

CLASSIC SCENE



May 2008

Office Bearers & Committee

- Chairman:** Michael Osborne
Tel: 01463 871473
michael.oz@bopenworld.com
- Secretary:** Ian Nixon
Tel: 01349 866178
irf_nixon@hotmail.com
- Treasurer:** Ian Thompson
Tel: 01463 790969
ian.judith@virgin.net
- Committee** Roy MacGregor
Jim Lorrain-Smith
Ranald Smith
Miles Vincent

Membership

Bryan McIlwraith

Renewals should be sent to Bryan at 72 Lochalsh Road, Inverness IV3 6HW
Tel: 01463 222839 (work) 01463 741632 (home)
Bmcilwraith@osteopath-highland.co.uk
Please let Bryan know if you have an email address

HCMC Homepage

www.highlandclassic.org.uk

Webmaster - Ian Thompson
ian.judith@virgin.net
Tel: 01463 790969

Editor

Callum Beveridge
47 Old Mill Lane, Inverness, Highland
IV2 3XP Tel: 01463 231787
Email: ClassicScene@bevs.org

**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
Tel: 01463 236459
Ranaldsmith@btinternet.com

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Cover picture

*Robin Gilberts 1938 1842cc 12170
Mulliner DHC Alvis*

THE CHAIRMAN'S BIT

Last Sunday (20th) was the annual "Drive It" day promoted by the FBHVC to raise awareness of classic motoring. The club took part for the first time. Around twenty four cars turned up at the start in Stadium Road followed by a tour of the city centre and a run out to the Old North Inn. Blessed by the weather I think it was an enjoyable few hours and well worth repeating next year, perhaps expanding the day with a longer drive. We did have some press coverage in print and on the local radio prior to the event and I did spot a photographer at the start so check out the Courier, you may be famous.

Talking of the FBHVC, they are now sending out their bi-monthly newsletter by electronic mail. If anyone would like to receive a copy of this, email me and I will forward it on starting with the next issue.

The Grantura seems to have started the season well, having been MOT'd and



re-tracked by John Eastwood. The water pump seems to have some play in it and the overdrive unit now decides when IT would like to engage but apart from that.....watch this space.

Don't try this at home

I filled up with petrol the other day and made the mistake of converting the cost back into pounds per gallon. Don't do it, it's scary!

Michael

This Months Meeting

Thursday 1st May at 7.30pm

Run to Brockies Lodge, Kiltarlity via the scenic route. Meet on the seafront at North Kessock at 7:30pm

EDITORIAL

Hello,

well, 'Dive It Day' has been and gone, and we were blessed with fine sunny weather for our jaunt around Inverness, up to Tore and around to the Old North Inn. Not everyone managed to keep to the pre-arranged route, but we did all manage to make it to the pub!

There was a good turnout of cars, although club members were outnumbered by other having come from near and far. Perhaps next year, we can organise a bit more of an 'event' to mark 'Drive It Day 2009'.

The 2CV eight-ball rally of Britain, breezed through here last week with a pit-stop in Inverness to do some running repairs. There were a dozen A-series Citroens with a few specials joining them for day stages. Despite the early morning snow in Aviemore, they managed brave the journey to Ullapool via John O'Groats. I received a report of a 'swarm' of them heading South from Ullapool, including the 1950's ripple-bonnet saloon that has last been seen approaching Drumbeg...slowly!



In this issue you'll find an entry form for the Tain Rally, which needs to be returned in the next couple of weeks.

There was an unprecedented number of entries for last month's Caption Competition, but the winner must be "You've lost power?" sent in by Jim Mackay. Well done! I'll include a another competition next month.

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



"No, THEY LEFT THE MONEY, BUT, THEY SIPHONED ALL OUR PETROL..."

Local Events Diary

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

May

24th/25th Scottish Rover Rally, Thirlstane Castle, Nr Lauder. Trevor Colebrook 01324 714406 (tcp5@sarr.co.uk)

June

1st Fraserburgh Vintage Car Rally
1st Motorfun classic rally with fun run. George West, Rally Sec 01343 543716
8th Knockhill SpeedFair
15th Tain Vintage Vehicle Rally

July

12th/13th Scottish Transport Extravaganza at Glamis Castle
13th Forres Theme Day

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.

After being away on delivery business, Ranald thought it would be nice to bring his wife a little gift.

"How about some perfume?" he asked the cosmetics assistant.

She showed him a bottle costing £50.00.

"That's a bit much," said Ranald, so she returned with a smaller bottle for £30.00.

"That's still quite a bit," Ranald grouched.

Growing annoyed, the clerk brought out a tiny £15.00 bottle.

"What I mean," said Ranald, "is I'd like to see something really cheap."

So the cosmetic sales lady handed him a mirror.

(Only the name has been changed to protect the innocent.) Ian Nixon

UNDER MY BONNET

got three grumpy books last Christmas. If that was not bad enough they were given to me by my wife and daughter. Victoria has long since taken to calling me Victor. It's an age thing and I am no different. I shout at the telly, particularly the News, I am less tolerant, less likely to bite my tongue and more and more disenchanted with the superficial and tacky world, and its values, which we live in. I've even got a grump box at home where I am fined 50p a grump, and it is well used I can assure you. At a King's Fund conference many years ago one of the speakers used the phrase – "all sizzle and no sausage." Oh how I wish I had coined that one.!

Before this develops into a full blown rant I may as well tell you that I have recently turned 60. No big deal, another day, spit it in the eye and move on. And yet, I would be less than human if I did not admit that I took some time to take stock. Just what have I achieved to date in my miserable life? What lies ahead in the rapidly diminishing time I have got left? All of a sudden the cracks I have been on the receiving end of e.g. when is the E Type/TR/Alpina (take your pick!) going to be

back on the road then, have taken on a sobering reality.

Anyway last week I went to the Service Point in Church Street to apply for my bus pass. Shows you how unworldly I am, wondering why there was a security guy at the front door. The lady who dealt with me, when she saw my name said "are you Ranald Smith the guitarist". Once I had given her my autograph and posed for the requested photograph we inevitably started reminiscing. It struck me that here I was at 11.25 a.m. filling in my bus pass form. 40 years ago, or even less, at this time I would have been in some licensed establishment, with guitar, and half way through my third pint. What happens to us, why do we do this to ourselves?

But I digress. For my birthday Joanna and I went to Glasgow for a few days (who says I don't treat a girl right) Great time and one of the places I visited was the Transport Museum. I have been many times before but not recently. It is shortly to be moving site to a river side complex so I wanted to visit it one last time in its present site. I was wandering round a



collection of 50s, 60's and 70's porridge when I came across it – a 1960 Morris 1000 Post Office Van. Well woop de doo I hear you cry. But this little time capsule stopped me in my tracks because my first car was – of course, a Morris 1000 ex Post Office van.

In 1967 one of my friends, Sloop, so called because of his spirited rendering of sea shanties at the Aberdeen City Folk Club, asked me if I wanted to buy his Morris Minor van. He had recently graduated to a Vauxhall Cresta, the later model with endless rear wings, whitewall tyres, bench front seat and column change (Lucky b.....d!) The princely sum of £22 changed hands and I suddenly found myself with a car I didn't know what to do with. I had absolutely no knowledge of cars and their inner workings, I had really had no money to run it, far less to maintain it. However I have never experienced such pride of ownership in all the cars I have subsequently owned. There is nothing, absolutely nothing quite so exciting as your first.....car! It wasn't so much the car, it was what it represented – total, absolute freedom to go exactly where you wanted, when you wanted. In reality it was a bit of a dog, not a wreck, but decidedly tired. It was brush painted, the big ends were rattling (only thing was I didn't know, or probably notice what the noise was) and the gears graunched. Was I bovvered – absolutely not. It had a yale lock on the door and plenty room in the back!! There I go again, and this newsletter may be read by children! It did have steel wings though. Do you remember the black rubber wings some of them had. My memory seems to tell me that the rubber winged vans were the Post Office engineering ones, which were green, but I am sure someone will correct me

They say that each successive generation is better off than the preceding generation and I generally think that this is true. My dad did not have his first car until the early fifties, when he was well into his forties, although World War 2 may have had something to do with it. Austin of England it was, a Somerset

in black. Shut my eyes and I can still feel every contour of the car, this being a time when cars were regularly washed and polished, and if it had been out in the rain wiped down before it was put away in the garage. My Dad did this every time it rained – honestly. He wasn't even interested in cars but he was proud of his car. It was something special and bought to last a long time, not like today when people go out to do the Tesco shopping, drive home via the Longman and end up buying a car because it's Saturday.

Young people today wouldn't even countenance a car like my postie van. They want, expect even, and get new, or nearly new cars. And why not. In a few years they will be misty eyed about their Corsa, Ka, Focus and Audi.

The very first day I had my van I was stopped by the police. Unused to the shattering acceleration of my postie van (after all it was marginally quicker than walking) I pulled out in front of a car, only it was a police car." Is this car yours, sir." "Yes" whispered the young student." What is the registration of your vehicle" "er.... er...." Nothing new there then! My best friend at that time was a student in Glasgow and I arranged to go down at the end of the Spring term to take him and all his belongings back to Inverness. Well I got there, stayed a few days in his room in Baird hall in Sauchiehall Street, and made another significant lifestyle purchase in my life – a leather jacket from Carswells I think. To put things in perspective it cost me £25 which was £3 more than my postie van cost. I remember taking the jacket back to Millsie's room, screwing it in a bundle, and jumping on it so that it would not look too new. (got to keep up the mean and moody folk singing image) It also, for an inordinately long time after I bought it squeaked loudly as I walked.

We set off home for Inverness. By now the noise of the big ends was becoming too loud to ignore. Even I began to realise that this was not

a normal engine noise. I didn't even have a car radio to try and drown the noise out. I had heard however of STP (remember that!) so I stopped at a filling station and poured a can of it into the engine. (I can't believe I am telling you all this. It's so embarrassing. Oh the power of advertising. I really did think that STP would cure the noise. We crawled up the road, progressively slower and slower until we got to the long hill just before Perth. By this time we were at walking pace, holding up all the traffic (no dual carriageways then) and trying to disappear into the footwell. To this day every time I drive up the hill to Perth these memories come flooding back. Eventually we hobbled into Perth and stopped at a garage in the centre. It is still there now although I can't recall the name. By this time it was patently obvious we were not going to get to Inverness. I can't remember the thought processes at the time but I do vividly recall the upshot was that the garage proprietor, who was totally blind, offered me £3 for the van. For some strange reason, I was allowed to keep the battery, although what I was going to fit it to escapes me. If I had known then what I know now I could have got an engine out of a scrappy for £5, had it fitted and drive on. In fact that is probably what the garage did. What I have conveniently forgotten is that I had no tools, no knowledge, no garage, no Tom, no money, no trailer or car with towbar - probably just as well! I was totally at the mercy of the garage and was thus fleeced by a blind man!

We hitched home and the following week Millsie and I came down in my mum's Austin Countryman Estate (woodie) to collect the luggage and I had recovered from my shock enough by then to nick the toolbox (GPO one) and the bottle jack (again GPO issue) both of which surprisingly I have to this day. So if there is anyone out there completing a restoration on one and needs these finishing touches I could be parted from them. Mind you I would be looking for at least £3 to cover the cost of the van.!

Sad Morris Minor fact 1

Before the Morris Minor went into production an 11th hour decision was made by Alec Issigonis to widen the car by 4 inches. The pre production car was literally sawn in half and moved apart firstly by two inches which still made it look too narrow, then by 6 inches which was deemed too wide. Eventually with the two halves set at 4 inches apart it was deemed right. Much of the tooling for the production body-shell had already been completed and this is why the bonnet was given a raised central profile to accommodate the extra inches. The roof and boot lid were widened. When it was realised that both front and rear bumper blades had already been manufactured in large quantities in the original dimensions, they cut the bumpers in half and added a 4 inch steel fillet. This is why early Morris minors had a three piece bumpers.

Sad Morris Minor fact 2

To celebrate the manufacture of a million Morris Minors, in November and December 1960 350 special Minor 1000000 2 door saloons were produced. (announced January 1961) They were all finished in Lilac, yes Lilac, with vanilla leather seats and trim panels. They had special Minor 1000000 badges and chrome wheel embellishers.

Ranald Smith

I am sure other members have some lurid tales to tell of their first car or early motoring experiences. If printable, please write in to the editor. It could be the start of a regular, and I am sure, a highly entertaining series. !

Route Of The Month - Doing The Dornie Landcrab!



This month I'd like to recommend a wee route to the West and back, in honour of the Dornie Landcrab that graced us with it's presence at Drive it Day on Sunday 20th April.

There was a great turn on the day out from across the Highlands and everyone seemed to have a good time. It was nice to see such a variety of different Classics from 80's Golf GTi's through Mk 1 and Mk 2 Escorts, Triumphs, Lotus, Bristol, Bond, Minis, Kits and Custom through to a 1936 Ford Model Y that was on it's first day out in over thirty years!

I was also told by one participant that being "pushed all the way by an Alvis" had really made his day.

This month I'm sending you a little further on a circuit of about 130 miles, quite far I know but well worth it. (It's only about as far as some of you would go to pop down to Perth and back to sit in a field.)

I'll start you off from Drumnadrochit as I know there are a few of you that can drop down onto the A82 without having to trouble yourself with Inverness. Head west the 12 miles to Invermoriston and then, if you can resist the temptations of the Clog Shop, hang a right on to the A87 towards Skye. It's a nice easy run through the trees for a while then a

short burst of single track at mile 21 for about a mile. Now you can open her up for a good blast the 9 miles down to the Clunie Dam and then swing along the 8 miles of lochside to the Clunie Inn (once used as an adverting back-drop pretending to be the John O' Groats filling station for a small van that supposedly could make it up from Lands End on a single tank. Short lived, when the people of Caithness pointed out that, although the mountains in the shot were lovely, they didn't have any!)

Now, crack on up over the peak and head down into Glen Shiel. Civilisation next takes the form of the Shiel Shop at Shiel Bridge after mile 48, fuel is available here (and probably oil if your driving an old Rover, although if Sunday was anything to go by then you are hopelessly carrying your own) and then, beware that on the tight corner around to the Kintail Hotel on Loch Duich you will find a rather large family of wild mountain goats. In twelve years driving this route I have never had a problem with them, but then they must cross the road now and again to get to the other side!



If you are needing refreshments Kintail offers both the Hotel and further round the corner there is the wittily named "Jac-o-bite".

Carry on round the loch through Loch Duich and Inverinate and along a few miles of cliff-sided swinging bends you will pass 55 miles and be at the home of the Landcrab and of

course Eilean Donan Castle. Well worth at least a stop for a photo.

There is a great restaurant visitor centre here to stop for lunch at even if you don't feel like crossing the bridge and invading the Castle itself, although I can highly recommend it. (Vulva owners will of course have brought their own tea and sandwiches but there is plenty of parking with a view of the Castle) Is my spell check playing up again?

3 miles further along the A87 you will find the A890 sign posted North. Turn right unless you wish to go over the sea to Skye! There is a pretty steep climb here for a couple of miles but this is the worst of it. You'll go up and down for a bit and just after mile 64 you will hit the single track road which takes you around Loch Carron, it's still an A road though (amazing!).

At about 76 miles into the trip you'll find the delightful Attadale Gardens that may interest the horticulturalist in you (we know one member who treats his plants very well don't we) and a couple of miles further on you'll find the Carron Restaurant (I've never been in but it always seems busy at the right times).

At the top of the Loch is StrathCarron where you cross the railway line and a mile on turn right at the T-junction. This is still the A890. From here there is about another 8 miles of single track road which finishes at about mile 79, just remember "Passing Places" are for letting people behind you past as well as those you meet!

Now you can open her up again. These new roads are some of the best that you could drive anywhere, fast and smooth.

12 miles away is Achnasheen (a colour from the new Jaguar range apparently!), here you get a choice of watering holes if required. May I suggest that Alvis, Bristol and Riley owners veer left to the open fire of the Ledgowan

Lodge Hotel for tea and scones and that perhaps MG and Mini owners hang a right for the Studio Workshop and Tearoom. If you own both I am assuming that your lady Wife has insisted on the larger, more comfortable ride for this journey (if you own all three it begs the question "have you told the Wife yet!?)

Not far to go now, mile 106 will see you



turning right onto the A835 towards Garve and onto Contin (Volvo owners who have run out of tea by now can top up with a polystyrene cup at the Tarvie Services – we know you brought the Volvo because no fool would try and go this far in a Stag!)

It's only 12 miles now to the Maryburgh roundabout and from here I am kind of assuming that you all know your way home, please tell me no-one has been using Sat Nav for this trip!

And there you have it, another new experience under your belt. (Kit Car/Custom owners did also take sandwiches with them but theirs, of course, were made of the leftovers from three different meals from the last week.)

Miles.

Note; I have chosen to describe this route in distance terms as I am not quite sure that you'd be able to keep up with my timed intervals between these places as I normally do it in my rally prepared (leased) works van! Enjoy.

Me and My Car - Ray Quibell and his Triumph Stag VRK 30M

I bought the car in 1976 when it was 18-months old. I used the car for business and also wanted a convertible. The stag was one of the few cars that had a good removable hard-top as well as a soft-top, which made it the perfect solution to both requirements.

The first thing I did to the car was to Waxoil it in the box sections, which I have repeated every two years. This has undoubtedly preserved the body. During the first four years it covered 100,000 miles - the only problems being with the automatic gearbox.



In 1980, I was given a company car, so the Stag became a weekend and fun car.

In 1990, I stripped the car to a bare shell and re-sprayed it both underneath and above using 2-pack paint. At this time I rebuilt the engine and all the suspension and brake components.

About 1995, a conversion to the 4-speed ZF automatic gearbox became available, so this was fitted along with tubular exhaust manifolds. This transformed the car as it always felt to be revving too high for a V8 engine. The new gearing increasing the top gear ratio by 50% giving 3000 rpm at 90 mph and the feel of a modern sports-car.

Ray Quibell

MILES'S MEANDERINGS

I bumped into one of our retired Club members the other day whilst popping out to my van for more parts. Funny what retired people find to do to fill their days isn't it? At first, when I saw him clutching his pot plant, I wondered if he was undertaking some sort of strange Bio Fuel experiment with his Classic, but then it dawned on me what he was up to.

He'd actually only decided that it needed a drink..... which is why he was strolling into Dows Bar with it tucked under his arm - Any excuse!

I digress (as usual!).

Why is it that the simplest of tasks always escalates into a ridiculously complicated state of affairs in a matter of minutes, especially when the Wife is due back in those matter of minutes?

You really thought that, in the allotted time of the Wife's absence, you could quite happily complete both the task already delegated to you by the Wife (from THE LIST) and that teeny job of your own that you knew would only take a second (but that was incredibly important to yourself and that the Wife didn't really need to be that aware of).

Go on, admit it, you've all done it!

I was supposed to be varnishing new doors and I did not have a problem with that, but the poor Mini had been suffering the indignity of being snowed on for the last forty eight hours (global warming my arse!) so I thought that I'd pop her into the garage.

The garage had been cleared sufficiently to accommodate the wee thing (using previously stolen minutes!) and I just had to drive her in. Now my garage is quite an old wooden structure but built on a good solid concrete base, so good in fact that the concrete is about a foot higher than the drive with a 1 in 10 incline!

I chose to go in forwards, so as not to remove the front number plate that resides



under the bumper. I could check it's clearance against the ramp before attempting the ascent.

At this point I decided against an Italian Job style entrance similar to the moment that the Minis in the film raced into the rear of the bus and opted for a more sedate approach.

However, the steepness of the incline did require a little gunning with the right foot and more than a little squealing of the tyres, but the front end was up.

Next I tried to bring up the rear, as it were. It was at this point that the shortness of the Mini's wheel base really came into play and the centre section of the exhaust ground itself against the unrelenting apex of the concrete rise. God there are some noises that you really shouldn't have to hear!

So I backed out of the garaged.

Any sane (married) man would have gone and varnished the doors about now, but I wasn't about to be beaten!

The reason that I had new doors to varnish was because the old doors had been removed. And where were the old doors? Why, in the garage of course!

So, with the doors duly lined up against the wheels of the Mini, re-entry was attempted, followed by another horrendous noise. Two in fact, as the Mini drove half way up the doors and then descended with an ear splitting crack through the panelled sections.

This was quite disappointing really as I had spent at least fifty odd quid on these doors not too many years previously in Wickes, although come to think of it that may have been the total price for the whole ground floor as there was a Sale on (hence the recent need for new doors).

Having removed the shrapnel from the driveway, the insane married man NOW went to varnish the doors, just as the Wife pulled up the drive in a flurry of.....SNOW!

About now, I am wondering whether the

new owners of Rover would be so kind as to honour the warranty that I seem to remember being advertised regularly on TV (coincidentally) at the time of my Mini's first registration.

Apparently..... if you bought a Rover and it didn't fit in your garage.....they would give you your money back!

Miles.




MINI MAYFAIR
1275cc
1994 (M), 55,000 mls, red, MOT Oct 08, tax June 08, alarm/immobiliser, CD player, great runner, reluctant sale
£1250 ono
Tel 01667 456450 or 07980 298217
NAIRN

**ROBIN HOOD
CATERHAM
BASED KIT CAR**
Built to high standard. 1600cc Ford Cortina engine/running gear, 8600 mls. Chrome/silver, wing wheel arches, Escort turbo alloy wheels, full weather gear, grey leather seats, tax Sept 08, 1 years MOT, excellent first kit car
£3200
Tel 01408 633234
GOLSPIE

**JAGUAR
XJS**
1988,
1 years MOT,
6 months tax
£1000 ono
Tel. 07740 680422
STRATHPEFFER

Going down a storm at last weekend's Race Retro show at Stoneleigh were Nostalgia Cars UK Ltd with a stunning representation of their range of C-type and XK120 OTS replicas.

To commemorate their tenth anniversary, the Taunton-based company have announced a special limited edition Ecurie Ecosse XK120. The original car is part of the Dick Skipworth Collection, being owned and successfully campaigned by Sir James Scott-Douglas during the early fifties.



Just FIVE of Nostalgia's version will be produced, all carrying a commemorative brass plaque. If you fancy one you'll probably be surprised at the asking price, which starts at £46,500 inc VAT depending on spec...

Highland Heaps

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





The Ardgay bus is delayed due to a technical fault...



Tired Tiger at Belladrum

If you're brave enough to want to rescue one these 'heaps', contact Miles (last two) or Jim Mackay (first two) for more info

Some of the participants of Drive It Day 2008

