

CLASSIC SCENE



July 2026



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The club has an extensive archive of
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Cover Picture

The new Cars and Coffee venue at
the Drumossie Hotel.

Welcome to the July Newsletter

The big news this month is that our Cars and Coffee event is back and with a new venue at the Drumossie Hotel, off the A9, just south of Inverness. This is largely (I believe) thanks to the owners of the hotel liking our event and how it's been run, and they generously offered us a new home at the last minute.

The other big news is that we won the Best Club Stand rosette at Tain this year, largely thanks to the eclectic range of vehicles on display. More in pages later on.

This leads me onto an issue that, after not winning the Club Stand award last year, I seemingly offended the winning club here by having a 'rant' about how we even had a stationary engine. This was intended to be funny, written with my tongue firmly in cheek as there had been bit of club banter before hand about how we must bring a tractor to win and we were having a bit of a laugh about it. We really don't take club awards that seriously (now I've offended the Tain Committee!). Unfortunately, what you write sometimes doesn't come across as intended (which is why we have emojis), and I am genuinely sorry to anyone who has ever been offended by anything in this newsletter. I assure you it is never meant and it actually upsets me that people may have been offended. I do have a parallel in my personal life, as most of my contribution to family chat is also intended to be whimsical and funny, but seems to often offend. I have now agreed a system where if I'm actually being serious, I put my hand up to indicate that. It seems to work so far. (This is part whisical, part funny but mainly true!)

In other news and in a bid to restore my karma, I've done a good thing. I managed to sell Bryan McIlwraith's MG BGT for him and for a fair price, to a really decent, 'proper' car enthusiast from Turrif. You may see it again at the Nairn or Buckie Shows. I now know why I have 11 cars - selling is such a pain.

Technically, this has probably been one of the most difficult newsletters I've had to write. Like many others, I have been busy and had to leave the final writing to last Friday and Saturday afternoon. Then the crazy overhead lightning on Thursday night took out our internet router and home network, and so much data is up in the (thunder?) cloud these days. I have a USB cellular adaptor thing but the SIM has expired so I'm using a Wifi hotspot on my phone. Unfortunately the desktop that has the publishing software doesn't have Wifi so I'm having to transfer from a laptop using a USB stick, except my laptop is awaiting a rebuild after a 'Blue Screen of Death' and anyway, that requires an internet connection, so I'm using an old MacBook with a faulty battery which means every time the power lead falls out, I lose everything I haven't saved. And then when I cut and paste information from the club website, the format isn't Microsoft compatible, so I'm actually having to type a lot in by hand. And, to access websites and Facebook, I need the passwords which are stored in various password managers that aren't on the MacBook. On top of all that, my 4G connection is like dial up speed because presumably nearly everyone else in my locale has a similar problem and I'm nearly at my data (and mental) limit. Still, mustn't grumble.

Your Editor.

Ramblings from the Chair



In the middle of last month, Mrs Chair and myself (along with sister in law and brother in law) found ourselves at Blair Drummond campsite, near Stirling (and what a lovely site it is for anyone with the necessary mobile accommodation). Unfortunately for us menfolk, this normally means a dreary (and expensive) afternoon at the Scottish Antique Centre at Doune with our beloveds drooling over artefacts (or tat) from years gone by. Hang on a minute though – a quick search revealed that the Doune Hillclimb event was on that weekend, with the start just behind the retail premises. Better still, it was for classic cars. The hillclimb route follows a twisty narrow, fully surfaced lane under trees, up to a first summit and a small level section before an extremely steep hill (maybe 1 in 3 on the steepest section) followed by a blind crest with a tricky bend before another twisty section and a dip before the finish line. There were ten classes of cars from the 1920's to the 80's – about 60 cars in all. Each were allowed four runs up the hill, all of them timed and the result published the following day. Times varied surprisingly little – only two of the cars (an Audi TTRS and a Subaru Impreza, presumably ex-rally cars) made a sub 50 second run, with the rest (if they were trying!!) in the 50 -60 second range with a remainder making by about 65 seconds. The exception to this were three Austin Sevens (from 1922 to 1945) all of which made sterling efforts but kind of ran out of puff on the very steep section but, even though challenging, the fastest did a 71.5 second run and even the slowest in an 83.7 seconds. Given that the newest of these cars is 80 years old (and the oldest could be 104 years) and they only have 750cc engines, I was mightily impressed. My other concern was that these cars were all on wire wheels which looked alarming flimsy considering what punishment they got. It seems that the best car for a hill climb is not a big engined variety – the V12 E Type Jaguar (5300cc) was very poor in comparison to things like Imps, MGB's, Mini's, Nova's, Fiesta's and the like. There was what looked like a standard road going Honda Jazz taking part and even a Datsun Cherry – now when did



you last see one of those? I believe the track record is something like 34 seconds for some modern stuff – and while I like the classics, seeing something going at that speed must be very very impressive. Altogether the male members of our party had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon of spectating (and I believe our opposite numbers enjoyed their shopping without the moaning from their long

suffering husbands!)

On a completely separate subject, and a quick follow on from our Editors comments from the last newsletter, I went to have a look at the 'Tryzub' (Ukrainian Trident) monument at Brahan Estate. This is a gently sloping concrete memorial to the displaced people (mainly Ukrainian) who lived there after WW2, dating from 1949 and in very good condition. It is located immediately adjacent to the A835, just after the layby before the entrance to the old camp, now a small industrial estate. I actually gained access from the camp. It is amazing that I must have passed it hundreds of times without knowing of its existence.

On the Senator front, I have a minor problem with the ventilation fan which stopped working on last month's treasure hunt – just when we needed it most in the very damp conditions behind Cawdor. This happened before and I thought I had traced the problem to the resistor pack (fortunately very accessible on the engine side of the bulkhead) which seemed to be three coiled wire resistors clamped into spade connectors which were on the rusty side. I cleaned them up and applied some solder and a copper wire 'tracer'. This sorted it for a couple of years. I have tried a similar repair and seem to have very good continuity through the pack but still no operational fan. I will have a detailed inspection shortly (a bad earth seems a likely scenario) and hopefully will update readers next month. Finally, I am pleased to announce that the Club won the first prize in the club entry Class at Tain this year. Apparently the judges were very impressed with the eclectic mix of vehicles on show. From a bicycle to a tractor to a Lotus to a Mustang – can't really get more varied than that, now can you? For the second year we ran out of space for our 20 allocated entry allowance – next year I think we are going for 30!! Thank you to all who entered and visited the show – keep up the good work.

This month's Club night is the annual 'Bring your own Pudding Run to Nairn' (you'll have had your dinner), starting at Culloden Battlefield, 7pm for 7.30pm, Thursday 2nd July. I am amazed at how many routes there are to Nairn – I wonder which way we are going this year? I look forward to seeing you all there.

Regards, Richard

Club Night - Treasure Hunt



I (aka the Editor) literally have very little to say about the Treasure Hunt and unfortunately it was relatively poorly attended, with only 6 or 7 vehicles there, but I'm sure fun was had by those that did make it.

These events have always been great and it takes quite a bit of effort to organise one, so big thanks to Andrew Card for doing just that.

I'd criticise the attendance, but I didn't make it either, as I was on holiday, and we don't do criticism here, where's the fun in that? (Don't answer.)

Vehicle Excise Duty – Be Careful What You Wish For

**Wayne Scott – JEC Magazine editorial March 2026
(abridged by the FBHVC).**

There's been plenty of noise recently around parliamentary petitions concerning older vehicles and taxation. One asked to: "Reduce Vehicle Excise Duty by 50% for vehicles aged 20 to 39 years". Now, I understand why some are tempted to support it, and the argument that it would help move from a 'disposable car culture'. Preserving cars where the carbon footprint has already been spent makes sense – but I would urge caution. On the surface, it can appear to address fairness. Dig deeper, and it risks opening a Pandora's box. If the petition were to secure a parliamentary debate, it is highly likely that the historic vehicle VED exemption — currently applied on a rolling basis to vehicles over 40 years old — would come under scrutiny. Once that door is opened, it may not close in our favour.

During my seven years lobbying the government as part of the team of directors of the FBHVC, I learned a simple lesson: you must pick your moments carefully. Sometimes the wisest course of action is not to rock the boat. The historic VED exemption was secured and defended on a clear, carefully argued basis — that these vehicles are part of our transport heritage. They are not for daily transport. They are not disposable 'old cars' clogging up commuter routes. They are cherished, maintained, and sparingly used vehicles that represent engineering, design and cultural history. That argument worked because it was true — and because the data supported it. However, many of the vehicles falling into the newer age brackets now being discussed do not fit the same profile as the cherished classics that we know so well. A significant proportion of these are everyday cars still being used as low-cost transport. If an exemption is perceived to create a loophole for cheap motoring, it will not last long. Government will close it — and they will do so comprehensively.

What might that look like? Increased surveillance of usage. Mileage-based taxation. Restrictions on when and where historic vehicles can be driven. Greater administrative oversight. Once you invite the Treasury and the Department for Transport to 'review' a concession, you cannot control the outcome. This is not scaremongering. It is experience.

Those of us who have sat across the table from policymakers know how easily a well-meaning campaign can produce unintended consequences. You can walk into a room defending a principle and walk out having lost ground you previously held. That is why the FBHVC continues to engage constructively and carefully, backed by research, usage data and economic impact evidence. Strategy matters.

So, yes — be careful what you wish for.

Fleeting Moments - Trish Brown

Well, still waiting for the work to be carried out on the Landie. That's what you get for 'hiring' a mate who happens to have a ramp. But he's a nice guy, just busy for local farmers and fixing council vehicles, on contract of-course. But it means we had nothing to take to Tain (we got a 1st place in the club stands I heard) or for any garden waste dump runs. Which means that not much gets done in the garden as the bin is full. Out of desperation we are using bin bags so we can at least cart some weeds to the amenities site. We are missing our Landie.

So, apart from a little bit of weeding, the only thing we have done recently in the garden is putting netting over the strawberries. And a few plastic bottles over the redcurrant – laden with berries this year and barely a bug in site. Makes a difference from the bush getting eaten bare by caterpillars. I am hoping for more than a handful of redcurrants this year. Black currant was cut back somewhat in the autumn, but there are still plenty berries coming this year. I also have a blueberry, but as it is in a small tub, it's not growing very fast and I can count the number of berries (34 to be precise).

I mentioned last month that we had the brakes done on our other car last month. Back in April, before we took a wee break, we had the car up at the garage as something appeared to be leaking – at least you could see the odd oily drip if it was wet. The garage could not find any obvious leak, not in the fuel, nor the engine, so off we went on our holiday. On our return we had the brakes done, as I mentioned last month, and we asked the garage again to take another look for leaks as we had to add some brake fluid to the reservoir. But again, they could not find anything.

We only had the car back for a few days when Alice took the car out, and there was definitely something fresh dripping on the drive and the road. And the brake fluid level was down again. Our mannie at the garage could not find anything behind the various under trays. But eventually spotted something behind the drivers wheel arch cover, but only because an assistant was pressing the brakes. All fixed now, the dripping has gone.

Regards, Trish

Tain Rally

The Highland Classic Motor Club had a great, dry, day at the Tain Gala Association Vintage Car Rally today and we won "Best in Class" for the club display. Due to blockage at our packed stand, Jim Mackay then transported chairman Richard Lashley along to the prize giving like some roman emperor, in the bucket on the back of his lovely 1964 David Brown tractor. Priceless and perfect. Congratulations too to (founding) member, Hugh Skinner, for taking "Best in Class" with his beautiful Austin Healey. Well deserved. We had no stationary engine this year but we did have a classic pushbike, called Eric apparently.

Well done to the new team who organised the day and saving the future of this great show. Well done to the new compere who took over from our Tom McCallum after a staggering 25 years of being the man on the mic, having started at the Alness Show.



An Alfa's Tale

Douglas Gibson



By way of introduction to those that have never met this, it's a 1999 Alfa Romeo GTV – the rarer 3.0 litre version. It's now been in our hands for no less than 19 years, coming up from Cornwall, where it was a daily driver for the owner of a classic car restoration business. We actually bought it on ebay – not something I would normally advise, especially since the car was in Cornwall! However, the garage in question also ran a Citroen commercial dealership, and had a van to deliver to Edinburgh – long story short, we agreed a deal involving driving the Alfa up north, and have both driver's air fares paid for to return home. Our reckoning was that if he was confident enough to drive the car some 450 miles then it must surely be relatively reliable? It was!

It's not our first Alfa at all. We had 4 prior to this, as well as several Fiats – and all perfectly reliable themselves, despite the doom laden warnings from all and sundry about electrical gremlins and Italian workmanship. But back to the GTV.

Those 19 years have had mainly high points and great drives.....very few low points at all, really. There was one Christmas drive across to Inverness where I accidentally dropped a wee glass fuse into the open mouth of the cigarette lighter thing (Neither of us smoke, by the way – I have no idea why it was open at the time) Anyway, the fuse dropped in, there was a discreet wee blue flash, and half the electrics went awol! However, that was remedied by the replacement of a couple of the main fuses, which of course had simply worked the way they were supposed to.

Then there was the time when the circular ring around the ignition barrel that tells the car that the appropriate key is being used to start it went faulty. Stupidly on my part, I had been having occasional starting issues for weeks and had chosen to ignore these, though had obtained a replacement item to fit "sometime".....matters came to head, unfortunately, on a bank holiday weekend Saturday afternoon on Inveraray High Steet, and the car absolutely refused to start.....clearly, it reckoned that it had given me plenty warning, and that I really needed to be taught a lesson here. However, after about 20 or so attempts at

starting – the 21st caught, and I managed to get round to a safe park in the nearby Tesco car park, and carried out the required work! It's been fine ever since, but I still have a spare ring in the glovebox....just in case.

But aside from that, it's been 19 years of some great drives (NC500 four times now), some broader based UK drives – although we're not allowed in the likes of Glasgow any more, due to emission rules – and general pootling about the North Highland area. Brilliant engine, very much the heart of the car, but thirsty with it! And why they bothered with the tiny rear seats at all – no idea. It would have been better off with a larger boot or storage area.

Actually, there was another incident worth mentioning – the great peanut avalanche of '25. There was a developing issue with starting – code light coming on, several turns to get going etc. (Thinking back to Inveraray, I decided to tackle this without undue delay).

The fuel pump wasn't ticking over, so that was identified as the potential issue – off came the rear seats..... squab and backs.... to access the pump. What was also accessed were a few stray peanuts lying around the floor when the seat came out, but I didn't give that a great deal of thought at the time – we DID have some mouse signs in the garage and in the actual engine area, but an expansive selection of traps had put paid to that, and there had been no problems at all. However. On removing the seat back itself, and I jest not, something like a kilo of peanuts came gushing forth! This had obviously been where the nut store had been located. Photo evidence below (and note: this was BEFORE taking the seat back off!)



Actually, the starting problem didn't turn out to be a fuel pump at all – just before removing the pump, I thought “Hang on. Supposing the (expensive) pump is actually ok, but just isn't receiving power....what else might it be?” The answer, of course, was a (much cheaper) £5 relay, which is at the front of the car under a protective cover. Solved.

And that brings us to now. 2025 was a timing belt year – absolutely crucial for these cars – and it was known that the engine had to come out for this one, due to seized bolts holding the water pump in.....so it was also decided to do the clutch as well. Out came the engine.....and then in came the phone call ..“There's a wee bit of oil / water mixing evident – do you want me to have a look? The answer was of course “yes”. Soooo.....it's now had a new belt, water pump, clutch, radiator, two wishbones, full gasket set replaced, piston rings, head skimmed – the works! I have to say it's running very well indeed, as it should. The total work done took several months, but this was an education on why these cars aren't like MGB's and don't have a world wide parts service available covering everything from a rubber grommet to a full bodyshell. Parts sourcing took a while, with calls and emails being added to as the work progressed, and with more needing done as we went – I'm saying “needing done” - of course at NO point did the car ever break down! But with the engine out, and so on, it made sense to do everything that MIGHT need done in the future, so the end result is pretty much a new engine – or at least one that's been totally overhauled. It should probably outlast myself now.



HUGE thanks to the unflappable Drew Macdonald for patience in all this. If you want to suss him out for a job – his standard of workmanship is first class (I think he is or was a helicopter maintenance engineer) and has a highly professional approach to this kind of work. His business is called Highland Speed Shop and is on facebook. (In case you wonder, HSS is the large blue shed on the left just before Gorstan, coming from Achnasheen direction). All self built, and very well equipped!

Have we ever thought of replacing it? Yes, kind of, but only briefly. A well known step up for GTV owners is to look out for a Maserati 3200 / 4200, and we did actually take a test in one a few years ago. But the writer likes his cars to be quite small, and to our surprise, the Maserati was very much a proper four seater....impressive machine, though. We took the drive ok, and then went away to think, parking the Alfa and going for a walk....it was coming back towards it that I remember looking over and thinking "Do you know what? I really, REALLY like the way that looks"....coupled with the unexpected size of the Maserati, the decision was made to keep the Alfa and no debate. Never regretted it! Although a nice Maserati in the driveway would not go amiss.....along with an early Range Rover, an XJ 12 Coupe, Mini Cooper, Lamborghini etc etc.

Bring your vehicle to the Gairloch Gathering

*Established Classic? Future Classic? All
welcome! Cars / Commercial / Bikes*

Saturday July **4th**
Gairloch Sands Campsite
Meet at Gairloch Pier, **12 noon**

Contact: Douglas Gibson

01445 712085
douglasg@burach.org.uk



Cars and Coffee

Saved from the brink, by the Drumossie Hotel, HCMC's Cars and Coffee event enters a new era at it's new home. The comments made after the event were very favourable with some even suggesting this is the best venue ever. I would say they have all been equally excellent, in the way you might rate your children. The catering is quite nice, quite posh actually, but still reasonably priced. I have included this picture of a 'proper' Panda as mine has disappointed some by being too new. And also a Maxi because when was the last time you saw one? It stands the test of time in my opinion. And the Suzuki Jimney is included because that's



exactly where I would want to park my Panda 4x4. I like the increase in American cars appearing as these are all iconic vehicles from my childhood television days, plus they sound sooo good. Please bring more.



I'm sure you are all delighted to see this event continue, but remember to grass up anyone that leaves inappropriately, or it may get cancelled again.

HCMC Events

2nd Jul 2026 HCMC "Bring Your Own Pudding" Run Culloden Battlefield Car Park This year's "Pudding Run" will start at the Culloden Visitor Centre at 7.30 for a short run through back roads ending up at the Nairn links. You'll have had your Dinner! So bring your own Pudding (and maybe a Flask!)

4th July 2026 The Gairloch Gathering. Meet at Gairloch Pier at 12:00

11-12th July 2026 Scottish Transport Extravaganza at Glamis Castle. All claases of vehicles up to 1985. Entry forms at www.svvc.co.uk.

12th July 2026 Cars and Coffee Inverness at The Drumossie Hotel, IV2 5BE. 10 - 12 am. 20th century classics and sports vehicles with coffee and craic. No wheel spinning!

12th July 2026 The Moray Miglia run by the Moray Motor Museum, a run for classy sports cars. It's probably all sold out by now, but the contact number is 07766511557

9th August 2026 Historic Wheels Annual Club Rally at Brodie Castle Morayshire.

15th August 2026 Classic Car Show and BBQ at Balintore Harbour. 1pm to 4pm. The last one was really good. Organised by our Hugh Skinner.

