

Wigton Motor Club Ltd

# Start Line

Issue 04/20

[www.wigtonmc.co.uk](http://www.wigtonmc.co.uk)

April 2020

**Think Positively for the Future**



We had to cancel the pre season test day so here is a photo taken at the 2014 version.

Let's use the extra spare time we have to work on our cars ready for when we can start using them in anger!

# Motorsport for All

# Club Officials

## OFFICIALS

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# *Talking Point*

## *Topical Comment from the world of motoring*

A couple of months ago I didn't think that I would be writing this saying that there are no events, or indeed motoring for the next few months, if not longer. Members will be effected in different ways, and we hope that this stricken with this dreadful virus come through it OK. For others it just means a restriction of movement and some inconveniences, for others it effects income and livelihoods, although hopefully the governments actions will reduce the adverse effects.

All our events and meetings are of until the end of June at the earliest. We will be looking a two month lead in time for events after that so while the Classic Weekend in August is still scheduled and everything is in place and booked, we will make a decision at the end of June as to whether we are able to go ahead. We have no plans to reschedule any of the events earlier in the year such as the LDC. It is foolish for any club to try and run a postponed event later in the year and we will end up with a complete log jam of events vying for officials, marshals and entries.

I am always optimistic and it may be that some good comes out of the bad. Motorsport and classic cars seem to have become overheated in the last ten or more years with lots of money being spent to the detriment of the genuine clubman. For example it is extremely difficult, of not impossible to book a circuit for a sprint as things like track days, super car days, testing and Britcar events can afford to pay what ever the circuit owner wants to charge. In the classic world low interest rates have encouraged people to buy cars with borrowed money on an upward market. They may be in for a big shock if the market tumbles. Much the same can be said for the growing number of commercial event companies who run race and rally series aimed at those who can afford the time and finance to do them. Reality might bite.

Work on the Motor House has of course stopped until normal safe and healthy lifestyles are in place and we are given to go ahead for normal life to resume.

Keep safe.

Graeme

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**The opinions expressed in Start Line are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Club**

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# PG Tips

## Chairman Peter Reflects On His Month

I'd imagine this edition of Startline will be labelled the Corona virus special because right now it appears to be consuming the world! The test day at Rowrah has been cancelled and MUK have now cancelled all motorsport permits until the end of April – something which I suspect will soon turn into the end of May, June and maybe even longer depending on whose predictions you believe. None of them are very good and it's as though the world has stopped. People are losing their lives so we had to act in line with government advice and now many people may also lose their livelihoods – the hospitality industry is going to be particularly badly hit as well as holiday companies and airlines. It is a very worrying time for mankind as a whole, and I only hope we can get it under control as quickly if not quicker than the Chinese who now appear to be on top of it in around the 4 month mark.

There aren't any real upsides to the crisis at the moment but if there was a tiny positive for me, it would be that at least I have plenty of time to tweak my now effectively ornamental race car – RBS8! Until today I had been frantically building the new rear wing mount and sorting out minor issues with it so that it didn't kill me at the Rowrah track day. I only got the car back from JDM dyno at Kirkbride last week and whilst the car is much tidier and lighter than it had been when it went in there was still a list of jobs to do.

The nose now sits a bit high thanks to new rubber bands on the suspension which need adjusting and things like the crazy throttle cable set up need replaced. At the moment instead of having a very long single cable it has a standard car 2m long type cable feeding into a 6" long iron structure that links to a 1.5 metre cable that goes to the engine. I suspect when Barry built the car he had 2 normal cables and decided to make do and mend and bodge them together rather than seek out a single long one. Thanks to the marvel of Ebay and very long single cable will be arriving this week! Ideally I need to build it a nice new dash pod as well because now I've removed a lot of the dated data logging clutter, there are holes with nothing to fill them.

The main A66 A595 Cockermouth roundabout that has been getting overhauled for several months is panning out as I predicted – a cosmetic overhaul with minor widening at one point and ridiculous painting of a similar ilk to the A66 Stainburn roundabout, i.e. 10 metres of a second lane created just after the roundabout after which people will then merge together if they've used both lanes as the arrows encourage. Lots more money spent for not much gain by the look of it...thankfully I remembered the torture would be happening during the night and went round it via the edge of great Broughton which didn't cost me any time.

The Astra Convertible is alive, and taxed and on the road, or at least it was until I decided that the nice new stainless exhaust I'd fitted made it far too loud and a bit too boy racery for a man in his late 40s. I've now sold it and a standard one is on route to calm things down....thanks to the dreaded virus I should have lots of time to fit it now I no longer have the LDC to organise or any events to attend.

Peter

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# From The Top

News from UK Motorsport, Regions and the WMC Committee



The March committee meeting was of course cancelled so here is an update on how progress at the Motor House is going. David says: More progress at the Motor House yesterday, Chris is pushing on with the electrics, Mary is making an excellent job of restoring the clubs old trophies.

## Bob Marshall

As many of our local members will know we lost Bob Marshall recently after a long battle with cancer. Bob was a huge supporter of the club over many years as Ron has written in his article this month. If you didn't know him you would have met him on the tours he ran with Kendall Bruce and as he marshalled on virtually all our rallies.

The Club had donated £100 to Hospice at Home in his memory.



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# Classic Column

## News from the Classic and Historic Scene

**This is actually my column from the April Classic Motor Monthly which has not been published this month for obvious reasons.**

The last big event I attended was Race Retro at Stoneleigh, a highlight of the motoring year for me. I try and attend on the first two days, Friday to view everything in relative peace and meet many friends and fellow enthusiasts, and then on the Saturday to see the rally stage action.

The problem of any major show is how to ring the changes to get spectators to return. Getting top quality cars for display is not easy, or cheap and you can of course head to the Silverstone Classic in July and see hundreds of such cars in action. It was noticeable that some clubs were not present this year, no doubt they have to balance the cost of having a display and manning it against the gains in terms of new members or event entries.

One big change this year was the weather – it was warm! So often at Stoneleigh you brave several difference temperatures when moving from hall to hall with the unheated autojumble area often being near to freezing. This year with the outdoor temperature around 12 degrees the jumble area was quite pleasant while halls 1 & 2 were positively tropical. You can't win!

The Silverstone Auction had a good mix of competition and road cars with the competition cars doing better at the hammer. Some interesting cars which suited the market of a show rather than a high end sale.

I got the impression the stands and displays were rather more spread out than in the past in order to fill the space. Both the main halls have stands selling trailers and gazebos that have previously been in hall 3 or even outside. Hopefully the profit margin on a race car transporter justifies the cost of the pitch!

Putting on a major show like Race Retro is a huge financial undertaking and the organisers must balance the income they get from stall holders with that of spectators. If the stands are too costly then you get fewer of them and there is less for spectators to see and they don't return. Certainly, the days of lots of volunteer clubs have gone as it's not just the cost of the space, it's getting display material and the cost of accommodation over four days.

The rally stage had improved viewing after complaints last year and there were a handful of current cars being driven with gusto but with 145 entries it just took far too long, and people wandered off. The credibility of the "historic" tag was stretched a bit with some of the entries, Vauxhall Adam, Fiats and MX5s for example. While it was run by "Rallying with Group B" there weren't that many genuine Group B cars or star drivers. Perhaps being more selective to get a sense of rallying history over the years with perhaps 50 cars being driven by experienced drivers would be better. There are now so many beautiful replica rally cars around which have probably never seen a rally in their life, neither had their owners!

The biggest stand by far was that of HERO who were pushing their many regularity rallies and their seminars were very well attended. It astounds me that there are so many people with the funds to take part in events that cost up to £1,500 a day and can last between 5 and 20 days. Certainly, way beyond my means!

I enjoyed my two days there, but I do feel the organisers need to take a long look at the event and get more clubs involved and freshen the show up. Otherwise there will be the usual “been there done that” feel that we get at the NEC.

Of course at this time of year many club events are starting to take place and indeed I will have been to a couple by the time you read this and one of the ones I run, the MG Cumbria Roof of England Challenge is scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup>. However, with all events the shadow of the Coronavirus hangs over them. Motorsport UK has rightly stopped all events at least until the end of June.

While cancelling events is only an inconvenience to clubs (assuming it is done a week or so in advance) there is a knock on effect for suppliers of rally plates, printing and of course the refreshments on the route. If cafes, visitor centres and hotels loose trade from events of all types, plus walkers, cyclists and tourists may not bounce back.

GTF

## Jottings

Storage: We’ve asked a few times recent about car storage and this is something we are actively looking at. More news when things get back to normal but please register an interest.

The Coronavirus has brought some remarkable revelations. Firstly that when a government wants to do something or built something it can do so very quickly without those endless and costly consultations and feasibility studies that seem to prevent or delay any new road building.

Secondly that virtually every car maker in Europe gets parts from China. Id the virus had remained in China the European car manufacturers will have still ground to a halt. This many change with more parts being made in the UK , not just to have a reliable supply but also that as China becomes more affluent and workers get paid more, costs will go up and they will be in the same situation as Japan was 40 years ago.

It was also astounding to learn that half our food is imported. A recent shopping trip in a food store a casual glance and there were salad and vegetables from five continents. When the “green” lobby complain about cars they should think about the airmiles that salad has done. By the time the salad leaves are picked put in a plastic contained and then flown to the UK and then to a super market, what on earth did the grower get for it? Surely we need to grow more of our own and then only eat things when they in season?

Various governments have tried to reduce the amount of plastic we have with bans on plastic bags and now magazine wrappers but now every where you go, road sides, coastal walks etc you find plastic food containers of various types. Is it needed in the first place and perhaps fast food chains and roadside food vans need to be held to account ?



Who can tell me what this is and where it was built and a tenuous link with royalty?



# Membership

**For any changes or queries about membership please contact**

**John Sloan on 01900 85833**

**or by email at: [wigtonmcmemb@outlook.com](mailto:wigtonmcmemb@outlook.com)**

## Adverts

MG BGT Early1969 Chrome bumper, recent engine rebuild alternator and negative earth conversion, much work done, £5.5k Ed Glaister 01228 576408.

It is likely that we will not have many events for a few months so we will welcome any articles, photos or other items for future editions. The deadline is the 20th of each month.





# Elderly Utterances

## The Voice of Experience!

### Ron Palmer has his say

The Midweek Meander was well supported again this year, the move to a March date being in the hope of better spring weather but the old adage March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb seemed to apply. There were strong winds from the west and the day alternated from light rain to occasional sunlight but ‘mustn’t grumble’ and little did we know it would be our last club event for some time. The cafe at the Lake District Wild Life Park was a new start venue courtesy of Charles Graves and within the first half a mile we were into the quiet side roads taking us up to Caldbeck Common. A loop taking in Hesket Newmarket and Sour Nook took us over the newly constructed Bell Bridge which replaces the old one over the Caldew a casualty of Storm Desmond flood damage in December 2015. The elegant new bridge was opened in December 2017 not a bad turnaround for such an attractive structure.

After a run through Crofton Estate and over the Orton Airfield we reached the Burgh Marsh junction just as the extra high tide was lapping over the road. The forward thinking organiser moved the date from February to March and planned a low level route to avoid icy or blocked higher roads. Right? No wrong! No account had been taken of the possibility of the high tides which occur with the full moon on the route through Drumburgh, Port Carlisle, Bowness, Cardurnock and Anthorn. This certainly tested the waterproofing of those cars taking part and apologies to those who got wet feet. The Meander ended at Moota where we all took the opportunity to view the excellent progress being made by David Agnew and his team of volunteers in fitting out the club’s Motor House.



Whilst on the subject of our cars and water I must include a picture of the Mercedes ‘Pagoda’ of Keith Graham and Sue Hoffmann on a recent Safari event in East Africa. They survived many such immersions and we look forward to an account of this challenging

event in a future issue of Startline.

One of the postponed events is the ERA Flying Scotsman which Charles and I had entered in the Derby Bentley in early April. It is without doubt my favourite event of current times and I look forward to a new date which doesn’t clash later in the year. With a provisional period of three months with no motoring events that will take us to the end of June. That may mean our first gathering COULD be the Cars and Coffee Breakfast Meet at Lingholm on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July. This is by no means certain at this time, but we live in hope.

I was sad to hear of the passing of an old friend Bob Marshal one of the Lamplugh group who was a firm supporter of our club over many years. Bob was very much a working member and until recently when his illness intervened, he jointly organised the Mockerkinn pub run and was responsible for renaming some years ago the Dalemmain weekend tour into The Rose and Thistle. Bob was a very rounded character having a lifetime interest in Rugby Union, Motorsport, fell walking and was a tireless worker on behalf of the Lamplugh Village Hall. Until a few years ago he had the choice of either a TR4 or an Austin Sprite for club events. He will be much missed.

Ron

## Team Wigton

### Toby Cook – Autotest – Update no. 5



So, the 2019 Autotest Championship finished back in October. The first round for 2020 was Hagley & DLCC, Jon Mackenzie Autotest at Curborough on 8<sup>th</sup> March..... but I was unable to do that as I left for WRC Rally Mexico at 0400 on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>!

Anyway, November 2019 was fairly hectic with WRC Rally Australia being cancelled, just as we arrived in Coffs Harbour on the Wednesday, due to horrendous bush fires, it was absolutely the right decision but left us stuck there till Sunday. Then we were back on schedule and off to Ad Diriyah, Saudi Arabia for rounds 1 and 2 of Jaguar ipace e-Trophy Season 2.

2020 got off to a good start, mid January, with 10 days in southern France for WRC Rally Monte Carlo – with R5 tests, recce and then the rally, with everything typical of Monte – snow, ice, sun, late nights working and early starts!

February got very busy with 4 days in North Wales with Matt Edwards on the Cambrian Rally – a great win for Matt and M-Sport. Three days later it was off to Mexico, leaving at 0500 on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February for round 3 of the Jaguar ipace e-Trophy. A lot warmer and dryer than North Wales!

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February I was off to Ireland for R5 tarmac testing at Cork. Quite a contrast from Mexico with snow, rain, sunshine and storm Jorge! - making the ferry crossing interesting too. Got back home late Friday evening, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March I did the Wigton MC Spring Autotest - at last an Autotest! A great club event at Maryport. However, I was only using our road going Micra .....I've been driving to work in it every day since Christmas! A bit different to my white Autotest Micra..... a heavy road car, no LSD, and a full 5-speed gearbox was going to make things hard work. So, I was pleased to end 1<sup>st</sup> in class and 3<sup>rd</sup> overall behind the lightweight Nova 'specials' of Warren Gillespie and Jack Palmer. A great event and good to meet with some other WMC members.

The following Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> March, it was another early start, leaving at 0330, off to Mexico again, for the WRC round this time. We had a few problems and then the Sunday run was cancelled, shortening the rally. Anyway, Friday ended with a late service and not getting back to the hotel till 0100 Saturday, then it was up at 0400 to get to Leon Airport. We had 2 cars retire and the decision was to get as many people back to the UK before airports 'locked down' due to Coronavirus! We were due to land at Manchester at 0620 Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March..... So, I could do the West Cumbria Motorsports Club Autotest at Workington then!!



We had a hire car from Manchester to Dovenby – then I drove straight to the venue at Dunmail Park, arriving at 0945 just in time to walk the tests ready for a 1030 start. Dad had got the blue Micra there, tyres changed and ready to go..... talk about ‘arrive-n-drive’ - 5,653 miles, 3 aeroplanes, a hire car, a micra and 23 hours 45 minutes travelling – to do an Autotest !!

Another great ‘club autotest’ and I was very pleased to end 3<sup>rd</sup> overall, in a road car, behind a lightweight mini saloon and a mini special, a couple of penalties late pm, dropped me down from 2<sup>nd</sup> overall..... Jet lag setting in!

I need a rest! Looks like that is going to happen with the Coronavirus situation taking hold.

TC

### Barry Lindsay:

#### Malcolm Wilson Rally



Malcolm Wilson Rally saw the first rally for myself as part of Team Wigton. I’ll provide updates as the season goes on but its not looking like the year I had expecting to be doing with every event currently cancelled to May at the earliest. The MWR was the second round of the SG Petch AN-ECCC stage Championship which myself and navigator Caroline Lodge are planning to contest. We’d already taken a maximum points score from the Jack Frost rally at the wheel of Steve Petch’s Fiesta S2000T he gave us for the prize of winning the 2019 championship.

MWR started well for Caroline and myself as we built up a 30sec class lead through Hobcarton,

Comb, Wythop and Greystoke before service. Following a check over and new Front tyres we headed to Grizedale for a push in forest we know quite well. However 2mile into the 18mile the gear linkage broke in neutral as we ground to a halt. Under the bonnet I quickly got it into 3<sup>rd</sup> gear which I figured would be best. However time and a good result was lost getting through. We opted to keep going travelling back to service to repair as the spares were readied at Penrith to be fitted in the 20min service. The small team got the car back into fine fettle for the last stage through Greystoke.

On leaving the start line of Greystoke though the Peugeot 206 was left with no drive again. This time however it wasn’t linkage related. The splines had sheared off the driveshaft inside the diff. Not the way we wanted our local event to end but time to reprep ready for when the season restarts.

Barry Lindsay



# Inside The Industry

Paul Gilligan has his say

## Inside the Industry

### Coronavirus

There really isn't another story currently. I'm typing this on March 15<sup>th</sup> so whatever I say will have been completely overtaken by events before anyone reads it. Already we've seen the F1 season abandoned probably until June at the earliest. The day after organisers announced the Geneva Motor Show was going ahead they announced it wasn't to the fury of manufacturers who lost a fortune as a result. Rally Mexico has been shortened, Rally Argentina postponed and future WRC rounds are in severe doubt. Ferrari are closing both their F1 and road car production departments for at least two weeks.

The virus started in China of course and the effect on the industry there has been dramatic. China is now the World's largest car market (or was until Coronavirus arrived). In February 80% of Chinese car dealers were closed and the remaining 20% did little business with new car sales 92% down on February 2019. Now 80% of the showrooms are open but mainly with skeleton staff and doing little business. This is really hurting manufacturers already reeling for reducing sales in many markets (like the UK) and the vast investments required for the development of electric and self-driving cars.

Now the same virtual stop in car sales is happening in Italy, Spain and to an extent France. Whilst in the UK we don't (yet?) have the draconian rules being imposed in other countries the industry is feeling the pain already. March is the most important new car sales month of the year in the UK (see below) and dealers already report showroom traffic dropping. I was talking to a Nissan dealer a few days ago who had a healthy number of cars sold for March in advance and having been very short of attractive used car stock so far this year was much looking forward to the part exchanges against new deliveries arriving. Now he says he's got the cars but few customers and so is running out of space to store them. With this situation looking like it will go on for months yet manufacturers and dealers face a very difficult time and amongst the dealers at least there will sadly be casualties. As there will be in many other industries of course, particularly travel and hospitality.

### Ford To Cut Almost Half Its UK Dealers

My regular reader may recall that a long time, maybe about 2 years, ago I wrote the Ford couldn't carry on with the number of dealers they had. Reason being that over the last 35 years Ford's share of UK new car sales has dropped from around 33% to around 10%. Although the market has increased over that period it still means that Ford dealer who in the 1980s shared around 500,000 new car sales now share around 200,000 so in simple terms there just isn't enough cake to go around.

Over time Ford have allowed the number of sales points to reduce by natural wastage from a peak of around 650 dealers to around 400. Now they have announced that they will accelerate the process and by 2025 will have around 220 sales dealers so about 180 will go. Of course Ford are not alone. Two years ago Vauxhall announced they would reduce the number of dealers by about a third and these cuts will come into effect in the next few months. Honda are doing similar.

To the end of February this year the average Ford dealer sold 60 new cars. VW have similar total sales but less dealers so their average dealer sold just over 100 new cars. Top performer was Mercedes where the average was 136 cars per dealer. Audi and BMW also topped 100.

**Ford have said their aim is that over 90% of UK customers will be no more than**



30 minutes drive time away from a Ford sales point. It is the smaller dealers who will go so if your local Ford dealer is a small one and less than 30 minutes drive from a big one it's a good bet that small dealer won't be selling new Fords for much longer. Ford hope these smaller dealers will stay on as service dealers but the general reaction from the dealers so far is only if the deal on the table for the Service Franchise is significantly improved.

With all the problems facing the industry I can't help wondering for how much longer Ford will be making and selling cars in Europe. General Motors sold out to PSA and seem happy with the outcome. Ford are moving closer to VW and I could envisage VW taking over Ford's European car business and Ford adding VW's van business to their own which is already very successful. Which would mean less dealers again of course?

#### At Least PSA Are Happy Or Were Until Coronavirus Arrived

PSA which is Peugeot, Citroen, Vauxhall, Opel and currently merging also with Fiat Chrysler recently announced record financial results for 2019. Vauxhall Opel came into profit in 2018 after 20 consecutive years of massive losses under General Motors and results improved further in 2019. PSA say they are now "Eager to enter a new era with the projected merger with Fiat Chrysler". Of course that's what they were saying a few weeks ago, things may have changed!

#### For UK Dealers It All Hangs On March

In the UK March is by far the biggest new car sales month with the arrival this year of the new 20 registration plate. So a good performance in March is vital for new car dealers, have a bad March and you pretty well guarantee a bad year. Some come into the month licking wounds from January and February. Alfa Romeo are 23% down against last year, Citroen -15%, Hyundai - 23%, Mazda - 39%, Mitsubishi -43%, Renault -32%, Subaru - 68%, and Suzuki -63%. Ford although only 8% down won't have enjoyed being beaten by VW in February.

It's a very rough number but if a dealer targets to sell 100 new cars in the month of March they would normally expect to have around 50 order "in the bank" by end February and sell the other 50 during March itself. And that's the 50 that are in danger at least in part from the arrival of the virus. Will the British public "Keep Calm & Carry On"? Reports are mixed so far. I really hope for my many dealer friends that the damage isn't too great. It's ironic that just when we got over the uncertainties of Brexit and the Election this dreadful situation arrived.

#### More Details Emerge From Aston Martin

The rescue plan for Aston has change a little (!) in the last few days. Because of the market volatility caused by Coronavirus the issue price for the new shares has been slashed by 86% from £2.07 to 30p! The total amount to be raised has increased from £500M to £536M. The consortium led by Lawrence Stroll will now end up with a 25% share rather than 16.7%. They have also agreed to increase the short term loan they are making to the company from £55.5M to £75.5M to give Aston breathing space until sales of their new SUV start helping out.

Mr. Stroll will take over as Chairman as soon as the paperwork is all complete and he obviously intends this to be a "hand on" role. For many years he's been the Ferrari importer for Canada so doesn't lack experience and wants Aston to be the British Ferrari". They are to stop building unsold cars which they then have to discount to sell so production of sports cars will reduce but margins will increase. Aston acknowledge they have some pain, considerable pain, to come to move the current "excess" stock so if you're looking for a bargain new Aston Martin sports car now's the time!

#### Jaguar Plan For A Brighter Future

Jaguar have not had a good time recently. Last year they sold 161000 cars globally which was almost 11% down on 2018. This is a tiny number when compared to the likes of BMW and Mercedes meaning Jag can't achieve the economies of scale needed to compete on price with their German rivals. Saloons are Jaguar's big problem. The XF achieved 50% of the 2018 sales at 15000 units (a tiny number) and the smaller XE was 15% down at 26000 units. Even their best seller the F-Pace was 14% down.

Coming soon is a new XJ to be pure electric and in addition there will be a flagship SUV to be called J-Pace, again pure electric. The electric I-Pace will continue for a few years more it is thought. The F-Pace is due a major facelift soon as well, which is important as it's easily Jaguar's top seller at 48500 units last year. F Type sports car sold only just over 7000 last year.

So while Jaguar are greatly looking forward to the new electric flagships and facelifted F-Pace they are left to wrestle with the problems of what to do about XE, XF, & F-Type. Can anyone imagine a Jaguar range without saloons and a sports car? You might have to get used to it.

Paul Gilligan

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# Andy's Armchair

## Andy Armstrong takes an irreverent look at motoring and motorsport

When all the stormy weather was blighting our shores we had to make a couple of trips to Glasgow as we were attending indoor athletics events at the Emirates Arena. The journeys there and back weren't exactly straightforward as the wind was wild and the sleet and snow showers were enough to bring out the gritters and cut vision down to pretty short distances, but we managed well enough. Anyway when we got there we met a friend whose first question was "which train did you come up on?" Train, haven't been on one for about fifteen years we told her and the conversation progressed from there. Basically she now looks on her car for local work and anything resembling a "proper" drive involves taxis and railway or air travel, she was actually quite amazed we'd used a motorway. Needless to say that got me thinking, maybe this is why some people don't see a problem with electric vehicles and even look forward to driverless cars, they don't actually like driving, something which I and most car club members must find anathema.

Basically I love driving and when I'm going anywhere the drive is part of the fun, the longer the better as far as I'm concerned, but I suspect kindred spirits are getting less as time goes by. When you consider this, it explains why politicians are continually kicking us as very few of them have any concept of driving other than getting from A to B. Electric range, no worries, use the train, driverless cars, lovely just sit there and relax.

Couple this with all the driver aids we now have, and you can see clearly that the objective is to make driving so bland, that even if you want to treat it as a skill which you can be proud of doing well the opportunity of using your own senses and judgment are gradually being eroded. Park assist, auto boxes, auto braking, hill start assist, sat nav, auto lights and wipers, tiredness warning etc etc the list goes on and on, for someone brought up on a choke, crash gearbox, cross ply tyres, vacuum driven wipers, drum brakes etc a lot of it seems so unnecessary to be honest.

I think this point was further driven home to me recently when the government were reported to be concerned about the pollution caused by wood burning stoves. I've no great knowledge of these, but apparently they emit particulates which are damaging to health, even the kiln dried wood recommended as the best fuel to burn isn't that much cleaner than coal and wet wood is the satanic equivalent of diesel in a car engine. Worrying you might think, so are the government going to ban them like they're intending to do with the internal combustion engine? Well no they're not because stoves are POPULAR, and in some cases essential. Ironical really, because for many people non electric cars are POPULAR and in some cases essential so surely we should be dealt with using the same criteria. Unfortunately what we like isn't important even though every year that passes car emissions continue to improve and by the time they're eventually banned I suspect problems caused by them could be at worst negligible. Why isn't there a level playing field?

Finally, as the new competition season hove's into view can I take this opportunity to wish all of you who are taking to the track or stage a successful and safe year. We'll quite possibly be there watching and cheering on the Wigton contingent.

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