

CLASSIC SCENE



MERRY CHRISTMAS

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CLASSIC SCENE

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Please send articles by e-mail or typed.

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COVER PICTURE

Merry Christmas everyone
and have a Safe Motoring
New Year.

CHAIR BITTY DEC. 2015

It was only days after I submitted my Chairs Bitty for November that our Merc decided to start leaking some vital and expensive fluid. Alice discovered this when she decided on washing the cars and as part of this moved the Merc a bit further back on the driveway. It was only when she re-parked the car that she noticed a new stain on the driveway, which smelled



suspiciously like petrol. A further visit to our garage was in order, who diagnosed that the petrol tank was weeping. Or as he put it "the fuel is now leaking through the rust". Fortunately our man at the garage managed to source a decent second hand tank for a reasonable price (£180 I think). And whilst he had the car in bits, he also re-did some of the fuel pipes, fabricated a new fuel pump mounting bracket and painted the tank and underside. But it did take around 3 weeks before we had our car back during which time we used our Landie to go shopping. Our wee Smart is just a little too small to carry the weekly shopping.

As a result of all this, we ended up taking our Smart to our meet at Calum's garage last month. Just as well that enough club members turned up with family cars for the car sharing, 'cause there is certainly no room in our Smart. Calum played a very generous host, gave a "lecture" about how a carburettor works and plied us with tea, various cakes and nibbles. His garage is such a nice place and so amazingly tidy, that one wag proposed that we should declare this our Club House (seconded by most members there judging by the cheer). Calum later confessed that he had specially cleared out his garage for our visit, claiming "you should have seen the mess last week".

This month is our Santa special at the North Inn, Inchmore. There will be tea and coffee, with some nibbles available and to get our into a festive mood, we will exchange some gifts (max £5). With a bit of luck the good saint himself will drop in during the evening to help redistribute these gifts. It will all kick off at 7.30pm. See you there.

A UNIQUE CLASSIC

(Or how I came to stop worrying and love the beast)

I searched for my ideal classic for forty years or more, on and off, through a misspent late youth (during which the object of my desire and most of my funds was a £75.00 1953 Riley RME in gleaming black with rich dark green leather interior smelling much as it should - i.e. of rotting timber and so many dead cows – and a remarkable propensity to split its flexible exhaust down pipe with alarming regularity. This I solved, with equal alacrity by the regular employment of a used soup tin split lengthways, two large Jubilee clips and a seemingly inexhaustible ('scuse the pun) supply of Gun Gum paste). Such was my mechanical expertise at the time. Practical, but not pretty. Side effects were a restricted diet but a delicious exhaust aroma. The car's alleged buffalo hide roof was a testament to the tenacious adhesive qualities of black Bostick. This was the 1960s, when things were different, as you will gather and as some of you will recall.

I knew the classic marque I wanted, and the model which, of course, developed with the passage of time and my aspirations which ascended in direct proportion to the disposable funds available. Car manufacturers have an unfortunate tendency to continuously update their offerings. This increases the choice but takes the decision-making process into wildly expanding areas of indecision. And my indecision can often be final.

Marriage, and a family and several house moves came and went, as did promotions and relocations. But the unscratchable itch persisted. Along the way I had a flirtation with 'proper' Rileys (1932 Plus Ultra Tourer, 1936 Falcon, etc) in various stages of decrepitude which was eventually exorcised when loss of garage space and domestic demands made old motors a luxury rather than an eccentric interest.

But still the brain worm burrowed away. I admired the object of my desires from afar, quietly and lasciviously; the itch turned into an obsession, a fantasy. Nothing wrong with that. As a song popular at the time quite firmly but incorrectly stated "You can't go to jail for what you're thinking". Try that nowadays.

Time dragged on, as it does, and in late middle age the subject was gently raised with the current significant other. I was deeply gratified and pleasantly surprised not to receive an immediate dismissal

preceded by a high-pitched 'Wha-a-a-a-a-a-t ?' and howls of shrieking laughter audible only to the local canine population. A game changer then.

Now a more focused searching started, though with an air of 'wouldn't it be nice?', echoing yet another popular song. You might discern the era from which I originate. And, it was only partly correct to say, as I did earlier, that I knew what I wanted. Rather, I knew what I didn't want. I wanted a Bentley, but I did not want a Turbo, nor a model with white or cream leather, nor did I want a fuel injection model requiring the first hint of breathing maladies to be addressed only by the coronary experts at Raigmore. And I was determined to avoid anything with Belgian lace wings or anti-magnetic paintwork or a service history carefully crafted by a close relative of Hans Christian Andersen. A Jackanory car I did not need. So it had to be an outstanding, carburetored, cared-for example meeting all my irrational criteria, difficult enough to find anywhere and almost impossible from the wilds of Sutherland.

But the search is often more exciting than the success. I saw some real dogs, but eventually fate brought me to a virtually pristine example for sale in the Scottish borders, which had spent all its life in Scotland and which was now offered by the present owner of eleven years duration who had obviously cherished the car and was anxious that it go to an equally enthusiastic new custodian. And the upside, to me, was that the car had been the 1985 Scottish Motor Show display model on the Bentley Motors stand at the then new SECC (it still bears the silver plaque attesting to this fact, in the glove box) and, furthermore, the car had been serviced for almost all of its life by the local marque specialist. That specialist obviously knew the car as well as anyone might. No decision to make then.

I collected the car on the return from a week or so in the Netherlands. Never has a holiday been such an anticlimax to the eagerly anticipated trip back north. I collected the car after an almost school-masterly discourse on the nature of the beast from the seller, which included a twenty minute lecture on how to clean the wheels and tyres complete with a special container for the concentrated detergent and an even more special nail brush with which to undertake the procedure. Talk about feelings of inadequacy.

The drive home was a delight. It immediately dispersed any misgivings that might have developed between Amsterdam and the Scottish

Lowlands. I gradually came to admire the quality, the engineering excellence, the surge of restrained power and the sheer grandeur of my new acquisition. I set about cleaning and polishing and improving where I could, though truth be told there was little that needed improvement. Just gentle detailing and several applications of saddle-soap and hide food to the acres of light blue leather.

I determined that I would keep it taxed and insured all year through with the intention of using it whenever the weather permitted, in addition to attending local classic car shows during the season. I was also determined to maintain the close relationship between car and the technician who had known it since he undertook it's PDI before the SECC Motor Show. Prior to the MoT renewal date in May I arranged to take the car back to him for its annual service and MoT test. I set off southwards with some trepidation as personal experience had taught me over the years that the annual inspection and test was almost a guarantee of unforeseen and certainly unexpected pitfalls. (I recall, years ago, having a Riley with cable brakes failed because of leaking hydraulic lines! The 'leaking brake line' was a centralized lubrication pipe running from beside the front dumb iron to the rear spring shackles. I pointed out the error and took the car away for testing elsewhere. It passed without demur; the sixpenny pieces in the steering ball joints remained undiscovered).

So, on my first long trip after acquiring the car I headed back south. Just north of Perth I was alarmed to see the dashboard lit up in a close approximation of the command deck of the star ship Enterprise. Amber lights, red lights, flashing and constant. Like taxes and death it did all rather tend to concentrate the mind. On arrival I was assured that if I still had brakes, then it was the hydraulic suspension system that was at fault. Sure enough, with the car raised on the workshop lift, a high pressure line to the rear suspension was seen to have failed. I was reassured that it was a relatively straightforward repair, and I left the car safe in the knowledge that it was, as it always had been, in good hands.

A couple of days later I rang its carer and was assured that the car was booked for MoT test later that morning, and that it would pass. I arranged to collect it that lunchtime. On arrival the technician, with a cheery countenance, announced that he had some good news and some bad news. The inevitable problem with this is the bad news. Apparently whilst at the MoT testing station all went well until the final process, testing of the foot brake efficiency. During the test a barely

perceptible 'hiss' was heard and the pedal went to the floor. Result: a failed high pressure hydraulic pipe in one of the two separate braking systems. But, the good news was that a full MoT test certificate was issued, irrespective of the absence of retardation, and without advisories or anything adverse.

The testing station knew both car and the technician presenting it so well that they accepted his assurance that he would undertake the repair to official standards; they did not require the car to be re-tested. So the good news really was good news, and I collected the car after a slight delay and returned joyful along the A9, at peace with the world if not with the travelers in ladies underwear hurtling past at beyond warp speed in their diesel Vectras.

The first show the car attended was the Inverness BID affair in May, where it boiled like a kettle in the queue accessing the pedestrianized High Street. We were conducted to the very front of the display, steaming defiantly, but having survived. Pole position on its first outing no less. Later that month we participated in the East Sutherland Rotary Classic Car run, from Dornoch to Ullapool and return, a charity fund-raising effort in aid of the RNLI and other local charitable causes. The car performed faultlessly all day, though I have to admit to carrying a large bottle of coolant just in case of a recurrence of the previous kettle-mimicking exploits. It was a most pleasurable way in which to spend glorious weather in equally glorious scenery among stunning machinery and enthusiastic owners.

June saw us at the John o'Groats Car Show, where on a constantly windy day in an allotted space far too small to accommodate the beast, she boiled again whilst negotiating the show field. But this time I had replenishing water. Later that same month an entry to the Tain Classic Car Rally produced a most unexpected second-in-class award. All very gratifying. Once again we ensured that the Tain links received their share of hot highland water.

July saw the car at the Sutherland County Show in Dornoch on yet another great day weather-wise. The now all too commonplace shedding of heated hydrogen dioxide around the parade ring repeated itself, but we remained blasé about this minor inconvenience as we had sufficient replenishing supplies, didn't we ?

Later that month, on the paper run for my Sunday Times (I am a long-standing registered addict having been taking my weekly dose since long before the current ever-so-humble gaseous antipodean proprietor had anything to do with it) the steering went stiff and I noticed on

exiting the car park a Hansel and Gretel-like trail leading in. By now super perceptive in the devious ways of fluid dynamics I deduced a steering pump malady. On arriving home and diving under the beast I perceived a shedding of ruby fluid in the area of the steering rack. Further investigation revealed a copious-ish leak from the high pressure pipe supplying fluid to the rack, or rather a hydraulic leak at the threaded junction of two elements of that pipe.

A 'phone call to the oracle in the soft south swiftly identified the precise part at fault and elicited the fact that he had one in stock and would post it that day by special delivery. Sure enough the pressure pipe arrived before lunch the following day and, through the good offices of a local youngster just starting up on his own, the new part was fitted within a couple of hours. Collateral results were (i) a perfectly restored power steering system, (ii) my local youthful friend gained an impressive addition to his burgeoning CV, and (iii) I now carried a sufficient supply of steering pump fluid along with (a) the radiator water and (b) the top up engine oil thoughtfully provided as original equipment by the master craftsmen at Pym's Lane.

August saw yet another practical demonstration of the car's Teasmade tendencies at the Dunrobin Classic Car Show and, wonder of wonders, a most gratifying third in class award. The final show of the season for us was the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Classic Car Rally. We arrived at the assembly venue at Dingwall Auction Mart to be advised by an interested observer that the car was losing fluid from the sharp end. Sure enough we had a boil on again, but it was becoming expected and anyway, we now carried a vast selection of automotive fluid supplies up the blunt end, didn't we?

Just to make sure, I assumed a lazy posture beneath the hot water falls. Yep. Radiator overflow. But I also spied a dripping of fluid from around the area of the back axle. Now this was new, and serious. More limbo-ing under the beast revealed that the guilty fluid was emerging from the offside rear hydraulic damper. A visual check of the hydraulic braking and suspension fluid reservoirs under the bonnet proved that although the level had fallen from the previous maximum, it was not at a critical level and the flow seemed to be diminishing. We decided to make an early start from Dingwall towards Fortrose after taking a precautionary tour around the mart car park to ascertain that we did have brakes and that the problem was indeed with the hydraulic suspension.

On arrival at the show field I again performed the ritual obeisance (I'm getting to know this car rather better from below than from above) and found that the leak had stopped. One of the two fluid reservoirs, however, was showing a depressingly low level. Now here again factory wisdom asserted itself; the car is fitted with two spare bottles of the special hydraulic fluid for just this eventuality. One complete bottle and part of the second were introduced into the hydraulic system in the approved manner graphically displayed in the owner's handbook. The leak at the rear had stopped and the reservoir levels up front remained at the recommended capacity after running the car back up to temperature and fully discharging the brake pressure, thus proving to my ignorant satisfaction that things were back to what passes for normal in my firmament.

And my delight at the car's newly revealed capacity to heal itself was compounded by a public address announcement that I had won a substantial cash prize in the raffle. Oh joy of joys. Oh deepjoy. My joy was unconfined.

So, after many alarums and excursions, the show season finished on a high. I had an unexpected significant contribution to the fluids fund, a car with a self-healing high pressure hydraulic system, an extensive and growing collection of automotive fluids of many colours stashed in the boot (or luggage compartment as the manufacturers have it) and a thorough knowledge of the vehicle, invariably from a low angle.

But the car is the star. It displays its uniqueness at every opportunity. It frequently surprises, both when it is behaving itself and when it is not. It has to be unique. But why?

How many Bentley **Incontinentals** have you encountered?

David Hird

THE EDITORS MONTHLY RANT

Not much to moan about this month apart from the usual plea for more articles, so while struggling to think of something I came up with the excellent idea of an annual revue of events. Club events and some of my own. At the AGM I asked for some more contributions for the Newsletter as it seems that its only the same 3 or 4 who help. That is still a problem, so get writing please. In the April newsletter I mentioned the possible cylinder head problems with the Lancia, but following the club visit to Auto Head I decided that it was time to at least get that done. I've said in the past that the Lancia was over engineered, so when I had the rocker box cover removed I had a long look at the head. It's a V4 but due to the narrow angle of the V it only has one cylinder head. DOHC with the cams working on the valve rockers, but what's this, a DOHC head but it also has pushrods! In order for the rockers to reach across the head to the valves on the opposite side of the head it has tiny little pushrods about 3mm by 30mm, running through the clamps holding the rocker shaft in place. But back to the years events. Events badly affected by the non-summer. Who can forget Drive It Day driving over the top of the Slochd in a snow storm! The Forbes Show. Freezing! Visit to Burghead. Still freezing. Ah! The Inverness Show. Lovely day, nice and warm. For those of us who went on to the North Coast 500 wellies and umbrellas were needed, it didn't stop raining for 3 days. I then went to the Vintage Day at the Highland Folk Museum. Well worth the trip and free burgers for all the entrants! Next up the Tain Car Show. The less said the better. For me the highlight of the day was after stopping for dinner at the Shandwick Inn I spotted the new(ish) Tornado steam train and then proceeded to race it all the way back to Muir of Ord catching glimpses of it here and there and always a plume of steam along the track. Great fun. The Dunrobin car show was next and the turnout was still a bit on the low side again. But I won a 1st prize in class. I only stayed till the end of the show to see if I didn't win the raffle and the car was boxed in. So when they announced the Lancia in 1st place I couldn't have been more surprised. All told I went to ten car shows and events this year and the club had something every month as well. Best visit? The visit to the Strathspey Railway engine sheds. With Auto Head Conversions next, even though the visit may cost me the price of an updated head.

VISIT TO CALUM'S GARAGE

On a cold and frosty night the club outing for November was to Calum's new garage. Calling it a garage was being economic with the truth. It is big enough to house no less than **three** cars and has sufficient room for at least one more! And it has a small workshop area at the back. I thought I was doing well just to even have one car in the garage with just a rickety work bench at one end. Following an impromptu committee meeting it has been decided that this will now be the location of the new HCMC Clubhouse, and a further decision confirmed that Calum must continue to supply tea, and digestive biscuits. Chocolate digestive biscuits.



NEXT CLUB EVENTS

3rd Dec 2015

Christmas Club Night

Old North Inn, Inchmore

Christmas Gathering & Secret Santa.

7th Jan 2016

January Auction Night

Old North Inn, Inchmore.

The "FAMOUS" Annual Club Auction Night, 7.30pm. Clear your garage of surplus car parts and related junk etc. and turn them into cash (with 10% to Club Funds).

4th Feb 2016

Club AGM 7.30pm

Old North Inn, Inchmore

Next Year's Diary to be filled with help from the Membership on the night! So Your Attendance and Input is Requested.

3rd Mar 2016

Visit to Seaforth Highlands Museum

Fort George. Subject to Confirmation.

9th Apr 2016

Club Run

Mystery run to somewhere on the Black Isle.

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