

CLASSIC SCENE



October 2012

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The club has an extensive archive of information relating to all aspects of classic car ownership including technical advice etc. To access this, please contact the archivist, Ranald Smith, at Hawthorn Cottage, 2 Burn Road, Inverness IV2 3NG
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The next 'Classic Scene'
GOES TO THE PRINTER
on the Monday of the week
preceding the next meeting
Please send articles by e-mail or typed.

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Cover picture

*John Cobb in the Napier-
Railton at Brooklands 9135*

The Chairs Bit

The shed is up and the gardening stuff has been transferred. It didn't generate quite as much room as we hoped for. Obviously still too much precious spares clutter and other "this will come in handy someday" rusty bits and offcuts of wood. Alice is determined put to Smart to bed for the winter and space will have to be created. Looking for Landrover wheels+tyres or an S3 gearbox, anyone? Free to a good home (or maybe for the auction night.... hmmm, yeah...).



create something drinkable from what at first looks like dishwater. And smells worse! But even that didn't stop most folk from doing a bit of shopping.

September's visit to the Glen Ord distillery was with a select, but eclectic crowd. Apparently the whisky was very tasty – I wouldn't know, I am tea total. So what am I doing at a distillery you may ask? Well you know, it is always interesting to poke my nose around old buildings and see how they

This month meeting will be an event of Titanic proportions, courtesy of Ranald Smith our own resident historian and archivist. Fortunately it is still to early in the year for icebergs. It promises to be a very interesting talk – don't miss it.

Trish

This Months Meeting

Thursday 4th October. Titanic evening at the Bogroy
(Old North Inn), Inchmore. 8pm.

HIGHLAND CLASSIC MOTOR CLUB
Monthly meetings (1st Thursday of every month)

2012

January 5th	Annual Auction—North Kessock Hotel
February 2nd	AGM and Quiz Night—North Kessock Hotel
March 1st	Club night at the Bogroy (Old North Inn), Inchmore
April 5th	Visit to Moray Motor Museum
May 3rd	Road run to the Altguish Inn
June 7th	Scenic drive to Whitebridge via Foyers
July 5th	Scenic drive to Tomich
August 2nd	Visit to Rimtech, Inverness
September 6th	Visit to the Glen Ord Distillery
October 4th	Titanic Evening
November 1st	Visit to VOSA—Inverness
December 6th	Christmas night—venue tba

2013

January 3rd 2013	Annual Auction—North Kessock Hotel
February 7th 2014	AGM and Quiz Night—North Kessock Hotel

(Further details to be published in 'Classic Scene' prior to the individual meetings)

Insurance Woes

An anonymous informant tells me that his son (lets' call him Neil for our purposes) was recently stopped by the police driving home after work in his classic Morris 1000 pickup. Given a producer, he then had to take all of his documents to the police station where they examined them and pointed out that he was uninsured due to the clause in his classic policy which didn't include 'commuting' along with 'Social, Domestic and Pleasure' purposes. Duly chastised, he has now amended his policy at a non inconsiderable expense.

How many of us have woken up to a fine sunny morning and jumped in our classic for the drive to work? Have you been insured whilst doing this? Please check your fine print on your policy!



Editorial

Hello and welcome to the October issue of Classic Scene.

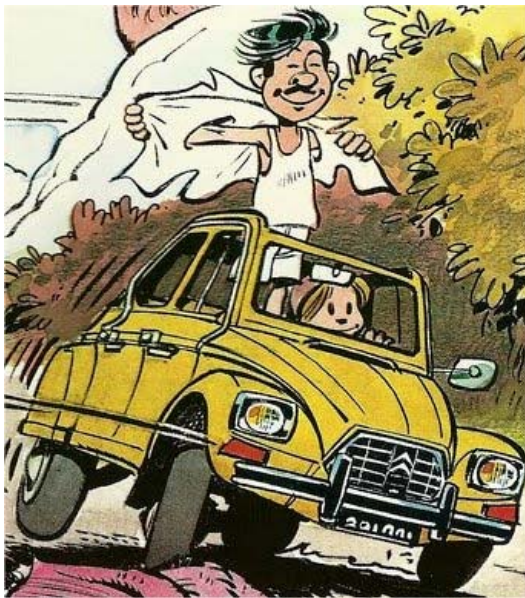
Last months meeting was a drunken debauched affair at the Glen Ord Distillery. About a dozen club members managed to sample the 'smoky' delights on offer. What do you present a distillery for showing us around? The traditional bottle of single malt seemed inappropriate, so an apple pie came to the rescue...

After just 12 months of use, the main fuel pipe from my tank to the fore-and-aft nylon pipe has rotted again, allowing the smell of petrol to once again perfume the garage. This is the 3rd time I've had to change this in 6 years—almost certainly due to the increase in bio-ethanol in modern unleaded fuel. I've now bought some SAE J30R9 spec pipe which should hopefully prevent any similar future problems.

I've also redesigned my exhaust, and am running a franken-carb - drilled and tapped to accept motorcycle jets. Oddly enough, the car has never gone so well...

My Dyane restoration has been kick started again with four doors now welded up and in filler primer. All I need now is an Indian Summer to allow me to get the painting completed, The end is in sight (although it may still be a long way off).

This months meeting is a Titanic event at the Bogroy (Old North Inn),



Inchmore. Ranald is putting something specials together for us for 8pm.

Next months meeting is likely to be a talk from VOSA, again, at the Bogroy. I'll know more details next month.

If you've not yet taken the plunge, you can subscribe by clicking the link on the front of the club website:

www.highlandclassic.org.uk

Callum

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John Rhodes Cobb (2nd Dec 1899–29 Sep 1952)

Twenty five years ago on 29th September, 1952 John Cobb lost his life attempting to break the World Water Speed Record on Loch Ness and as I had been closely associated with the project it was suggested that a short account of the activities might be of interest to the people who have come to live in the Glen since that time.

C C Wakefield & Co Ltd of Castrol Oils, as sponsors, approached me with a proposal for the use of Temple Pier as headquarters for the coming event. As this seemed such a wonderful venture to bring to our locality, I was most anxious to bring about, so, as a preliminary step, arrangements were made for Mr Cobb, Mr Railton and Capt George Eyston to call early in May to inspect the place.

In due course, they arrived: Mr John Cobb tall, of massive build, quiet spoken and unassuming more like a country Doctor than a speed ace who held the World Land Speed Record of 394.2 mph; Mr Reid Railton, slight in comparison, designer of the famous 'Railton Mobile Special' with which John Cobb broke the world record; Capt George Eyston, tall and energetic, a friend and one-time rival of John Cobb and holder of the Speed Record at 357 mph with his car "Thunderbolt" and chosen to become manager of the CRUSADER team of experts.

Satisfied that the site was suitable they arranged for certain repairs to be made to the old pier and large doors 18 feet wide by 12 feet high fitted to the shed where CRUSADER would be housed. For lightness in handling, the doors were covered with polished aluminium sheets over wood frames. Work was to be completed by mid-August. Electricity and telephone were laid on in the shed and meantime the measured mile was being surveyed and marker posts erected on both sides of the loch.

The great day arrived when CRUSADER, after her long haul from Southampton turned in at Temple Pier. John Cobb with his team were there to

greet her. Mounted on her trailer she looked huge under her dust cover on which her makers' name "Vospers Ltd" was printed in bold letters. Photographed from all angles by the 'Press', she was then stowed away for the night.

A Coles 'ten-ton' diesel-electric crane (itself weighing 24 tons) arrived from Sunderland for lifting CRUSADER on and off the loch. A farm tractor for towing her on her trailer to and from the pier, a headquarters caravan, a radio van, a small fishing vessel the 'Astrid' from Fortrose to act as a mother ship, and various launches and speed motor boats completed the set up.

Radio engineers arrived to fit each craft including CRUSADER with H F radio inter-com and linked with the shore based radio-van. Many barrels of fuel, drums of lubricating oil, batteries for starting the jet engine, for the radio sets and for the signalling lamps, together with spares for all kinds filled another shed.

CRUSADER herself measured 31 feet over the sponsons and weighed 3 tons. Three years of research and model testing produced the unusual shape of her hull, designed to eliminate as far as possible the adverse effects of the very large forces exerted on it by the surrounding air while travelling at high speed. When planing at speed she rose up till supported on three points: the step and the end of the two sponsons. The planing surfaces were of sheet aluminium.

To obtain maximum strength with minimum weight she was constructed with a mixture of birch ply and high strength aluminium alloy. Mr Reid Railton was responsible for the unusual layout, while the design and construction were directed by Commander Peter du Cain of Vospers Ltd. The de Havilland Engine Company supplied a Ghost 48 MK1 engine (a similar engine in a de Havilland Vampire held the world's height record, at that time of 59,000

feet). CRUSADER was the first water borne craft in the world to be specifically designed and built for jet propulsion.

A week or so of feverish activity followed, while behind closed doors CRUSADER'S team fitted the sponsons, checked and rechecked everything. Spectators lined the roadside from dawn to dusk every day, hopefully waiting for a glimpse of CRUSADER and, at last she was ready to make her debut. One writer described it thus: such a scene would be marked by the hushed whispers of the expectant watchers on one hand and the roar of the diesel-electric crane on the other hand. It almost seemed akin to the 'first night' performance of some great masterpiece. The shining doors would open like the parting of a curtain, then slowly but surely CRUSADER would be drawn out from the dark confines into the front of the (stage), presenting a magnificent spectacle of silver and crimson. The (scene) was set, the (rehearsals) commenced whilst the many other "actors" each played (their parts.)"

During the five weeks, visitors from many lands came to Temple Pier, visitors from the humble crofts of the Highlands and visitors of royal blood including Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

All day and every day, except the Sabbath, work proceeded on CRUSADER. John Cobb respected the religious feelings of the local people, but there were many other sides to his character which endeared him to the people of the Glen.

Out in the centre of the loch, trials went on, revealing various small defects. A larger rudder had to be fitted and slight alterations made to the hull to overcome a tendency to 'stick' on flat calm water instead of rising up on the planing surfaces at the critical speed. On September 15th CRUSADER made her first attempt reaching 185.567 mph and 160.714 mph on the return run, a mean of 173.10 mph.

Then came the dawn of Monday 24th. Conditions

were perfect. The team made ready, attendant craft took up position and at 7.30 am all was set. The mirror calm held for a few minutes longer, then ripples broke it up. Patiently everybody waited. By 9.30am conditions were no better, so John Cobb called "hands to breakfast".

In less than an hour the breeze had gone, and the team came hurrying back to take up their positions on the loch. At about 11.30 I went along to see what was happening and John Cobb stepped out of the caravan saying "Where have they taken CRUSADER, Mr Menzies?" She was nowhere in sight until we reached the very end of the pier and there, close in shore, round the headland which had been obscuring the view, we saw her with the "Astrid" standing by. At that moment a messenger from the radio van came to say all was clear and ready. John Cobb walked back to the caravan to say he was going and Mrs Cobb and their friends prepared to drive round to the loch side at Lenie.

A fast launch took him out to the CRUSADER and I, with several others watched from the end of the pier. The engine started and in a few moments CRUSADER was on her way. Skimming the water like a bird she moved beautifully, John Cobb giving her full throttle as she passed close by Urquhart Castle. In what seemed but a few seconds we heard the engine cut out. Believing CRUSADER had completed her outward run, we waited: Suddenly one of the radio team came running over, shouting "there has been an accident, get a doctor, get an ambulance." Momentarily, I thought he meant a road accident. I knew there was a doctor in attendance on the loch, but it took half an hour to get a clear line to the ambulance service.

Capt George Eyston was first back to the pier and with tears in his eyes said, "For the one and only time we did not have our usual full conference before going out and this is what happens." Could this be the reason for the whole chain of unfortunate

circumstances which led up to the tragedy? Why did CRUSADER not start, as usual, from the centre of the loch? It was evident John Cobb was unaware of this change. Did the crew of the attendant craft which moved out from and returned to her position in-shore assume that CRUSADER would be out of her usual centre course? Had she done so, she would not have hit the waves which wrecked her.

John Cobb was catapulted out and killed instantly. A speed-boat pulled his body on board and artificial respiration was applied, but it was too late. Transferred to the yacht "Maureen", his body was brought to Temple Pier where the ambulance waited. It is beyond me to describe the emotional aftermath as the rest of the craft returned to base, some bringing all that remained of CRUSADER in the form of wreckage. That team of loyal men who had worked so hard and so hopefully together, were heartbroken. Their hero was dead. They were unable to hold back their tears. The stark tragedy of it all send a shock of deep sorrow and distress everywhere, particularly in the Glen.

On Wednesday, all the personnel involved at Temple Pier and close friends of Mr and Mrs Cobb assembled in the tiny chapel of the Royal Northern Infirmary where the impressive funeral service was held. Crowds stood in silence, many of them moved to tears, as the cortege with his remains passed through the streets. Flags in the town were at half-mast. In a final salute, the Provost, magistrates and council stood bare-headed on both sides of the High Street outside the Town Hall. Continuing along Eastgate, a brief halt was made at the outskirts, where we stood in silent farewell to that gallant man, one of nature's very own gentlemen. Then the hearse moved off on its long journey to Surrey. He is buried in the town of Esher, the place of his birth.

On a small plot of land close to the roadside above the site of the tragedy, the people of Glenurquhart and many friends outside the Glen

contributed towards the erection of a memorial to John Cobb. It takes the form of a traditional Highland Cairn. A bronze plaque designed by the late George Bain, an authority on Celtic Art, bears this inscription:-

On the waters of Loch Ness

John Cobb

having travelled at 206 miles per hour
in an attempt to gain the

World Water speed Record lost his life
on this day 29th September 1952

Urrom do'n Freun

Agas do'n Iriosal

which translated means : *Honour to the brave and to the humble*. The border design in Celtic knotwork symbolises eternity.

Alex Menzies 1977

