

CLASSIC SCENE



Sept 2026



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Cover Picture

HCMC Club Night on the Garbole
Road heading towards Farr.

Welcome to the September Newsletter

Hello and welcome to the next newsletter. It's harvest time and also time to assess all those car jobs you promised yourself would be done this Summer. I SORN'd (and insured - see below) my Ford Sierra while I took a look at the clutch and a steering niggles, with the full intention of getting it done for the Autumn but as always, other things (Are you listening, Panda?) go in the way. In reality, I have only managed to get it lifted into the air for inspection. I need to take the exhaust off anyway and having contemplated that, I've made the strategic decision to drop the complete engine and gearbox as I have many oil leaks to address, and this will be easier with all round access. I have been after a spare engine for years now but couldn't find one locally. There's not much wrong with the one I've got, but I do have a Turbo Technics (pipe dream) kit in a cupboard, and I need an engine to test fit it on, plus I have other nefarious tinkering reasons. I finally found one. In Eyemouth. At least it's in Scotland. Just. I had my eBay bid accepted so I will soon have a day trip to south. Hopefully I'll spot some classics on the way and get two stops at the Ballinluig Motor Grill.

Following on from achieving an MOT pass for my Mundane-O in last month's newsletter, the back box of the exhaust fell off - just two weeks after the ticket was issued. To be fair, it didn't look that rusty, but it obviously was as the pipe just separated from the box. A low cost part was ordered from eBay and fitted with some difficulty, but I saved lots of money. I also addressed a disintegrated pressure sensor pipe on the DPF (particle filter for the emissions) so hopefully that will be another year of bangernomical motoring.

Ian Hazell has sent in his story of his Midget breakdown on our run over to the Ullapool boatyard last month. I confessed my Beetle broke down on the way home too and he has persuaded me to tell all. In essence after stopping at Dingwall Tesco's and it wouldn't start. Not even a click. A push start from the kindness of strangers got me home, though it took a couple of weeks before I got around to swapping the starter motor. One of the bolts was tricky to access so I paused for thought thinking, this could be annoying if it's not actually the starter motor at fault. So back to first principles. Battery voltage. 11.5V. Well that's not right, should be charged up after that long drive. I charged it and behold, the engine started. I measured the charging voltage. 11.5V. Well that's not right. I disconnected the dynamo and with a bit of revs it was outputting around 80V. Well that is right. There is an electro-mechanical voltage regulator to turn 80V into something more suitable - around 13.8V. A quick rummage in my overly full but carefully indexed (in my head) garage produced a spare regulator which took about 5 minutes to fit. The charging voltage is now 13.5V and a DC clamp meter showed some decent charging current. I had assumed the battery had been charging as the charge light on the dash board was off (the bulb works!). So lessons learned. 1. Don't make assumptions. 2. First principal diagnostics is fun and satisfying.

Happy classic motoring,

Your Editor

Ramblings from the Chair



Righto, I guess most of you will have read in the news about Ed Sheeran being fined for not having insurance for his 1966 Aston Martin despite it being in the workshop for an electric conversion and hasn't been on the road for five years or more. Kind of weird. However, the problem is not difficult to understand and anyone with a classic vehicle that spends some time off the road (like during the winter say) should be aware of. It seems that any vehicle that has not been put on SORN, must have valid insurance to a minimum third party level. The DVLA has access to insurance details for everyone (remember, they will not allow you to tax a vehicle unless it has valid insurance) and therefore can issue fines as they seem fit. For those of you with vehicles less than forty years old, I guess the situation isn't too problematic – if like myself, you would probably SORN the car near the end of a month (before winter say), so as to get a refund on the tax on the unused months until renewal. Alternatively you might get a tax reminder letter (V11) at the end of the tax period and you put the car on SORN from there. However, for those vehicles over forty years, the tax is free (albeit it still needs to be applied for) and therefore you are less inclined to SORN it and might even re-tax it if it comes to the current expiry date (it doesn't cost anything – so why not?). All is well until the insurance expires and you might decide to wait until the vehicle returns to the road (in spring say) before it is re-insured. Then you would have an uninsured but taxed car – which is illegal apparently. It cost Ed Sheeran over £1,000 in fines and costs – he immediately put the Aston on SORN to rectify the situation. I hope the above is a lesson to us all – life doesn't get any easier does it?

Recently, Mrs Chair and I found ourselves in deepest Aberdeenshire on a short break and I decided to visit the Grampian Motor Museum in Alford. I think I last visited about 13 years ago when my son was learning to drive and he drove the entire route in a newly acquired (but knocking on), W reg VW Polo. It is a cracking little museum with a great selection of vehicles from the dawn of motoring to the 1980's. In particular, they seemed to have made the effort in acquiring many of the Top Gear vehicles and have a whole section of the museum dedicated to them. You might remember their efforts to cross the English Channel (the VW camper converted to a boat, the Triumph Herald with sails), Clarkson's homemade vehicle (in plywood and dexion) and the Toyota Hilux they tried to destroy (but it lived!). I think this was perhaps when the programme was at its silliest, maybe entertaining at the time (some 19 years ago now!!) but slightly naff now. In my opinion, these should be pensioned off and replaced with some more interesting 'real' classics. In this respect, one of my favourites was a Pashley ice cream mobile 'shop'. The rear is a Villiers motor cycle, grafted to a refrigerated, two wheeled front subframe and body, complete with steering wheel and Perspex



covered serving area which could hold three deep tubs of ice cream. It was delivered to Lodge Café in Keith in 1950. (Sorry about the photo's – it is suspended on wires hanging from the roof). There are a couple of BL cars (a Minor and an 1100) which are high up on a frame which you can walk under. What impressed me was the simplicity of it all by comparison to modern cars – and would be really easy to work on.

The September Club Night will be the last evening run of the season. We are repeating the very successful event of last year, when we had 28 cars, from North Kessock village car park (at the sea) to the Ord Arms in Muir of Ord. Given the daylight hours are limited, this is a fairly short run and will be on a different route from last year. Stewart at the hotel is always keen for us to visit and will have his classics out on show, all being well. I hope to see you all there, 7.00 for 7.30pm, Thursday 3rd September.

Regards, Richard.

August Club Night Drive

Inverness to Tomatin, Garbole and Loch Duncheltaig.

Report by the Chairman

We had a great turnout of 15 classics gathered at Tesco Inshes on a warm, still evening and set off on familiar roads to Nairnside, under the Culloden Viaduct and then right, following the single track road and a left turn onto the B9154 (often referred to as the 'old A9'). I haven't been along that road for some time and was interested to see the completed replacement rail bridge at Moy, constructed in 2021 as part of the new A9 dualling works and carries the main line over a (not yet constructed) minor road to Lynebeg. This bridge was constructed in a nearby field before being lifted/carried by a specialist Mammoett transport equipment into the place of a previously demolished bridge, all within a 78hr railway closure (and during storm Arwen). There are videos on YouTube with time lapse photography showing this feat of engineering excellence (type Lynebeg Rail Bridge replacement into YouTube and you will find a short Network Rail video and a much longer Railway Engineering Institution video.) Anyway, I digress – we carried on to the new A9 works and crossed into Tomatin and through the village to the road heading up the valley towards Coignafearn before turning right again, up towards Garbole. What a lovely part of the world – a typical Highland glen with crofts, areas of woodlands and views to the hills beyond. Before the climb up on to the moors we stopped on the verge (and indeed on the road – but there was no traffic) for a photo shoot. After a bit of a bletcher we suddenly seemed to be invaded by midgies – right, back into the cars then!! There was a minor issue with the red Sunbeam Alpine which would not start again but after some external operation of the fuel pump, the car burst into life and we were off again. I was quite surprised to see a number of motorhomes, obviously parked for the night, in the various wide verges and accesses next to road, the occupants of which were more than happy to give us a cheery wave. At the top, where not so long ago it looked a vast moorland wilderness, there are a huge number of wind turbines. I'm not really sure how I feel about these – they are very impressive in their size and operation but it does mar the unspoilt beauty of the area – and we do need the electricity! Onwards on the very twisty and hilly road with beautiful views of the mountains to the north before dropping down to the B851 Daviot to Fort Augustus road. Surprisingly we took a left here and then a right which took us past the end of Loch Duntelchaig – again a road which I had not been on for a long time. Soon we were back at the Asda car park to continue our natterings, many of which carried on to near darkness. Altogether an excellent evening, enjoyed by all who attended.



Fleeting Moments - Trish Brown

After hitching up a trailer to the back of the Merc, you do the usual safety checks, including whether the lights work. Only to find out that they didn't. Took the plug out and reseated it, but still nothing. Question then is, is the problem on the trailer side or the car side? Out came the bike rack and we plugged that in. Still nothing. As a check, we also plugged the bike rack onto the Landie, and hey presto, it works. How very annoying, as this points to yet another issue with the Merc.

We then started thinking back to the last time we used the towbar, which was before we swapped from air suspension to coil. You will remember the subsequent electrical issues we had. This made us think that perhaps a fuse had blown. We asked our mannie at the garage where in the boot we needed to look for this. 'Not in the fusebox as it is an after market towbar' he said. 'Try looking for the module in the left hand side of the boot.'

Back home we took the trim of the left hand side in the boot, but no towbar module there. Took of the right hand trim, and yes, there was the towbar module. But the fuse was fine. We then followed the power wire back behind the rear trim. Duly removed that trim too, and lo and behold, the towbar wiring was not connected. Ah, our mannie will have forgotten about that when the car was last put together again. But as the power module has several outlets, we were not sure to which one to connect the towbar and took the car up to the garage. It took our mannie all of 10 minutes to wire it back up.

You may also remember me mentioning the potholes in our street. We got some amazing news recently when we noticed some yellow jacketed men strolling down the street. The street will be re-tarred. Downside is, that somebody (not sure who) has asked for speed bumps. One is marked up just down from our driveway. We're not happy as this means that it will be in front of our door that vehicles will be revving their engines after going over these bumps. Our neighbour is equally not happy, as the second marked bump is right outside their front door (their door opens directly onto the street). And speed bumps are unlikely to slow down the target group of white van man. I've never seen them slow down for any speed bump yet.

For those who are interested, I am still waiting on my blueberries to fully ripen. We're down to 22 berries.

Trish

Balintore Gathering

Jim Mackay reports a super turn out of fifty plus cars at Hugh Skinner's Classic Car Show and highlights a Massey Ferguson 35X for attention.



Charlie Munro

Charlie passed away on Saturday 8th August 2026, aged 88 years.

I (your Editor) didn't know him well but he was a Stalwart of the classic car scene in the Highlands and Easter Ross. He was well known for his Ferrari's and in particular his Ferrari Dino from the glory days of the Alness car show. And he drove them too. I remember chatting at one of the BID shows and he was reminiscing about taking his Dino to track days. True, the bigger Ferrari's pulled away on the straight but he made up ground in the corners. I loved seeing peoples faces when he got out of his car. He was somewhat incongruous, looking a bit like a butcher from Alness, while onlookers possibly expected some mafiosi type bedecked with sunglasses and an Armani suit. To me he was the perfect Ferrari owner - a true enthusiast.

Later, he found his Dino in the Ferrari Centre in Kent and asked to look at it. They initially refused but a short chat proved his credentials and he was welcomed in. He only replaced the Dino (with a bigger Ferrari) when the drivers seat seemed to shrink as the years passed by. He was a local legend who will be missed.

The Mystery of the Missing Midget

It was a lovely morning when I set out to travel to Ullapool to visit the boatyard so I decided to go topless in the Midget rather than use the 2CV. Bridget has not been out much recently as she is not really suitable for carrying our dog despite the fact she does quite enjoy travelling in it, but this trip was going to be on my own so it just had to be the MG.

Everything went fine until we were approaching Garve when I experienced a loss of power, followed a mile or so further on by a loud bang and complete loss of 2 cylinders. I was definitely not going to make it to Ullapool. Fortunately I had the number on my phone for the breakdown service provided by my Insurer RH Motor Policies. There was then a very efficient procedure where I made a call, then received a text with a questionnaire. I filled in all the boxes and was given an ETA of about an hour and a quarter hence.

About half an hour later I received a text from ERS in Dingwall saying that they were about to leave the depot and confirming the vehicle that had broken down. There was no question of repairing the car so they wanted to know where it was to be recovered to.

The breakdown truck soon arrived and it was huge, the driver explaining that because of the low ground clearance of the Midget he had brought the flat bed demountable deck truck.

With the deck on the ground we were soon loaded up, on the road home and pushed into the garage.

There was so much noise from the car I initially thought I must have holed a piston and I had visions of having to press my spare engine into service but when I got the head off I found a much simpler problem ... a blown head gasket between 3 and 4. It amazed me that such a small gap could cause such a loss of power and noise.

With the gasket off it was apparent that failure was imminent between 1 and 2 as well and the broader area between 3 and 2.

Before I stripped the head for skimming I decided to ring the technical expert at the Midget club for advice and discovered that my problem is very common thanks to inferior aftermarket gaskets. He recommended talking to an expert at Mini Spares in York and I was able to purchase one of the heavy duty gaskets they have commissioned. It was about 3 times what I paid for the last one but guaranteed not to fail!

It is all back together now and ready for a road test on a nice day, and in the mean time the 2CV has clocked up the miles!

Ian Hazell





West Coast Classics

After the recent successes by Douglas Gibson promoting some classic car activities in the North West Highlands, they have a Facebook page where you can join in their drives and see what cars appear out of sheds and garages in that area. We know there are plenty.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1644091513722005>

Ranald Smith

The work party at Ranald's I mentioned last week was a great success. About eight people turned up which turned out to be the perfect number. We only had an outline of a plan, which was to clear some space in the downstairs garage so we could move things stored in the garage attic downstairs for perusal.

We identified the easiest pickings to go to the dump and filled several car boots with the less desirable old magazines, brochures and junk. This allowed us to decant about half of the attic (maybe a bit more) and many boxes of original boxes for model cars were relocated into the house so they can be reunited.

Poor Ranald was conflicted seeing all this disposal but knowing it was the best for his family. We also managed to turn what could have been a bit of a miserable day into a laugh with good craic. After a few stories had been exchanged, one of Ranald's family exclaimed, "They're all the bloody same!" Hopefully they realised that Ranald's collecting and car enthusiasm wasn't unique and we chuckled at their realisation. Yes it's perfectly normal to swoon over a 1930's oil can.

I paid a brief visit in the following week and both Ranald and Joanna are over the moon with what we have done for them. We have agreed one more work party for now, in advance of the HCMC Club Auction. Get your diaries out...

Next work party. Sunday 6th September. 2pm at Hawthorn Cottage, 2 Burn Road, Inverness IV2 4NG

Please feel free to contact me on 07762101067 or editor@highlandclassic.org.uk

Out and About

Jim Mackay



I'm not sure where Jim has been this month, all over the place it would seem and he sent these out and about snaps in for our enjoyment.



If you've seen something interesting out and about, send in a picture.

Cars and Coffee



This month's Cars & Coffee review comes via the lens of Jim Mackay. He parked beside the 4litre hearse as "There was no body about!"



This lovely Subaru Impreza STi was won in a raffle.



The V8 Radical is a head turner minus one driveshaft which was broken on the Golspie circuit yesterday. Ford Orion one fits, allegedly.



Coming soon:-



Angus Bethune has passed on his invitation to attend the Killearnan Church open day. It is located on the low road that links Redcastle to the A832 on the north shore of the Beaully Firth. It's on Saturday 12th September.



HCMC Events

29th August 2026 Fortrose & Rosemarkie Classic Vehicle Rally. Dingwall Mart to the King George V Sports Field, Fortrose.

30th August 2026 Buckie Classic Car Show, Linzee Gordon Park, Buckie

3rd September 2026 The last HCMC Thursday night run of the year. Leaving from the North Kessock Car Park. Meet around 7pm for a 7:30pm start. Full details tbc.

5th September 2026 Dingwall Rotary Vehicle Show at Cromartie Park

12th September 2026 Killearnan Church open day - see previous page.

13th September 2026 Cars And Coffee - Inverness at The Drumossie Hotel, Inverness IV2 5BE 2nd Sunday of every Month from 10am-12noon. A Quiet Social Gathering of 20th Century Classics plus modern vehicles of interest. Park up, buy yourself a hot drink & snack from Drumossie Hotel and check out what's in the Car Park. Find us on FACEBOOK.

19th September 2026 Wheels of Nairn at the Nairn Links

26th Septemeber 2026 Laigh o'Moray Vintage Association Rally Weekend Seafeld Park, Keith Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th September. Details on "Laigh o'Moray Vintage Association" Facebook Page. Entry form: www.LOMVA.co.uk

1st October 2026 In a change to the usual schedule we will be having an October Auction Night. Weather affected attendance last year. I have a feeling this could be a special event, so save up your money now.