

CLASSIC SCENE



December 2024



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The club has an extensive archive of
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Cover Picture

Are you ready for Christmas yet?
Cars and Coffee Inverness and MFR's
Mission Christmas are making sure
Santa doesn't miss out on any chil-
dren this year.

Welcome to the December Newsletter

Were in Practical Classics again. On page 6 is the group picture from last years winter PC gathering. They are using it to promote their upcoming trip to Cornwall so we're obviously the benchmark for a successful trip. Cornwall is almost as far away from their office as the Highlands and it's hard to believe our meet-up was a year ago.

And sneaking in on page 44 is our Derek's stand out yellow Saab 96. That was one of my favourite cars from a previous club drive each others cars night. It's a cracker. I wonder if that interview was a left over from the PC Highland visit last year? As always, remember to go and buy your own copy to see the articles in full.



There are two kinds of winter drivers, those who take things cautiously and worry about it and those that actively go out looking for fun in the snow.

Our recently acquired Panda 4x4 was such a laugh and capable drive in the recent wintry weather. I haven't had

as much fun in a car in years. Probably since the corkscrew road at Inverfarigaig Corkscrew on a club night.

I got a little feedback form Chris Silver on my old A96 article. He has similar memories of the A96 approach, and suggests the old A9 routes near Moy for a future article. Does anyone fancy taking that on?

Controversially I have nothing against electric vehicles for transport, apart from the cost, crappy designs, too much technology and smugness of owners but mainly cost. It was interesting though, to hear from a work colleague who has a VW ID.Buzz (that dot is very irritating) I think they look great, like an old school VW bus. If only I had £48k. Through the wintry weather he had to charge it twice a day for an hour each time and being rear wheel drive it handles like a 1970's Capri in the snow. So not all bad then! He's swapping it for his bosses diesel van.

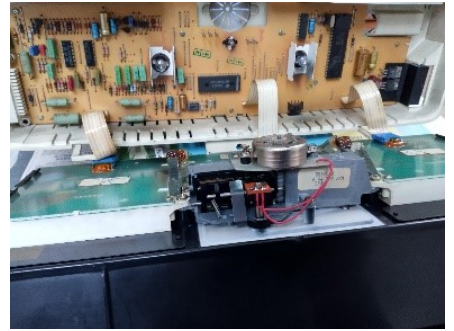
I hope you enjoy this newsletter

Your Editor

Ramblings from the Chair



Well, this month I finally got round to sorting the odometer and trip meter on the Senator. It was all Callum B's fault – he handed out a Tulip diagram at the 'Drive it Day' outing and I pressed the trip reset at the start. That was enough to stop the miles being clocked up! However, after a bit of research, I found this is a common problem with Vauxhall/Opel cars fitted with the digital dash and is caused by failure of a small plastic cog which drives the revolving number wheels. Surprisingly, removal of the binnacle was remarkably easy – two screws removed the pod surround, two more took off a bit of the lower dash and then three more screws and two electrical multi plugs to remove the entire instrument unit (no speedo cable – it's all electric). It even came out above the steering wheel (which was lowered on its adjustment facility) with ease. There is a very small motor with a spiral drive which meshes with the cog on the drum spindle – it must be very clever to spin at different speeds to match the cars road speed! Lo and behold, one tooth missing on the cog. The spindle was pushed out of the drum body with ease and the old cog pulled off with a bit of a tug. Rebuilding was just a reverse of the above – easy. Until recently the little cog was unavailable in the UK and maybe £80 from Germany. Top marks for the Autobahnstormers Car Club – they have had the part remanufactured by 3D printing, cost £6 including postage.



Now on to charity matters – at the last committee meeting, it was decided that the Club should make a £500 donation to Maggie's, the cancer support centre at Raigmore Hospital. I have received a very kind letter of thanks from them, a copy of which is reproduced below. One never knows when we might need the help of these local organisations.

Last month's meeting at Corrie Motors body shop was excellent – they make the repair of bodywork look easy – and it certainly isn't. This month it's the usual annual Christmas Rollerbow! visit – remember to bring a secret Santa present. Hope to see you all there.

Corrie Motors Visit

Calum Pearson

November's club meeting was a trip to Corrie Motors body shop was arranged by Bryan through his long term friendship with Ian Donaldson, who worked there until he retired. I believe the company started of in Tomnahurich Street, possibly where Tesco's is now. Ask an oldie! They moved to Harbour Road area in 1986, developed the current site in 1989 and currently hold the Isuzu dealership. I've never



Picture: Am Baile

had a new car or required dealer servicing so I had no idea about Corries Motors. I'm afraid my impression of big dealers has been



pretty negative, based on cost, delays and poor after service - according to friends, but I got a very different impression at Corrie Motors. We were hosted by Stephen Graham who's heart was very obviously in the motor trade though (like many jobs) it isn't what it used to be. The move to cars being mobile computers and of course electrification has changed things. In the olden days mechanics were employed if they showed a natural aptitude, but now they need good grades just to show

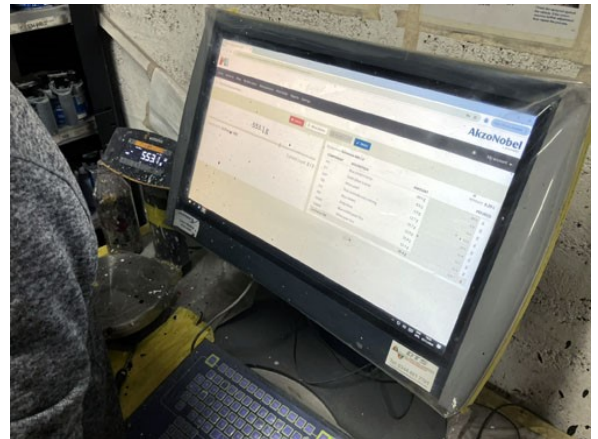
they can cope with the technology. I got the distinct impression from Stephen that they believe in doing a job right, so if you're looking for some dealer servicing, Corries Motors could be worth a shot. They can service most cars, and they are very well equipped.

Anyway we were here for the body shop, and after strict instructions to stick together, off we went to a cavernous workshop. Next to three paint booths there was a row of cars getting worked on. Everything was neat and tidy and professional looking. For the water based base coat they have a booth with blowers as well as heaters to let the paint flash off more quickly. Lacquers are still solvent based, but it seems there was more of an environmental issue with vapours from base coat. There was also a conspiracy theory that paint technologies are made so complicated today, to discourage DIY-ers like us from having a go.



Bryan's friend Ian has been a painter for a long time. He started off with brush-on coach paint with a varnish finish on buses, army dump trucks and MacBrayne coaches. The primer was often rolled on, a technique that has come back. Then of course we moved to the highly polluting, but a home painters favourite, cellulose, for that out of the gun finish, or in my hands ready for flattening and polishing. Next was two pack (aka 2K) with the isocyanate harder ready to ruin your lungs, vitals and skin. However Ian only remembers one case of isocyanate poisoning in his time. Now it's all water based which is like emulsion paint. This is protected by lacquer but as moisture ingress can change the colour, it's important to lacquer well around any edges or lips.

In the paint room we were shown the camera scanner. To get a match, the original paint is polished up, three images captured and the computer tells you what weight of each Sikkens colour to put in the mix. Gone are the days of colour chips or even manufacturers colour codes. We had a chat about the problems with metallics, which is paint with coloured aluminium flakes in it. These finishes can look perfect in the day light but completely different under street lighting. Nightmare.



The painter's guns are very personal to them and can cost thousands. DeVillbiss is a common brand. The guns are kept locked up and should only be touched by their owner. You have been warned.

The phrase 'blended in' came up, and I've never really understood this. Ian explained, that if you were painting a panel, you might blend in the adjacent panel. You progressively overspray more and more onto the adjacent panel until you cover it with the final coat. This means the near finish is thicker and more paint coloured than the far side of the panel where the finish will be thinner which allows more of the original colour to show through. Blended.



Then we had a look at the bodywork repairs. The technicians are highly trained and the repairs are Thatcham approved. This means there is a standard repair method for every aspect of every vehicle, with standard repair panels. This guarantees the work is done to a safe and as good as original standard. This includes bonded repairs and boron steel

work. If a technician wants to deviate from a standard repair, the work has to be signed off. There are strict Thatcham inspections 3 or 4 times a year. For example, keeping parts for a car inside the car is a fail. They'd better not come round mine

then, though my garage is too full for them to get in to inspect anyway. Corrie Motors are also VDA approved and Kitemarked to British standards. You can see why repairs are so expensive.

They have a body jig and there are book values for the reference points on the cars chassis and a big puller to correct errors. Some cars delivered from the manufacturer arrive out of spec! Though they didn't say if they bent these back into shape, we did talk about pre-sale inspection, another dealer benefit.



After a while, we noticed the body shop had less people in it. It turned out the half our party had sloped off to look at the showroom's small collection of Classics. And half had not. We had done exactly what we were told not to do and split up. Group B snuck through the rabbit warren trying various doors, until eventually we heard voices, then shadows, then shapes of actual people beside actual classic cars.



After a bit of chatting and general socialising it dawned on us that it was half past nine. Some of us could already tell by sore feet or weary legs. The thank you presentation was duly made and off we went home after a satisfying night out and personally speaking, my aversion to dealers and big garages took a dent (!) Corrie Motors seems more like a big garage with a small garage heart.

Thanks to Bryan, Ian Donaldson and Stephen Graham. We're all very grateful.



Fleeting Moments

Trish Brown

There's not much to say about our cars this month, except that we discovered that the Merc has a new trick. When it is below freezing the airpump on the suspension gets temperamental, causing the level warning light to come on. Once it gets above freezing its ok again. I am looking at the positive side and present this as yet another reason on why I should work from home in the winter.

However, there is a disadvantage to working from home at this time of year, which is due to bird strikes on power lines. We have a loch in the near vicinity which is used by geese and swans. Usually it is towards dusk that these birds hit the power lines, but the odd one does occur during daylight hours. But luckily these outages are never very long. Generally, by the time you light a candle, the lights are back on. But every now and then you can sit in the cold and dark for some time. That is when we look jealously at our neighbours who have their open fires going. At least the wee portable gas stove comes to the rescue so that we are not stuck for hot food and drinks.

Now, we had a need to go into Inverness the other day and this gave us an opportunity to see the resurfacing progress that has been made on the A9 at Alness, since it was taken back to the baselayer. which left that stretch of road in a dreadful state. Well, they have put on a temporary surface which already has more pot-holes in it than there ever were in the original stretch of road, and in terms of driveability is approaching the state it was in before the temporary surface was applied. Some improvement, eh? The roadworks are scheduled to finish in early December, but with the recent snow and frost, that is likely to take a bit longer.

Dear Richard,

Maggie's Highlands would like to thank you and the members of Highland Classic Motor Club, for your extremely generous donation of £500.00. Your donation will help the people who visit our centre, whether they are facing a diagnosis themselves, or trying to support a loved one. Inside our calm and welcoming centre, families can seek helpful advice at any time, free of charge. They can speak to people who understand the challenges they are going through. Get counselling and family support like how to talk to their children about cancer. Or they can simply find a peaceful place to sit in the garden when they're feeling overwhelmed. These sources of comfort are available thanks to your kindness.



With kindest regards,

Aimee Skye - Centre Fundraiser Organiser

RANT

Jim MacKay

Every so often I need to rant. There's no obvious stimulus, more an accumulation of little stimuli, little niggles and frustration at how the world could be. I'll start with this laptop producing lovely uniform text with "spell-check" there to make it perfect. I spent a lot of time hand writing and no-one could read it so I spent more time getting to grips with producing an article otherwise known as a document. I've had to learn the phraseology and adapt my ways but it's worth the effort. Sometimes I wonder, I mean, we're still using Qwerty!

I renewed a car insurance online because that way I can't shout at the person on the other end of the line! So I cut out the middle person which ought to make it cheaper. Wrong. I had a renewal notice so I was "in the system". All I had to do was to log into their website, my account would come up with all the details of my insurance, I would click "pay now" and it would be done and dusted. Wrong. It was a bit like shopping in Ikea where they drag me round every department hoping I'll buy something I don't need. It took me a long time to navigate this website, lots of red herrings, many swears and tantrums galore. Don't tell me what I need, I know what I want, just deliver. No wonder they call themselves "Saga"! "Leave feedback to make this service better" it recommended. Would you believe it wouldn't let me?

I thought computers were there to make life easier but instead I spent an inordinate amount of time adapting, time I'm rather short of. There's talk of using AI in search engines. How about just clearing out all the out-dated crap chocking up the system. Is that too simple? I don't need to know the date of the Inverness Fireworks Display in 2019. Is it only an old person who can see that? I don't need quicker speeds and more storage, I don't need forty thousand hits of irrelevance, I shouldn't need to spend time rephrasing my search in the never ending search for the truth!

Don't get me started on mobiles also known as smart phones. Have you seen what predictive text can churn out? Of course you have and it's not very smart. They are bigger and heavier, produce enhanced images which defy reality, store vast quantities, use a bewildering number of apps and consume power like it was going out of fashion. A small, lightweight phone would be good, thank you.

It would be rude not to mention cars. You know that I'm happy with the VW Polo. It just suits my needs but it's twenty years old. I'll just have a new one, exactly the same so I don't have any welding to do and learning how to operate it. That's what I said, exactly the same, not longer, wider, heavier, exactly the same. No? Really?

Don't get me wrong, life is good but it could be better. On chatting to my fellow cronies I realise that I'm not alone. Us old people know.....we just know.

Cheers, Jim MacKay.

[I agree. Computers don't make life easier, just different, and I work with them - Ed]

Chain Bridge Honey Farm By your Chairman

Right, I can hear you all saying 'what on earth does a visit to a honey farm have to do with a classic car newsletter?' Well, I found myself there at Mrs Chair's request – she is an avid beekeeper – and lo and behold, along with an excellent visitor centre dedicated to bees and beekeeping, there is a 'museum' of sorts displaying a wide range of very unusual vehicles, in various stages of disrepair, and an upper gallery containing what might be described as old fashioned household and garage appliances and equipment. It's the sort of place where you could easily spend a whole afternoon reading old car magazines (I looked at a 1960 edition of 'Motor' reviewing the revamped Vauxhall Victor F Type!), reminiscing over domestic appliances you once had, thinking about how mechanics managed with basic hand tools (not a socket set or power tool to be seen) and examining old vehicles from lorries and tractors to tracked diggers and military armaments. On the upper level there is a 'shop' with cabinets, scales, tills and the like, all things I remember from my youth. In another corner there is a display of old typewriters and office equipment. Outside there is a late RM London bus open to visitors together with a Bristol Lodekka double decker kitted out as the attraction's teashop. I was particularly amused by the DIY wooden cab on the Caterpillar tractor and the blue one looks like a beast to me. In a faraway open shed there is a selection of old Foden trucks – I'm guessing there might be enough parts to restore one or two of them. A short walk away is the Union Bridge crossing the River Tweed and, in fact, the border between Scotland and England (with a stainless steel strip embedded into the roadway). For those of you who are interested (and I guess our Editor will be!), the Union bridge was the oldest suspension bridge in the world when it opened in 1820, at a length of 137m (or 449ft). Unlike modern bridges of this type, the suspension system is made from iron bars with eyes at each end through which pins are passed at each link plate. Hence the local name – The Chain Bridge. There are three double 'chains' on each side and similar bars hanging downwards to hold the deck in place. [Nice - Ed] Amazingly, it survived with very little maintenance until the 1970s when it received a minor refurbishment but by 2020 it was close to complete closure. However, with joint funding between Northumberland Council and The Scottish Borders Council (with help from the National Lottery fund), the bridge was totally dismantled into its constituent parts, checked and refurbished, with new parts where necessary, and reopened in April 2023. It looks amazing and is open to public traffic albeit restricted to a 2m vehicle width by concrete blocks. Interestingly, the bridge deck moves vertically in a wave motion as vehicles pass over it – rather a strange sensation as a pedestrian. In keeping with the interests of the HCMC, the first car to cross the bridge after refurbishment was a 1936 Riley Kestrel – a picture of which is available online (copyrighted so unable to reproduce here). The Chain Bridge Honey Farm can be found about 4 miles south of Berwick upon Tweed – turn right at the first roundabout on the A1 after crossing the border. Well worth a visit if you happen to be travelling south down the east coast.

Cars And Coffee



Are you ready for some Lotus puns? No? Too bad...

Lotus prey. The Lotus position. Petal to the metal.

You can't be a petrolhead without having a soft spot for a Lotus, and with good old British prestige and pedigree which is a rare thing these days.

Lotus not forget Colin Chapman's genius. We'll not mention Chinese ownership.



Old stuff. That's what we like. You can't beat a bit of motoring nostalgia especially with a hint of sportiness. All these cars will sound and smell uniquely, and drive differently, unlike most moderns which sound the same if you can hear them at all. Maybe the future nostalgia is in different electric motor whines and these will be looked back on fondly. Hopefully when I'm dead and gone.



CARS AND COFFEE “Mission Christmas.”

In 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 8th December, plus at our December HCMC Monthly Meeting.

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

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.

8th Dec 2024 Cars And Coffee - Inverness At Rollerbowl, Culduthel Rd. Inverness. This Month supporting MFR Cash For Kids "Mission Christmas." Bring New Unwrapped Gifts. See Facebook.

15th Dec 2024 Festive Classic Cars & Coffee & Cakes Highland Classic Car Hire, Forres Sunday 15th December from 2pm at Highland Classic Car Hire, Bogton Place, Forres, IV36 1EP. Take a drive in your Classic (or modern) and drop in for Coffee & Cakes.

9th Jan 2025 The HCMC January Meeting is the Infamous Annual Auction. Craigmonie Hotel, 9 Annfield Road, Inverness, IV2 3HX. 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!!!**