

CLASSIC SCENE



November 2024



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Cover Picture

Autumn colours at Cars and Coffee

Welcome to the November Newsletter

There are no motoring tales from your editors garage this month. The Ford Mundane-o is going well and all the efforts to repair the Skoda Fabulous led to a clean sheet at MOT time. I have to say I was pretty chuffed with that. Now both cars are driving perfectly (and probably right up until I click the publish button) and there is a joy to driving round in cars you have fixed yourself, and quite tricky fixes too. It doesn't quite match the joy of a classic project hitting the road again, or enjoying the performance of an engine you assembled yourself, but there is certainly a sense of satisfaction. It's strange I don't find the same satisfaction from DIY. Where's the joy in fitting a new kitchen? All you get at the end is a.....kitchen.

At the end of this newsletter you'll see a note on honorary memberships including the Practical Classics team who promoted our patch in the north so well recently. In this month's PC we have a Chrysler Avenger from Inverness and a fine selection from Thurso after their recent trip to the top right hand corner of the Highlands.

I'm also overly pleased to point out a new entry in the top 100 classic cars as voted by Practical Classic Readers. A new entry at number 98, yes, the humble Ford Focus Mk1! It's officially a classic now. So are MR2's Toyota Supras Austin Maestros, 1980's BMW's. No mention of the Austin Ambassador, Princess or the Allegro though, they must be bubbling under in the words of old Radio 1 DJs - the ones that haven't been cancelled. If you want to find out what's No. 1, buy a copy.

Continuing with the PC theme, I recently had a financial review which is a free service provided by my bank. It was very good but I did get asked, 'Do you really need 11 cars and a Practical Classics subscription?' 'Yes, but I could maybe go down to ten cars.' My analyst didn't really understand what an investment those Focus's (Focii? That sounds like an Invernessian affirmative!) are.

I wonder now that two PC staffers are honorary HCMC members, if they will get the newsletter email and then read this drivel. Oh my, the pressures on! Will there be a new Spotters Corner next month?

Now the editors editorial is a chance for me to moan about producing this newsletter and the time it takes, but this month I'm feeling unusually positive, thanks to the number of you that have sent in contributions. A week ago I was looking at a six page edition but now we're at full size and I'm allowed to say as I didn't write most of it, I think its a good read.

I have aimed at a vaguely autumnal theme this month on account of it being Autumn. It's time to look back on all the events, maybe get some work done on those projects, prepare for winter driving and maybe plan what next in our classic lives. Buying something new maybe.

Hopefully I'll get to see you at one of our winter event's soon.

Your Editor.

(Calum, no not that one, the other one.)

Ramblings from the Chair



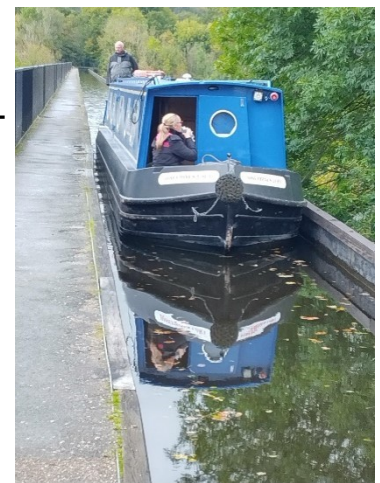
Not a huge amount to report this month on the classic car scene – the Senator is now out of road tax (for the last time unless the government abandon the 40 year old exemption!! – I'll be first in the Post Office queue on April 1st to licence it for free) and awaits in the garage to be jacked up for the fuel tank to be inspected. I have discovered that with a large block of wood spacer, my hydraulic jack can lift a rear wheel sufficiently to get a ramp underneath – I can do one side and then the other. Mrs Chair and I have been too busy enjoying ourselves getting the last rays of the summer sun – and managed locations in Scotland, England and Wales. At the latter, I enclose some photos of the Pontcysyllte aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal, near



Chirk, which I hope readers will find interesting. [I do - Ed] It comprises a cast iron channel (a baseplate with bolted on sides) on lightweight cast iron arches (4no. per span) between tall stonework piers (17no.) and has a total length of 336 yards. It has a maximum height (with no railings on the water side!) above the River Dee of 126 feet (which is about 10 feet higher than the Kes-sock Bridge road level) and is, amazingly, 220 years old (and still in navigable condition). In the interests of the 'classic motor' scene, there is a photo of a barge traversing and you

should note the very limited clearance on each side. Interestingly, because of the limited dimensions of the channel compared with the canal, the speed of the water across the aqueduct is significant and the barge was struggling against the current, despite being on full throttle. Even more incredible is that in the early years, horses would pull boats across – very scary.

I have to admit that I was gutted to miss the visit to the fire station last month – I believe it was very much enjoyed by those who attended. This month we're off to the body shop at Corrie Motors. I wonder if they might be able to touch up the scratches on the Senator? See you all there on the 7th.



Regards, Richard

Inverness Fire Station Visit

Mark Wilson

The Club trip in October was to the Inverness Fire Station, where we were the guests of White Watch, who gave us a guided tour of the various appliances stationed at Inverness and the equipment carried on them. Inverness is unique in the Highlands and Islands, it is the only full time Fire Station, but has a retained station in the same building. All other stations in Highlands and Islands are either retained or volunteer.



Inverness whole time, have 2 Rescue Pumps (RP), an Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) in the main station and a Heavy Rescue Unit (HRU), Water Rescue Unit (WRU) and other "Specials" in other bays, which are crewed up as required. Inverness retained have an RP in bay 4. (The one on the far left.) Inverness is also unique in that both full time appliances are classed as RPs. All of the other 2 pump stations have one RP and one appliance with a 9, 10.5 or 13.5m ladder but no rescue kit.



Our tour started in the drill yard where we were talked through the process for removing you from your car after you've pranged it and the dangers that the numerous safety devices we take for granted can become a hazard for the Firefighters trying to help us. Airbags being the most common. There are now so many in a car that cutting the roof off, or removing the steering wheel, can be a bit hazardous if the bags haven't deployed and the cutting equipment then chops one, that's not been spotted, in half. Currently there isn't a "one stop shop" information centre where details of the locations of airbags are available for all manufacturers and models. It certainly pays to be vigilant if you are helping at a crash. We also had a discussion on the problems that Electric Vehicles can present, both in a crash and if they spontaneously combust in your garage.

We then split into two groups and were shown the different appliances. The HRU carries a crew of 2, who are trained in using Weber StabFast stabilisation kit (they

don't just make carburettors) and the more powerful cutting equipment it carries. The photos show some of the kit and the cutting gear, which is driven off a small hydraulic pump. The HRU would be used in a crash involving 3 or more vehicles, or one involving an LGV and carries a platform to get the Firefighters up to wind-screen height to make it easier to get access to the cab.



The Rescue Pumps also carry cutting and stabilisation equipment, but here the cutting equipment is battery operated rather than using a separate pump. Although still weighty, they are lighter than the other hydraulic kit and have the advantage of no hoses to get caught up and reduces the risk if a burst giving someone a hydraulic injury. They are slightly less powerful than the hydraulic kit, but are easier to use and much quieter, which is good for any casualty as the noise of their car getting cut up is much reduced.



We were also taken through a typical shift, which includes checking all the equipment is where it should be and is functioning, with an appliance being stripped completely and re-packed to ensure everything is ready when needed. The ALP undergoes checks as well to ensure it is operating correctly. Once checks are done, there is usually some practice drill to ensure the Firefighter's skills are kept up to speed.

You might have guessed I'm a bit of a geek, but the visit was very interesting and it was great to see the advances in the equipment that is carried and that I hope none of us have to see in use close up.

Miles proposed a vote of thanks at the end of our visit and presented boxes of chocs, which I'm sure they can work off in the station gym.

Thanks to White Watch for their hospitality and time.

TUBE

Jim MacKay

It's many a long day since I've mended a puncture, not taking it to the tyre place but actually manually on the floor with tyre levers and swear words. I'm sure these cross-ply's harden with age or is it I weaken with age? It's a dying art formed out of necessity, we did tractor tyres this way for goodness sake. These new fangled tubeless tyres were tighter on the rim and often needed 'run over' to break the seal if the big tackety boot or lump



hammer wasn't sufficient. We didn't have a record on furthest travelled tyre lever or most damage caused by a flying tyre lever but there will be somewhere!

Samantha's rear tyre was flat and the valve was at an angle so I knew 'what' but not 'why'. There was no nail in the tyre but the tube was leaking near the valve. Yes, yes, back in the day we used tubes in our tyres, you know, one in each tyre and one driving! I've attach an image to jog your memory or for your edification. The leak was patched and I discovered the 'why' when I inflated the tube. The valve had a slight leak which was sorted by pulling out the centre. These things happen and I usually confirm with the 'spittle test' each time I check the pressure. I must have missed this one, so remiss and I have been punished. The 'what' happens when low pressure allows the wheel to rotate in the tyre and tear the valve, such is the power of the Austin Ten engine!

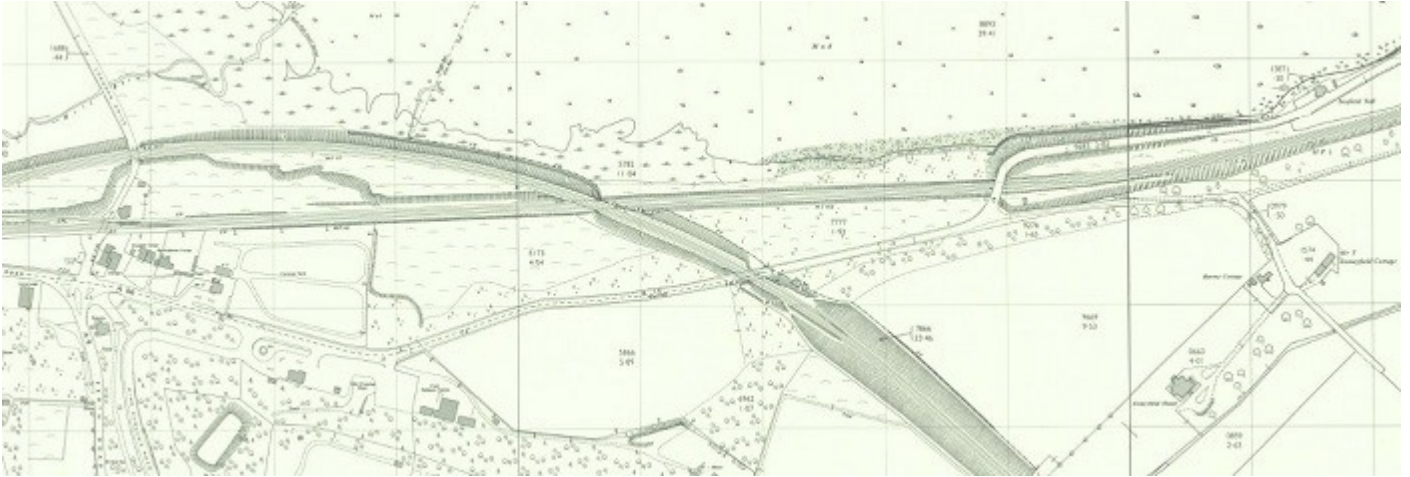
Honorary Memberships

At a recent interim committee member discussion, it was agreed to give honorary membership to James Walshe and Craig Cheetham of Practical Classics to recognise the publicity given to our club through the magazine. Both have accepted.

It was also agreed that the following 4 members will be given an honorary membership to recognise their contribution to the club from its very early day.

Jim Mackay
Bryan McIlwraith
Tom McCallum
Ranald Smith

Old A96 Inverness approach Calum Pearson



I have a small obsession currently, and I hope you readers can help me with it. As many of you will know I didn't grow up around these parts but was born a Moray man, 40 miles east of here. On rare occasions we would leave our promised land and head over to Inverness and beyond. Our passion for old cars is largely nostalgia based and I was thinking the roads we travelled are part of that nostalgia. The routes remembered from the back seat of Mum or Dad's car.

On the Inverness A96 approach I can remember a toll house, a road skirting the edge of the sea, a dog leg over a bridge, under a bridge and a level crossing we were pleased not to get stopped at. The mists of time have clouded this memory somewhat and I think I'm mixing up the level crossing at harbour road with a much earlier one just west of Nairn at Gollanfield. I asked my Mum about this and she doesn't remember coming through to Inverness that often as before the Eastgate Centre, the shops were better in Aberdeen, but I have no recollection of trips to Aberdeen, just Inverness. Funny that. But then there were holiday trips up north and my Dad preferred heading south on the A82.

Anyway, I did some cheap and probably copyright breaching research but I'm defending it under fair dealing policy, and it's only wee bits. In the title picture you



can see the old toll house and you can go there yourself and see it in real life if you take a wander down to Milton of Culloden, off the A96 near Tesco's. You can walk to the dog leg bridge over the railway too. My Dad, who worked in Inverness in the late 50's, once came across a car crash here. A vehicle was down the bank towards the railway, there was a lady in distress, petrol everywhere and a man lighting up a cigarette. He portrayed himself as a hero, saving everyone from flames by stopping the man lighting up, and I wouldn't be surprised if he rescued the lady in distress, whether she wanted it or not. Fortunately this story can not be fact checked.

Next, the old road went under the south bound railway and joined up with Millburn Road and heading straight into the old Eastgate road, down the High Street across Ness Bridge and beyond.



In an aerial photograph from the period, you can see the old A96 skirting the top of some forestry and joining the end of Millburn road, which I remember as a continuation with a 60 mph limit, which modern boy/girl racers would have loved. Again, it could be a false memory.

In this Google Earth image you can just see the vestiges of the old route skirting north of the Raigmore Interchange and Millburn / Harbour Road Roundabout. Your mission if you remember this, is to search your personal archives and see if you can find any photographs to bolster my memories and share some nostalgia. Hopefully we can then do other routes like the old A9 north from the ferry.



Fleeting moments

Trish Brown

Alice took the Merc along to the local tyre man to have a look at the front driver side, which has been losing a bit of pressure recently. You may remember from September that we had a similar issue looked at on the Smart. Well, we said to each other, time for the Merc this week. A different problem this time, with a nail that had obviously been in the tyre for a very long time. Long enough that the head had worn off. Fortunately, it was in a part of the tyre that they were able to fix.

A week later we decided to have the balance looked at again and guess what, all 4 tyres were out, including the one that was fixed/balanced the week before. We've noticed that the Merc has a habit of chucking the weights. Either that or the glue they use on those pads is rubbish.

Came home the other night and found a 4x2 piece of wood on the junction in the village. I went back for it and put it in the garage. Will be useful for something, sometime. Same as with the chuckies when they resurfaced the back road. I swept up a few bucket full and used them to fill the various potholes in our street.

I bought some bulbs a few weeks ago with the idea of planting them in the corner of the grass near the front of the house. I kind of fancied the idea of a meadowy type of look in that area as not much wants to grow near the hawthorn. Better get my skates on and plant them up as the seasons are marching on.

Out and About

This Dolomite Sprint was seen locally. I can't say where as I don't have permission but if you really want to know I might be able to whisper in your ear.



LIDL Plasma Cutter

Bryan McIlwraith

You know what it's like. You go into LIDL for a pint of milk and a loaf, and you come out with a pint of milk, a loaf, and a set of spanners! That centre aisle is a dangerous place. In fairness I've bought quite a few of LIDL's tools, and I've been satisfied, nay impressed even, with the quality, and of course the price.

So, there I was perusing the middle aisle, (why don't I just buy the groceries and avoid the middle aisle?) and lo and behold, a plasma cutter for 120 quid! Good grief! I remember using one many moons ago in Don McChristie's work shop in the Muir when these things cost thousands. Did I need one? Well... I don't have a current welding and fabrication project in the lockup, but... I was intrigued to know how well it would work and so it was duly purchased.

In truth I'm not short of tools to cut metal. In addition to the hack saw and 4 inch angle grinder I have air shears (LIDL), nibbler (LIDL) and 9 inch angle grinder (LIDL). Er, we're seeing a pattern here.

Of course you do also need a compressor, which I have, before you can use it (No, not LIDL, although I do have a small one in the garage at the house but I think that was ALDI). You also need to set up a work

bench to do the cutting on. Setting up the machine itself was simple enough. There are half a dozen leads that connect to it but they can only go on one way.

However, the air supply used euro fitting of course, and my compressor has UK fittings. A rake around my box of miscellaneous air fittings produced nothing so a quick look on Ebay (where else!) found a set of conversion fittings for another nine quid.

So, with it all set up it was time for the acid test. Of course on the first attempt the cutting current is all wrong so the cut edge is all blobby and snottery. With a bit of fiddling it calms down but it still makes an impressive display of sparks and smoke. The technique is to use a bit of angle iron as a guide and run the nozzle along the upstand of the angle. Even then the edge is a bit uneven although with practice that might improve.

Ultimately is it worth it? Probably not. It's difficult to control, and as I said I have plenty of other ways to cut sheet steel, and they don't require the faff of a work station to be set up. Even with heavier steel the tools I have are perfectly adequate, so it might end up being a bit of a white elephant, but I just couldn't resist buying it to satisfy my curiosity. Next time, avoid that middle aisle!



Cars And Coffee



How cool and rare is this? It's a rhetorical question as it's very cool and very rare and if you don't agree I'll deselect you from the newsletter subscription list. It's a Maserati Mexico 4200, and no I've never heard of it. It's an early 1970's GT car which after making it's debut at the Turin Motor Show, the prototype was sold to the Mexican president, hence it's name. It looks sublime, and those tail pipes tell you it's something special.



There were other stunning cars on show too. Here are some examples but the Italian GT takes the biscotti on this occasion. It just goes to show the quality and surprises that our Cars and Coffee event continues to attract.



CARS AND COFFEE “Mission Christmas.”

In November and December we will once again be collecting donations of New Unwrapped Toys & Gifts for MFR Cash for Kids North Scotland “MISSION CHRISTMAS.”

You can donate at CARS AND COFFEE - INVERNESS on Sunday 10th November and Sunday 8th December, plus at our November & December HCMC Monthly Meetings.

No Soft Toys or Sweets please and if your usual Classic or Sportscar is tucked away for the Winter then regulars are more than welcome to pop along in their daily whips. [Even my Mundane-O—Ed?]

So please, buy one extra Gift for a Highland Child who might otherwise wake up with nothing under their tree this year.

Each year we help MFR to help nearly 5000 Children!



HCMC Events

7th Nov 2024 Visit to Corrie Motors Workshop. 52 Harbour Rd, Inverness.
7.00pm for 7.30pm start. All Welcome!

10th Nov 2024 Cars And Coffee - Inverness Rollerbowl, Culduthel Rd. 10am-12noon. HCMC's outreach programme, spreading the car love. This Month supporting MFR Cash For Kids "Mission Christmas." Bring New Unwrapped Gifts. See Page 13 in this newsletter.

5th Dec 2024 The HCMC December Meeting is a 10 Pin Bowling evening - Bring a Secret Santa Present! Plenty of Bowling Lanes reserved, so the more the merrier. Approximately £8 per head. Meet in Rollerbowl for 7.30pm. Refreshments available at the Bar.

9th Jan 2025 The HCMC January Meeting is the Infamous Annual Auction. Time to clear out your garages, attics and sheds to make yourself some money. 7 for 7.30pm Start. Bring Cash and grab yourself a bargain, it's more fun if the Bidding is brisk! **Note the new date!!!**