

CLASSIC SCENE



May 2022



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Cover Picture

Jack Meredith's Alvis TC21/100 Grey
Lady, out and about.

Welcome to the May Newsletter

Happy spring time everyone. It's been quite a busy month outside your editors garage with an excellent club night and slightly damp but thoroughly enjoyable Drive it Day.

I was planning on taking the Sierra on the run but I wanted to fix a few things like headlights, brake discs bumper alignment and headlight wipers. Oh and the MOT has expired. So this is what it looked like on the day before. Oh and the wheels are still at the Wheel Specialist. That's Fix Or Repair Dailies for you. Fortunately I have a reliable VW Beetle which drove perfectly. As a good example of just in time planning I met another entrant at the Tesco Jetwash ten minutes before the event.

More on drive it day later in this newsletter.

Last month I told you about having the Focus crashed into on the Tore roundabout. I got off quite lightly but as always dealing with the insurance was tricky. The other driver admitted liability so I dealt directly with his insurance company, Churchill (Oh yes). Modern process can't cope with someone wanting to repair a low value car themselves and before I knew it Overton's of Dyce were in contact to take the car away as a total loss. No. Thank. You.

After a few calls and terminal holds I was passed to their engineer. *Now* I was speaking to someone who understood. We talked about the process and he agreed that the process is set up so that normal car owners were off the road as little as possible. Thankfully he arranged cash in lieu payment which is enough to repair the damage.

Sadly my Dad passed away last week so I'll leave you with this picture of him at Buckie harbour with his souped up "Two and a half litre Riley."

All the best,
Your Editor



Chairs Bitty

Last month we were invited to visit Jack Meredith's garage in Drum. He and his mate are heavily into Alvis, most of them are in bits but with 2 very tidy runners. But what drew probably the most envious looks was the lockup itself (more of a hangar really). Big enough to have a mezzanine floor with office, a car lift, your own conveniences and lean to storage shed. Luxury. Thanks to Roy for arranging this visit.



Our cars all got a little attention this month. The Merc got new front tyres, which were starting to get close to the wear bar. The Smart received a new crank position sensor and its alternator got a soaking with wd40 to aid issues with slow starting, which improved dramatically. And in preparation for Drive It Day, the Landy's fanbelt was tightened a teeny weensy little bit more to stop the charge light from coming on.

Today, as I am writing this paragraph, it is Drive It day. For us an early start and a last check that the tyres are at the correct pressure (they were), and off we set. Unfortunately, although an earlier test drive with the Landy had suggested that issues with the charge light coming on were fixed, today proved different. At random, although mostly at lower speeds or on the overrun, the charge light would come on. And the fuel gage had one of its funny days by suggesting that the Landy was drinking fuel like it was going out of fashion (a re-fuelling stop on the way home proved it wasn't). Not an entirely comfortable drive for us. However, all that aside, there was a very good turnout of vehicles at our starting point at Rollerball, most of whom also took part in the country run to the Lodge Steadings near Forres. Thanks to Callum for organising this.

On a different subject, we had a bit of a disaster in the house. I was just watering some seedlings when I wondered why I was getting wet feet. And no, this wasn't me pouring water on my feet! After pulling up the carpet I realised that something must have been quietly leaking for some time as the fibreboard under the carpet had done a grand job of soaking up water. The saving grace is that it only appears to have affected the small room where the heat pump is located. We dismantled part of the laminate in the dining room, but the floor looks ok there.

Of course, in accordance with Murphy's law, the wetness was only discovered in the long weekend over Easter, so nobody around to take a look at this. When we eventually got someone out (by now it is Thursday), we could not discover any leaking pipework – the plumber and I had a good look and feel all around the heat pump. The explanation provided was that the condensation created in the heat pump, rather than draining away, was finding a way out underneath the heat pump and so into the fibreboard. I am not 100% convinced of this explanation and decided to measure the amount captured in the tray now placed under the heat pump. 400ml/24hrs seems rather a lot for mere condensation. Meantime the place is in a mess as everything from the backroom and 2 rows of the dining room laminate has been stored elsewhere in the house as we wait for the floor to dry out so we can put the laminate and carpet back again. And then find a better solution than a drip tray under the heat pump. Meantime, the seedlings are inhabiting the living room.

Back to the coming month. As I mentioned in the last magazine, our member Richard arranged a visit to the Strathspey Railway on Saturday 28 May. We meet around 1pm at the railway's carpark with the engine shed visit at 1.30. This to be

followed by a train ride, for which we aim to get discounted tickets. If you want to come along, **you must book your space before 16 May**. Go to our website to book your place. If you want to bring a +1 write +1 after your surname.

<https://www.highlandclassic.org.uk/public/events/steam-signup-form.php>

This month will be a run around the Firths, starting at 19.30 in the northbound layby at North Kessock on the A9, up to Ardully, left to Dingwall, via Strath, Contin and Marybank to Muir of Ord, then continue via Beaully to Inverness.

See you there,

Trish Brown.

Arrangements for the Strathspey Railway Visit.

Date: Saturday 28 May.

The Motor Club 'official' event is as follows;

Meet at Aviemore, Speyside Railway car park (north end)	1.00pm
Visit to engine shed (adjacent north end of car park)	1.30 – 2.45pm
Return to station on foot	
Board train for Broomhill - steam service	3.00pm
Return to Aviemore	4.42pm

STANDARD SERVICE – AVIEMORE TO BROOMHILL			
Aviemore Departure	10:30	12:45	15:00
Boat of Garten Arrival	10:48	13:03	15:18
Boat of Garten Departure	10:58	13:13	15:28
Broomhill Arrival	11:21	13:36	15:51
STANDARD SERVICE – BROOMHILL TO AVIEMORE			
Broomhill Departure	11:36	13:51	16:06
Boat of Garten Arrival	11:49	14:04	16:19
Boat of Garten Departure	11:54	14:09	16:24
Aviemore Arrival	12:12	14:27	16:42

Standard ticket Senior (60+) = £14.85

Standard ticket Adult (16+) = £16.75

Standard ticket Child (5-15) = £8.50

Group price tickets expected to be confirmed.

If you want to make a day of it, Richard has suggested the following activities.

Train spotting – Boat of Garten middle station with picnic tables and a great view of the railway. There is a takeaway café and the Boat Hotel nearby.

Scenic walks – There is a lovely path adjacent to the River Spey.

Cycling – on the Speyside Way between Boat of Garten and Aviemore (approx. 5.5 miles each way).

Road trip – to Loch Garten nature reserve. Note, the famous ospreys have not nested here for the past few years.

April Club Night

Jack Meredith's Garage

Roy MacGregor has often mention his friend Jack Meredith's garage in Drumnadrochit, where he had a car from every era of motoring. As the Covid lockdowns finally receded, he managed to arrange a club visit though the collection has been reduced to focus on Alvis cars and in particular the TC21 "Grey Lady". Were we going to be disappointed with this reduction? Certainly not! It was the best club visit in a very long time with about twenty enthusiastic members lapping up everything they saw and heard.

The first thing that impressed was the size and height of the garage leading to a fair bit of garage envy.

Roy introduced us to Jack and Peter who then welcomed us themselves and set up the plans for the evening. We were introduced to the first car which was this lovely Alvis TC 21/100 also known as a



Grey Lady. I believe this name came from a marketing strategy when it was launched at the Earls Court Motor Show. The /100 refers to the guaranteed 100 mph performance and the cars were known for their excellent road manners. VPG 678 has excellent mechanicals but we were told the bodywork needed some attention. The Grey Lady models came with more "bling" such as bonnet scoops and wire wheels, however Jack pointed out that some buyers of the Grey Lady elected to forgo the bling on the basis that scoops may admit water into the engine electrics and wire wheels require a lot more cleaning than steel wheels.

This car is also know to Jack and Peter as GL2. They numbered all their cars GL1 to GL5 in the order they arrived in the garage.



This is GL1 another TC21/100 living in the garage next door. It's an ex-Practical Classics staff car. Peter is the Chairman of the Scottish Section of the AOC and the marque specialist for the Grey Lady. Jack told us how he managed to have 12 sets of stainless steel bumpers made by the Harington Group, in Vietnam. These cost less than getting an original re-chromed, and are more robust. The starting handle quickly rubs the chrome off the originals.

Jack and Peter have collaborated with the engineering course team at the NES College to complete a body

off restoration of a 1948 Alvis TA 14 Mulliner Sports Saloon which was handed over to the Young Driver's Classic Car Loan scheme at the NEC Classic Car Show in 2019. They are currently engaged with the same team on the restoration of a 1952 MGTD to hand over to the Car Loan Scheme.

There was talk of an initiative run by a charity, 'Starter Motor' based at Bicester Heritage. It's purpose is to encourage young people into apprenticeships to keep the skills required to maintain classic cars alive. Jack and Peter have been in talks with the Grampian Transport Museum and others to promote something similar in Scotland.

I think at this point it's worth having a short summary of circa post war Alvis cars to put this visit into context.

Years	Model	Cyl/cc	Type	Coachwork
1938-1940	12/70	4/1842	Sports tourer, drophead coupé and sports saloon	Mulliners
1946-1950	TA14	4/1892	Sports saloon, and drophead	Bodies by Mulliners coupés by Tickford
1948-1950	TB14	4/1892	2 seater sports	A P Metalcraft
1950-1953	TA21	6/2993	Sports saloon, drophead coupé	Bodies by Mulliners coupés by Tickford
1950-1953	TB21	6/2993	2 seater sports	A P Metalcraft
1953-1955	TC21 and TC21/100	6/2993	Sports saloon, drophead coupé	Bodies by Mulliners coupés by Tickford
1955-1958	TC 108G	6/2993	Sports Saloon	Graber and Willowbrook
1958-1963	TD21 I & II	6/2993	Saloon, drophead coupé	Bodies by Garber coupés by Park Ward
1964-1966	TE21 III	6/2993	2dr saloon, drophead coupé	
1966-1967	TF21 IV	6/2993	2dr saloon, drophead coupé	

Car production ends September 1967. Alvis Car and Engineering Company Ltd was based in Coventry from 1919 to 1967. As well as road cars, they produced racing cars (with front wheel drive), aircraft engines, armoured cars and other armoured fighting vehicles.



This is GL4 and the plans for her are to build a "rocket ship" with a TE21 engine and a gearbox with overdrive. The car already has working electric power steering. At this stage in the tour we talked gearboxes and found out there was an Alvis ZF 5 speed gearbox available in the later TD21's but a 4 speed with overdrive was more in keeping with the era.



We took a break from Alvis world and walked a short way to another garage nearby to find this Rover P5B and a Ford Anglia 105E with motorsport pedigree. This car featured an Alfa Romeo 2 litre twin cam engine and had competed in rallies, rally cross and in this guise, circuit racing. The Anglia is listed on eBay as I write this article. It may be sold by the time you read it though.



In his introduction Jack said that the workshop area to the right had some 1960's Nat Squadron three wheeled ATV's, or at least that's what I wrote down. Jack did say there wasn't much information available on them, but I was surprised to find so little on the Interweb, until after a few days of searching I found a picture of a Gnat. Those silent letters!

Anyway they have 3 Gnats in various states of repair.



That's it at the back with the hoops for headrests. The rear tyres are very fat for gripping in the mud, and because of the low centre of gravity are excellent hill machines. Here' some facts I eventually did find on the internet.

Introduced in the late 1960's the Gnat was manufactured by Aimers McLean & Co Ltd in Scotland. (J Cameron Lewis & Company Limited in New Zealand) The vehicle was a 2-seater, 3-wheeled cross-country vehicle that was designed for golf courses, forestry grounds, estates and parks -even used in the sub-antartic It was a precursor to the ATV. Controlled by tiller steering, the Gnat was powered by a 400cc (10hp) Briggs & Stratton four stroke engine. (Villiers in New Zealand.) This drove the rear wheels independently through an 3-speed Albion gearbox and chains. In addition to 8" disc brakes, each wheel has a 14" wide tyre to improve traction in muddy areas, and with a 12" ground clearance, the Gnat could climb a 1 in 1 gradient with a stability of sideways tilt in excess of 30 degrees. The vehicle proved to be a true workhorse being able to carry 650lbs and pull up to 950lbs on its tow bar.

The Gnat could reach 25mph though a Gnat 2 model was also introduced that was governed to just 15mph. Production ceased in the late 1970's.

On the right is a picture of a complete one. Notice the tiller steering. You had to be careful not to turn too sharply or you would just plough straight on.





We returned to the main workshop for tea biscuits and a natter and then Jack and Peter swapped GL1 and GL2 between garages. I was great to see and hear and smell the cars running. GL1 was lifted up on the ramp so we could see underneath. Someone spotted an odd modification under the engine which was to catch oil drips.

I took the opportunity to ask Jack, why Alvis, and it was a familiar story. When he was in a youth group, some members had sporty cars. One of them was an Alvis and it left a lasting impression.

And so the evening drew to a close and Roy gave a wee thank you speech and presented our hosts with bottles of whisky, which were received with much gratitude and an invitation to come back next week.

The Case Continues.

Meanwhile at the Inverness Justice Centre, your newsletter editor was summoned not for crimes against the English language, but to be charged with auctioneering without a license.

Our friend the court artist caught this image as the defendant listed the bargains he had sold himself, including a nice set of interlinked smoke alarms which he has now wired in and where they each display a rather satisfyingly lit green led in place in the hall, kitchen and living room.

The Prosecutor said, "There was no smoke without fire," which wiped the grin off the defendants face.

The case continues.



Staff Car Sagas

Alvis TC21/100 • BMW 2002 • Fordson Van • Scimitar GTE
Jaguar Mk V • Triumph GT6 II • Wolseley 1500



Geoff Le Provost's
Alvis Grey Lady
arrives with a crash

I was sorting out some diabolical wiring under the dashboard of the 1954 Alvis TC21/100 Grey Lady, parked beside the village green, when along came a 1934 open two seat Lagonda which pulled in to park in front of me, caught the edge of my front bumper and broke off the outer quarter of it. I ask you! When was the last time in this world that a Lagonda was in collision with an Alvis?

To add insult to injury, he didn't even apologise, just muttered something about my bumper being rotten then dived into the nearby pub! There were no signs of fresh damage on the Lagonda – nothing that might have been done that day. But I'm jumping the gun. How come I am driving an Alvis?

All I can say is that it happened very quickly. One day I was cleaning the Triumph TR4A, the next I was polishing the Alvis. The decision to change cars came after seeing the Grey Lady advertised by David Howard Cars, of Ranvilles Farm, just outside of Romsey, Hampshire. I popped down to see the car and was very taken with its generally good condition, if not its colour. Someone at some-time in the past resprayed it (badly) in early seventies British Leyland grey over blue. This apart, I loved it.

The deal took a day or two to finalise and

then David Howard delivered the Alvis to me in Kent and drove away in the TR4A which he is now offering for sale. The Triumph looked and sounded fantastic as it was driven away and I was sorry to see it go. A lot of work has gone into getting that car right and now someone else will be able to enjoy it.

The Alvis went straight to work, covering about 600 miles in the first fortnight, and it will be interesting to see if a car which is almost 30 years old can cope with the rigours of commuting as well as the long distance weekend trips we make.



Wood and leather add to the old world charm of the interior.

Future work on the car will include sorting out the untidy headlining and respraying the car either the original black over ice blue, or perhaps the black over silver grey which I

think would suit the car better. I am compiling a list of missing bits – and there are surprisingly few – which includes half of the chrome windscreen strip, bonnet badging, a front bumper and a pair of kick plates for the front of the rear wings which were, I think, made of polished stainless steel.

The first impression I gained when driving was that this was a very high quality motor car. The rich aroma of wood and leather helps this along. The large, upright steering wheel and those great, bulbous wings add to the image.

The gearbox is tricky. You have to take your time or the cogs will grumble. The only really awkward control is the umbrella handled hand brake which is under the dash board to the left of the wheel. With the seat belts on (they have straps over the inside shoulder rather than the outside one) you can reach the brake but you cannot push it off.

The engine is a three litre straight six fed by twin SUs and it delivers its 100 bhp at low revs which means that you don't have to change down very often, as the engine will growl along in top gear at 15 mph. The engine note itself is very satisfying. It sounds just like a better class old car should – or, as David Howard put it, 'like the cars on The Archers'.

The car certainly causes a lot of interest wherever it is parked. Dozens of people have stopped to talk to me about it in the last few weeks. Interested parties have ranged from grubby little boys to dear old ladies and included publicans, vicars and policemen.

So far, I have enjoyed every minute behind the wheel of the Alvis and I look forward to improving an already good car.

And here is an Excerpt from Practical Classics in 1983 showing OXU 490 as a staff car.

The black rubber 'patches' on the leading edge of the rear wings should be stainless steel. The twin bonnet scoops and wire wheels were standard on the Grey Lady.



Out and About



Well I just had to pull over and get a picture of this on a recent excursion to Morayshire. I guess the driver was getting ready for Drive It Day, or maybe he was just out for a drive. It sounded fantastic.



Regular spotter Jim Mackay was also out and about and saw this VW T25 north of Falkirk. Imagine overtaking this old Volvo driven by an old man on Drumossie only to be promptly overtaken by it and left for standing. It's just a wee T5 badge on the back but it means five cylinders pushing out almost 250 hp.



Lights again.

Chris Silver

Last month, Jim MacKay made some very valid points about modern headlights but I want to address the other side of the coin – namely, those who don't use **enough or even any** lights!

Albert Einstein is reputed to have expressed the view that the only difference between genius and stupidity is that there are no limits on stupidity. Actually, there's no evidence that he did say it but it's demonstrably true.

On various journeys recently in murky (to say the least) conditions, I have come up with three levels of stupidity or incompetence :

Firstly, other drivers who resolutely refuse to switch on any lights at all. Generally, they are in grey or dark-coloured vehicles. Do they have a death wish (for themselves or others) or are they just (a) incompetent, (b) divorced from the realities of driving in such conditions or (c) completely thick?

Next up (or down) are those who switch on their side- or parking lights. Just a hint in the name there, folkies – they're intended for PARKING (but who does nowadays?). I suppose they get some Brownie points for doing something but it's worse than bloody useless because in 9 cases out of 10 you can see the car long before the side-lights. Do they not look at other approaching cars?

Finally in this list, we come to those driving post-12 registered vehicles with Day-time Running Lights (DRLs). Now, I thought the purpose of these was to have them on whenever the vehicle was in motion but obviously that's not so. I don't know if it's universal but it seems in many cases you can turn on and drive with the side- (yes, parking) lights without the DRLs, thus negating the whole reason for having them. And these drivers are supposed to be intelligent???

Who remembers "dim-dip" in the dim (sorry) and distant past? At least if you switched on the lights while driving you got something equivalent to DRLs but they did have some downsides especially for tourists in hire cars who tried to drive at night with them! Apparently, dealers also had to fend off loads of complaints about terrible headlights from owners who did not understand them. We had them on a Golf GTI Mk3 which my wife had for a while but they were a typically British idiosyncrasy which the rest of Europe did not like or want so they were canned after a short while.

Incidentally, we were a bit disappointed with that GTI – possibly the poorest of the series? It was a bit flabby and had an underlying harshness to the ride which gave me a headache on a long run. Not a particularly bad car, just not a very good one either.

Chris.

Austin Healey 9

Jim Mackay

With the chassis and both bulkheads repaired, it was time to get some paint on. I contacted Norblast who had done my MGZA some years back but no luck there. Eventually, I found Andrew Park who agreed to shot blast and primer everything. His premises are on the Black Isle so I didn't have far to travel and he completed the work in a few days. It all sounds very easy but I had to re-commission my trailer which involved fitting new tyres and lighting and giving it a coat of paint. The tyres had plenty of tread but the cracked sidewalls could have been problematic. I had them for about 50 years and they would have been the original caravan ones which adds another 20 years!



It was nice to have the Healey all one colour even if it might not all fit together.

Cheers,

Jim Mackay.



Drive It Day

Sunday the 24th of May was the national Drive it Day pushed by FBHVC to increase awareness of the classic vehicle scene.

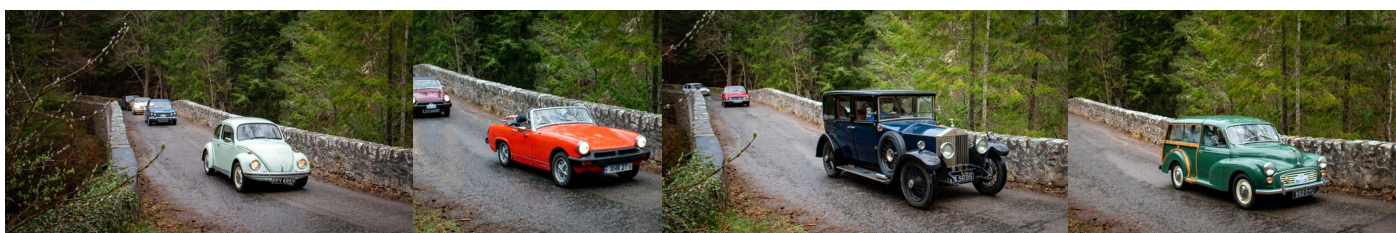
It was a damp day, but that didn't dampen our spirits as around 50 vehicles gathered at our friendly Rollerbowl venue for a drive through Nairnside towards Logie Steading which just changed hands days before our event. Many thanks to them for hosting us and to member Callum Beveridge for organising. My highlights were Alan Croxford's Rolls Royce 20hp Saloon, The Nash Metropolitan and 5 Jensens parked up in a row. The Jensens were going round Loch Ness and a few others were only able to come to the start so 43 classics of all shapes and sizes set off on the run. To avoid congestion we set off in small groups, but inevitably we all caught up en route. Also inevitably there were some flexible route choices leading to comedy some meetings at crossroads.

Callum B had prepared a Tulip diagram as used in road rallying since the Tulip Rally in the 1950's. Personally I really enjoyed this and found it easy to follow as a solo driver.

Route highlights were driving under the Nairn viaduct and crossing a (thankfully dry) ford on the back road from Cawdor to the A939.

On arrival at Logie Steading we were directed to a field for parking and then to coffee in the courtyard outside the bookshop window, where they had cleverly displayed motoring related volumes. You couldn't help but notice as you helped yourself to ample amounts of shortbread.

After a bit of chat, we slowly dispersed and found our own way home.



Over the page is a collection of pictures from the day.



Four Jensen Interceptors? Not a sight you see every day. In fact not even on this day, as one was an Interceptor, one an SP and the other two are FF's. Oh and one Jensen Healey too.



Events Diary Planner 2022

I'm not sure how Covid proof this will be but here is a list of events we know about for 2022. Apologies if I've missed anything (let me know!) and check the details nearer the time in case of change.

- 1/5 ~~Forres Classic Vehicle Show, Grant Park Forres.~~ **CANCELLED**
- 7/5 Historic Commercial Vehicle Road Run, Dingwall Mart to Ullapool
- 21/5 Rotary Club of East Sutherland Classic car tour. Dornoch to Durness
- 21/5 Inverness BID City Centre Car Show
- 29/5 Highland Folk Museum Vintage Day
- 4/6 Rotary Club of Inverness Loch Ness Classic Car Tour
- 5/6 Fraserburgh Vintage Car Rally, Fraserburgh Leisure Centre
- 4-5/6 The Shetland Classic Motor Show
- 12/6 Caithness & Sutherland Vintage and Classic Vehicle Club Rally
- 19/6 Tain Vintage Car Rally
- 2/7 Gairloch Gathering. **NEW**
- 9/7 Scottish Transport Extravaganza, Glamis Castle
- 6-7/8 Orkney Classic Motor Show
- 13/8 Truckness, Black Isle Show Ground.
- 14/8 Historic Wheels Club Rally. TBC.
- 19/8 Dubness - The gathering of the vans. Clune Farm Dores.
- 18-21/8 Scottish Micro Car Club Highland Rally
- 27/8 Fortrose & Rosemarkie Classic Vehicle Rally
- 28/8 Buckie Classic Car Show
- 4/9 Grantown Motormanica

Check the club website for further details and updates. If it all goes ahead as planned it looks like it will be a good year for shows.

HCMC Events

Thursday 5th May 'Run around the Firths'

Set off at 19.30 in the northbound 'Harry Gows' layby at North Kessock on the A9, up to Ardully, left to Dingwall, via Strath, Contin and Marybank to Muir of Ord, then continue via Beauly to Inverness.

Saturday 28 May. 'Strathspey Railway Visit'

Meet at Aviemore, Speyside Railway car park (north end) 1.00pm

More details in this newsletter and on the front page of the website where you need to sign up.

<https://www.highlandclassic.org.uk/public/events/steam-signup-form.php>