

CLASSIC SCENE



September 2023



Club Officials

Chair: **Trish Brown**
Tel: 01862 832337
chairman@highlandclassic.org.uk
Secretary: **Bryan McIlwraith**
Tel: 01463 232144
secretary@highlandclassic.org.uk
Treasurer: **Ian Thompson**
Tel: 01463 790969
treasurer@highlandclassic.org.uk

Membership

Bryan McIlwraith
Renewals should be sent to Bryan at
67 Lochalsh Road, Inverness IV3 8HW
Tel: 07821 260774
01463 232144
bryanmcilwraith@gmail.com

Webmaster

www.highlandclassic.org.uk
Webmaster@highlandclassic.org.uk

Editor

Calum Pearson
Bowersburn, Croftnacreich,
North Kessock. IV1 3ZE
Email: editor@highlandclassic.org.uk
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Thursday preceding the monthly meet-
ing. Please send articles by post or
email to addresses above.

Archivist

The club has an extensive archive of
information relating to all aspects of
classic car ownership. To access this
please contact Ranald Smith at
Hawthorn Cottage, 2 Burn Road, In-
verness IV2 4NG. 01463 236459
ranaldsmith@btinternet.com

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Cover Picture

This Austin van was the result of a
long restoration and was having it's
chassis paint well tested at a wet
Fortrose and Rosemarkie rally.

Welcome to the September Newsletter

Welcome to the next one! In the last one I struggled to find anything to write about or any sort of theme, but this time I have something based on negative feelings towards this...



Every time I drive behind one I think, how could you? I mean a classic British sportscar brand with the name sold off to the SAIC Motor Corp to give the market these bland boxes. I mean it's taller than it is wide! It's just wrong.

At least no one I know owns one. Or so I thought. A friend claims his MG4EV is the best car he's ever owned. Another ditched his Ford Mondeo (great) for an MG3 (rubbish) and loves the light steering. They are becoming ubiquitous which isn't helping my inappropriate

marque branding rage. I can hardly drive anywhere without raised blood pressure.

I could lay the blame at corporations. British motoring corporations were almost as bad as the current Chinese owners, as the marque passed and became part of larger and larger companies. Morris Motors, BMC, BLMC, BL, Rover. MG Rover but at least the cars were wider than tall (maybe not the MG Y), and there have been good traditional everyman sports cars through the decades. My Mum owned an MG Maestro 1600 as she always promised herself an MG. It was just a badge on a saloon car, but it was pretty decent.

But she fell for the badge, and I wonder if modern day punters are doing the same? If so travesty!

Then someone sent me this picture. It's an MG Cyberster - terrible name - but I think it looks quite good and with 536 electric horses should go well. In a straight line. It weighs



nearly 2 tonnes and costs around £50k so not quite every(wo)man unless everyone's income has gone streaking past mine and I didn't notice. If only they could get the roof to go down.

In other news, if you read this month's Practical classics you'll see a lot of love for that emerging classic, the Ford Focus Mk1. Values have risen by 6.4% Oh wait, that's just inflation.

Tell me your marque related angst. I'll print it and you'll feel better.

Your editor

Chairs Bitty

Here we were all set to go out on the mystery run, when we heard about the traffic chaos at the Longman. We did not fancy being stuck in those queues and thus ended up giving the car club run a miss. But I gather that those of you who managed to avoid the queues had a good evening's run. The route – and some others, have been published on our website for those who want a personal re-enactment.



On a further motoring note, you may have noticed that the A9 between Deephaven and Alness is getting a much needed facelift, with a full back to basics rebuild of the carriage ways. Not before time. The potholes on that stretch of road were legendary. Alice got pulled over one day because she was “weaving”. Not so, she said, she was simply avoiding the potholes – no further comment from the bobbies who let her continue on her way. Our back road and village junction too has some attention. The council came round earlier this month to fill in a few potholes on the main junction in our village. The junction was needing it as HGV traffic was fair chewing up the tarmac there. Not long after that the Council was back, this time to surface dress our back road. I promptly forgot all about this work, but was forcefully reminded when the next day I had to travel into Inverness and I turned down into the back road. Yikes, fresh chuckies for 2 miles. I ended up crawling down the road as the noise is awful and was promptly passed by several vans travelling fast enough to raise clouds behind them. A week or so later, much of the chuckies have already been scrubbed off on the junctions at either end of the back road, thanks to that very same HGV traffic.

A wee story about decking this month. We have got a tiny bit of decking from our backdoor into the garden, which essentially functions as a step, since the ground is about a foot lower than sill level. We noticed that one corner was starting to sag. Not a big deal we thought, just lift up the boards and we probably just have to either pack underneath the frame, or tighten up some screws. However, on removing 2 boards, some of the wood below looked a bit ropery. Off came more boards, and the extent of rot was clearly more widespread, with one cross beam so badly affected it just disintegrated. Looking at how the frame was put together we realised that we could not simply replace the affected beam, no, the whole lot would need to come out, be dismantled and then have the rotten bits replaced. To cut a long story short, it took us the best part of a full day just to lift the frame. Rusty screws that simply did not want to come out. Nails buried so deep into the wood you can't get the claw hammer on it. We ended up cutting the frame in strategic places, just to get it out. That is when we realised that this is what you get when the joiner builds the decking frame using leftover joists (multi sizes) from building the extension. Not treated or painted, it is amazing it lasted this long (8 years) but there isn't a single bit of wood that has not been affected in some way. The only salvageable bits left is the actual anti slip decking. Ironically that is the bit we specifically bought for this job. Guess what is on our shopping list – treated wood.

This month we will be meeting up at Brockies Lodge. It has been a few years since we were last there. The club night is a chance to drive (or be driven) round a small circuit in someone else's classic car. A veritable car flavoured smorgasbord.

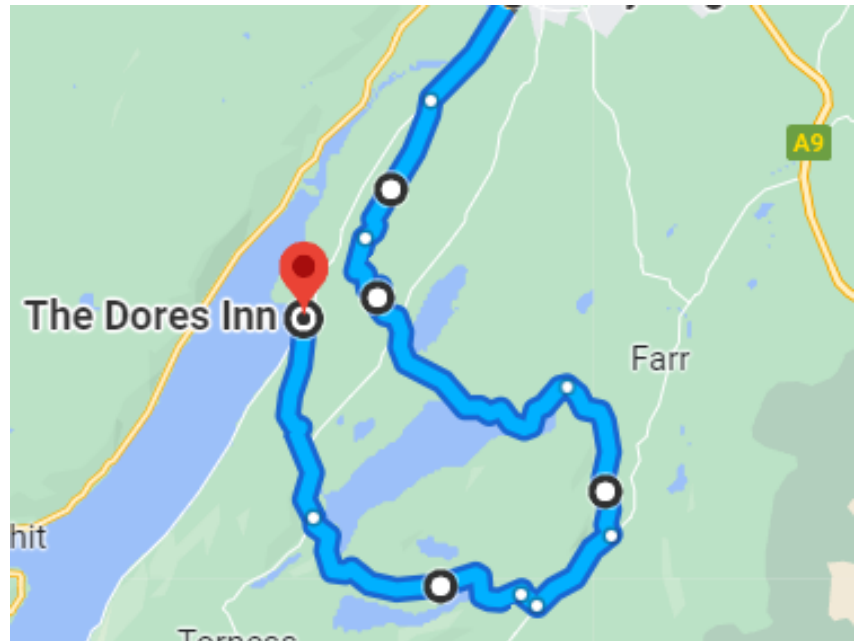
See you there.

Trish

August Club Night



After the scheduled drive to the Grouse and Trout was cancelled as that destination sadly ceased trading, a swiftly organized alternative was organized around the picturesque but damp roads south of Inverness.



Considering the weather a good number of hardy souls braved the elements. It was followed by a stop at the Dores Inn for well earned refreshments and a blether.



Fortrose and Rosemarkie Classic Vehicle Rally

Saturday 26th August



Wet but not a washout describes this years show. The organisers decided against cancelling and although the weather made managing the day difficult, the exhibitors generally had a nice time and about 90 vehicles braved the elements.



There was something for everyone, although the hoards spinning parasols and eating ice cream largely stayed away.



Well done everyone especially to Ronald for driving his bubble car through all that rain. Here's to a sunny 2024.



Cars and Coffee

Sunday 13th August

I woke up this morning and realised, yes I am free, I can go to Cars and Coffee. (Imagine as sung by a Delta Bluesman if you will.) I haven't been for ages for personal reasons and boy have I been missing out. Our Miles has been doing a great job curating this event, basically filling the car park with interesting cars and interesting people. I don't consider myself the most sociable person, but this Anglia brought back memories and stories of youthful daring driving and the owner was soon engaged in enthusiastic conversation about all things Anglia. And the owners



Dad owned this lovely Cortina. I was soon introduced to the owner of that rival blue Sierra. It turns out that it was quite a serious resto-

ration with a fair bit of welding. We compared notes on the unexpected places that these old fords rust and had a general bonding over all things Sierra. Well someone has to. It's that understanding of shared pain and disappointment I suppose. Like most car nuts.



If I'm not mistaken this is the fastest Mini Moke north of Tomatin. They are ridiculous things, but a lot of fun. My Mini daft uncle brought one of these back from Africa in the 70's.



And I'll just end my story with this nice Lotus Elan. I mean there were many other cars there but I was too busy talking nonsense about cars with people to get time to photograph them all. It's good for your soul. Until the next time.

Future Classics

Jim MacKay

Inevitably, some of today's runabouts will become classics in the future; it's just the way of things. So what moderns are we driving? I'll ask a few questions.

How many horses do you have? That many! Come on, how many do you need?

How big is your vehicle? That big! Come on, do you really need it to be that big?

How wide are your tyres? That wide! Come on, do you really need them to be that wide?

Of course, some of us will not be able to answer any of these questions! I suspect the rest of us will show a large gap between what we have and what we need.

What we have is what is available. The market is driven by the consumer and the consumer takes what he can get; something like that. So long as manufacturers produce fast desirable cars, people will buy them. And why not? They are a hoot to drive. No-one on this planet should live their life without driving a fast car. But, every day? Our life is too long and the points tally too low for that to be a reality. We end up driving our fast car slowly for most of the time.

I'll remind you that the maximum speed allowable on British roads is 70mph. That was set shortly after the first stretch of motorway was completed (M1) in 1959. There were very few cars which could hold that speed over a sustained distance at that time. Most of us were trundling along about 40 – 50 but times have changed and, 60 years later, there are very few cars which can't hold motorway speeds all day long.

I reckon anything 80 and over will get you into trouble these days so it would be reasonable to suppose that a car need only require to travel at that speed some of the time. I find the Polo 65 bhp is perfectly adequate and will get me up and down the A9 just about as fast as any of my previous 100+ bhp Triumphs and MGs. It doesn't have that oomph but winding it up and keeping it there requires forward thinking and alertness. No chance then of falling asleep on the three piece suite in cruise control! Remember, James Hunt drove an A35 van when he wasn't on the circuit.

Cheers, Jim MacKay.

I agree with Jim. Our current modern a Skoda Fabulous 1.2 TDI is really slow. During a recent trip to Aberdeen, mecca of expensive cars, we were left in the fumes at every set of traffic lights and roundabout but it's still a nice car to drive and we had open road in front. It does wind up to cruising speeds quite nicely. It's great going up and down the A9 though sometimes you have to drop to 3rd to avoid lorries catching you up on the hills. It's kind of fun, and there's a real sense of achievement if you do overtake something, just like driving the Beetle. On that Aberdeen trip we nearly managed 70mpg, and that was with a sticky rear calliper. And our journey times were good, a bit like a modern A35.

Editor

Blue Rally Ecosse - a French raid on the Highlands



This distinctive group of Renault Fours, 2CVs, and a Beetle and a Mini were spotted all over the place last month.

The Blue Rally Scotland was a 10 day, 1550 mile Car Raid from France, through the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.



getting the **BEST** from **SMALL CARS**

CORTINA

LATEST of the Ford range of cars, the Consul Cortina fills the gap between the smaller Anglia and the bigger Classic. With this car, Fords have returned to the more classical body shape and discarded the "cut back" rear window.

The gear lever is floor mounted, but as an optional extra a four-speed column change is available. Though the trend on many small cars is towards disc braking on the front, Fords have retained drum brakes all round.

On earlier models there was a tendency for the bodywork to leak, but this fault was corrected fairly soon in its career. Though most people find the lines of the car attractive it has, in some cases, been marred by poor paintwork. This is a point well worth checking when buying second-hand; and something to guard against on a new car.

The Cortina handles really well in all conditions. There is moderate roll when cornering fast, but the car never feels unsafe. If it is pushed to the limit the tail can be induced to slide, but this is easily corrected. All in all, it is a very good family car, and good value.

Maintenance: Greasing points have been kept down to the bare minimum. All are on the front suspension. Using the recommended grease (molybdenum disulphide lithium-based grease) greasing intervals are every 5,000 miles. *If any other type of grease is used then it has to be done every 1,000 miles.* Don't forget the universal joint, or the steering-to-idler-arm ball joints.

Improving performance: As yet, few specialist firms have got to grips with the Cortina, but development work is in hand. When buying new, however, more performance can easily be had by choosing the Cortina Super, which has the 1,500 c.c. engine.

Accessories: Again because of the relatively short time this car has been in production, there isn't as yet much in the way of "tailored" accessories. Fords themselves list whitewall tyres and a radio.

SPECIFICATION

Engine: 1,198 c.c., 4 cyl.; o.h.v.; bore 81 mm. x 58.2 mm. stroke; C.R. 8.7:1; 48 b.h.p. (net) at 4,800 r.p.m. **Gear-box:** 4 speed; floor or column change; all synchromesh; ratios 4.1, 5.2, 9.8 and 14.6:1. **Brakes:** Hydraulic, drum. **Suspension:** Independent coil front; half-elliptic rear. **Tyres:** 5.20 x 13 in. **Tank capacity:** 8 gal. **Dimensions:** 14 ft. 0½ in. length, 5 ft. 2½ in. width, 4 ft. 8½ in. height, 6½ in. ground clearance. **Boot:** 20 cu. ft. **Weight:** 1,736 lb.

Acceleration: 0-30 m.p.h., 6.2 secs.; 0-60 m.p.h., 22.6 secs.

Maximum speed: 78.9 m.p.h.

Touring consumption: 38 m.p.g.



I had to pick the Cortina after this weeks Cars and Coffee didn't I?

CARS IN MY LIFE

Nicol Rainy-Brown

[Last month I published what turns out was part four of the cars in Nicol's life, and this month I give you part 2. It's like one of those modern TV dramas with everything out of order, you're not sure what year it is and , "Who's that again?" However bear with me because the story line is simple. These are cars that have struck a chord in someone's life for whatever reason, and if you're reading this, you can understand that. Ed.]



After what felt like a life time, I was, last behind, the wheel of a car! My only previous 'experiences' had been the 'Willy's' Jeep and the pony trap (see photos)..... But now it was the real thing. It would be around 1962, when the family acquired the mini van, and a year later that I was permitted to take the vehicle out the farmyard into the nearest fallow field. Oh what joy; what excitement; the thrill was, and still is, indescribable. The little mini was such a

delight to drive; a brilliant car on which to begin one's life behind the wheel.



However, what with being away at school, and subsequent employment far from home, it was a whole year before I sat behind the wheel of a car; and in very different circumstances. Father had just died, and Mother, anxious to have a little space to herself encouraged little brother and I to take the farm hack, now a Morris Minor van, into the fields to hone our driving skills (or lack of them!). The minor was a very different beast to drive af-

ter the mini; yet it was years later that far away in Aldershot, one sunny morning, that I passed my driving test. Yes, you've guessed it; in a Morris Minor. Prior to that I did have some experience driving a Morris 'J' van, delivering souvenirs around the kiosks at Edinburgh Zoo.

So, what next? We have a licence; yet no vehicle! Next month's prattle sees the purchase of the first of many vehicles and the beginning of what was to become a life-time of professional driving.

[Next month it's the third prequel. It's like Star Wars, without the budget. Or the Stars, or Wars. Car Wars maybe? Or more likely Car Bores - narrow and long stroked for tax reasons. Now, where did I leave my tablets?]

Out and About



Ian McNeill spotted this 1973 Commer Camper Van at Fortrose Camp Site.



Richard Lashley spotted the Blue Rally Ecosse going through Beaulieu. I told you they were everywhere.



I spotted this orange oddity in Inverness Morrisons car park. I didn't know what it was but Googling USSR vans came up with a hit.

A real Cold War icon the UAZ-452 "Bukhanka" van - known in Russia as the "a loaf of bread," the 452 originates from 1958's 450 design and is still available.



I thought this Maroon estate in Lochinver was also a relic of the eastern bloc but on closer inspection I think it's a Volvo Amazon estate. Unless you know different?

Balintore

Sat 19 August 2023

Hugh Skinner's Informal Classic Car Meet and BBQ at Balintore Harbour had an impressive turn out. For those who didn't see it in last months newsletter that's because it wasn't advertised in time for print, but obviously enough of you found out by social media or word of mouth.

HCMC stalwart, Tom MacCallum was asked to judge "Best in Show" and his stand out winner was the Jaguar XK brought along from Moray Motor Museum. The other prize awarded was for furthest travelled and this was picked up by the Mk2 Cortina's owner who drove up from Glenlivet for the afternoon. The sun shone, the craic was good and the BBQ much appreciated.



HCMC Events

7th Sep 2023 Drive Each Others Cars Night Brookies Lodge, Kiltarlity A chance to drive or be driven in something a bit different.

10th Sep 2023 Cars And Coffee - Inverness Rollerbowl, Culduthel Rd. Inverness 2nd Sunday of every Month from 10am-12noon. A Quiet Social Gathering of (pre-2000) Classics plus interesting Sportscars, Supercars & Bikes. Park up, buy yourself a hot drink & snack from Rollerbowl & check out what's in the Car Park. Find us on FACEBOOK.

5th Oct 2023 Moray Motor Museum Visit Moray Motor Museum Meet at the Inverness Retail park for Bus transport to and from the museum. You MUST register to guarantee a seat on the bus (limited). See front page of site. <https://www.highlandclassic.org.uk/public/events/mmm23.php>

Local Rallies

2nd Sep 2023 Dingwall Rotary Vehicle Show 2023 Cromartie Park Vehicles should be in the Cromartie Car Park by 11.00am and remain there until the parade at 3.30pm. please reply to gordonmacrae72@gmail.com by email with your details

3rd Sep 2023 Moray Miglia Moray Motor Museum A sporty car run by the Historic Wheels Club. You need to register and pay. Details here:- https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=6665578846795054&id=269396063080063t.

17th Sep 2023 Caithness And Sutherland Vintage And Classic Vehicle Club - Dunrobin Rally Various - Helmsdale -> Dunrobin Leave Helmsdale at 10am, Brora 10:45, Embo 11:45, Dornoch 12:30, Littleferry 14:30. No entry form, no fees, no Judging