

Wigton Motor Club Ltd

Start Line

Issue 10/20

www.wigtonmc.co.uk

October 2020

A Super Afternoon Run



John Ross ran a great afternoon tour along the Broder at thee dn of last month.

More photos inside.

Motorsport for All

Club Officials

OFFICIALS

<i>President:.</i>	<i>Charles Graves</i>	
<i>Vice Pres.</i>	<i>Ron Palmer & David Turnbull,</i>	
<i>Sec/Editor</i>	<i>Graeme Forrester</i>	gtfmg@yahoo.co.uk
<i>Treasurer</i>		
<i>Membership Sec</i>	<i>John Sloan</i>	wigtonmcmemb@outlook.com
<i>Social Sec.:</i>	<i>Charles Graves</i>	charles.graves@armathwaite-hall.com
<i>Child Protect.</i>	<i>Alan Jackson</i>	bigwalk1@gmail.com
<i>Equipment Officer</i>	<i>Graeme Mactavish</i>	gmact123@gmail.com

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Graham	jl86mpa@hotmail.co.uk
Lynda Graham.	jl86mpa@hotmail.co.uk
Andrew Graham	andy-lake3rec@hotmail.co.uk
Jim Crockett	jamesmccrockett@yahoo.co.uk
Chris Leece	chris_1lowtherview@yahoo.co.uk
John Sloan	johnsloan02@outlook.com
Ron Palmer	ronpalmer777@hotmail.com
David Agnew	DAVIDWAGNEW@aol.com
Rob Grant	robincumbria@hotmail.com ,
John Holliday	johnholl403@gmail.com ,

Visit the Facebook page for the latest news, or the webpage at
www.wigtonmc.co.uk

Talking Point

Topical Comment from the world of motoring

The lockdown situation has seen lots of activity from Motorsport UK in terms of training and discussion on a variety of topics which are well worth watching on the webinars on the MSUK website.

One recent suggestion is to have “hubs” of clubs to run bigger events and to generally support each other. Of course, this is not new but still very worthwhile. The Association of North East & Cumbria Car Clubs is divided into three Motor Sport Groups, Tyne, Tees and Cumbria, due to the size of the ANECCC area. These groups work to co-ordinate events and produce calendars and avoid date clashes. Sadly, there are now far fewer clubs and far fewer events than there were 30 years ago, indeed the number of active clubs in the Cumbria MSG is less than half what it was then.

The CMSG promoted the Tour of Cumbria Rally which morphed into the Pirelli with eight clubs have an equal share in the event and each providing an organising committee member. This went well until the event had to move to Kielder and the shares were returned to the clubs. When there was a big demand for forest allocations the MSA, as it was then, arranged three of the clubs to work together to run the Lakeland Stages which then became the Malcolm Wilson Rally .

WMC have been involved in several successful collaborations. For a number of years, we co organised the Autumn Stages with our friends in South of Scotland Car Club, an event that gave Colin McRae his first forest rally win. Later we worked with the MG CC in Scotland with the Knockhill National Sprint before running it ourselves in the later years. Just last year we helped SoSCC with their round of the BTRDA Autotest Championship at Maryport.

Over the years though, clubs have tended become more specialist in particular disciplines and perhaps drifted apart rather than clubs running a variety of events for everyone.

As a club has, we have fortunately been able to build up plenty of equipment over the years we have always been pleased to loan this to other local clubs, as with our Wharton clocks for rally timing. I am sure this level of co-operation can be revived to the benefit of everyone. We are already looking at hoe we can help Fellside AC with the Northern Trial as they won't be able to get in the forests. Please see the note in this issue.

GTF

Editor: Graeme Forrester

Email: gtfmg@yahoo.co.uk

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Forthcoming Club Events

It is very difficult to say what events, will or won't, take place given the current lockdowns with the pandemic. Ultimately, government directives, Motorsport UK advise and plain common sense will prevail.

Hopefully we will have a touring event on October 25th and we will email details out nearer the time.

Sadly the planned breakfast meets at the Motor House won't take place as they would contravene the Rule of Six.

We asked members what their views were and the overwhelming view was that it was inappropriate to run any competitive events at this time on grounds and health and safety but perhaps more importantly, on the basis of good PR. If other groups, hobbies, interests and even jobs are unable to function at this time then it would look bad if we ran autotests or rallies which may also bring people in from other area. Therefore everything is on hold. As with everything else caused by COVID, things change almost daily and we can but urge members to keep safe and we will get out to play again when it is safe.

In the meantime Ron has come up with a brilliant idea which you can read about in his column and hopefully we can keep these going each month.

Club Touring Event

October 25th.

By Dave Nicholson

Details will be emailed out in due course.

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PG Tips

Peter Reflects On His Month

It's been a quiet car month for a change – Barry is still broken but the replacement engine is now sat next to it in the garage ready for.....well.....ready for me to either get brave and do it myself or find the money to get JDM to do it. So far the electrics and multitude of connectors are scary enough looking to make me start saving up. I wouldn't want to start the job and then end up getting stuck with it in bits in my garage!

I had a nice road trip down to Oxfordshire to collect my new trailer for Barry and what a great little thing it is too. If any of you have a 7 type kit car or single seater the trailer is probably the perfect device. Built by a company called the alloy trailer company, it is super light, narrow enough to fit into a single garage and can be dismantled to store it by undoing a selection of pins. It tilts, and the load bed can also be used as a set of ramps to work on the car. The total weight of the thing is only 190kg and due to this it can be towed by someone without the specific driving licence class required to tow a larger braked trailer. It tows beautifully (unladen only so far) – in fact I could barely tell I was towing on the way back. I haven't yet tried to put Barry on it but it has an electric winch as standard and all in all it's a very clever little thing. The price of a new one is a bit eye watering but thankfully I didn't pay anything like that which makes it even more pleasing.

The trip to collect it was very undramatic with surprisingly few road works or delays – which is in total contrast to West Cumbria where the county council seem to have a vast budget to resurface roads at the moment and traffic lights and road closures are a weekly occurrence. One thing I have noticed about all these new road surfaces is that they don't seem to be as smooth as they look. I don't know if anyone else has noticed this, but the new sections of surface on the Distington bypass and the Maryport to Cockermouth road both cause significant vibrations in my cars – as though the surface is ribbed. Very odd and surely not intentional? The first time I went on the new surface on the bypass I thought there was something wrong with my car it was so bad.

My plans for the Astra are spiralling out of control.....supercharging! Seemingly the Z22se engine in the car was thrown into every budget and Eco car that GM produced in the US for several years, but when they wanted to produce 'hot' versions of them there wasn't room for a V8 or much else. So as seemed to be a bit of a trend in the early noughties (Mini, Various Mercs) they created a bolt on supercharger kit and almost doubled the power of the engine. Owning a supercharged car is on my bucket list and there are probably cheaper and easier ways of doing it (a rusty old C180 Kompressor springs to mind!) I've got the Astra close perfect now and invested a lot of my time in it – it's also a very easy car to drive and maintain. Apparently a man called Jeff in the US will sell me the kit for not much money at all, and then I need to fit it and get it remapped in Norfolk...Norfolk being the sting in the tail! Seemingly Courtenay Sport in Norfolk are the only UK firm with the necessary software to remap the standard ECU to run a supercharger. That's going to be a bit of a road trip. Obviously in the meantime I may come to my senses and sell the thing and do something else totally different!

Corona Virus goes on and I don't want to start a row over masks, which seem to be a very emotive subject for some, but I do marvel at the people driving around in their own car on their own wearing a mask! I can't fathom what purpose they think it's serving or why they would want to wear one – they aren't exactly comfortable or fun. I notice that Motorsport UK have mandated them for people in outdoor areas at events which is also a bit nonsensical but I guess it is them trying to be so safe that no one could protest and claim motorsport was not safe.....not in a Covid way at any rate.

Gretna Social Run

Changing Times

There are so many unexpected consequences of the pandemic that I have a lot of sympathy with our leaders. Whatever they do someone will say it is wrong. For the past twenty years we have seen a steady move to remote working which has allowed people to live in a pleasant area and not have hours of commuting each week. However the virus lockdown has brought this about in huge numbers, this has been good in that it cuts traffic and pollution levels but at the same time the city workers are not buying their lunches near their place of work and thousands of jobs are being lost in cafes etc. Thus, the government is wanting people to go back to the office again. On the other hand, those workers who are not commuting or buying lunch will be a fair bit better off and will be spending their money in different ways.

Similarly, in our motorised hobbies, there are winners and losers. Sadly, there have been redundancies at M Sport with no major rallies in Europe. Nationally lots of small rally preparation teams have suddenly lost their income. It was good to see that CAI Motorsport have diversified into making bespoke camper vans. On the other hand, racing and karting seem to have bounced back with quite a few nice new motorhomes in the paddock.

Firms that supply classic car parts and restoration companies seem to be doing well with many people doing restorations and jobs they had not previously got around to.

On the other hand, there are the third level of commercial activity that relies to a certain extent on our activities. Take for example a simple classic car tour. We use cafes etc for the start, lunch and tea halts so perhaps 80 to 100 meals at each. The participants may well buy gifts etc as well. We buy rally plates, finishers awards, folders, stationery etc from local firms.

The Classic Show involves venue hire, hiring loos, barriers, PA systems, attendance awards and trophies, printing of programmes, admission tickets, signage and markers. Again, all from local firms. And of course, it is not just our events, From Easter to October there are village, country, dog shows and sports every weekend that rely on the same providers. Some like the PA man will have had virtually no income this year. Groups like cadets, scouts and Road Table do car parking duties so will not get donations.

Each year we support two local charities chosen by members, mainly from the income raised at Drive It Day which of course has not happened this year. So many fund raising events had bitten the dust this year that many of these worthwhile causes will be really suffering.

Hopefully, things will get back to some sort of normality next year.



Clubs Past & Present

Last week I was sending some emails out to the members clubs of the Cumbria Motor Sport Group and it occurred to me that over the years we have lost more clubs than we have left, some being large clubs and some with a distinguished past.

Starting in the south of the county we had Vickers (Barrow) MC who were a works club of over 700 members, membership gave lots of benefits and the use of facilities and the excellent "Spotlight" was distributed by internal mail. Although mains involved in autotests trials and 12 cars they were excellent at providing marshals for local stage rallies. They also ran a stage event on the Vickers owned Walney airfield on a couple of occasions. Sadly, the takeover by BAE and a loss of key committee members say the club wound up about 20 years ago.

Furness & DMC was a big force in rallying with Motoring News Championship events like the R.L. Brown and the clubber Towers Leck plus the Festival Stage Rally. Like many road rally clubs it falters after "selective" type rallies were banned and exists today purely to run the excellent Grizedale Stages.

There was a Whitehaven Motor Club at one point although I can't remember much about it. It may have merged with West Cumberland who was a great road rally club with the Peak Revs Rally and the Fellside Stages. Just up the road there was the USSO Motor Club another works club which morphed into Workington & DMC with again rallying top of the agenda with the Derwent and Wyrkentonian events. In more recent times West Cumberland and Workington merged to become West Cumbria MSC.

Over the hill there was for a short time a Keswick Motor Club and I can remember an autocross being held at Castle head. Silloth had a motor club although it was purely for treasure hunts which were extremely popular at the time. Long gone, I think.

Nearer home there was a John Peel MC which was based in Caldbeck but had a short life, I seem to remember it was a reaction to other local clubs becoming RAC affiliated. Another club to last only a few years was Dalston MC which ran twelve car rallies out with the system and in the same area there was the Black & Reds which I remember as mainly bike orientated.

Cumberland Sporting CC were the main Carlisle based club with some super road rallies and the odd autotest. Interest fell away although it still exists in name only as the permit holder for the Pirelli Rally, which will re appear as the Kielder Rally next year hopefully.

Spadeadam MC were always an active "works" club when the Blue Streak programme was at its height and was perhaps the last local club to become RAC affiliated.

The current Eden Valley MC was formed in the mid eighties but there was a club of the same name some years before.

Kirkby Lonsdale MC were another big rallying club with the Devil's Own being a Motor News round right up to the final year of the series. More recently they have got involved with the Barbon Hill Climb that was previously run by Westmorland MC. Barbon was the main event in Cumberland for many years and the annual British Championship round attracted up to 5000 spectators and the car park was always full of interesting cars (long before we had classic car shows). Westmorland did well financially from it and bought an area of fellside for their bike trials. They dropped out of the hill climb with their share and expertise being taken by Liverpool MC.

Morecambe CC are another major club that has gone. The Illuminations Rally was another MN round and the Mind and Bitter was a farm track stage rally. They also ran some great autotests at Halton. Tony Mason cut his teeth there.

In the Kendal area there was a short lived club called “Blue Ramblers” which were mainly ex KLMC folk, but I think it only lasted about five years.

Sporting trials were originally covered by Cumberland Sporting CC as in those days’ clubs covered all disciplines. However, the trials folk decided to do their own thing with the Norther Sporting CC but at some point, there was a disagreement and there were two clubs for a while. It is now down to the Northern Phoenix Trials Car Club who run events over a wide area of the NW.

For years the Civil Service Motoring Association (CSMA) were active in the county with a huge membership in local government and at BNFL. They had a good marshals team for a while as well and nationally they entered a team of cars in the RAC Rally for many years.

Fellside AC were formed about 25 years ago to run classic trials and PCTs in the county.

The Cumberland Centre of the 750MC were active in the north of the county in the 60s and obviously lots of activities with Austin 7 specials of various types. One adventure involved driving one up Skiddaw. Doing that today would give the greeny folk kittens! Sadly the centre was dissolved after the club HQ reclaimed all the money from the centres so the local stalwarts set up a new club under the Eden Valley MC name but it never really got off the ground. My thanks to Ed Glaister and Ron Palmer for their background to those clubs

One of the key features of a club is its club magazine and every club used to have one, all typed and printed on Roneo or Gestetner duplicated, collated, folded, stuffed into envelopes, address and stamps put on before posting each month. There were some really good magazines over the years. Editors swap magazines and there was a time when I got around 15 from local and not so local clubs but now sadly I only get them from KLMC, West Cumbria and Spadeadam.

One of the best magazines was from Furness which was edited by Derek Varty, an antiquarian book seller from Ambleside. He must have had a lot of time on his hands waiting for his books to get old and the amount of time he must have put into the magazine was huge, it even had a rather difficult crossword each month. He had a personal registration DV8 so his editorial was “Deviations” and he had a command of language possible rather greater than most of his readers! I wonder if FDMC have those archived?

During lockdown there has been quite a bit on online interest in motorsport history and there are FB pages for Cumbrian Rallying and Croft Racing that will be of interest to members. We do have our magazines going back to the 60s, plus minute books and roads books for some of the rallies we ran. These will all go in the office at the Motor House and be fully listed and archived and be available for members to view.

If anyone has any memories of other local clubs that I may have missed I’d love to hear from you.

Northern Trial

Myke Pocock is looking for new venues for the Northern Trial in February as the local forests will not be available. If you have any ideas or venues please email Myke on

mykepocock@yahoo.co.uk

From The Top

News from UK Motorsport,

The roots of all sports governing bodies lie in the fabric of rules and regulations; and of course, they emerged as people wanted to make sure that things were kept fair, and enjoyable. And in the case of motorsport – safe. Danger has always been an unwelcome ingredient of motorsport – albeit our ability to manage it has quite impressively kept up with our increasing inability to countenance its existence.

So, the subject is never far from the forefront of discussion, and all of us are well versed in planning and mitigating danger in all its forms for those competing in a vehicle. With that in mind, it has not been a great surprise that the community has dealt with the dangers and consequences of COVID-19 in such an effective and successful way. When the pandemic first struck, I was not alone in fearing that motorsport would not return at all in 2020. So, it is a massive thank you to everyone in the whole of our motorsport community that we have been able to get racing, rallying and competing in every other discipline this summer.

In fact, the level of events and entries is not too far behind this time last year, which is a wonderful endorsement of everyone's passion and enthusiasm. It also shows how safe people feel to be back in their respective venues. We took a lot of time crafting the 'Back to Racing' guidelines, and that has a good deal to do with why the events have been able to restart; but it also demonstrates how brilliantly organisers, officials and marshals have risen to the challenge. However, we always said that it may be necessary to review aspects of the guidelines as circumstances change.

The spectre of a second wave of the pandemic has always been there, and now it is emerging in significant numbers. It is different to the first wave, and thankfully at the moment it is not proving to be as disastrous; but we are heading into winter and all that brings.

We are allowed to run motorsport events under special permission of the Government (via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport), based upon the premise that we are able to implement mitigations to the effects of what can only be termed a 'mass gathering' in most events. And now the goalposts have moved, and in the wrong way.



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The ‘rule of six’ could, in theory, stop sports events overnight, even though we operate in the open air with plenty of space. The reality is that the sport does need people to come together in clusters, whether it is the paddock, event administration, marshalling, or in the pits. And some disciplines are more challenged than others, especially karting. We have listened carefully to the feedback over the summer, and one subject that kept coming to the fore was the concerns expressed around face coverings. From the restart on the 4th July, we adopted a somewhat less than prescriptive approach to the wearing of face coverings, with advisories in certain areas and circumstances.

However, it left a large number of our community feeling very nervous and vulnerable. We need to recognise that a significant proportion of our volunteer workforce is somewhat older and therefore quite rightly needs to observe greater care than the young. Perhaps the most worrying thing was that even in areas where we had become prescriptive (such as on a kart dummy grid), there were some who refused to comply and flaunted the need to cover their face.

“We need to make sure that our particular sport is doing everything it can to justify being allowed to run.” So, the combination of the Government changes imposed on the 14th September, and the feedback from our community, led us to a new position that we have implemented to tie in with the new Government legislation. Our first priority has always been to keep you and everyone in our community safe, but also those we come into contact with externally, and ultimately the key workers that have managed the crisis so well. But beyond this we seek to protect our ability to compete. The Government has made it clear that they will do whatever needs to be done to control the infection rate, and that there are certain sectors, such as schools, that need to be preserved as long as possible.

Sport is recognised as having great social benefits, and generates billions for the economy, but it would be easy for us to be closed down in favour of other sectors. We need to make sure that our particular sport is doing everything it can to justify being allowed to run, and if that means going above and beyond what is technically allowed across the country then we will do so. None of the decisions have been taken lightly and all with the advice of experts, led by Dr Paul Trafford, who is our Chief Medical Officer and COVID-19 Medical Officer.

We have already had feedback and made some tweaks to the guidelines, but the broad message is that we all need to be wearing face coverings, where required, at motorsport events. It is frustrating, but better this than run the risk of passing on infection or for our sport to be closed down. Motorsport is the thing that brings us all together in a vibrant community of 65,000 people, with a shared passion. I know that together we can ensure that the sport can be run safely – it is in our DNA – and that we can lobby the authorities to permit us to carry on looking after everyone’s interests. We really need your support to make sure this is successful, and to demonstrate that to everyone watching.

Stay safe and secure, with best regards to you and your families.

Kind regards,

Hugh Chambers CEO, Motorsport UK

Classic Column

News from the Classic and Historic Scene

Sadly the family that have published *Classic Motor & Autojumbler* have decided to cease publication after 31 years. They had suspended publication when the virus hit as there were no shows etc to publicise and advertising revenue disappeared.

A Woke Moke?



It was the car of choice for summers in the late '60s and can still be spotted today, breezing about holiday resorts with a full complement of happy faces aboard. And now the classic Mini Moke is to be reborn for 2021 as an electric runaround.

To help get noticed before jumping onto the electric car bandwagon, Moke International has relaunched the classic 1960s funster, but despite its simplicity it

comes with a sobering price of £20,000.

The latest Moke features a 1083cc, four-cylinder petrol engine sourced from Chery in China. It musters 68bhp which can propel the little car to a breezy 68 mph and is offered with a choice of automatic or manual transmission. The Moke's suspension is updated to independent Macpherson struts at the front and trailing arms at the rear, fitted with coil springs instead of the original's hydrolastic system. Brakes are discs for the front wheels and drums for the rear. Power steering is an added luxury that will make original Moke owners a tad envious.

The bare-bones utilitarian design is essentially unchanged from the car that gained a global cult following, including starring in [The Prisoner TV series](#) – and several reboots – after it went on sale in 1964. For safety reasons there's a roll cage, but you won't find windows or doors. Inside there are four waterproof seats and a single-speaker stereo. Weatherproofing comes in the form of a tent-like structure that covers the whole car, promptly mists up and causes much cursing – if past experience is anything to go by.

It's hardly surprising then that the new Mokes have become popular in the Caribbean and the South of France where hotels use them as courtesy cars, and rental firms hire them out to fun-and-sun-seeking tourists.

Moke International has just launched the car in the U.K. in a range of 13 bright colors from Barts Blue to Flamingo Pink, with prices starting at £20,000.

A New Arrival

Eric and Lynn Little have a new toy to play with!



Fang



Some of you may have noticed the “Chowinis” decal that has been subtly displayed on the back of my car for the last 35 years. Not long after I bought my Celica in January 1977, I was posted to Hong Kong for 12 months - which then rapidly grew into my initial seven years in the colony. “Fang” as my car has always been affectionately known, was then stored at my parents house in Fleetwood, for use when home on leave. During my first few years Hong Kong I enjoyed the benefits of a company car and driver, but from 1982-85 while working for the MTR, I needed to buy my own car. Having a Celica at both ends was the ideal solution. In those days, motor sport in Hong Kong was not such a big thing, but there was a rather tasty outlet in North Point called “Chowinis” that had plenty of interesting motor sports equipment, mainly focused on Toyota. Mr Chow was into motor sports in a big way, most notably in the Macau Grand Prix, with Corolla Levins and 1st generation Celicas.

Bill Sykes



North Coast 500

A few years ago, I realised that while world travel was exciting, to my shame I'd never been North of that formidable line between Fort William and Inverness, the 'Great Glen'. I wasn't scared of getting a nosebleed above a certain longitude. I simply never had a reason to go this far North.

When the North Coast 500 was announced, I realised there was an adventure on my doorstep, (not literally, as I live in Dumfries) that was just begging to be enjoyed. Initially, the missus and I planned it for 2015 but life, and something a bit more serious in 2018 got in the way. But having recovered, we agreed 2019 would be the year.

However reliable our ten year old MX5 had been, the trip was to be improved somewhat as 2019 coincided with an upgrade to a much newer MX5, the 'Recaro' version, with all sorts of goodies, but most importantly a 2 Litre turbo power unit that pushes it along like poop off a Spear & Jackson. However, it has veeery low profile tyres and no spare wheel and I began to get a bit neurotic about this, as I couldn't imagine a can of skooshy cream filling a hole in the side of a ripped tyre. No space saver would even look at the boot which is tiny and after all, once we had packed a spare pair of pants and one toothbrush between us, even a hamster's wheel wouldn't have gone into the miniscule boot space.

So I bought an extra can of skooshy foam, to be sure, to be sure, and knew that driving in daylight hours should make any breakdown easier to deal with. We needn't have worried however as the roads in the north of Haggisland are generally of much better quality than further South, with potholes a rarity.

Early in 2019, our planning started and I began discussing the forthcoming trip with folk I knew had already done it. Human nature dictates that most people will do outdoor pursuits, (at least where there is a choice), in a clockwise direction. Just ask any theme park, agricultural show or zoo worker.

Educated thinking suggests however, that the NC500 should be tackled anti-clockwise and most folk suggested this, as from the start line in Inverness, the coast line up the East is fairly flat and relatively uninteresting, even though there are fantastic views across the North Sea, with oil rigs and nice bays to view. By contrast, the rugged and sometimes intimidating scenery to the West of the country is mouth-wateringly spectacular. In essence, the advice to go anti-clock was to 'leave the best to last'. And what wise words these were. Go anti-clockwise.

And here's another gem. If you don't like midgies, consider going before the midges come out. Midgies are bountiful in Scotland between June and September, and in the Highlands, they drive Harley Davidsons and can eat a whole deer without chewing. Go in May.

As Inverness is 250 miles from home, (I should call it the NC 1,000) we spent the first day just getting there, stopping occasionally. The idea was that first thing the next day, we'd head to the official starting point, Inverness Castle, and begin our epic journey.

However Inverness's one way system was clearly designed by a moron, so a lot of time was wasted just trying to figure it out. After ages the castle was finally located but the suggestion by the NC500 organisers that you should have a picture taken with your car at the front of the castle is nuts, as the road to it is blocked by an unmanned electric gate, only accessible by council workers!.

I'd suggest that if you do want to attempt the NC500, you miss out the castle bit and start and finish your trip at an alternative spot, say the railway station, Betfred or the local branch of Anne Summers, just to be able to say you've done the full round-trip. And you could bring your girlfriend a present!.

Go from anywhere but the flaming stupid castle.

Maybe at this point you 'd like to open up a map of the far North of Scotland, to follow the route.



Now if you are thinking of doing this trip, I'm happy to pass on more tips. I had marked a couple of maps with the route and pencil notes of 'things that could be visited if we have the time or the inclination'. About an hour North of Inverness our first tentative stop was at Dunrobin Castle. We were instantly delighted we'd stopped here, as it is a spectacular castle built on a cliff and in the style of a massive French Chateau. The gardens below are also stunning, the café is excellent and the Falconry display was, in itself, worth travelling for. Do try to build this into your itinerary but be prepared, there are tiger skins, with heads still

attached, strewn liberally across the floor in one of the castle's studies. They were probably bagged by someone posh from the back of an elephant before the more pleasant sport of rallying caught on. If looking at dead things isn't to your taste, you can bypass that room. But don't miss Dunrobin Castle.

Small harbours are plentiful up the East coast and occasionally a grandly named 'heritage museum' will be on offer. Beware. In reality, most are fairly amateur efforts, having been assembled by locals but predictably, all seem to have a gift shop attached where tat is aplenty if that's your thing.

In this regard things don't improve at all on arrival at John 'O Groats, the most Northerly mainland tat station in the UK, so having had the obligatory picture taken at the famous signpost we were keen to make tracks, now heading Westward along the North Coast to our first overnight halt at Bettyhill, just about half way between John'O Groats (JOG) and Cape Wrath, a formidable place with an evocative name. More on this later.

While at John O' Groats, I was genuinely amazed to see that the Orkneys were only a few miles away and that they weren't surrounded by a big black wall, as they are on every map of Scotland I've ever seen!. Who knew?. Bright summer sunshine made them positively attractive.

A visit to the Castle of Mey, (the Queen Mother's former residence) was short lived as we arrived just as it was closing but at least a short stop at nearby Dunnet Head, actually the most Northerly tip of the UK's mainland and not JOG as some would believe, was worthwhile, to see the Puffins and as it was a fine cool day with no sea haze, almost clear line of sight all the way to Cape Wrath, 114 miles away and the most North Westerly tip of Scotland.

Here's one for Gin drinkers. Go nearby to the most Northerly distillery, Dunnet Bay Distillers and buy some of the award winning Rock Rose Scottish Gin. Nuff said. It'sssh luvly.

A short drive round Thurso gave us the first feel of an old fashioned town typical of the far North and soon we were out on the open flat 'ish' moors, passing the now defunct (or is it?) Dounreay Nuclear Power Station en-route to Bettyhill and while we were stealing glimpses to our left at the looming mountains, we were at the same time becoming more and more aware that the large grey cloud we'd first seen at JOG now looked more like a large black smoke cloud - now right in front of us but still some distance away.

Around ten miles short of Bettyhill, a temporary road sign tried to point us off on a diversion but I ignored it, pretending it wasn't there. To be honest, I've never have learned from warning signs, not even the one that read 'DO NOT TOUCH THIS ELECTRIC FENCE WITH YOUR TESTICLES!'.

Two miles later we rounded a bend onto a long straight stretch where both sides of the road were littered with police cars, fire engines, estate workers 4 X 4's an ambulance and any other vehicle that might be useful when a grass and heather fire breaks out over hundreds of acres on a huge tinder dry moor. There were dozens of uniformed folk standing about and just beyond the vehicles and people, with no one trying to extinguish the flames literally lapping at both sides of the road, we drove cautiously through the now very present and all enveloping cloud (still with the roof down).

A mile later we were out of it again but all the way to Bettyhill, the smell of smoke persisted, mainly because the wind was blowing in our direction toward the North West.



Bettyhill village sits atop a hill, the hotel itself overlooking a large bay of golden sand where the red sunset over the gentle Atlantic waves was truly spectacular. We gathered what few bits we needed to stay the night and arrived at reception to be greeted by a flustered lady who told us they had no power, due to the fire burning through a transformer up a pole some miles away. The power cut didn't stop the local drinkers though, who sat by candlelight scoffing alcohol like it was going out of fashion, other than for a few minutes when they smelt our foreign blood entering their space. Tumbleweed rolled past, a distant church bell rang and if John Wayne had walked in through the

(imaginary) swing doors, I wouldn't have been a bit surprised.

The much more laid back owner appeared next and asked if we intended to dine in the hotel that night?. Considering the nearest restaurant or even Burger King is probably 50 miles away, his question was a bit redundant but on answering yes, he replied. "Well, before the power went off, chef had prepared just eight lamb shanks and if you would like one each, you should say so now before they are snapped up!".

It was a little embarrassing sitting in the dining room, smugly tucking into the most tasty lamb ever, while other later arrivals had ham salad and eyed us enviously.

Day two dawned as bright and sunny as the first so again, down came the roof. First planned port of call was the grandly named and much publicised 'Cocoa Mountain' in Balnakeil, which I'm afraid is more hype than substance. It's just a very ordinary wee café where they sell their own chocolates, in one of the buildings of a disused early warning station, obviously more popular among bikers who probably camp locally overnight and just need some breakfast. Disappointing, I'd give it a miss!.

Having reached Durness, (where John Lennon used to go on his holidays and actually wrote the lovely song 'In My Life') you literally turn sharp 'ninety left' in the village and begin heading South, down the West Coast.

Now, back on that cold and windy evening in February when we had booked our accommodation for the trip, my missus suggested that if we were to visit the North East tip of Scotland, we might as well drive to the North West tip too, even if it wasn't on the route of the NC 500. There's a good reason that you can't drive there, as there is no public road to Cape Wrath!. Undaunted, she found a website offering minibus trips along a potholed dirt track to the lighthouse at Cape Wrath, so I sent the company an email to book two spaces on Tuesday May 14th. Then the fun began.

Two days later I called the company's number and the conversation went something like this with the man on the other end 's responses shown in inverted commas. When reading this part, imagine I'm addressing one of the characters from the old comedy film, Whisky Galore:

Hello is that James?. "Aye". Are you the man that does the trips to Cape Wrath?. "Aye". I sent you an email. Did you get it?. "When did you send it". Two days ago. "Oh I haven'y checked them yet". The name's Proudlock. Can you confirm our booking? "No". Why not?. "Because I don't take bookings". But if I send you a confirmation email or a letter, will that guarantee us a place on the trip?. "No, because if you send me a letter or an email I'll (in a Gaelic accent) Chust lose it". So how do we get a place on the trip?. "Chust phone ,me the day before you get here".

Dear reader, this conversation didn't annoy me one bit, as I'd just had a weird conversation that threw down a challenge I couldn't resist. I was as much intrigued as excited to go to Cape Wrath. The trip to Cape Wrath was, in fact, brilliant. Go to Cape Wrath.

The trip South from Keoldale where the trip to Cape Wrath ended, to our next evening halt at Ullapool was one of two great 'driving' days. We were now in amongst towering mountains and vast open valleys where no walls or hedges spoil your view for miles and miles, making spotting oncoming vehicles and the necessary passing places, very easy. This section also includes a stretch of road that the NC500 organisers insist is not suitable for motorhomes, other than a VW T5 conversion. And I totally agree.



The single track and **extremely** undulating road from Kylesku to Lochinver is beautiful and challenging, with stunning views out across the sea to the isles but no place for a motorhome, as there are very few passing places, meaning that long reverses to get out of a jam are highly likely. And the locals hate to be held up by selfish drivers, incapable of negotiating their access roads in vehicles they can't drive. If you do tackle the NC500 in anything bigger than a car, take a shortcut, stay on the A894 and avoid this loop.

Ullapool is truly a picture postcard town where the ferry to Stornoway can be caught, excellent meals to be had and plenty of space to walk

and admire the scenery and after a good night's sleep we set off for day three, again with the roof down, for our next night halt in Kyle of Lochalsh (which is slightly off piste - but it's allowed as long as you later rejoin the route).

Our first port of call was Corrieshalloch Falls, a perilously deep gorge and a chance to clear any constipation as you wobble across a shoogly bridge, limited to five people at a time for good reason, trying not to look down at the rocky reception awaiting 60 metres below. Then a drive alongside Gair Loch, where I was stupidly looking for the nuclear submarine base, confusing it for Gare Loch which does have submarines but is many miles further South, near Helensburgh. Inverewe Gardens was next, a must for me as an aspiring Monty Don but as the day went on, we were nearing what most of you would consider the highlight of the NC500, Applecross, or more accurately, 'Bealach Na Ba', (the pass of the cattle) with an elevation of 626 metres.



While I revelled in the challenge of getting up this notorious and much loved climb and was flinging the MX5 round the hairpins with a huge grin on my face, I failed to note that my passenger had gone very quiet. It wasn't until I jumped out at the top to take a picture that I was politely instructed "get me out of here". I think you really need to have a slate or two missing to fully enjoy Applecross!. Do Ap

Applecross but not in a motorhome, you'll just spoil everyone else's day and probably burn out the clutch **cos it's steep!**.

I kid you not but the guy who owned our hotel in the Kyle of Lochalsh was a Mr Bates!. He didn't appear to be a psycho but I didn't turn my back on the shower curtain!.

On our final day, again with the roof down, Skye, Eilean Donan Castle, Beaulieu, Loch Ness and so much more were enjoyed on the run back to Inverness and the completion of our route. Not one midge or spot of rain was experienced and frankly, the roads weren't terribly busy, probably all because we went in May. To have done the full 500 miles + (with the odd off-course trip added) felt like quite an accomplishment and to be frank if I did it again I'd take more than four days.

Do the NC500. It's fantastic!.

Roly Proudlock

Elderly Utterances

The Voice of Experience!

Ron Palmer has his say

Autumn can be a great motoring time particularly in the Lakes and Borders where we can find quiet roads to potter along with only the occasional cars, DPD vans and tractors now that the harvest is in and we can share the roads with the new generation electro cyclists without too much hassle. We recently enjoyed the club run organised by John and Christine Ross from Surrone House at Gretna. With the evenings closing in it was necessary to start and finish in daylight so we were off from 3pm and during the course of the 61 mile route we managed to cross the border no less than six times although what Nichola S would have thought of that had she known I'm not so sure. The area covered was broadly from Gretna to Newcastleton and down to Bewcastle and Longtown a very compact route using the best roads in that area, clearly John knows his stuff in planning the route. Casting my mind back, as I do, I recall marshalling on my first RAC rally in 1960 in this area and as part of the 750 MC team I was dropped off by Bob Myers and Ed Glaister at a gate north of Bewcastle which had to be manned to prevent sheep from straying. These days many of the gates have been replaced by cattle grids making for easier passage.

Standing there on my ownsome on a clear frosty night I was probably not aware of the total lack of light pollution and the only sounds being from the sheep which became curious and justified the reason for me controlling the gate. After the course car had passed silence returned until I became aware of a strange distant noise which gradually got louder and soon no less than Erik Carlsson and Stuart Turner arrived in what transpired to be the winning two stroke SAAB. As my reader will know it made a sound resembling an angry hornet and on the overrun 'tring a ling ding ding tring tring' etc but only those who have listened to one driven in anger will truly understand. There was no time to get bored as the field roared past consisting of a mouth watering selection of cars much valued today, Volvo, Jaguars, Sebring Sprites, big Healeys Sunbeams etc . There were no fleece rally jackets in those days and a raincoat had to do to keep off the cold. Anyway after a couple of hours the course closing car swept past and triggered Bob and Ed to collect me on the way home in the wee sma' hours. So I have ever since enjoyed this area and got to know it well as many of the local club events and those from the North East used to venture this far. These days Le Jog, the Tests, The Flying Scotsman and the 1000 mile Trial don't miss an opportunity to visit if the route passes our way. Any way enough nostalgia for now but suffice to say the Club Run was a great success and we look forward to John's next one – don't miss it.

As we face the prospect of perhaps six months or more of restrictions because of Covid I have been thinking of ways we can use our cars in a constructive way on a pre-organised short route. Let's call it a 'Tourally' and it goes like this:-

You will need an OS 1:50,000 map of the area to be used on the event, a Romer, 3B pencil and rubber. Print off the route card instructions from 'Startline' each month. Plot the six figure map references and directions of approach and departure onto the map in the comfort of your own homes, join up the dots and you have the route. Then select a day you want to drive the route and you can choose to go solo or with a navigator and even link up with one or two other crews staying within the legal social limits. Start and finish points may have facilities, if not there will be others close by and you can make your own prior arrangements for food and drinks. In that way you can use any convenient

days and take advantage of good weather, exercise your classic or modern car, have a degree of social mixing (within allowed limits of course) and hone your navigating skills all for the cost of a drop of fuel. The next phase of lockdown needn't be so bad after all.

See separate sheet for an October exercise and have fun.

Ron

TOURALLY Route Instructions

Oct-20

**Coloured
roads only OS
Map 90**

Location		Map Reference	Approach from	Depart to
START	Keswick Reach	206357		NNW
	Lay by			
	via	238387	W	N
	via	264389	N	SE
	via	295397	SW	SE
	via	339386	SW	E
	via	363381	W	S
	via	358364	NE	S
	via	364306	N	ENE
	via	409358	SW	E
	via	471325	NW	SW
	via	457280	N	WSW
	via	422252	N	W
	via	402227	SE	SW
	via	391242	SW	NNW
	via	389271	SSE	WSW
	via	A66		
Finish	Threlkeld	322254	E	
	total miles	48		
refreshments	Pub	Horse and Farrier		
at finish.	Coffee	Village Hall		

Caterham Academy

Thought I would give the club an update on my Caterham Academy Championship adventure. Last year I decided to try my hand at driving instead of always being in the left hand seat partnering Malcolm in our Talbot Sunbeam Ti in the British Historic Championship, but also intending to still participate in the rallying as well as the circuit racing. I chose to start at the bottom so signed up to do the Caterham Academy, which looked as good a place as any, for a novice, aged 66 who had never driven competitively before.



Luckily for me circuit racing returned after the lockdown and we were able to have a delayed start with a revised schedule.

I am in the Green group of the Championship, with 25 fellow novices, we have had 3 races so far, all at classic British Circuits, Oulton Park, Cadwell Park and Thruxton.

Very wet qualification at Oulton, followed by a wet start to the race with the circuit drying out towards the end. An eventful qualification where I had an early spin but recovered to start 12th on the grid, eventually finishing 15th in the race with no car damage!! Very challenging circuit for a first race ever especially in the wet.

This was followed by Cadwell, which I visited prior to the race and did a track day. Superb challenging circuit, technically with the forest and mountain section, one photo is of me coming into the mountain and forest.

Qualified 15th and finished 18th, I will have improve my racing technique and stop the spins!!

Then it was onto the very fast and possibly the quickest circuit in the country, Thruxton, where you only brake twice on the whole lap. Did a track day prior to the test day and race weekend, coming through Church corner at 106mph with pedal flat to the floor is exhilarating, another super circuit.

Qualified 10th and after another spin in the race finished 18th. Must cut out the spins and learn some patience.



Last week I did a test day at Silverstone National, Malcolm joined me to offer some advice, and this week Friday 18th September have been across to Snetterton, 6 hour slog from South West Wales. Was pleased with progress at both circuits as of course I have never been on any of them before. Lap times were coming down and learning the break point of the car. Couple of spins but nothing dramatic, if you're not spinning you're not trying is the moto. No car damage to report.

Next weekend 25-26 September we have a double header at Brands Hatch on the short circuit, sub minute laps. Did a test day there about a month ago and was within 1.5 seconds of the academy lap record so looking forward to the 2 races. There are some quick youngsters and some who maybe shouldn't be in the championship, you should not have driven competitively before or held a



competition licence. Some guys have clearly done both and have separate track cars and have obviously done a lot of time on the race circuits, or rallying. Still its about enjoying the races and is a stepping stone to next year when I can move from being a novice to being a fully qualified race driver and I will move up to the Caterham Roadsport Championship with some modifications to the car, race tyres, larger brake cylinder and brake balance and rear anti roll bar.

To finish off this year we have a double header at Donnington National circuit mid- October and then a final race with the new modifications at the end of October.

Thoroughly enjoying the experience and am currently sitting 16th in the championship table.

Shame that rallying has been cancelled but at least I have been kept busy with the circuit racing.

I'm keeping the club colours flying !

Ron Mounsey

More Members News

As usual I am too far away to be involved in Wigton's local events but wish you all the best in whatever you can put together. I know it won't be soon but I will look forward to seeing your new headquarters especially since I used to stay at the Moota Motel back in the 70s while visiting the Maryport Zeibart depot as the Zeibart representative.



I know you have had driving tests and Graham Couser has been involved in 2 Saltire ones recently. I didn't attend but he was telling me how they ran everything without physical contact so if you have a need to discuss aspects of that, give him a shout.

I don't know if I told you about my recent lockdown activities but if I did and I am repeating myself,





Sorry! I have been painting reproductions of advertising signs and also made up a fibreglass hard hood cover for my restored (not to be rallied) TR4.

Jim Hendry



A Real Rarity



A recent week in Norfolk saw us at Wroxham on the Broads and while wandering around the boat yards we can across this extraordinary car. It was built to a high standard and quite large. I posted photos on Face Book and my friend, Paul Goodman, MGCC commentator and al round good egg came back with the answer. In addition to MG racing Paul has a life long interest in power boating and does some commentary on those events.

This is what he said: *This car was built by Alan Sabberton. His father raced on Oulton Broad and he followed with catamarans powered by Chevy V8s. He is currently building a boat to try for the water speed world record. It's registered as a Sabberton Omen, manufactured in 2003. 4700cc Chevy V8.*

Motor House Update



The carpet is now laid in the office so we can start archiving the Club records.



The main storage racking is now complete and in use and the final trims are being put on the base of the mezzanine.

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Andy's Armchair

Andy Armstrong takes an irreverent look at motoring and motorsport

I recently watched a documentary which followed the build process of a modern London taxi. The whole thing was reasonably interesting but the point that really struck me was the power source, namely all electric driven, but, and here's the twist in the tale, it also has a "range extender" petrol engine which ups the total range from 198 to 400 miles, by charging the battery but not driving the car itself.

I couldn't help thinking that this sort of system will be the one used by future governments to achieve their set targets of no petrol or diesel driven cars by 2035. If vehicles are configured as outlined above then technically they achieve this goal, but let's face it, it's hardly honest to claim a petrol engine charging a battery but not providing direct energy to the wheels, is any more environmentally friendly than its predecessor. It's all smoke and mirrors.

Browsing the "web net" I came across an old friend (car) which had recently been sold. The description of the cars history is a load of tosh.

"Known rally history dating back to 1968 in the UK and Europe. Class wins in Motoring News rallies in the 1990's."

It carries on further and might be right as I don't know the cars later history.

The below is more accurate.

"Nothing original when bought in 1998. The whole car was built by Steve Murphy

in the 1990's on a used none S shell. The engine came from the Smith brothers car rallied at Kirkbride and the only original part is probably the instrument binnacle.

The registration was originally that of a Liverpool Constabulary car so it's only rally history in 1968 would have been pulling up rally competitors for various driving misdemeanours".

Ironically it did have a very successful history in the years 1999 to 2003 winning lots of class awards on national events, but the last vendor missed these facts and went for the imaginary instead.

Whether or not the fictitious history effected the value of the car is debatable. It still looks very well prepared and will no doubt provide fun etc for its current owner, but if he/she considers its supposed history to be important, what they know is partial fiction, what they don't is fact.

Oddly enough this is not the first time I've been made aware of such dubious information regarding a cars past. I well remember the late Martin Wood telling me about a Formula 2 March he'd been working on which was reputedly an ex James Hunt machine. Now Martin had done a lot of scrutineering over many years and was saying that he'd heard the tale so many times he reckoned every F2 March ever built in that era claimed the same thing. Mr Hunt must have been exceptionally busy!

Another such case, but this time the "biter bit". Pete Lovely an American enthusiast ordered a new F1 Lotus 49 from Colin Chapman. Now no such car was available so an older chassis previously used by Jim Clark but no longer needed by the work's team was passed off as a brand new vehicle. Years later when Mr Lovely was having the car refurbished it was discovered what had been done and rather than being annoyed for paying new price for a used car Mr L was highly delighted as the link to Clark more than doubled the value of his racer. Not many people got the better of the Lotus supremo but quite unknowingly Pete Lovely most certainly had.

Ends

AA.