members. So, please keep this in mind and look out any old photographs you have of cars that have been owned by yourselves or your family (or from events) from days gone by and pass them to me (somehow!) so that they can be scanned in for showing on a TV. I can scan actual photos, slides or negatives. All the better if the cars are in scenic locations.

I have been reminded by Miles, our Membership Secretary, that there are quite a few membership fees outstanding (yes, guilty as charged, I was one!) and that the preferred method of payment is by Standing Order. I have only just realised that setting up such an Order is really easy for those with Internet Banking – it is simply a case of, when making a payment to somebody, you can click on repeat payment for any time period. Select yearly, and the job is done.

On another matter discussed at the recent committee meeting, we decided to change the timing of the Annual Auction from January to the October Club Night. We thought that the cold weather in December might hamper most of us getting into the garage to find those gems of lots – now you will have all summer to do a clear out to sell those items that 'money simply can't buy' (and purchase others of course). The craic is always good and the range of items is amazing so I look forward with anticipation to a good attendance and heavy sales – details closer the time.

Our March meeting at the Oxygen Works was a real eye opener. I was aware of their hyperbaric chamber and its therapeutic benefits for some conditions, such as MS, but did not appreciate its use for a lot of other conditions. Also I did not realise that they have a lot of other equipment to aid easing and recovery from other illnesses, all of which feature in the report later in the newsletter. The Committee has decided to make a donation of £500 to this Charity as one of our benefactors this year.

Our April Club Night meeting is at Luxury Auto House at their new premises, off Harbour Road, behind Parks new Chery showroom. Take the road round past the Three Little Bakers. They specialise in car customising and detailing and sell all sorts of goodies for your 'pride and joy'. I look forward to seeing you all there – Thursday, April 2nd, 7.00 for 7.30pm.

And finally a reminder of the national Drive It Day on the 26th April. This year we are having an outing to Grantown on Spey, via the old A9 as much as possible with refreshments (paid for by the Club) at the Grant Arms in the Square. A return route will be provided, over Dava Moor, to Nairn and back to Inverness. Exact details will be provided soon. So that we have approximate numbers for the refreshments, I would ask those intending to attend to register their interest. If you go to the HCMC home page on the internet you will see a link at the bottom with instructions. I hope the weather is good – I'm told that on a similar outing some years ago, the return journey was through a very intense snowstorm (and very entertaining!).

That's all for this month.
Regards, Richard

March Club Night – The Oxygen Works

For those that didn't make this visit, I guess you maybe thinking, "What is The Oxygen Works?" Well, it's not a factory producing oxygen, I can tell you that. Nestled under a rise in the Longman Road in Inverness, at the very end of Burnett Road, there is a small charity specializing in Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy. For the twenty-something members that attended, our hosts Jenni Donnelly and Leigh-Ann Little told us more. They provide support to individuals living with neurological and complex health conditions like MS. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy is an age old therapy and Professor Philip James, of the University of Dundee spearheaded the charity movement for community access. With decades of experience in diving medicine, he noticed a similarity between spinal lesions in MS and nitrogen bubbles caused by the bends. Oxygen is a natural healer and under high pressure it is absorbed more efficiently by body tissues. The therapy is also used to treat crush injuries and one of the centres big successes was saving a client from a limb amputation, as the oxygen therapy promoted recovery. The process also works on the bodies nervous system and traverses the blood brain barrier. This can help it treatment of neurological conditions such as Parkinson's disease, Chronic Fatigue and Long Covid. While it's not a proven cure, it does provide relieve from symptoms which as anyone suffering from a chronic condition will tell you, pain relief hugely improves your quality of life. If you want more evidence just look at the demand and the number of repeat clients.





← Accessible Gym



Theraplate →

So down to the nitty gritty. How is this treatment administered? The facility is based around a metal chamber that comfortably seats about six individuals, and the air pressure is carefully raised to a maximum of two atmospheres which is the equivalent to a diving depth of thirty-three feet. Oxygen is then administered through face masks. Each session lasts about ninety minutes with forty five minutes at pressure. The chamber, formerly from the oil industry, is a seriously over engineered piece of kit, with steel walls about an inch thick. Being car people, we checked out the quality of the welding. It's very good.

This isn't the only service available on site. They have many treatment rooms used by third party practitioners including a very good Sports Therapist and physiotherapists Move4Ward who deliver highly effective treatment, combined with state-of-the-art rehabilitation technology. There is also an accessible gym and anti-gravity treadmill.

Another key facility is the Theraplate. This is basically a big oscillating plate to sit, stand or lie on. It is more like a big DA sander though as it oscillates in a circular manner generating what is called a wave vortex. If you put a cup of water on it, it creates a bit of a whirlpool. Originally developed for and successful at treating lame horses, it is now being used on humans. It works by stimulating blood circulation to the muscles. While researching this article I found some race trainers using this on healthy horses to gain about a 3% performance advantage. This is good to know when you're down at the bookies.

The Oxygen Works runs as a charity and costs about £270,000 a year to run. To keep it affordable for clients they rely heavily on donations. We were so impressed that we decided to up our proposed club donation to £500 on the night, plus we donated monies personally to cover our teas, coffees and biscuits. Having been so impressed by our visit, I have been talking about The Oxygen Works to friends and family. It's surprising how little people know about the place, so we can also help by spreading the word.

Calum Pearson

New Vehicle Tax Rates

As of the 1st of April this year, vehicle tax rates go up in line with inflation, with larger monetary increases at the higher end of the emissions spectrum. This is obviously a deterrent designed to keep more polluting cars off the road, but an unfortunate side effect is that many future classics over 20 years old or so are becoming too expensive to run. This is why there has been a government petition raised to scrap the planned VED increases on 20-year-old vehicles, but as far as I know it hasn't got anywhere.

If, like me, you have noticed the creep in tax prices, especially if running multiple vehicles, this is a worry for ones wallet, especially when you can only drive one at once.

I made up a table of the tax bands and some example cars. I don't claim 100% accuracy as even in an afternoon of internet research I found discrepancies in the information I dug up, but hopefully it will give you an idea.

Cars and light goods vehicles registered before 1 March 2001

Engine size (cc)	12 months tax
Not over 1549	£220
Over 1549	£360

Cars registered between 1 March 2001 and 31 March 2017

Band: CO2 emission	Tax	Example Cars
A: Up to 100g/km	£20	Skoda Fabia 1.2 TDI Greenline, Toyota Aygo
B: 101 to 110g/km	£20	Ford Fiesta 1.6TDCi
C: 111 to 120g/km	£35	Some Golfs, Some Fiestas
D: 121 to 130g/km	£165	Vauxhall Astra, Renault Clio, Ford Ecoboost
E: 131 to 140g/km	£195	VAG 2.0 TDI's, Focus 1.6 Petrol and 1.8 TDCi
F: 141 to 150g/km	£215	Audi A3 TFSI, Mid Range VW Golfs
G: 151 to 165g/km	£265	BMW 318, Mondeo 2.0TDCi, Fiat Panda 4x4
H: 166 to 175g/km	£315	Mondeo 2.0 diesel, Early Audi TT, BMW 323
I: 176 to 185g/km	£345	Golf GTI, Mazda MX5, Saab 1.8T
J: 186 to 200g/km	£395	Volvo XC90, Subaru Impreza, Golf R
K: 201 to 225g/km	£430	Ford Mondeo V6, BMW 330i, Jaguar XJR V8, Saab 9-3 Aero, VW T5 2.5 Tdi, Ford Focus ST170, Mini Cooper S R53.
L: 226 to 255g/km	£735	Bentley Continental, Audi S8, Boxster S Sport, Golf VR32
M: Over 255g/km	£760	Jaguar S Type V6, Aston Martin DB9, Ford Mustang GT

(Apologies for the clumsy formatting, I haven't worked out how to do tables in the new publishing software yet.)

So, what can we do? Well, you could sign the petition, lobby your MP, or just tax for the 6 summer months or even less. Or you could join a car club that is affiliated with the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs who effectively lobby parliament on our behalf. If you are reading this, you should already be a member of HCMC and part of your membership goes to the FBHVC who are doing a great job on our behalf.



Updated MOT exemption eligibility - A historic vehicle does not need an MOT if:

- it was built or first registered more than 40 years ago
 - no **substantial changes** have been made to the vehicle
- Your vehicle must have an MOT if it:
- has been substantially changed
 - is a type or model of vehicle still in production
 - has a registration number with a 'Q' prefix
 - is a kit car constructed from components from different makes or models
 - is a reconstructed classic vehicle (as defined by DVLA)
 - is a kit conversion where a kit body, chassis or monocoque is added to an existing vehicle, or vice versa

Changes that can be shown to have been made to vehicles of that type during production or within 10 years of production are acceptable if parts no longer available

Changes made to preserve a vehicle where original type parts are no longer reasonably available are acceptable. This includes changes to:

- axles or running gear to improve efficiency, safety or environmental performance
- the chassis – replacements of the same pattern as the original
- a monocoque bodyshell (including sub frames) – replacements of the same pattern as the original
- engine – alternative cubic capacities of the same basic engine, or alternative original equipment engines - if the number of cylinders is different, it is typically (but not always) non original equipment

My editorial views on these MOT changes are my own and don't represent the club's view or even other members. I have always been dubious about MOT exemption as I consider myself a mechanical tinkerer, an enthusiast or hobbyist, so as I've said on these pages before I always like to get a second opinion on the safety of my cars. The MOT test is a good value way of doing just that. Having said that my Beetle hasn't been tested for about three years because of laziness combined with convenience. It only does a few hundred miles a year and I am aware it has a slight hub oil leak, and the front tyres could do with replacement due to age, but I will get round to that. The only modification to this car is the addition of disc brakes, which is deemed acceptable as it is a safety improvement. Still, I should get it tested again.

My two classic Minis on the other hand have little standard about them. The mods are all done with specialist Mini parts but both have larger engines with more than double the original power, the suspension is all tweaked up and lowered making them a different and potentially much faster and therefore riskier drive on the road. Having these MOT'd makes sense to me.

Kit cars - now that's a bit more controversial and I guess also includes Hot Rods. I hear there is quite a backlash in these communities. I was reading that some chancers have been re-shelling modern cars with older bodies in a bid to avoid tax and MOT responsibilities. Perhaps the authorities have got wind of these and have tightened up the regulations, a classic example of a small minority spoiling it for the rest of us.



MGB for sale?

I'm just testing the waters here, but there could be a chance to buy this lovely 1973 MGB. Sound car, lots of replacement parts on it. It was bought for some light restoration but has been in dry storage for a year or so. Will be tax free and MOT exempt due to it's age. Looking for offers around £2000. If this is

something you'd be interested in, (and lets face it, why wouldn't you be? It's got chrome bumpers.) please contact me at editor@highland classic.org

Cars and Coffee



The classics are back because of nice weather and no road salt. I know the interesting moderns are interesting but they aren't classic!



Interesting and classic. A Cox GTM. A pal had one back in my Mini days. It left us standing as it had traction.



Here's a Landrover that would take you into the outback, and back again. Look at the grille.

A Buick Skylark. How many boxes does this tick? Rare. Stylish. Iconic. Different. American. Bronze. V8. 1970s. That exhaust note.

Miscellanea and Random News

Charidie Works.

As well our MacMillan Cancer fundraiser at the end of last year, our Cash for Kids - Mission Christmas and a healthy donation to the Oxygen Works, we have also committed ourselves as a club to donate £250 to Cafe 1668 at 86 Church Street in Inverness due a member connection (we like that), and that it is a very good cause. I, your editor, after a short selection process have been elected to arrange some sort of press publicity probably involving a picture of some members, a large cheque and a classic or two outside the cafe. It will probably be a daytime thing and if this is something you'd like to be involved with please drop me an e-mail. editor@highlandclassic.org

Out and about

Although your editor missed the last Cars and Coffee, he did see this lovely Vauxhall Astra GTE at Tesco's. I couldn't stop my "Nice car mate." comment, and got a nice smile back. Looking through the pictures, I believe it was at Cars and Coffee. I'm a bit sentimental about these, as one of my school pals had one, and she's no longer with us.



For Sale: 2005 SAAB 9-3 1.8T Vector



2005 SAAB 9-3 1.8T Vector convertible, Cayenne red, charcoal grey leather, 84,500 miles recorded with service history, 5 former keepers, MOT to March 2027, towbar, wind deflector, very clean underneath. £3500 ono. Please phone Chris 07850 738107 or cjds@ag47.net for more info/photos.

Editorial comment. These still have the classic 2.0 16V Turbo engine, just a bit more emissions friendly, which given the road tax story earlier in this newsletter, is a good thing for your pocket. If you still have some hooligan in you, they respond well to tuning, and I read they have about the most comfortable seats of any car.

HCMC Events

2nd Apr 2026 HCMC Visit to Luxury Auto House at their new Harbour Road premises behind new Park Chery showroom. Take the road by the Three Little Bakers round the back and look for RM Towbars, It's an unmarked unit near there. It promises to be an interesting night with experts in detailing, upholstery, coilovers, air ride, wheels, audio, media screens, dashcams, trackers & immobilizers. 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start.

4th Apr 2026 Classic Wings & Wheels Easter Airfield, Balintore
12noon Display your Classic Car for the "Open Fly In Day" Planes. Land 1100-1300 & depart 1330-1400. Catering Trailer on site. At Airfield bear right to Cabin. 3Words:///commands.skimmers.grills Classics convoy leaving lay-by north of Cromarty Bridge

12th Apr 2026 Cars And Coffee - Inverness Carlton Bingo, Inverness IV2 3ED 2nd Sunday of every Month from 10am-12noon. A Quiet Social Gathering of 20th Century Classics plus interesting Modern Sportscars & Bikes. Park up, buy a hot drink & snack from Carlton Bingo & check out what's in the Car Park. Find us on FACEBOOK.

26th Apr 2026 'Drive It Day' 2026 A trip to Grantown following the old A9 as much as possible, to support FBHVC Dive It Day 2026. Pre-Register on HCMC Home Page here. .

