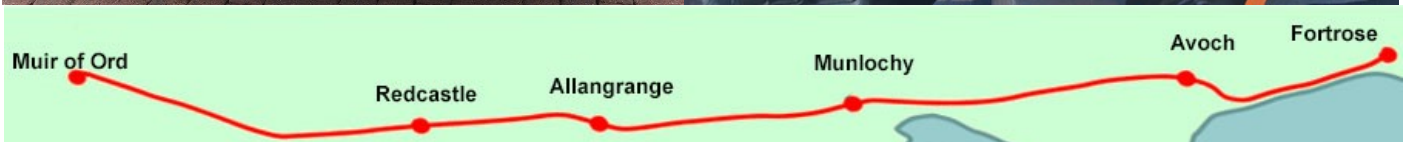


CLASSIC SCENE



May 2021



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The club has an extensive archive of
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Cover Picture

A rather random selection of cover
pictures this month. Some pictures
of a sunny A9 on the way to
Dingwall, a literally mint Austin Alle-
gro and sunny stripes on a Ford
steering wheel beamed through a
Ford sunroof.

Plus a mock-up of the old Black Isle
railway route.

Welcome to the May Newsletter

I have to say we were inundated with contributions this month, so much so that I have kept an article back for the June issue. There was no hierarchy or preference, it was just the order they went down on the page before I realised the edition was quite full. I wonder if that's how it goes at the New York Times?

At last the lockdown restrictions are starting to ease and for the next club night we will go for a drive. There are some details at the end of this newsletter. Unfortunately due to having to work, I can't make it which is really frustrating as I have been looking forward to it all lockdown. On my last club trip I didn't even make it out of the car park.

Oh, I have an update on that. The vehicle in question was the Beetle with fuel starvation issues. Zack put me on the right trail by suggesting a floater in the petrol tank. I removed the tank last Autumn and this spring got round to looking inside it and what a surprise I got. About 10 years ago the tank was a bit leaky around the seam so I sloshed Frost tank sealer around it and that was that fixed. Unfortunately it seems the sealer available at that time wasn't ethanol resistant and it was now peeling off in messy wrinkly sheets. After an unpleasant hour or two with a wee hook bent into a welding rod, I managed to peel most of the liner out. You can get Frost tank stripper that would get the rest, except as a hazardous chemical and due to Covid restrictions they can't post it to the Highlands! So bought an upgraded fuel outlet that has a built in filter that sticks up into the tank, hopefully preventing any more blockages. And some of that new E10 fuel should sort the rest!



My editorial seems to be turning into a list of things that have gone wrong, but I hope you find it entertaining at least. Other disasters this month include fitting a new wheel bearing and hub to the (emerging classic) Ford Focus Mk1. On turning the hub there was some black rubber being shedded. It turned out a bit of rust was sticking out of the back plate damaging the reluctance ring for the ABS. I ordered a new one but it ended up being dispatched from Germany and was ages in the post with pessimistic tracking information, so I ordered another one. The Focus was off the road for 2 weeks waiting, and guess what? Both orders turned up on the same day! I'm a bit scunnered with the VW T5 van. My clearcoat paint came out all orange-peel, rust and seized bolts that turned a spring swap into a 4 day epic, and fitting new rear shock absorbers just revealed more rust, which was tricky to weld. Light at the end of the tunnel? No - it's an express train coming the other way. Find out what happens... next month.

Your editor.

Chairs Bitty

Rather than a dry historic "on this day, and then that day" etc, Chris talked about the social history of the local Black Isle Railway. Although we too have a book on this railway, it is always interesting to hear how other interpret the same history. The talk reminded me of a few things that happened in the railways history that I had already forgotten again. At the end of the night there were some local recollections of the railway, including the "bovine delivery", "when I fell asleep at the wheel" and the "what to do with scrap cars" stories. Quite a bit of the railway's infrastructure is still visible in the landscape and part of it can still be walked.



We got a surprise the other day in our garden. Last year we purchased a ton of compost but only used half the bag. Time year, as we were about to plant up the seed potatoes and were in the process of emptying out the remaining compost into a raised bed, a mouse jumped out of the bag. It ran round the raised bed a few times before scuttling off round the back of the garden wall. As we got to the bottom of the compost bag, we came across a ball of leaves – probably the mouse's nest. Sorry mouse, but your house is no more.

Still on a nature theme, we put up a bird house in late March. Initially no customers, but 2 weeks ago a blue tit showed great interest. And then a Sparrow. Over the course of a few days it came to blows with the blue tit (which is a head smaller than a sparrow) coming out on top. But for some reason a few days later, the blue tit seems to have lost interest in the nesting site. Straight away the sparrow moved in, but to date he has not been able to get any female interested in setting up shop.

April has also had nice weather. I've been taking some long evening walks and Alice been out with the Smart. Better still, the pothole squad has been round again, so our little backroad is passable again. All very fortunate for Jim MacKay. He paid us a surprise flying visit when taking his A40 out for a drive. Our driveway got a second treatment of vinegar – those bits that were missed out the first time round. But this time using a pressurised spray – which is working a treat.

Our Landy is currently paying a visit to our local garage. Alice decided that the time had come to get the swivel joints replaced. This way the Landy will be ready when we are coming out of lockdown, which happily is already starting, hence the club being able to go for a run this month. Repairs are facing a slight delay as the lift is occupied by a 4x4 vehicle who had some specialist work done to the gearbox in recent past. Our mannie at the garage found out just what this specialist work involved. The release bearing was held in place with cable ties. He is waiting for spares for this vehicle before he can tackle our Landy.

As I hinted at earlier, this month we are going for a drive. Hurray! Given that our cars may not have seen much activity in the past year, we are going to take it relatively easy. We will meet up at the Council's HQ front car park, then we are taking a run up to Abriachan and across to Brockies, coming back to Inverness via the Black Isle.

See you there.

Trish.

Ramblings April21

Jim Mackay

Last month Calum wrote an article on the Sweeney cars and mentioned the Triumph 2000 and expressed some surprise* about its inclusion. Having some experience with Triumphs, I'm not at all surprised because our family one was a revelation. My father had a Wolseley 4/44 which looked the part but was woefully short on horses with its 1250cc engine and stopping wasn't any better. He changed it for a second-hand Triumph 2000 which had been well looked after by a neighbouring farmer. I know that sounds like a contradiction as farmers are notorious for giving their vehicles a hard time but this one was garaged and never carried any stock or driven in a field. I remember in every detail my first drive and how impressed I was. There was 90 horses available delivered smoothly by the in-line six with twin carbs, all synchro box with overdrive on 3rd and 4th, rack and pinion steering, McPherson struts on the front, trailing arm independent rear suspension and front servo-ed disc brakes. With no front bouncing or rear axle tramping the handling was precise and the engine sounded marvellous. It was, quite simply, a great car for our country roads and long legged enough for effortless cruising. And it was styled by Michelotti no less.

He replaced the 2000 with a later VX 4/90 but that was a backward step. Meanwhile, to put things in perspective, I had a Ford Thames 7 cwt van with drum brakes, cart springs, a propensity to eat starters and all of 39 horses to play around with.

Calum also mentioned (oh no, not a split infinitive) a spring breaking on his T5 without going anywhere. I can vouch for that as both the single leaf springs on my spare VWLT35 have broken. The van is inside, hasn't moved for years and now cannot be moved because the rear axle is attached only by the hand brake cables. Some things are not meant to be explainable. Cheers, *Jim Mackay*.



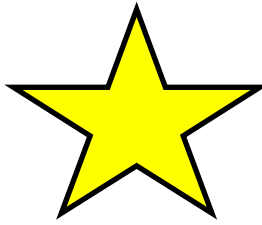
This very nice low mileage 1100 was photographed at Kildary. The lawn mower engine three wheeler has pedals to help it on a slope



This pair of Fords are just around the corner in Scorguie.

(* In my defence, not as fast as a Ford Consul 3.0GT though - Ed.)

Out and About



This is my car of the month. I saw it on a recent but aborted trip to B&Q.



It looked great and much easier on the eye than I remembered. I think it's because it's height which was a design compromise then now looks positively svelte compare to modern hatchbacks. I love so many things about this car. The rarity, the colour, the un-coolness. Top Gear say it was more aero dynamic going backwards.



I saw this for sale in Stornoway on a work trip. A 2001 Ford Cougar 2.5 V6 for a mere £600. I was quite tempted with this sporty looking Mondeo.



And this low mileage 992 Mercedes 190 1.8 was a pleasant surprise outside a pals house. It turns out it belongs to his son. It's in great condition, bought online from someone in Liverpool. They drove it back and it was faultless.

It's good to know at least some the youth of today have good taste, and don't drive back firing Fiesta STs.

Tad Baecker

Sadly we have been informed that Tad Baecker has passed away. Members of longer-standing will remember him for his pipe, his droll sense of humour and, not least, his Honda Civic Type R.

He had suffered severe ill-health for many years and had been in care for a considerable period.

The Black Isle Railway Talk by Chris Silver

For the April club night Chris Silver gave us a very interesting talk on the Black Isle Railway and had a good turn out of over 16 members, which is not at all bad for a Zoom night. Chris's talk was based more around the human enterprise rather than engine numbers and models as in his own words, he's no train spotter, and we believe him. I don't want to give too much away because it's Chris's talk and anyway you should have been there! But here's a wee summary.

In the mid 19th Century the railways were a cut throat free market enterprise. From 1865 the Highland Railway dominated the area between Perth, Inverness and the north and west but the landscape was difficult and the population low.

In the Black Isle there was pressure to build a railway and there was much wrangling, little agreement and not quite enough money. In 1889 the Great North of Scotland Railway (GNoSR) deadly rivals of the Highland Railway proposed a route including a ferry from Ardesier to Chanonry and Highland Railway fought this proposition with their own line from Muir of Ord to Fortrose and won. The order was placed in 1890 and the 15 mile line opened in 1894.

There was a junction to the main line at Muir of Ord, then stops at Redcastle where you can still see the station, Allangrange which is now industrial units on the back road to Tore, a 1:60 incline at Munlochy, then added in 1905 a private station at Rosehaugh. The next stop Avoch, where the station was up hill on the west of the village and where you can pick up the old track on a walk to the final stop in Fortrose.

The single track was run on a 'one train in steam' basis and there were passenger, heavy goods, livestock and mixed trains. There was even an express which took 35 to 40 minutes and was initially a great success until World War 1 where the railways started to decline because of better roads and buses, then after the war ex war department trucks and skilled men to drive them. The Highland Railway was absorbed by the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) between the wars but this was a sloppy process. World War 2 badly affected the railway and there were fewer and fewer services until in 1950 passenger services were stopped. Freight continued until 1960 but even that became uneconomical and in June 1960 after about 65 years, the railway closed with a whimper, not a bang.

If you want to know more you could track down 'The Black Isle Railway' book by Jack Kernahan. Which we believe you can find in the Groam House museum when it's open. Alternatively you can persuade Chris to do another talk because he was very, very good.



Gordon Murdoch

Sadly on the 26th March Gordon Murdoch passed away. He was an HCMC member for several years and was a prominent Triumph owner with both a TR5 and a TR6 which he was always keen to tinker with.

Gordon served on the HCMC Committee for a few years and was the Events Co-ordinator for a spell.

Sadly, he developed early-onset Alzheimer's a few years ago and latterly had been in the care of Highview Home in Inverness.

He was a neighbour of ours at Kincurdie here in Rosemarkie and I'm sure members would wish to extend condolences to his widow, Jan, and family.

Chris Silver

This month's "The Automobile" magazine includes an in-depth article about the unique surviving Varley-Woods which we went to see when it was owned by Ranald Coyne in Inverness . <http://www.theautomobile.co.uk/may-2021-issue/>

THE VICISSITUDES OF VARLEY-WOODS Not only was the Varley-Woods an assembled car, it was assembled with apparent indifference by its mercurial creators and destined to languish in obscurity. Zack Stiling examines the sole survivor



I hadn't heard of this magazine. It looks interesting - Ed.

Austin Healey Part 2

Jim Mackay

In the July 2020 newsletter I printed an Austin Healey article by Jim and he sent me this follow-up piece, but for some reason and I'm blaming btinternet I missed it. So I am probably about 9 months late. However you can find the original article on the website here <https://www.highlandclassic.org.uk/newsletters/0720.pdf>

I shall now handover to Jim...

The Healey 100 was safely stored meantime. I didn't know what I was going to do with it as I couldn't afford to do anything with it and, with a young family, it just didn't fit the transport bill. One day I thought I'll get it on the road. To be honest I thought that on more than one day!

A "for sale" advert drew my attention. It might have been in the Austin Healey Club newsletter or the Exchange & Mart. A 1954 Healey 100 with no engine was available in Bathgate so I couldn't not follow it up. Yes I could but I didn't. After all, in the bigger scheme of things, Bathgate was local. Having a spares car would make restoration easier and cheaper. We had friends in Greenock so I invited myself and the family for a week-end holiday. We loaded up the Vitesse and trailer and had a lovely city break with our friends. Oh yes, almost forgot, I nipped though to Bathgate which really is nowhere near Greenock. The Healey was on its side in a garage and it looked like some stripping down was started and abandoned. The doors and gearbox were there but the engine block had been thrown out because it was getting in the way. Oh, no, that was going to be a costly mistake. The sum of £100 changed hands and the fairly light Healey was on its way northwards. Cheers, *Jim MacKay*.



The Sunbeam Affair

Jackson Hiddleston

I suppose it all began in 1953 when my father died. I had been left my father's specialist playing card collection. However, with my mother's permission, it was agreed that this could be sold as at the age of eighteen I desperately wanted a car. We then bought a Humber Vogue 1938 two-door sportsman saloon. (Photo 2) This was a super car, but the hankering for a convertible – or as it was described then, a drop-head coupe, was very much to the fore. The Humber was ultimately traded for what should have been a 1955 Sunbeam Talbot a Mk IIA drop-head coupe, not being able to afford a new Mk III. *Photo 2.*



However, my mother, who was still keeper of the purse strings, preferred a Mark V Hillman Minx drop-head. (Photo 3) The Sunbeam and the Minx were alongside one another in the showroom at the time. I think the showroom was located somewhere in Purley (Surrey).



So, the ambition to own a Sunbeam – or Sunbeam Talbot – was thwarted. A life in the Merchant Navy, a variety of different employment situations then ensued, and ultimately, marriage, prevented further excursions into the possibility of owning a Sunbeam.

1977 arrived, and again while scanning the adverts in 'Motorsport'. Happened on one for a 1955 Mk III drop-head coupe, registered number ROH 20. A trip to Bromsgrove from Dumfries where we were living at the time, a test drive and discussion with the owner came to nought: the owner having decided not to sell.

1978, the cash flow a little better, again stirrings of the possible ownership of a Sunbeam, followed by a study of adverts and one or two trips south. Yes, the very one that we wanted was available in Bedfordshire, having been well-maintained, owned by a retired schoolmaster, all the usual work had been carried out, e.g. sill, chassis members, outriggers etc. Trip to London – single trip only ! Accepted on face value, driven home from Bedfordshire to Dumfries. Thorough examination on returning home, revealed something of a botch-up. Have not a number of us all experienced this ?

Major restoration work required to chassis. Two further Sunbeams purchased in the Carlisle area (for spares); one reasonable, the other best described as "chicken-coop use" ! Restoration project proved too much. Wife and family (wife in particular) somewhat resentful of money being spent on the Sunbeam. I advertised in national dailies, national magazines, local sale obtained. This was 1978/9. Issued

with major threats **never** buy another Sunbeam. However, we all do it – adverts pursued, articles on Sunbeams obtained, read and digested – it's always there once you're hooked.

Summer 1994 arrived, we had moved to Caithness. Once again the cash flow was better – so, usual magazines, and coincidence – advert in Classic Car Mart: Sunbeam Mk III drop-head coupe, overdrive, radio, etc. Immediate calls to owner. Surprise, surprise, registration number of vehicle ROH 20 – almost twenty years had elapsed since I had pursued the purchase of this self-same vehicle. Purchase price agreed, but what do you do ? Purchaser is near John O'Groats, seller is in Essex. Engineers' report obtained, once again price agreed – small, definitely small, amount of work to be carried out. Vehicle taken to London by Graham Brook's specialist Sunbeam Talbot engineer. New owner travelled south to collect vehicle. I've never been in North London - at least – for many years – all the traffic and the people. Arrived at Graham Brook's workshop. Is this the place where my priceless purchase has been worked on? However, all seemed well. Collect vehicle. Aim to drive from North London to Sunningdale to stay with friends before tackling the trip north.

Monday afternoon, 4.30 p.m. North Circular Road – and M25. Years since I've driven a Sunbeam ! How do others cope with the traffic ? Do they not realise that the indicators on this car are red and white. I **am** flashing to turn right ! Give us a chance, mate ! Arrived in Sunningdale shattered. In need of a dram. Do people cope with this traffic every day ? Next day courage and confidence. You have to drive from Sunningdale to eight miles west of John O'Groats, home to Dunnet (Caithness).

Originally the intention had been not to use motorways, but to attempt to drive as it might have been in the 50's only using A class roads. However, this seemed to be virtually impossible. The M40 was used north, then M6 until crossing the Border – thank goodness I can breathe again; I am over the Border.

First night in Dumfries. Not a bad trip. Sunningdale to Dumfries in one day. No problems. Second day to Inverness by minor roads. Really enjoying this now. Loads of admiring looks from passers-by. Weather not too good, this is November ! Third day, Inverness to Dunnet (Caithness). All the old roads avoiding the use of the new bridge crossings of the Beaulieu Firth, Cromarty Firth and Dornoch Firth. Perfect trip, though the steering was none too good on this vehicle or at least so it seemed. Later check on the car revealed somewhat rather old WD marked tyres. Must get these changed. What do we put on ? Avon Tourist recommended.

Since returning to Caithness with ROH 20, having enjoyed such an excellent summer that year (1995) the car has been taken to the National Rally in Worcestershire (no problems) returning via Edinburgh up to Pitlochry, Fort William and onto Glenfinnan. Superb trip, hood down on return journey from Worcestershire almost all the way. Touring in the grand manner, it seemed !

Also that summer, attendance at the Alness Classic Car Rally. (Photo 4.) Again, superb weather, hood down all the way Caithness to Alness and return. Various trips to Inverness from home and back (240 miles round trip) had been carried out during the summer. The car had performed superbly including the exploration of one or two Highland glens, a trip to Shetland and on the Glenelg Ferry to the Island of Skye .(Photo 5)





The only work carried out since purchase (1994) was to change engine oil, change gearbox and overdrive oil, thorough greasing and cleaning of plugs and also replacement of off-side kingpin and bush. The latter required for the MOT in June 1995.

After the expense for my eldest daughter's wedding at which the car was used, and knowing that the Sunbeam required some body/chassis work it was decided to put her up for sale.

The best offer came from a buyer in Paris. After negotiations a sale was agreed and my role was to drive the car down South to an agreed destination where my buyer from Paris and I would meet up (I had received a hefty deposit).

I dutifully loaded the car with an assortment of spares, manuals etc. And set off. This was November 1999. The drive from Caithness was OK until Golspie where it started to snow heavily. On exiting the Dornoch Bridge, I lost control and started a wide rear end skid to the Drivers side into the oncoming traffic. I corrected and overcorrected, hit a Vauxhall Astra with my offside front wing then my rear chrome bumper acted like a 'tin opener' along the offside of the Astra !! I managed to take back control and stopped on the nearside verge. The Astra driver, a lady, was in shock, not as much as I was !! My Guardian Angels who came to my rescue were two Motor Patrol Police Officers in a 4 wheel drive. They told me they were right behind me and witnessed the whole incident. Their statement was that on the exit from this roundabout travelling south was the camber was wrong and that I was not to blame. (The conditions were very icy).

And so my beloved Sunbeam ended up for repairs in Bannermans of Tain. A phone call to the buyer in Paris whose response was "the car can be repaired, let me know when repairs are completed." He still wanted the car !

Thereby hangs another tale !

Jackson Hiddleston

Dingwall 31st March 2021

For Sale



This Standard 10 was for sale in Golspie and I promised I would put it in the newsletter. It has since sold but I thought I would stick a picture in because it's such a lovely looking car.

But you can buy this one sent in by Richard Lashley. It's a Rover 418SLD which I believe has the trusty Peugeot 1.8 XUD engine, which while not setting the tyres alight, will be light on fuel and can run on chip fat. I read recently that chip fat for fuel is now being imported from Europe and no longer "green" because of the delivery emissions.



"A friend of my daughters boyfriend has just 'picked up' a Rover 418SLD. I don't have any details of the car except for the pictures enclosed and a description of it being in very good nick. I note that it has only done 44k miles on a P reg – that's less than 2000 miles a year.

Anyone interested please get in touch with me and I will take it from there.

Regards, Richard"



For Sale : SAAB 9-3 Linear SE Turbo Convertible

2012 (12); Hirsch up-grade (200 bhp); 34,000 miles; dealer-registered & one owner from new; Silver with Black hood & Cream leather; cruise control; air-conditioning; wind-stop; full service history and recent service by Perth SAAB including replacement CIM; MOT to April 2022. Last one sold in Scotland? Kept in heated/de-humidified garage; tow-bar used for bike-rack only. £7,500 ono. Phone Chris - Mobile 07850 738107.







BARNES HIGHLAND MOTOR GATHERING
ARE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THEIR
2021 FRIENDS AND FAMILY DAY OUT.





WHEN: SUNDAY 6 JUNE 2021 - 11:00 TO 15:00 HRS
LOCATION: BARNES CAMPSITE, KINCHYLE FARM, IV12 5NY, NAIRN
FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT: INFO@BARNSHIGHLAND.COM OR PHONE 07494532380

CLUBS & ENTHUSIASTS ATTENDING:

HISTORIC WHEELS CLUB - HIGHLAND CLASSIC MOTOR
HIGHLAND DRIVERS CLUB - MG OWNERS CLUB
PLUS,,, MANY MORE TO BE CONFIRMED.

VENDORS ATTENDING:

HANGAR96 - HIGHLAND OVERLAND - HEILANBREW
HIGHLAND VALETING - HIGHLAND CAMPERVANS
PLUS,,, MANY MORE TO BE CONFIRMED.

NO ENTRANCE FEE. DONATIONS WELCOME.
ALL PROCEEDS GO TO SCOTTISH CHARITY AIR AMBULANCE
VISITOR PARKING: PARKING WILL BE MAINLY ON GRASS DIRECTLY
ADJACENT TO BARNES HIGHLAND CAMPSITE

VEHICLES AND VENDORS TO ARRIVE STRICTLY BETWEEN 09.30 – 10.30HRS
ALL VEHICLES MUST BE IN A SAFE CONDITION AND INSURED
THIS IS NOT A COMMERCIAL EVENT AND THERE WILL BE NO COMMERCIAL
COMPANIES OR VANS ON SITE WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL.

THIS OUTDOOR GATHERING COMPLIES WITH GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS REGARDING SOCIAL DISTANCING AND HYGIENE.

Drive It Day 2021

Drive It Day 2021 was a very low key affair with the FBHCV recommending taking your classic out for a run where ever you are, perhaps in small groups.

Well this was our small group and we enjoyed a very sunny drive over the Struie Road near Evanton, up to Brora, the down the A9 via Tain.

We saw a few other classics on the road and got a couple of cheery waves. A classic Mini and base model light blue Ford Escort Mk3 spring to mind.



There were some other Drive It Day people out and about. Some on a trip to Ullapool and some going round the Black Isle 50. A couple of Highland MG owners were on the road too. If you managed a drive please send in some pictures and a couple of words if you'd like to share them in the newsletter.

2021 Classic Car Shows

It looks like car shows may be few and far between this year. We have heard that Tain and Grantown Motormania have both been cancelled, and the Inverness City Centre BID show is unlikely to go ahead.

If you hear of any shows that are likely to be on please let your newsletter editor know so we can publicise them.

HCMC May Club Night

We're Going for a drive! A short one to warm up those tyres and aged oil seals.

Meet at the Highland Council front car park, Tomnahurich Street for a 7:30 pm start.

The route will be Loch Ness north side, up over Abriachan, down via Foxhole to the A833 towards Brockies Lodge. (Optional escape point by turning right to go home via Inverness on the A862). For the hardcore turn left and then go home via Beaully, Muir of Ord, The Black Isle Show Ground, and then down to the Redcastle Shore road along the north of the Beaully Firth via Charleston.

We will be allowed to meet in socially distanced groups of six so bear that in mind when you're out tyre kicking. You don't even need to get out of your car if you don't want to.