

Wigton Motor Club Ltd

Start Line

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www.wigtonmc.co.uk

March 2021

Great News For M Sport!



M-Sport and Red Bull are again to join forces - championing young talent in the FIA World Rally Championship with French protégé Adrien Fourmaux.

Get Involved!

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Talking Point

Topical Comment from the world of motoring

As I see it we live in the most challenging times for motorsport that I can remember. Environmental issues, electric cars, venue loss, ageing membership are just some of the issues. However as a hobby we have too many self inflicted wounds.

The recent consultation on the motorsport use of forests generated 1680 email responses, 633 of which related to Rallying and 982 from motor cycle Enduro and Trials followers. That figure from all those involved in rallying is pathetic! A typical BTRDA rally with 100 entries will have 200 folk in cars, another 200 service and 200 marshals etc. That's 600 for a start. What about all the folk who make a living from rallying, car preparation firms, those who provide facilities and equipment? Why did they not respond? A bet a fair few made their feelings known on social media though! Then when we have very few events they will blame MSUK!

Anyone who reads the Vintage Sports Car Club Gazette, will know they face severe problems with ageing and declining membership. The list of obits in each issue is huge. They are hoping that by changing their age limit to include any pre war cars will enable younger folk to afford cars that they can use. When I've raced with the GTS series at VSCC race meetings it was very noticeable that entry levels were getting lower. The crux of the matter is that the cars are going up in value and when inherited can be seen as the value of a very nice house! The buyers, and there are plenty, don't particularly want to be VSCC members but want to pick and chose events like the historic endurance rallies, continental tours and prestige events like Goodwood. All really out with the normal motorsport club scene.

The rest of us should not be complacent as the same sort of problems are creeping up on us. Clubs of all sorts need to take a long hard look at what they do. In many ways what clubs did 40 years ago has not changed much since other than fewer venues and competitors.

We surely need to change from being a fragmented sport, by discipline or by make of car in order to protect and promote what we have got. There are at least six type of trials for example but are all fundamentally the same concept. There has to be scope to amalgamate. There a far too many one make clubs and even more internet based groups. We need to work together or even merge or extinction beckons. The Bean Car Club could be the Has Been Car Club!

GTF

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Club News & Events

With restrictions being used progressively it looks as though we may be able to start with some low key events in April and May. Possibly a couple of autosolos or autotests and then a social run.

We await more details on what is permitted from Motorsport UK. And will give more details in the mid month newsletter.

However the Classic Show can go ahead subject to the various conditions of the easing of lockdown being met. Entry forms will be available sometime in April.

Wigton Motor Club

Cumbria Classic & Motorsport Show

August 22nd

At Dalemain

Featured marques: MG, Toyota & AC Cobra



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Partners with Wigton Motor Club – please call 0844 824 1135 and don't forget to mention your club when you do!

PG Tips

Peter Reflects On His Month

Another month and not much going on. I've had my first vaccination and still I have to wait until May to go to the pub! There does appear to be light at the end of the tunnel now at least, and Motorsport UK announced that activities can commence from the end of March as things stand, so I'm keeping everything crossed that this year I might get out to some hill climbs in Barry. Barry now has a new engine and Jonathon found a fairly major problem with the rear suspension that may account for the tail happy characteristics of the car (other than the driver having a heavy right foot and too much exuberance!). The rear shock absorbers had been set in such a position as to effectively lock them so that there was no movement in the rear suspension at all.

Whilst I did replace the rear shocks because one was a bit sad and floppy, I fitted them to fixed points on the car. These points are, at one end, governed by control arms that were set at an angle that prevented movement. I can only surmise they were set like that when the car was ignominiously hung on the wall of the motorsport dealer who I bought it from. It's no wonder I spent a lot of time pirouetting at Rowrah last summer and struggled with the oversteer at Harewood! I still don't have the car back but I am assured there is now movement and the only thing left to do is to set up the Power Commander on the rolling road...and wait for lockdown to end so I can enter some events.

I had booked the Astra Bertone a slot to have the supercharger kit fitted but I've now had to knock that back until the end of April so I've spent my time cleaning it and sorting out my garages which seem to be filling up with children's bikes and a pedal go-kart that my youngest daughter now spends her time furiously peddling round the garage block and access track on. There is hope that I may have at least one other person in the family getting the speed bug!

Last month we bought some white goods on wheels – a new car for my wife Trudy. Her long in the tooth Yeti was reaching a point where a new clutch and dual mass flywheel were looming as well as a new EGR valve (the light came on and a bottle of EGR valve cleaner thankfully cleared it.....for now) and the expense of both was going to add up to about 1/3 of the value of the car which had also covered close to 120k miles. It had been a good workhorse towing my cars to many events and taking us all over the UK but as I now have my own tow car and we don't have the burden of push chairs and the like to lug about a smaller car was preferred option.

As you can imagine, there were a lot of bargains to be had – many used cars with low miles at significant discount due to the pandemic, but Trudy wanted a new car with toys, decent power and MPG, a high seating position and reasonable boot space and all on a budget that would really only buy a new Dacia or low spec city car – which wouldn't have the toys, space or the speed.

I managed to find a Vauxhall Crossland X with a 1.2 130bhp turbo engine and all the toys that had been pre-registered last year at a dealer in Burnley along with hundreds of other identical ones it would appear (Vauxhall fiddling the sales figures!). With the metallic black paint it would have been £21k new but was not a great deal more than half. It's not the most dynamic vehicle and it isn't a fun or sporty drive but it ticks all the boxes and is a pleasant thing to be in and when pushed, has a fair turn of speed. I'd do one of my reviews but there really isn't much to say other than that the seats are comfy it is loaded with all the mod cons and it feels a little bit wobbly due to being tall and quite narrow. Like a lot of modern cars it is the automotive equivalent of white goods and will do the job it was built to

do at an acceptable level. It does look half decent in black and compared to my elderly fleet is a joy to wash because the dirt falls off it. The best thing is that it was a real bargain, and it should only require a service or 2 in the next couple of years.

Finally – the ‘Pinter’ beer brewing kit works...2 brews in and both have tasted like properly brewed beer with some life and a step up from the usual home brew – but probably not as good as a pint from the pub. Roll on May.

Peter

E10

E10, contrary to what some younger WMC members may think, is not an order in a disco for a quantity of mind bending tablets! It is, in fact, the designation of a new petrol mixture that is to be introduced across the country later in 2021 if all goes to plan. Why comment on it? As many WMC members are likely to own and run vehicles built before 2002 you will need to be aware of problems that may well occur when using it in your vehicle.

E5 petrol has been around for some years and unleaded pumps have had to be labelled as E5 by September 2019. E5 fuel contains up to 5% ethanol and therefore E10 up to 10%. The reason for adding ethanol to petrol is to reduce CO2 emissions every year by up to 750,000 tons. Whereas E5 fuel can be used in any petrol engined cars without any problems or the need for modifications that is not the case with E10.

Ethanol is an alcohol based fuel product made from the fermentation of a range of plants including sugar cane and grains. The issue for us to be aware of is that the quantity of ethanol in E10 fuels can seriously affect certain components in your vehicle. As ethanol is hygroscopic it means that it absorbs water from the atmosphere. This, of course, means that condensation will find its way into your fuel system. This will cause condensation in fuel tanks, fuel lines, carburettors and cause corrosion in brass, copper, lead, tin and zinc components. In addition, as ethanol is a solvent it can also affect rubber, plastic and fibreglass so any component made of these materials or containing them will be liable to develop faults. Does your carburettor have a soldered float? Think of the possible issues. Fuel pumps with diaphragms and carburettors with the same. The list is endless. Deterioration can take time and lead to faults developing including blockage of fuel lines and jets, poor running, fuel leaks and even potential fire risks.

In addition as ethanol isn't as energy dense as petrol the petrol air mixture could be leaner and therefore fuel consumption could be slightly higher.

All vehicles manufactured since 2011 have had to be E10 compatible. The RAC advise that any vehicle older than 2002 do not use the fuel and they reckon that to be up to 600,000 in the UK. You are advised to contact your dealer to check that your vehicle will run on the fuel but try finding one to advise on your 1926 Austin 7!

What therefore can be done? Super unleaded will remain at the E5 standard for the next 5 years after E10 is introduced but it is fair to speculate that it will be phased out gradually before then. Additives can be used such as Castrol Classic Valvemaster which also contains an ethanol stabilizer. There are other additives such as TecLub E10 Fuel Protector. In addition any component that may be affected can be changed such as fuel lines and fibreglass fuel tanks but there are bound to be others that are impossible such as fuel pump diaphragms.

Further information can be obtained from the web site of the FBHVC which includes further details of the materials that can be affected by ethanol. What is clear is that most owners will need to take some sort of action to prevent issues occurring.

Myke Pocock

From The Top

News from UK Motorsport, Regions and the WMC Committee

Motorsport UK CEO's message

We are fast approaching the first-year anniversary of the country being placed into lockdown, and an initial suspension of motorsport activity. A great deal has happened in the last 12 months, with numerous challenges for so many and sadly, for some families, life will never be the same again. Broadly speaking, motorsport has met these challenges with great resilience and fortitude. I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone in our community for all that you have done for the sport during these tragic times, and everyone at Motorsport UK is deeply grateful for the efforts of our community to make sure that when possible we have run safe and successful events. What is more, you have laid the foundation for a solid return for the sport when we all are allowed to do so.

In fact, the last year has not been entirely without productivity for the health of the sport. In this month's edition you will read about the various aspects of innovation that have been introduced in order to deal with the pandemic, such that we could ensure the health and safety of everyone involved with the events. The use of contactless timing, the move to pre-event signing-on and self-certification for scrutineering have reduced the bureaucracy for both clubs and competitors. We are looking closely at the potential to continue with some of these innovations once we return to a more normal way of life. One of the challenges facing many of our clubs and different disciplines is the ability to field a full complement of officials and marshals, with dwindling numbers in some areas.

Quite separately, we are making a significant push to recruit and retain these vital communities; but at the same time, it makes sense to look for ways in which we can take the pressure off them with time-saving technologies and innovations. We have reported on a number of occasions on the need to respond to the challenges that motorsport faces for environmental sustainability. Shortly, we will be launching our strategy in this area, and a new committee, which will be fully focused on this crucial issue. Although this is a very complex subject, we cannot afford to sit on the side-lines and wait to see what happens – or hide behind the defence that motorsport represents a tiny contribution to emissions and environmental impact. The reality is that for 100 years or more we have been the ultimate high-profile expression of automotive performance, and as such, it is inevitable that we fall under the spotlight of scrutiny. The fact is that the agenda is accelerating at warp speed, with a political drive for the implementation of electric vehicles to the exclusion of the internal combustion engine.

I won't recite the debate on the merits of electric vehicles here – suffice to say there are plenty of conflicting views – but what is clear is that there will be a seismic shift, whether it is electric, hydrogen or synthetic fuels, and the automotive world is heading for the biggest change since its inception. Motorsport at the highest level has already responded, with Formula E, Extreme E, plans for electric



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WRX, hybrid WRC and BTCC solutions. All of these are fantastic, but not in the realms of club motorsport, which is currently wholly reliant on the internal combustion engine. So we need to create our own pathway that responds to the environmental imperatives, but that is also practical and affordable.

Le Mans has always been a favourite of ‘Les Brits’ who make the annual pilgrimage to La Sarthe, and when they can return safely the spectacle is about to shift in a way that I see as very exciting – and later in this edition we explore the new Le Mans Hypercar category designed to bring back the biggest global prestige car makers and to field cars that have some linkage back to the road. In addition, the ACO and Le Mans are leading the way with hydrogen and have announced a class for this fuel in 2024. Motorsport has led the way with new technologies that have filtered their way down to road cars in ways that we take for granted. Now is the time, once more, for motorsport to lead the way in the search for the holy grail of zero emissions and not just at point of use – but an entire end-to-end ecosystem.

And that brings me on to the subject of last month – rallying and more specifically the WRC in the UK. A recent report from Forestry England announced a commitment to work with the motorsport community on a sustainable future for rallying in the English forests. Likewise, all of the discussion with Natural Resources Wales points to a positive dialogue based on the idea that motorsport can reinvent the relationship between nature and the sport – and with the immense natural resources of Wales, that seems like a massive opportunity.

Thanks to all who have written to us with ideas and concepts for the future of rallying – we are in the process of collating and analysing all of the input – as well as discussing with a wide range of stakeholders from across the sport. I am confident that this exercise will give us a fresh impetus to make positive change and ensure sustainability for all.

Finally, we have just received the great news from Government that the proposed EU ‘Vnuk’ insurance legislation will not be applied in the UK. That may not sound like it would have affected you but in fact it had the potential to literally close down all forms of motorsport here - thankfully that has been avoided. Full details later in the magazine. I hope that you and your families are keeping safe and well – and that we will all be able to return to our sport as soon as possible.

Kind regards,

Hugh Chambers

What Every Petrol head Needs!



I’ve mentioned in the past about the wonderful nostalgic aroma of hot Castrol R. Well now you can get it, at a price. Indeed you might be cheaper to get the real thing and warm it up in a saucer!

Anyway it’s the Flying Tiger 2 Stroke Oil Candle available from flyingtigermotorcycles.square.site. Just £24 per candle!

MONTE CARLO OR BUST

The recent posting on WMC Facebook of British Pate News 'Road to Monte Carlo' reminded me of an adventure over 50 years ago which took me to Monte Carlo, in some style. I received a phone call in early spring from a relation, a second cousin called Cameron Miller, who was well into vintage cars and VSCC events.

I had 'bounced' for him on the Welsh Trial the previous year in his Lea Francis 14/40, but this phone call related to a working summer holiday, dates to be confirmed. If I could be available and flexible, would I be prepared to drive the 'Leaf' to Monte Carlo ?

Cameron was working with Paramount pictures in the making of the 1969 film 'Monte Carlo or Bust' supplying vintage cars, and extra cars were needed to create authentic street scenes in and around the Principality. This film was to be a follow-up to an earlier comedy, 'Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines', and starred, amongst others, Tony Curtis, Susan Hampshire, Terry Thomas, Peter Cook and Dudley Moore, Eric Sykes and Hattie Jacques, Benny Hill with Gert Frobe as a German baddie.

Filming with the 'stars' had been carried out earlier in studios in Italy so we never got to see them. It was now late summer and action was moving to Monte Carlo. It was time for me to set off. I drove to North London and on arrival at the house, a visit to the garage was necessary to start to load the cars for our journey.

Assorted delectable cars were housed there, including 2 - 250F Maseratis: chassis number 2525, and the ex Prince Bira car in his familiar blue and yellow colours. These cars were to be the catalyst which evolved into the creation of the CM 250F Maseratis, which are regularly raced today. A Maserati 200S sports two seater, a 1920s GP Sunbeam, and others, plus the cars we were taking to France, a Vauxhall 30/98 with a Wensum body, a totally original Sunbeam 3 litre twin cam and 'my' Lea Francis 14/40.

The following morning we set off for Portsmouth where we met a fellow enthusiast with his Morris 10 tourer who joined us for the trip. Once in France and staying off main Autoroutes, we headed south creating a bit of a scene on the way, four vintage cars in convoy. Overtaking cars had people hanging out of the windows, cameras were clicking and cine cameras awhirling as they passed us. Cruising at 45 – 50mph the miles passed remarkably quickly.

No accommodation was pre-booked and our first night was spent in a wonderful ivy covered family run hotel, clean beds, good food and a proprietor who couldn't do enough for us. The next day we pressed on to Montelimar, the home of nougat where we stayed in a travel lodge type place. The overriding sickly sweet smell of nougat pervaded the air and everybody departed next morning with numerous bites from miscellaneous bedbugs. A real contrast to the previous night.

We reached Eze-sur-Mer the next day, all the cars running reliably apart from the Morris. which needed a points adjustment on the second morning The Villa we stayed in at Eze was comfortably big, located high on the hillside with views overlooking the Mediterranean. We were joined by a great guy from London who had driven down through France in his supercharged Alfa Romeo 1750, a truly beautiful car, what a drive !

The next morning we travelled in convoy to Monte Carlo where the scene was prepared. Cars were fitted with appropriate continental number plates, street furniture and direction signs had already been removed and replaced with period items. As 'extras' we were assigned assorted hampers of clothes of the 1920s, to dress and look the part.

When filming, action has to be instant, and happen on the 'B of Bang' so replica looking cars had been created to look the part, from a distance, and which went and stopped quickly. Susan Hampshire's somewhat pedestrian Austin 7 Dixie, ideal for close-up shots, was a Fiat 1100 under the skin and Guert Probe's 1930s Mercedes SSK body was fitted to an AC Cobra chassis, with a Fiat 2300 engine. In the film, eagle eyes can spot the disc brakes behind fake aluminium brake drums, but the car looked the part.

Filming was very slow and a very meagre packed lunch, supplied by Paramount, was taken sitting on the steps to the casino. Probably a 'no' 'no' today.

Everything relating to 1960s was removed from the streets, even front doors were painted and some window boxes repositioned. Our cars were positioned, parked on the street ready for action, when 'competing' cars would travel at speed along the streets, driven by the principal characters' double.

We were given our instructions.... to simply hang about as directed, and when all was ready and the light was right the director would bellow into his loudhailer, in Italian, 'Toutes la Monde !', 'Toutes la Monde !' 'Actione ! 'Actione !'. Everyone who knew what to do, did it, but not always to the satisfaction of the Director, usually resulting in another 'take'.

Conditions were not always right, the sun would go behind a cloud, it wasn't always a wrap. Eventually different scenes were completed. A convoy around Casino square, a parade along the harbour wall, some crash action high in the mountains behind Monte Carlo. In one scene, a car was 'fired' over the edge, off the road at a hairpin, and into the ravine below. That shot took all day, and wasted a serviceable vintage car.

At the end of each day's action, the cars were all held in 'parc ferme' with security guards. We travelled back to the Villa by minibus and were similarly collected the following morning.

On one really dull day when there was no filming, my new best friend, the guy with the Alfa, invited me to join him on a trip to Sanremo, 30 miles away, to buy pistons and liners for his Alfa daily driver, a great day out. The cost of Hepolite pistons and liners, manufactured in Yorkshire, were cheaper in Italy than in the UK.

Protracted filming meant my vacation of two weeks quickly became three. Eventually filming was finished and we were homeward bound, just the three original cars.

There was no trauma en route to Le Havre and no problem with inquisitive French customs. At Portsmouth we were the only ones held for about an hour by HM Customs officers, who showed more interest in the cars, their history, what we had been doing than in the many cases of wine and other contraband, hidden in unusual places. At this time of restriction, we were way beyond our personal allowances.

This was the first holiday I had been on where I came home with more money than I had when I left.

Enthused by this experience I eventually managed to buy a totally wrecked 1926 Austin heavy 12 Clifton Tourer, a 'Gumdrop' and after many years have managed, with the help of Covid lockdown, to complete a total restoration. It went on the road at the end of September and has now done 52 sedate 'running in' miles.

Roll on 2021, Covid vaccinations, warm summer days and quality motoring.

Clive Kennedy.

For Sale

Morris Minor 1965: 3,000 miles since rebuilt with many new parts. Every conceivable period extra.

1275cc, overdrive gearbox, Peter May half shafts, anti roll bar, telescopic shock absorbers, disc brakes, two speed wipers, two speed heater, fully fused wiring loom, heat rear screen, laminated front screen, inertia reel seat belts all round. Very good condition outside, inside and underneath.

Receipts for parts alone total £ 6,500 Available for viewing once lockdown is eased but I can send plenty of photographs

Price £ 7,250

Stuart Bankier 01289 382025 smbankier@gmail.com

Rev Hang?

No it's not a new trendy vicar!

When you dip the clutch in a car, the revs will drop. This is due to the inertia of the flywheel, and the lack of air going in the intake as the throttle is released. After the gear change is over and the clutch is released, the engine speed will go back up again, meeting the transmission speed.

However, *rev hang* is when the engine speed doesn't immediately drop once the clutch is actuated, and instead descends very slowly, as if there were some form of restriction. In extreme cases the engine speed will even rise slightly when the engine and transmission are disengaged.

This obviously isn't ideal for changing gear. If the engine speed doesn't drop enough during the process of dipping the clutch, changing gear and then releasing the clutch, the engine speed and the rate at which the flywheel is rotating will be much higher than the speed that the friction plate is rotating at.

This creates a horrible jerk as a braking force occurs when the powertrain and transmission are reengaged and forced to spin at the same speed. This can be frustrating if you're wanting to perform a quick, slick gear change, as you have to wait for the revs to drop to a reasonable level before upshifting to the next gear to avoid stunted progress.

The cause of rev hang can be put down to the war on emissions. Recently, manufacturers have been intentionally implementing rev hang within ECU programming to save themselves from a potential emissions scandal. When the throttle is released and the clutch is dipped, an ECU with rev hang is programmed to leave the throttle slightly more open than usual.

This strategy is used because it was found that suddenly closing the throttle produced a sudden spike in gas pressure within the crankcase which emphasised the rate of oil vaporisation, thus adding to emissions from the engine. Also, when the throttle is suddenly shut, the fuel mixture suddenly becomes lean which creates NOx (oxides of Nitrogen) which also contributes to emissions.

By keeping the throttle open for a small period of time after the pedal had been released, this pressure spike was avoided and cleaner emissions were achieved. Found most prominently in US-spec vehicles to meet the emission rules over the pond, this pre-programming has frustrated many owners since its development. Rev hang can even be found in Subaru's WRX STI, along with prominent cases in VW and Hyundai products.

To help eradicate this high pressure within the crankcase, a PCV (positive crankcase ventilation) valve is used which can reduce the need for a rev hang system when fully functioning. This PCV valve is used to regulate the pressure within the crankcase that can fluctuate to high levels when gear changes occur. In internal combustion engines, it is inevitable that a small amount of 'blow-by' occurs, which is when gases from the combustion chamber seep past the piston rings and travel down into the crankcase. The job of a PCV valve therefore is to remove a proportion of the blow-by fumes away from the crankcase, thus reducing the amount of high pressure gas contained within.

Although an intentional rev hang system would go a long way in saving your oil levels and help your car sail through an emissions test, most petrolheads only see it as a hindrance to their driving pleasure. With a quick reprogramming of the throttle body control codes and a bit more competence when it comes to checking oil levels, rev hang can be eradicated and your gear changes can be as smooth and as quick as you desire.

Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs appoint an Automotive Fuels Specialist

The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs (FBHVC) has announced the appointment of Nigel Elliott to the Federation's Legislation Team, in the role as Automotive Fuels Specialist, with immediate effect. The FBHVC currently represents over 500 clubs, museums, independent and trade supporters encompassing a collective membership of over 250,000 historic vehicle enthusiasts. As the umbrella organisation for the historic vehicle movement in the UK, the Federation seeks to work towards defending the freedoms of historic vehicle owners, whilst also addressing the environmental impact of the community's activities.

Nigel Elliott joins the Federation to take up what will be an increasingly important role in the coming years as the Federation's focus fixes squarely upon ensuring combustion engine powered historic vehicles have a place to co-exist alongside electric vehicles on the roads of the future. The Federation sees the need to assess, study and understand the impact of changing fuel demands and technologies on the historic vehicle community as critical work in the coming years.

Nigel's professional background has seen him enjoy a successful career working in engine and vehicle testing, and fuels product quality and development for a multi-national oil company. In 2012, Nigel set up a fuels quality consultancy. He is an active member of the British Standards Institute PTI/2 Liquid Fuels Committee as a co-opted expert, responsible for petrol, diesel and non-road fuel standards. Nigel was the Convener of the European Fuel Standards (CEN) Diesel committee and a long-term UK expert member of the Petrol Committee and has been heavily involved in the development of the Biodiesel and Ethanol standards and their implementation in road fuels.

This impressive professional background is set against a passion for historic vehicles and motorsport. Nigel is a keen hill-climber and supporter of Shelsley Walsh Hill climb. A member of numerous clubs, including the MAC, HDLCC, Bugatti Owners Club, HSA and BARC, Nigel competes in a 1979 Triumph TR7-V8 4.6 litre twin Turbo modified production car. Nigel has also owned a number of classic Range Rovers over the years and currently runs a 'modern classic' 2004 Jaguar XKR convertible.

Speaking on his appointment Nigel Elliott said, "I am looking forward to helping the historic vehicle community understand the challenges that we face regarding fuel quality and supply. Historic vehicles are very dear to my heart and so bringing my specialist professional knowledge built from 43 years of experience in the industry, I hope to contribute to the team tasked with preserving the freedoms of enthusiasts to continue to use and enjoy historic vehicles on UK roads."

David Whale, FBHVC Chairman said, "The Federation and the historic vehicle community are going have to face the challenges of fuel supply and quality increasingly over coming years. Not only that but we will be required to put our points across to those in power with the backing of professional experience and expertise. We are looking forward to Nigel Elliott joining us and bringing those qualities to our existing team of highly capable volunteers. "

Motoring Dogs

Now, I've always found that people who like cars are usually nice folk and people who have dogs are also good people so we can assume that people who like cars and dogs are very nice folk!



Now Lewis Hamilton swapped his Pussycat for Roscoe who seems to be his only confidant these days but doesn't look over happy on his veggie diet!



Jim Clark as a sheep farmer has his faithful Sweep.



Mike Hawthorn had Boxers, Grogger 1 and Grogger 2.



Michael Schumacher was always a great animal lover and has lots of pets. He often took his Westie to European GPs. At one point he arrived at the paddock in his Ferrari with the dog and Bernie said, "You can't bring that in here", Michael replied, "Bernie, do you want me to race this weekend?" Nothing more was said.

While he was driving for Benneton the dog stayed in the motor home in team boss Flavio Briatore private room as Flavio only turned up on race days. However one Saturday Flavio turned up unexpectedly and the team had to get the Westie out quickly only to discover the little chap had relived itself in Flavio's silk embossed slippers! A dog of good taste and judge of character



The 1970 British Leyland Team had a Bulldog mascot. Not sure if it got to Mexico!



Mike Parkes used to have his Labrador Federica with him all the time.

Federica in the cockpit of the parked Ferrari 512 during the shooting of the movie "Le Mans".

Penny, Mike's fiancée, came up with the following anecdotes: they went from Modena to Verona in a De Tomaso Pantera incl. Federica. Mike was always late so he drove very fast in order to keep his appointment. Before the return trip the dog steadfastly refused to get back into the car...

Federica was also with Parkes whenever he took his private plane. The dog always slept aboard but as soon as the descent to Modena Areoporto started Federica woke up and was prepared for disem"bark"ment!



Jenson Button has three much loved dogs and regular posts pictures of them on his Instagram page.

USA Coast to Coast 1989

After 2 years spent self building a house the VAT man generously returned the tax spent on materials. This provided the opportunity for a little road trip. Myself and my ex wife, Liz, started to plan a six week American coast to coast trip. My daughters were 2, 4 and 6 years at the time so needless to say the general consensus seemed to be that we were veering round the bend.

My research quickly revealed that this was going to be no fun in an American Compact i.e. small affordable rental car, plus the drop off charge from one side to the other was eye watering. So, plane tickets, directory of cheap motels, cash to buy a car, what could go wrong?



It was 55 degrees when we left Glasgow airport and 105 when we landed in Phoenix, Arizona. We booked into that cheap Motel 6 and I went in search of that car. I returned with a chocolate brown 1978 Chevrolet Caprice for less than \$1000. I wasn't used to air conditioning and hadn't considered it until that point – 1st mistake. Of course it didn't work, so it was windows down and copious Thirst Busters (a sort of cardboard bucket full of coca cola available at all petrol stations) to keep the children happy.

After a visit to the canyon, a jaunt into Mexico, a trip to Disneyland (Los Angeles)

the Chevy decided it disliked its English occupants so much that the head gasket let go. I started the diagnosis of this in a lay by near LA until I spotted the sign - 'Beware of Rattlesnakes' and consequently we made a slow, spluttering exit.

Still, at least four of its eight cylinders and 2 out of its 5.7 litres allowed us to limp to another slightly less dodgy car dealer. At this point I noticed that the car lots were packed with Full Sized saloons, the yanks were still rebounding from the Iran oil crisis when had gas soared to over \$1 per gallon. By the time of our visit it had dropped to a very reasonable 95 cents.

This presented an opportunity in the form of a metallic pink 1975 Cadillac Eldorado for \$1800, less a few quid for the clapped out Caprice. Capacity had increased to 7.2 litres and consumption; well it was £1.70 a gallon at home and about 60p here. What was not to like?



Another 3000 miles took us across Death Valley, a chat with the Mormons in Utah, the Yellowstone geysers, saw the cowboys in Montana, and the historical battle sites in Dakota led us to Minneapolis. We were staying here for a week with the parents of some good friends; our eldest even went to school each day and took the The Pledge of Allegiance each morning.

By now I was scouring the classifieds for a 1950's car with the intention of ship

ping it home. Partly because these cars had developed a following in the UK and it may even pay for some of the fuel that the Caddy had used. My search led me to a classic car dealer, although I was not too interested in his showroom. Over his shoulder I spotted several part ex's in the back parking lot. His view on the pink Caddy was "The pimps down town will just love this Mama". Did I mention that it had white leather seats? A deal was concluded, more or less a straight swap for a 1955 four door Chevy Bel Air. We made a detour to Mister Brakes and Clutches for a free (with voucher) brake check. See the efforts I made to keep those children safe!

This little classic took us via Chicago to Detroit which at the time had the highest murder rate in the country. I worked out that you were in a dangerous area if fuel had to be paid for before the pump was switched on and the cashier was behind bullet proof glass, probably with an AK47 under the counter.



By this time the Bel Air was looking a little sad in the rear suspension department. A trip to River Springs had them make up new leaf springs in a couple of hours for very little money.

Onward through Canada to Niagara Falls and the city of Buffalo. Whilst slowly traversing a busy cross roads we were T boned by a small, by American standards, SUV. Not too much damage and thankfully no injuries but almost immediately heard the wail of the cop cars.

Officer Norbert Schloer sidled up to me with the obligatory mirror sunglasses. "Licence, registration and insurance" New York state law demanded that you had to be able to produce these documents at any time. I replied "Err well it's like this officer...." Licence and registration were no problem but the insurance certificate related to the Chevy Caprice I had bought a month earlier in Phoenix. I had rung and changed it of course but they had no forwarding address as we were constantly on the move. Norbert was not impressed with this and promptly issued me with a ticket. Although to Norbert's credit, he told me not to bother paying it and issued the other driver with a ticket for dangerous driving. Norbert further impressed me when I told him of my occupation at the time (Police Officer). He suggested pushing me to the next motel – no not like that – by using the bull bars on the front of his Ford Crown Victoria. He then took the next day off to help me fix the old Bel Air.

A new radiator was needed and this was Saturday morning in a car built in 1955. We went to a huge breakers yard and were met with "No problem guys, V8, straight 6, manual or auto" A few hours later the Chevy was running sweetly BUT the passenger side wing was projecting about 10 inches beyond the body line. Me "I can't drive it like that" Norbert "Why not?" Me "It would be considered dangerous in England" Norbert "Dangerous to who?" Me "Pedestrians" Norbert "What pedestrians?" Fair comment! So off we went down to Newark docks where we left the car for shipment home.

A few weeks later I collected the car from Southampton and brought it back to Penrith. In between times Chuck someone or other from an insurance company rang me to conclude the claim. The conversation went something like "Let's see if we can't get this sorted right here and now" Me "OK, I bought the car for \$1800 and spent another \$200 on the springs and it wants \$1000 of repairs from the accident" Chuck "OK we are just glad that no one was hurt, I will put a cheque in the post for \$1000" and so he did. I don't think Aviva work in quite the same way!

My circumstances changed and I did not have the time to repair the car so sold it on but it had given us some happy memories.

Steve Fishwick

A Fantastic legacy And A Way Forward

Having spent many hours reading through old Start Lines and WMC News, plus our minute book, it was great to see how farsighted the club was even 50 years ago. I read that when the Club had a strong motorcycle section land was leased at Rosley for a motocross track (scrambles in those days). Sadly, the bike side died away in the seventies and the land returned to the owner who planted trees there.

We have also been lucky with financial management and planning. Much of the cred for this must go our the much missed Stuart Turnbull who was treasurer for many years. When we were running four or five stage rallies a year with full entries, they proved to be quite profitable and Stuart made wise investments at time when interest rates were in double figures. There were some years when our interest earnings were greater than the membership income.

We also bought our own Wharton timing clocks. These were state of the art at the time and have served us well since. The cost of hiring them, plus the carriage to and from the supplier was quite a big part of the cost of an event. We also hired them to local clubs which helped them as there was no carriage costs etc. Given what we saved on hire fees and the income from hiring the clocks out the clocks had recovered the purchase cost within three years.

Again in the stage rallying days we invested in radios, the Solway radio net, we bought our own stage signs etc rather than using hand me downs for the major events. We have bought caravans, trailers, computers, printers etc, all of which by investing reduced our running costs. Having office quality photo copiers greatly reduced the cost of hard copies of the magazine and event paperwork.

For over 20 years we have had an ambition to create our own multipurpose venue, similar the East Ayrshire CC's Kames complex. Thanks to the Show and classic events we did accumulate a fair bit of money and we searched high and low for suitable sites, in fact even going to a couple of auctions. A site was hard to identify and there was a lack of funding from other bodies to help us make it happen. About fifteen years ago, with the North West Development Agency and MSA there was funding for a feasibility study for a complex at Sillioth, which I have just reread. Sadly, there was no money forthcoming to take the project further, but it may be worth revisiting.

When we were active in speed events and running at Knockhill, Kames, East Fortune and Teesside, we bought 200 cones which we took the venues like East Fortune to mark the course out.

In more recent years the Classic Weekend has grown to be the biggest car event in the region with over 800 cars at the Classic and Motorsport Show alone. Not only does it give hundreds of our members a great day out, but it is a show case for what we do, motorsport cars and the grass autotest brings new blood into the club. Given good weather it also brings in a good income which is needed to cover the cost of the Show but also for future investment. There is a large amount of signage and many hundreds of markers used at the show and these have to be replaced every few years. What puts our show above many of the commercial shows that appear, is that we have around 70 marshals and officials making things happen like clockwork.

The jewel in the crown is the Motor House which should have been completed by June last year but with COVID has been delayed. David Agnew and his team have met on Wednesday's whenever it was allowed, and we just have the final electrics and fitting to be added. Hopefully, we can have it opened in the early summer.

The Club is not just one or two people, it is a community drawn together by a mutual interest in cars, whether it be in the many forms of competition, shows, classic tours and just tinkering. It's not just the committee that organising things, we are fortunate in having many members to run events, let us sue land, or give up their time to help.

Long may that continue!

Motor House Update



Under the current restrictions we've been unable to have the usual Wednesday work parties. However some progress is being made and the stairs are now carpeted to a high standard.

The kitchen area is now 90% there and with the electrics and lighting in that area it be completed. Once restrictions are eased there will be a main table and a further storage cupboard to go in the committee room.

Once everything is complete we intend buying simulator for club nights.

We can also welcome other clubs for event starts and finishes.



Forest Review

John Fife's take on the situation

Rallying Review ... A previous post on this page mentioned the recent publication of the Forestry England Motorsports Review document and referred to its 11 page 3,000 word Executive Summary. And whilst it would appear that forest rallying is safe for the moment it was not exactly fulsome in its support. Mention was also made of how the sport fits into the future of Forestry England plans, both financial and environmental, and how the organisation is perceived by the wider public. Much has now been written on its contents by more learned journalists and published in more august and esteemed journals and it all seems pretty positive. However, I wonder just how many folk have read the full 75 page, 22,000 word Report and not just the Summary.

The main report was compiled by a company called Rural Solutions Ltd who are headquartered in Yorkshire. It is a very comprehensive report and the company's conclusions were informed by both a stakeholder and public consultation process. Public response generated 1680 email responses, 633 of which related to Rallying and 982 from motor cycle Enduro and Trials followers. Eleven car clubs also responded to the questionnaire.

Not a great response, is it? Consider the fact that the Forestry England estate attracts some 235 million visits per year whereas it is estimated that "the footfall generated by motorsport during 2019 attending a total of 19 rallies, 28 enduros and 13 trials was 27,130."

If that figure is correct, motor sports visitors account for 0.01% of FE's total individual visits. Kind of puts us firmly in our place in the pecking order, does it not? According to Rural Solutions they used "data supplied by MS UK and the MSA Rally Championship Steering Group and the ACU."

On the finance front, the average total income generated by motorsports is in the region of £300,000 to £400,000 per annum with expenditure of £300,000 to £350,000 which suggests an overall contribution to the forest estate of somewhere between £50,000 and £100,000. The concern here is that FE does not record accurate repair costs following each event but they have indicated that this is a matter which will be addressed so that they can come up with a more accurate 'true' figure. And, according to the Report: "Motorsports appear to be at odds with FE's financial sustainability objectives."

Another concern is public opinion. Many of their visitors believe that motor sport should not be accommodated or tolerated within the forests, on the grounds of pollution, noise and wildlife disturbance. However, FE's own studies have found that wildlife disturbance is minimal whereas other forest activities can be more detrimental. On the issue of pollution both Rural Solutions and FE are well aware that more automotive pollution is caused by the huge numbers of visitors travelling to and from the forests in their own vehicles than by motor sports!

Again the Report states: "Motorsport is an activity which is difficult to justify against the environmental objectives of Forestry England and therefore if these activities are to be permitted, there is a strong argument that they should demonstrate a step change in the adoption of more environmentally sound practices."

The Report concludes with three options - Stop, Continue, or Evolve & Adapt.

The first Option is self explanatory - motor rallying in the woods will cease, while the second Option is just to carry on as before - only that would appear not to be acceptable.

Which leaves the third Option, to Evolve & Adapt - That means to allow the sports to continue, but in an evolved manner in an adapted format.

Hence Motorsport UK is calling for our ideas, suggestions and contributions regarding how the sport can be adapted from the present format, and also, what can be done to the 'tools of the trade', i.e. cars, to make them more environmentally acceptable and less damaging. On this final point that means electrical or alternative fuelled propulsion and less surface damaging technology.

Only 633 folk out of 27,130 possible responded to the initial call for submissions during last year's public consultation process. On that basis the sport didn't do itself any favours. It's all very well saying few people knew about it, or blaming who did and didn't spread the word.

And where Forestry England goes, Forest & Land Scotland will take an interest.

A final word - aimed at the politicians and decision makers - if only 13% of Great Britain is forested, that makes us one of the most de-forested nations in the world after centuries of weapon making, warship building and pit props. What then gives us the right to criticise other nations for burning trees and clearing forests for arable production?

In the great scheme of things, motor sport is but a small sapling scrabbling for life in a giant forest - and it hasn't got much time to grow!

John Fife

Wise words as usual from John. It is disappointing that so few “enthusiasts” bothered to write in with their views. You only have yourselves to blame if we lose forest rallies.

Car Manuals for Loan

Singer Vogue

Cortina Mk3

Vauxhall Victor FE

Peugeot 205

Ford Focus 05-08

Capri Mk11

Cortina Mk3

Corsair V6

Ford Consul/Zephyr/Zodiac

Avenger & Sunbeam

Mini 62 onwards

Cortina Mk3

Ford CVH engine

Mini

Citroen 2CV and Dyane

Citroen engines 84-87

Volvo 240- 245

Volvo 140

Vauxhall Ventura

Saab 990 and 900

Saab 95 & 96

Ford Granada 85 to 93

Rover 820

Austin Princess and Ambassador

Porsche 911

Capri 11 from 74 to 76

Lotus Elan 62 to 73

MG B 62 onwards

These are kept at the Motor House. Email if you wish to borrow one.

Thanks to the members who have donated them, more welcome!

Reflections on Sir Lewis and Sir Henry

I recently came across a rare and fascinating article on the subject of Sir Henry Segrave. It was occasioned by the recent coronation of Lewis Hamilton with boringly repetitive and largely irrelevant questions of who was the greatest ever. It prompted me to dust off two books from my motoring library: “The Boys Life of Sir Henry Seagrave” co-written by Malcolm Campbell and “Sir Henry Segrave” written by one of the greatest motoring writers ever to put pen to paper, Cyril Posthumus. (Interestingly, two names already mentioned, Malcolm Campbell and Lewis Hamilton are both recipients of the RAC’s Segrave Trophy).

As always happens on these occasions, there followed days of the usual speculation as to who was the greatest of all time, begging the question as to whether one can compare across different eras. I feel any such discussion is a bit of a nonsense as “Motorsport” has changed so radically over the years that it’s a bit like comparing apples and pears - indeed they were and are different sports in, say, 1920, 1950, 1970 and today. Similar debates go on in all sporting genres, soccer being the classic case, but any debate surrounding Pele, Maradona or Messi for example is entirely meaningless. Time and memory are of course great distorters and I fully admit to having several pairs of rose-tinted spectacles in my drawers. Being of a certain age brings attendant biases. Any straw poll result on any subject depends very much on the age of the respondents whose opinions are largely subjective. Interestingly “best”, a very short word in the English language, has one of the longest and most vague definitions in the Oxford English dictionary - hardly definitive.

Coming back to Sir Lewis and Sir Henry, they are two classic examples of how it could never be said that one is greater than the other. They undoubtedly share common qualities (skill, bravery, determination, good eyesight, etc.) but the technology available to them, conditions, safety, rules, science, physical training and regulations are light years apart. This is of course no surprise given how the planet has moved on over the nearly 100-year period we are considering.

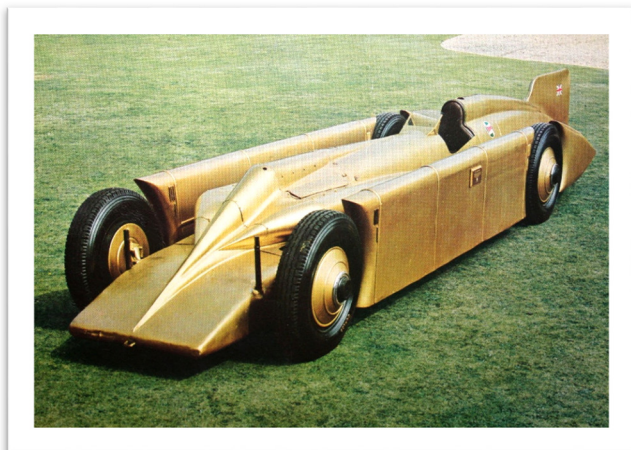
Anyway, here is my biased, subjective, heartfelt plea for Sir Henry, a man I never met, never saw in action and can only judge from historic records, photographs and dusty books. If I had to limit my favouritisms to drivers I have seen in action many times, my top five (not necessarily in order of preference) would be Vic Elford, Gerry Marshall, Jackie Stewart, Roger Clark and Hannu Mikkola. Despite the inclusion of JYS, a boyhood hero whose autograph I first obtained at the 1969 British GP, I have never felt that F1 is the best yardstick for judging a driver skills and qualities, but that’s a different article for another day.

So why Sir Henry? Much of this will be known to WMC members but bears repetition.

His was a short but full life. He was born in 1896 and died in 1930 on Lake Windermere having set a new World Water Speed Record of 98.76 mph. In 33 and a bit year on this planet, he dedicated his life to speed through motor sport, land and water records – even finding time to design boats and aeroplanes. He set three land and one water speed record and was the only person ever to hold both land and sea records simultaneously. He was also the first man to win a Grand Prix in a British designed and built car, a Sunbeam, in 1923 a feat not repeated until 1960.

Raised in Ireland and educated at Eton, he attended Sandhurst briefly at the outbreak of WW1 and was sent to the front as an 18-year-old subaltern. He was wounded twice in hand-to-hand combat and whilst recuperating in England transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. Having shot down his first German plane, he himself was shot down by anti-aircraft fire and crashed severely breaking his leg and ankle and was invalided out of active service.

After a brief sojourn as a desk jockey in the RAF he left to the lure of motorsport. The British motor manufacturers were in recovery mode and Segrave was soon to become a champion. In 1921 he won the first long distance motor race to be run in Britain. His motor sport career progressed in various GPs between 1921 and 1924, winning the 1923 French GP in the aforementioned Sunbeam and two more GPs in 1924, France and Spain. A Spanish newspaper report following his win described him as “El Maestro Completo” which requires no translation. He quite properly wore a collar and tie under his overalls. He then retired from racing to concentrate on speed records.



Two years later in 1926 he set a new LSR of 152.33 mph on Southport Beach in “Ladybird”, a Sunbeam Tiger. (At that time, 40 mph was a useful top speed for a road car). Having subsequently lost the record, he regained it a year later, becoming the first person to exceed 200mph in “Mystery”, a 1000hp Sunbeam, achieving 203.79 mph. In 1929 he set his final LSR in “The Golden Arrow” * at Ormond Beach, Florida, achieving 231.45 mph. He then retired from LSR attempts having witnessed some horrific deaths. On a lighter note, one of his lesser-known water borne wins was at Hythe Re-

gatta in 1927 where he won the 8HP Outboard Class – not all blood and thunder then.



In the final phase of his career, in 1928 and still only 31, he built “Miss England” to his own design. After his 1929 final LSR he travelled to Miami winning a speed race on its first outing. Then in June 1930 came his tragic demise on Lake Windermere but only after setting a new WSR of 98.76 mph. One crew member

died instantly and a second suffered injury. Typically, Segrave’s dying words were to ask how they were.

What a man, the first and greatest ever motor racing knight, what a life. His achievements spanned only a decade, not just a driver but also driven to achieve. His career carried him from Hythe to Venice Lido, The Isle of Man to Brooklands and Le Mans, from Birkdale to Southport and Windermere, Biscayne to Daytona. How humbled we should be in his memory.

*Both Sunbeams and the Golden Arrow may be seen at Beaulieu motor museum and are well worth a visit if you have not seen them. Gain particular is vast and would make a particularly good secondhand car as it is reputed to have less than 19 miles on the clock.

Nigel Wright.

Elderly Utterances

The Voice of Experience!

Ron Palmer has his say

I'm not exactly sure when Historic Rallies began for me as it was a gradual changeover from stage and conventional road events during the '80s and probably a landmark was 1989 when I joined the HRCR. I still have all of their Old Stager magazine series since then and continue to be a member. The '90s were very active with Historic Events competing with Frank Davies in his TR4 or Mk 1 Lotus Cortina and with Robin Murray in the Cooper S. If I'm honest I had difficulty in grasping the mysteries of regularity sections which I hadn't encountered in the '60s or '70s but they were part of many road events from the '80s in an attempt to make rallies competitive and legal.



In early 2001 I got a call from a motor trade friend from Lancaster, Tony Payne. Tony, a director of Pye Motors the Ford Main Dealers was a keen enthusiast with a long history in rallies going back to before the 1967 London Gulf which Robin Murray and I had also competed in. He had been reading up about a new event The Rally Of The Tests to be held in late 2001 and promoted by the Classic Rally Association. The Clerk of the Course was to be Fred Bent and his assistant Nigel Hunter with Bob Redhead Chief Marshal all experienced Cumbrian rally men so that was a good recommendation. The event was organised to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first International RAC Rally.

Tony had several classic cars and his 1959 Jaguar Mk1 3.4 saloon was identified as one to use on the Tests. Finished in BRG with matching wires and two Lucas auxiliary fogs it was a dead ringer for the Mike Hawthorn car. This placed us in Class 5 for Historic saloons over 2000cc against 2 other Jaguars, 3 Mercedes, a Lancia Aurelia, a Daimler 250, 2 Ford Zodiacs, an Austin A105 Westminster and 2 Rovers, a great mix of cars with the crews mainly from GB and one from Germany. In total there were 104 entries, all cars dated 1962 or prior and we were allocated number 11

The event included a series of speed tests to add variety to the navigational challenges making up the larger part of the 1200 mile route. The navigation formats divided everyone into the men and the boys, as it does to this day. It is possible to take part and enjoy the experience but unless you have a top class navigator you can forget the win and there is a cluster of about six top experts who could help you stand a chance. Don't get me wrong, you need a competent driver and a nimble, reliable car but the navvy is the key ingredient for Historic road rallies. So the first hurdle is to do well in your class and our class just so happened to include the eventual winners Frank Fennell/Kevin Savage in a Mercedes 300SE.

The idea of the Tests was to revive the Spirit and Style of the 1950s so the car had to be to a period spec and the crew dressed accordingly. Tony opted for tweeds and a countryman's trilby with country shirt and tie. I borrowed Paul Gilligan's flying jacket, (no charge), plus cords, shirt and Jaguar tie. Of course sitting in the opulence of the wood, carpets and leather of the Jaguar we had it easy. Pity the poor souls braving the winter weather in their prewar MG, Alvis, HRG etc.

The three day event started from the Hilton Hotel, Blackpool which was a handy distance for Tony and me and the first two tests were in the ideal setting of the Promenade. After four tests, one regularity and some demanding road sections MTC 2 was located at Lakeside Station on Windermere and lots of old rally hands turned up to encourage those taking part.

Regularities at Ulpha - 30 mph and Hardknott - 20mph, concentrated the mind before we headed east through Garsdale and Hawes in Wensleydale. A great day in familiar territory finished after 258 competitive miles at the Old Swan in Harrogate.

Saturday's route was of 312 miles and finished at The Holiday Inn, Oxford after 12 tests, three regularities and an interesting variety of road sections. Sunday's route and the rally finished at the Grand Hotel at Brighton which had been the scene of the IRA bombing in 1984 which killed five and injured 31 others but did not achieve its aim of killing Margaret Thatcher and the rest of the cabinet at the Conservative conference. Our room was at the front of the Hotel facing the prom and not far from the site of the bombing. MT was made of sterner stuff and attended the conference the following morning after the bomb was detonated at 2.54am.

Tony and I in car 11 finished 4th in class and 21st overall and we enjoyed it so much we entered the 2002 event forthwith. I was fortunate to compete in the next 14 years of The Tests which has rightly claimed its place as the premier historic road rally in the U.K. if not Europe.

RIP Tony - a great competitor and a nice guy to spend a Rally with respected by all who knew him in business and the rally world.

Ron.



VNUK 0, BREXIT 1

Motorsport UK hails Government plan to quash the EU ‘Vnuk’ motor insurance law a “significant victory”

Motorsport UK is delighted to announce to its community the news that its considerable efforts alongside the UK government to defeat the threat of the Vnuk insurance issue have been successful.

In a press release issued earlier today, the Department for Transport confirmed that it is taking the necessary steps to exempt the UK – and consequently UK motorsport – from the implications of the EU Motor Insurance Directive.

The news will be met with enormous support and relief by everyone in the UK motorsport community, as the sport will no longer be vulnerable to the requirement for insurance even on private land for a wide range of ‘vehicles’.

The EU rules would have meant any motorsport collision in the UK involving vehicles from karting to F1 would have been treated as regular road traffic accidents requiring insurance. The financial implications would have posed an existential threat to motorsport, risking tens of thousands of jobs in the process.

David Richards, Chairman of Motorsport UK, welcomed today’s announcement by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps and extended his appreciation to all who supported Motorsport UK in their efforts to secure this crucial decision and protect the future of the sport.

“Today’s announcement is a hugely significant victory for the UK and our sport, after a considerable effort by Motorsport UK and the Department of Transport over several years to defeat the threat of the Vnuk insurance issue,” he commented. “This decision provides stability as we seek to progress our sustainability agenda and protects the UK’s preeminent position at the forefront of motorsport technology worldwide. I would like to thank all those who played a part in securing this important outcome, including the MIA and the insurance industry.”

Vnuk continues to apply in the EU where the FIA is making robust representations for a motorsport exemption to apply. Although not directly involved in that consultation now, Motorsport UK continues to liaise with the FIA regarding the detail because it will apply to UK participants in the EU – unless it is repealed.

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Andy's Armchair

Andy Armstrong takes an irreverent look at motoring and motorsport

I was reading a short article a week or so ago listing how many public charging points some of our major cities have to deal with the expected growth in the number of electric cars. Between them, Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Coventry, Bristol, Brighton, Milton Keynes, Nottingham and Leeds, have, according to the i paper, a combined total of 1442 such points while London on its own has, wait for it, 5763. Why?

Now a wet afternoon, stuck in the house provided with an i pad and “google” gave me the following figures. London has a population of 9304000 while the combined population of all the others totals 8654000 which means London has only 650000 more people than the others combined. Put another way, for every charger in London there are 1614 people and in the other cities the count shoots up to 6001. Seems a bit odd don't you think for a country where our leader has vowed to “level things up” and become a lot less London centric. Oh, and by the way those places listed are supposedly good examples of preparedness. Can you imagine how much worse the figures would be if you used Carlisle and a few more backwaters?

Moving on.

It seems to have been a case of musical chairs in the BTCC driver line up. Tom Ingram has left his long term team Speedworks Toyota and moved to Hyundai which is run by a much less successful squad. Rory Butcher has moved to Speedworks and left Motorbase, which has been sold to two new owners whose previous performances have been rather underwhelming. The Seat Cupra will be new to the series in 2021 being run by Team Hard which again has never shone brightly up to now. I could go on, but you can no doubt see what I mean by musical chairs from what I've mentioned above. Whatever happens you've got to say the likely outcome of the above will still see the West Surrey Racing BMW's and Team Dynamics Hondas scrapping it out at the front as usual, along with Ash Sutton as reigning champion in his Infiniti run by Lazer Tools Racing. Tom Ingram in his Hyundai could also have a part to play as thanks to his natural talent he makes an average car look like a good one.

Whatever happens I recommend you to watch the series unfold live on ITV4. Some of the support races can be tedious, but the 3 feature races at every one of the 10 meetings usually provide some real entertainment. Keep an eye out in May when the series kicks off at Thruxton on the 9th, fingers crossed.

Having researched a bit about Mexican Grand Prix drivers for last month's “Armchair “ ramblings I bit the bullet, rang “Chaters” bookshop and got a copy of “The Brothers Rodriguez” delivered. Superb biography of both of them with hundreds of pictures from their childhood through to their untimely end. I'd wanted a copy for years, since it came out in fact, and I'm certainly not disappointed. Furthermore the initial price of £99 had dropped to £60 which made the book even more enjoyable. Mind you it's huge, don't drop it on your head if you nod off reading in bed, you'll end up with a fractured skull.

Ends

AA.