

Wigton Motor Club Ltd

Start Line

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www.wigtonmc.co.uk

December 2012

“Tests” Success for Charles & Ron



Photo by Tony North

Charles Graves & Ron Palmer finished a fine ninth overall on the Rally of the Tests in the Jaguar XK150. Ali Proctor navigated Richard Prosser to 4th in a Sunbeam Alpine, Bob & Sue MacLean were joint 13th in their Anglia with Frank Fennell and Bob Hargreaves in an Alfa.

The “Tests” is considered to be the UK’s toughest historic rally.

Always in the lead!

Diary

Club events over the next month or so

Annual Awards Dinner

at the

Skiddaw Hotel, Keswick

on

Saturday, February 2nd 2013

With

Special guest speaker from M Sport

Tickets £28 from David Agnew - 01946 841455

First come first served as always!

WIGTON MOTOR CLUB LTD

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Talking Point

Topical comment from the world of motoring

It's been a funny sort of year! I can't remember a year where the weather has paid so big a part in our activities and motoring in general. A day without rain has been a rare thing. We lost the "Trotters" autotest and the Kames sprint and we were lucky at the Classic Show that the rain appeared late in the afternoon. Lots of other events suffered, mostly those based on grass like classic shows. I would suspect that a fair number of events will have lost money this year due to poor spectator attendances. In other respects it has been a very good year for the club with membership keeping at a high level and rising entries for all our major events. The social pub runs have also been well attended. As usual I would like to thank all the committee and members who put so much effort into making our events a success.

Family circumstances prevented me from getting to as many events as I might have usually done and a lot of motor club stuff was getting done rather last minute but hopefully we are back on track.

Congratulations to the Solway Autumn Classic Weekend team for their efforts and an excellent events. We could do with some new recruits in terms of the organising team as a couple have had to leave and we also need a few more venues for tests if anyone know of likely places.

I read with interest an article where John Surtees was saying there was no clear cut "ladder of achievement" in motorsport. Karting has innumerable classes and those lucky enough to get into car racing are raced with several "routes" to the top. Mind you this applies through out motorsport as we have far too many championships with far too many classes. This year all the crews that did the minimum number of rounds in the British Rally Championship won something. Mind you there were not that many crews anyway! Giving lots of awards and creating championships is a method of getting people to compete because if you are the "Under 25 Novice Lady Champion driver in Class N11" in the BRC then you can go to a sponsor and rightly say you are a British Champion. The fact that you were the only one in that category does not matter however meaningless that is. How can you compare that performance say with someone in a Formula Ford race who comes 20th out of forty cars?

Of course in speed events we have far too many classes and many classes have no competitors or just a couple. At Harewood for example it would seem that some cars can fit in up to three of the classes. Is all about being a big fish in a small pond? If there is a class of three and you come third you can happily tell your mates in the pub that you came third - the fact that there were no other competitors is conveniently forgotten!

Ron pointed out at the last committee meeting that the new "Targa" rally rules have classes based on ability and then engine size which will lead to at least 12 classes. So you have thirty entries with less than a handful in each class and perhaps none! Just plain daft!

GTF



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

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Classic Column

I paid my first visit to the NEC Classic Car Show a couple of weeks ago. Fortunately from Newport Pagnell it was just an easy hour to the NEC, which strangely I had not visited before. I am not quite sure what I expected from the Show but overall I was underwhelmed by it. It was very big with lots of cars rather crammed in and there were huge crowds as well (60K).

I think I rather expected the club stands to be more elaborate with a lot of sets, staging, props etc but very few seemed to have made the effort. The other rather strange thing was the classic motorbike show in one of the middle halls. Now if you had a ticket for the cars you could go to the bike display, indeed you had to in order to get to the other part of the car show, but the folk in the bike show had to pay to see the cars. This meant the gates into the bike hall had to be manned on both ends. It would have been simple logic to put the bike hall at one end and the problem would have been solved!

There were undoubtedly some very nice and rare cars, including some I had not seen before like an Essex similar to one my Grandfather owned and the beautifully engineered Railton. Interestingly many of the main classic firms like Moss were not present, it's simply not financially viable compared to online sales.

The auction was in the middle of a hall and seemed a bit disorganised with a fairly average set of cars for sale. The sheer volume of folk there did make it difficult to see the cars to even stop and stare at some points and I am told it was worse on Sunday. It shows the popularity of classic cars!

Would I go again? Well not for a while anyway. In my opinion it was not a patch on Race Retro where every car is worth looking at and you meet lots of real enthusiasts.

At the last committee meeting we had a full debrief of the Classic Show and there will be a number of changes for 2013. The main one being there will be no "entries on the day". This has become an increasing problem in recent years with people thinking they can just turn up and display their cars. When you have some 600 cars to get into the field in an hour or so and a few don't have passes or final instructions, it creates a huge bottle neck. Then some don't want to pay the admission fee and want to leave against the flow of traffic.

We will look at re-arranging the position of the clubs to allow the bigger clubs to have more room. The arena will be enlarged as well.

We are looking for a theme and invited clubs/makes if anyone has any ideas.



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PG Tips

Shock, horror – I now finally have all the bits of the Skoda engine back and with any luck the car will be back on the road before Christmas....just in time to put an entry in for the Isle of Man Classic next year and do something else to it to render it unusable again no doubt. Recent work in the garage has left me with the usual number of minor cuts and abrasions and as a result of this I would like to recommend a product for people not to buy! Stood in the chemist one day with my hands gently bleeding I saw a small line up of products, the brand leader of which seemed to be called 'liquid skin'. Sold as an alternative to good old fashioned plasters its something that you paint over small abrasions to seal them and stop germs and dirt getting in. It sounded great when I bought it, and then I applied it to a small wound....I would say the pain I experienced was something close to being stabbed with a blunt knife and then having vinegar poured into the wound. After I had stopped swearing I noticed the liquid had begun to dry in a thin white coat that then stuck to my hand like superglue for several days and refused to come off long after my body had done it's magic and healed the cut. So yes it does work, but no the pain is not worth it and I will be sticking to plasters from now on.

My Alfa 166 has now passed an MOT which makes me very happy, however the down side is that I had to replace both front tyres. Not too bad you might think, however I have been running around on a set of winter tyres since I bought the car in April. The whole car had been shod in the things by it's previous owner and as they seemed to have lots of tread and I didn't want to spend money on something as frivolous as tyres (!) so I just left them on. They appeared to be made of granite and in spring/summer weather had very bad handling characteristics when pushed. As the Alfa is a bit of a big cruiser it was not often that I experienced the shocking understeer induced by them so it came as a surprise after the MOT to note quite how much better the car feels on half decent normal tyres. It's also a shame that I didn't get to try them in some proper freezing winter weather, so now I will never know whether they were any good or not. I have seen quite a lot of mention of people fitting them on spare sets of wheels of late and a couple of magazine features as well, but in all honesty I can only think of a handful of times in recent years where they would have been really needed. I believe that you can now buy snow socks from Asda and such places if the weather really does turn snowy.

On a motorsport front, the Formula 1 season is now almost at an end and I have to say it seems to have gone on forever this year. I don't know if it's just me but the start of the season seems to be light years ago. I also have to confess to not seeing very many of the races, partly due to the ridiculous Sky deal that means not all events have been on mainstream TV and partly because I don't seem to have the time to sit for 2 hours on a Sunday afternoon anymore. The season has been quite a good one though with various drivers winning races but with only a couple of races to go it appears Vettel is once more on top.

The potential re-opening hillclimb venue that I mentioned some months back – High Auldgirth now appears to have been put back on the closed venue list. Apparently the road surface is very badly damaged in places, the Armco that was stolen is going to be a lot more expensive to replace than first thought and the whole place looks like it's going to need a lot more money spent on it than anyone anticipated. It's a real shame because it is almost local and would have been a great addition to the Cross Border speed championship. The hunt is now on to find events for next year and a 2 day sprint at Anglesey in Wales has been mooted. I could quite fancy going down there for a jolly – the championship could then change it's name to the Tri-nations, or the Very Cross Border speed championship!

Peter

Winners All

The following members will receive their awards at the Awards Dinner on February 2nd

Club Champion	Angela Jones
Ladies Champion	Eileen Horsfall
Marshals' Champion	John Graham
External Champion	Colin Birkbeck
Enthusiast of the Year	Ronnie MacGregor
Field Champion	Willie Jarman
Stage Champions	Richard & Edwin Cook
New Comers Champion	Robert Iveson

Brockbanks Solicitors Cross Border Speed Championship

Speed Champion	Mark Purdham
Class wins:	Robert Iveson, Ronnie MacGregor, Richard Shaw, Les Golding, Colin Sutherland, Peter Sewell, Angela Jones, Willie Jarman, Harry Moody, Darren Coleman, Angus Buchan, Colin Birkbeck
Class second:	David Wiggins, Alex Thornton, Peter Keen, Chris Boyd, Gareth Coleman

TJ Services Northern Historic Rally Awards

1st driver: Dave Marsden	1st navigator: Mike Garstang
2nd driver: David Agnew	2nd navigator : Bob Hargreaves
3rd driver: Stephen Palmer	3rd navigator: Ron Palmer

**Could the current holders of the main trophies return
them to Graeme Forrester before
Christmas please?**

Event Reports

Solway Historic Rally.

A lovely sunny morning greeted the 43 entries at the start at Rowrah Kart Club. Test 1&2 around the track, great fun and going well. A run out to the quarry at Broughton-uphill, turn around, back downhill-very slippery!

Maryport, Moota and Wigton for 3 more tests. All going well so far ,no wrong tests! Soup lunch, then a run out to Kirkbride Airfield for 2 tests, return to Maryport, a thrash around a track in a field at Wellington Farm and return via a scenic route to Rowrah and a final 2LAPS of the track which was great!!

As we were running an early number we were able to watch other competitors while enjoying an excellent buffet. We were surprised to find ourselves 2nd OA .as there was a lot of competition.

A great event with uncomplicated tests that suit us just fine!

Thank you to all the organisers and marshals for a great event.

Tot and Maureen Dixon

Solway Marshals Draw

The winners get £15 each. Thanks to all the competitors who contributed.

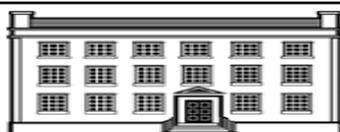
D. Waddington

Jack Palmer

Abby Palmer

Peter Keen

Esther Bowness



**Brockbanks
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Whitehaven, Cockermouth, Maryport, Workington and Keswick (as Oglethorpe & Broatch)

Elderly Utterances

The Voice of Experience!

Ron Palmer has his say

Charles and I have used the trusty XK150 FHC on the Rally of the Tests over the past ten years and any other Jags on the entry list have always been of interest. All cars entered are classics and the date spread this year was from 1951 to 1979 with most makes and models represented. This year car number one was the only other Jaguar entered, a 1951 MK V saloon driven by Ed Abbott and navigated by Dennis Greenslade a previous winning navigator of this event. We were running at number five out of an entry of 80 cars and I took the opportunity of speaking with Ed about his first time on the event in this large and very nice car. During the course of the event which takes place over four days the running order changes according to your finishing position on the day prior so the number on the car does not represent the sequence in which a car appears. Those lowest in the scoring run first and the leaders run at the back of the field. The competitive parts this year consisted of 35 timed Tests on private land, 25 Regularity sections mostly run on testing public lanes and tracks, 18 Passage Controls and 39 Time Controls. At this time of year we have what passes for daylight until about 4.30pm and the next 6 or 7 hours before bedtime are run in darkness.

After the Thursday evening prologue close to Torquay the event started in earnest at 7am on Friday and ran through Devon and Somerset before a finish at Bristol just before midnight. The following day we made our way through the uplands of central Wales before having a Time Control and brief coffee halt in the late afternoon at Llanwrtyd Wells. Then after a regularity section and three further tests we arrived at the start control of regularity section 2/6 Llyfnant Valley where our starting time was 18.28 with a target average speed of 26mph for the section. The road along the valley is a very narrow 'yellow' with a steep hillside to the right and unfenced on the left with the river running alongside the road. Not much of this was obvious as Charles tried hard to cope with the pine needle and mud covered road which twisted, rose and fell and was only as wide as the car. I usually travel with the door window open on competitive sections to make transactions quicker at controls. Two miles into the section I thought I heard someone call out, could not see anyone in the pitch blackness but thinking we may have missed a secret check marshal we stopped and backed up a few yards. Not seeing anything but hearing another call I grabbed a torch from the door pocket and jumped out to see a fast flowing river some fifteen foot below the road with someone standing on an upturned car calling out. I could see the second crew member in the water but by this time the driver had gone back to him to hold him up clear of the surface. I recognised the car as the Jaguar Mk V running car No 1 which must have got a wheel over the edge - enough to pull the car over. They had started the section five minutes before us so four other cars had passed them before we came along without them being noticed or heard. Seeing that both crew members were above water I ran back to stop the next car along. They in turn stopped the following cars as they arrived at intervals.



The driver called that Denis had his leg trapped by the seat belt and couldn't get free. As we pondered the next move car number 39 a Volvo 122S arrived crewed by Irishmen James O'Mahoney and Paddy McDonnell and James clearly being a man of action ran 50 yards upstream and waded across the fast flowing river and then scrambled up the steep far bank. Having assessed the situation he called across for his navigator Paddy to get his Swiss army knife from the door pocket and this was thrown across to him and he passed this down to Ed who went below the water to cut Denis free from the seat belt. This allowed Ed to

under Dennis's arms and James hauled him bodily out of the river and vertically up the bank. He then passed the rope back to Ed and helped him up the bank. They must have been in the freezing water for 15 minutes by now so dry clothing was called for and thrown across. There was no mobile phone reception and being at the head of the queue we set off looking for any dwelling with lights on and after passing several in darkness we came to an occupied farm and were able to get a landline for assistance. One of the cars at the back of queue must have been able to reverse out and they too called for an ambulance.



We carried on to the next control at the White Lion at Machynlleth and ultimately the evening section. There were two heroes that night firstly James O'Mahoney who plunged into the river without a thought for himself and Ed Abbott the driver who was a tower of strength in the river and kept Denis above water. The crew spent a night in hospital and Denis turned up for the Awards dinner on the Sunday night at Chester weak and sore but dry and cheerful. James and Paddy retired from the event and by Monday morning were back at home in Ireland. I'm not sure what has happened to the Mk V, it would no doubt take a mighty effort to recover it.

The rally time schedule was extended by half an hour that evening because of the holdup and finished on Sunday afternoon in Chester town centre with a ceremonial welcome. It was a tough event on cars and crew but we wouldn't have missed it. The XK ran better than ever and caused us no worries. The event was won by Paul Wignall and Mark Appleton in the Guilietta Sprint followed by Neil Wilson and Matthew Volkes in a Porsche 356B. Charles and I finished 9th overall and won our class. Local crews included Ali Procter from the north east who on his first Tests finished a fine 4th navigating Richard Prosser in the Alpine, Bob and Susan McClean from Barrow 13th = in the Anglia with and Bob Hargreaves navigating for Frank Fennell in the Alfa Guilia Super also 13 =. Local boys to retire were Fred Bent navigating for Geoff Crabtree in the MB 300SE, Roy Perkins/Peter Ward Porsche 911 and Paul Bosdet navigating for Joe Reynolds in the Irish MG Magnette ZB. Two thoughts – first is that motor sport as we know can be dangerous and second it is comforting to know that when things do go wrong there can be resourceful people at hand.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to my reader.

Ron

Photos by Tony Large.



Club Championships 2012

Name	May AT	May AS	June AT	June AS	July AT	LD CR	July GA	Kames	Sol-way	Over all	Field
Angela Jones	22	13	23	20					24	102	78
Willie Jarman	24	25	25	17						91	91
Edwin Cook	25		19				25		19	88	69
Andrew Graham	19	19	21						25	84	59
Robert Iveson		20	16	25			18			79	79
David Agnew		16		18			22		22	78	56
Brian Graham	23		24				24			71	71
Steve Palmer	15	7	22				23			67	67
Steve Fishwick	17	18		21						56	56
Tot Dixon						25			24	49	0
Maureen Dixon						25			24	49	0
Bob Hargreaves						24			23	47	0
Eileen Horsfall							21		24	45	21

68 members scored in all

Festive Frolics Winter Autotest

The Autotest mentioned in the last Startline is now taking shape. It will be on Sunday December 30th. The Location is at the test site in Maryport used on the Solway classic rally. Near to the Go Kart track on the A596. Signing on will be from 10am for a 11am start. There will be a choice of standard Autotest with no passenger, or Production car Autotest ie with passenger. The emphasis will be on having FUN. The tests won't require you to be Eisenstein to complete.

It is hoped to have an industrial unit available for shelter if needed and toilet's. Tea and Coffee will be available at the start and it is hoped to have vegetable soup and roll for lunch. All included in the entry fee of £10.00

The entry will be limited to a maximum of 20 so that we can get the maximum numbers of runs each and finish before dark.

Please give David Wiggins a ring ASAP to book your place on 016973 49488 or email myself at stephenpalmer41@gmail.com the earlier the better so we can try to get the catering right.. Details of the prizes will be announced later or on the day depending on numbers.

This will be the first round of the 2012 Club Championships.

More Harewood Photos

By Ronnie McGregor



Lakeland Trial Photos

By Graeme Forrester



Welcome to the following new members:

We have pleasure in welcoming the following new members to the Club and we hope that you all enjoy our events and social activities.

Scott Wragg of Sheffield
Mark Burton of Middlesbrough
David Winter of Rotherham
Sally Ann Hewitt
David MaCausland of Ballymena
Ian Dixon of Perthshire
Gordon Furness of Northallerton
Richard Craig of Kirkby In Furness
Andrew Steel of Harrogate

Simon Farrar of Sheffield
Jon Hill of Rotherham
Colin Rose of West Lothian
Archie Simmonds of Berwickshire
David Martin of Penrith
Dan Quille of Edinburgh
Simon Barnes of Preston
Paul Slingsby of Ilkley

For most of you this will be your first magazine and we hope that you enjoy it and that you will take part in many of our activities.

Membership Renewals

You will shortly receive your membership renewal form. Should you have already paid for 2013 and receive a membership card, please ignore the form. Please complete the form carefully. The emailer system we use allows us to mail particular interest groups so please tick the boxes for those that interest you.

The good news is that the committee have decided to keep the membership fees at the same level for 2013 but sadly it is likely that with postage and printing costs rising all the time, the fee for posted versions will have to rise for 2014. The emailed version is of course in full colour.

The competition: If your form arrives with Liz before the 30th of December you stand a chance of being one of the two lucky folk to get free membership! All forms will go in the Chairman's hat and two will be drawn out. So sent it off now - you know it makes sense!

More Lakeland Trial Photos



Christmas Quiz

For years we used to have a Christmas Quiz in Start Line. Sadly the curse of the internet has made them a bit pointless but In my recent sorting of motor club papers I found the 1994 Cumbria MSG Inter Club Quiz so below I've made a "fun" quiz out of some of those questions. No prizes of course!

- 1) In what car did Louise Aikten win the Coupe des dames on the Mote Carlo Rally?
- 2) Who made Sabra, Anadol and Fox?
- 3) What is Michael Turner best known for?
- 4) What did Vic Lee smoke ?
- 5) What was Ayrton Senna's full name?
- 6) You know what an RB5 is but what was R5B?
- 7) What instrument did James Hunt play?
- 8) What was a "Denovo" ?
- 9) What did Jack Kemsley introduce to British rallying?
- 10) What were the colours of the works MG Metro 6R4 on its first event?
- 11) What do "Workmate" & "Elite" share?
- 12) What colour were the first "works" McLaren racing cars?
- 13) Where was the Midnight Sun Rally held?
- 14) What happens at Pikes Peak?
- 15) Who won the 1977 Solway Stages Rally?
- 16) What did Ken Costello do long before the manufacturers?
- 17) With what sort of car was Chris Coburn associated?
- 18) Damon Hill's helmet colours denoted what?
- 19) Who starred in the film "Le Mans"?
- 20) What marque did Henry and Charles create?

Drive it like a girl!

The term “Drive it like a girl” was first initiated by a gentleman by the name of Mr. Wiggins (what “a gentleman” I hear you all cry)!! We were at Barbon hill climb and he informed me I was “driving like a girl” after a slower time than him up the hill. After my first attempt I seemed to improve slightly and went up quicker than Wiggy (an affectionate term for a gentleman)! Unfortunately Wiggy didn’t get a faster time on his next run, so I took the opportunity of going over and saying “now who’s driving like a girl”, to which he replied “you you’ve beaten me” (I know it would be impossible for that word to be printed) I thought that was a little unsporting of him and certainly not very gentleman like!! (Whets’ the saying “don’t count your chickens”)

Anyway the “banter” followed everywhere we went and what good fun we had at each other’s expense, I enjoyed trying to catch the boys and on the few occasions when I did I made the most of it.

Teesside was an event I hadn’t done before and really enjoyed. Mr. Wiggins and Mr. Jarman were having fun chasing each other around the track and I was following up the rear. It was a good day weather wise, the only down side was we managed to lose all the water out of the car. This was soon fixed after some repairs by Mr. Jarman (and some swearing)!

Willie and I have been doing some of the ANWCC sprints and hill climbs this year, so I have been getting more practice in. Still not enough as I have only managed to beat him once on a run at Scamonden and on one run at Barbon. I remember coming in at Barbon not realizing I had beaten him and Brian saying it had just been announced on the tannoy that Angela Jones had beaten William Jarman in his own car---interesting! Keith Thomas came rushing over as I parked the car and said to tell Willie “I had missed a gear and still beaten him”! You can imagine the stick Mr. J got, especially as he has also been rumored to say “I was driving like a girl”. Anyway it was short lived as I knew it would be and Willie went back out and claimed the point something of a second. I thought it was a bit unsporting of him next time we went to Barbon to take a bigger and faster car -strange!!

Three Sisters followed and I had been fortunate enough to have done some ANWCC events here, so it wasn’t so bad, I had already been on this track. I find the slight climb after the straight quite challenging and still have to slow down for fear of carrying on through the tyres as I’ve seen some do. Mr. Wiggins made a comment in his article about me “consciously trying to “drive it like a girl”. (Mr. Wiggins’ time was 88.66 and mine was 89.46).

The trip to Forrest burn was a very wet one and I found this a challenging track for me. I had watched Willie carry on across the grass at one of the corners and remember saying “I’m glad it wasn’t me that did that”. Remember what I said about “don’t count your chickens”-well I decided after watching several people going across the grass that I would try and brake before the water to avoid this. I did brake before the water, but the car carried on and we had a trip across the grass and back onto the track, only to nearly go straight on into the tyre wall the next time out!! It was not one of my better days (I think this was another place where I was told I was “driving like a girl”) I seem to remember Ronnie putting something in his article after this event about my performance waning a little and “the boys were well and truly back on top”!!

We decided to do the full weekend at Harewood, which I was really looking forward to. Willie decided he was taking the Cosworth (the little Peugeot not being good enough anymore) I cleaned and polished the little Peugeot as girl’s do and Willie cleaned and polished his Cosworth. Willie’s wife Anne helped me take some old stickers off the car (much to Willie’s disgust, as she never helps with his car)!! And put a new sticker on mine!!

Brian, Willie and I set off for Harewood, even the promise of a shopping trip to Harrogate could not persuade Anne to come with us! We stayed at a lovely farm about 20 minutes from the venue and I had full responsibility of the truck, trailer and Peugeot, while Willie drove the other vehicle. A bit hairy on some of the narrow roads in the dark, but I soon got into the swing of things. It was Brian I felt sorry for as passenger, but he survived the ordeal.

The weather was beautiful on Saturday and I proudly presented a polished Peugeot and my” new tattoo on my derriere” as Ronnie puts it! (Incidentally Keith Thomas informs me he called into my workplace to have a look at the tattoo, but was told I was out)! I enjoyed the track at Harewood and managed to keep all my tyres on the tarmac, unlike some people in bigger four wheel drive cars – I wonder who that could have been? Ronnie and Dave were moved into my class after a tyre issue (dodgy), but you could not wish to be beaten by two nicer people and I took it like a true girl would (I do mean that despite the stick they give me). I would have had two class wins, but I got two thirds instead which is still a good result for me. I think Kevin commented “I was driving like a “fast girl” that day – I didn’t know whether to take that as a compliment or not!!

On Sunday the weather wasn’t as kind, but the day seemed to go slowly and there were a few cars went off which slowed things down slightly. We did manage to get a timed run in the dry and then the heavens opened and most (sensible) people put their cars on the trailers. Willie asked me to go and fetch his full wet tyres out of the van, which I did and brought them back in the boot of the Peugeot (how many boys could do that in their cars-they were big tyres as well)!! As we unloaded them out of the boot, he decided he wasn’t going out after all - even with the four wheel drive and full wet tyres!!!! I asked if it would ok to take the Peugeot out seeing as I needed the practice in the rain (I quite often get reminded that I need to drive faster in the rain)! Ronnie came over and asked if I was going out, so off we went to line up. Only twenty eight cars went out as the rain came down harder and as Ronnie previously mentioned in his article I was the only girl.



Then came a victorious moment for all girls. I went up the hill in an amazing 82.69 and Ronnie went up in 84.54, he didn’t seem to acknowledge this result at all and disappeared very quickly to put his car on the trailer!! Was it a yellow Honda he was driving or was it a giant bowl of custard (or was he driving it like a bowl of custard)? What was it Ronnie wrote about “the boys being well and truly back on top”?

The last event we hoped to do was Kames and guess what it was raining. I was quite looking forward to the challenge of the rain again, but we had problems starting the car and getting it off the trailer. A big thank you to Willie, Harry and another man with a Peugeot for trying to get the car going. Thank you also to everyone who tried to clear the track so the event could run. Unfortunately the weather won as it has at so many events this year. All was not lost; I was still able to give my special presents out to two people who have kept me going with their banter all year. Mr. Wiggins now has an identical tattoo on his derriere (which he seems very proud of and in his words is “class”) I expect Ronnie hasn’t shown many of you his present, I thought because he has shown so much interest in the tattoos he should have one of his own. (It reads “driving like a girl – in the rain”) He hurriedly put it in his vehicle and didn’t seem that pleased at all, mind you he did pose for a photograph with it (anyone know where the photo is – come on Ronnie be a sport and let everyone see it)!!

One final note, we seem to have a slight problem in that Mr. Jarman doesn’t want to drive the car with the “drive it like a girl” sticker on. This is the man who wouldn’t take his Cosworth out in the rain at Harewood!!

Thanks to everyone for another fun year.

Angela Jones

Inside the Industry

Paul Gilligan keeps us up to date

Driving an Electric Car

I've written about electric cars here previously, but this week is the first time I've driven one. A couple of weeks ago someone from Vauxhall Fleet offered me an Ampera for a few days and it was delivered earlier this week. It's an intriguing car. About the size of a Mondeo or Insignia it has a battery pack running down the central spine which powers the electric motors. When the batteries run out a 1.4 litre engine takes over automatically. Performance on electric power is very acceptable with easy overtaking thanks to the maximum torque being available at all times. The silence is very pleasant, you actually can't tell whether you've started it or not and it's equipped with a second and quieter horn so you can politely warn pedestrians of your impending arrival. The "conventional" bits of the car are very pleasant, great interior, good ride and handling and so on.

However going back to the power packs (which is the point) I'm afraid there's a lot more bad news than good. The biggest problem is the range on electric, driven carefully no more than 30 miles. Then you're left with a 1.4 litre petrol Insignia. Unless you've equipped your home with an expensive fast charge system it will take 8-10 hours before you're ready for the next 30 miles. I know that much research shows that most car journeys are short, but not for this type of car which is most likely to spend its life as a business tool on motorways and A roads. Driving it carefully includes minimising the use of devices that sap electric power. There's even an electronic display that monitors both your driving style and use of power, encouraging you to switch off electric seats and air conditioning to increase the range on electric power.

It's a VERY clever car, but is not as an electric car practical in everyday use for most. It costs over £30000, at the end of 3 years will need a new battery pack that will cost approaching £10000 which must put off any used buyers, so although you'll save on fuel it will be a very expensive car in total. Best I think to term it work in progress, but full marks to Vauxhall for trying and producing such a refined showcase of current technology.

Meanwhile Renault have released details of their next electric car, the Zoe supermini. This will cost £13650 net of the Government grant of £5000, plus the owner will have to pay £70 a month to rent the battery pack, which is cheap as it covers replacement as needed. Range is said to be up to 130 miles in theory, but even Renault say 60-90 miles is more typical. Charging is 9 hours from a normal domestic supply. So perhaps more useful than an Ampera but still not likely to cause a rush to the showrooms when ever-cheaper new cars are being launched (see Budget Brands below).

October Car Sales

The industry was delighted when October numbers came in a whopping 12% above last year. I have to say I was very surprised by this given the number of September pre-registered cars that had to be moved on. At the premium end Audi & BMW did particularly well as their battle continues – Audi are 3000 units ahead currently but BMW beat

them by almost 1000 in October. The real growth was in small cars where cheap finance deals, low fuel costs, and small or zero road tax are tempting private buyers. BMW have been facing the problem of disposing of the 3500 cars they registered for use in the Olympics. The plan was to feed them through the dealer network, but that would have hurt new car sales that BMW desperately need if they are to beat Audi this year. In fact most people thought that because of these cars Audi were more or less guaranteed first place for 2012. BMW have now hit on the elegant solution of selling these cars (at it is said very cheap prices) to the Olympic volunteers. Everyone wins, good thinking BMW!

Digital Car Showrooms

Manufacturers continue to strive to cut costs wherever possible to try to boost profits or cut losses. One of their biggest costs is the margin they give to dealers, between 15 and 20% in total. Not that the dealers keep much of this, most is spent on expensive facilities and discounted away. When manufacturers are struggling to cut a penny off a component the dealer gross margin of maybe £3000 looks enormous. Of course dealers have to spend it on very expensive showrooms, staff, demonstrator fleets and so on. That all might be about to change. Audi have just opened their first UK digital car showroom in Central London. More than 20 more will follow in the next 2 years, Beijing and Dubai next. There are no cars in this showroom, just the facility to “build” whatever car the customer is interested in and showcase it in life size on the “power screen”. Any model in the Audi range can be “demonstrated”, in any colour & trim combination, with any options. There are no demonstrators, if the customer wishes a car can be taken to their home or workplace for them to try.

Whilst initial set up is expensive after that the costs are a fraction of those of a conventional showroom. Whilst internet shopping is destroying the High Street, this new development may make those glass palaces on out of town Motor Parks look like expensive follies before too long?

Budget Brands

Renault’s budget brand Dacia has announced details of its second model, the Sandero supermini. Prices start at £5995, and a finance plan is being offered with a deposit of £1845 and payments of £75 per month, or deposit of only £699 and payments of £99 a month.

The specification is basic (even a radio is extra), but many will be tempted. However Dacia will have competition in a year or two from what I regard as the *cleverest* manufacture in the World, Volkswagen. Using existing technology where the development costs have been written off, and production facilities in China and India VW will it is said launch their own budget range in 2014 and significantly undercut Dacia. Plans are for a small saloon at **£4800**, then an estate for **£5600**, and then a basic 7 seat MPV for just **£6400**.

What these sort of new car prices will do to the other manufacturers remains to be seen. Also they must have a significant effect on the used market. Why buy a 2 or 3 year old Fiesta for £5000 when you can have a new VW? Other manufacturers who don’t have a budget strategy must be very concerned.

Aston Martin For Sale?

Industry observers have been saying for a while that Aston don't have the funds for the next round of product development. The 64% shareholder a Kuwait investment company apparently wants out and has appointed advisers to achieve a sale. Front runners are Tata who could combine Aston with Jaguar and Land Rover, and Toyota who already have a working relationship with AM. Aston Martin are losing money and a sale would seem to make sense, much better than a closure!

Ford & GM Bleeding in Europe

Whilst many were shocked when Ford pulled out of the WRC recently, I have to say the surprise to me was that they had stayed in so long. Citroen have only remained because outside sponsorship covers about 80% of their budget, and both are experiencing very bad times. The Ford news was put into context when the next week they announced the closure of the Southampton Transit production plant (500 jobs) and the Genk plant in Belgium that makes Mondeo and S-Max (4300 jobs). Many more supply chain jobs will inevitably go.

In Europe Ford is currently losing over £3 million **every day**. GM's Vauxhall/Opel losses may total **£1.8 Billion** this year, Ford's could be close behind. GM closed their Antwerp plant in 2010, and is now dramatically downsizing it's Bochum plant in Germany. Both see their salvation in taking their brands upmarket so they can charge the same prices as Audi and BMW, even VW revenues would do!

This is a game played with enormous stakes and many peoples working lives. I can't help feeling these two, and Peugeot/Citroen as well as perhaps Fiat, are caught in a very uncomfortable trap. Above them they have the likes of BMW, Audi and Mercedes moving downwards, below them they have the Korean manufacturers and now Budget Brands offering a strong value proposition. Squeezed as never before, both Ford and GM have very successful operations in the US and elsewhere and I can't help wondering whether they might just throw the European towel in sooner or later? It might be more than the WRC has to get used to life without Ford.

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**A rare sunny day at
Drive It Day 2012**



Andy's Armchair

Andy Armstrong takes an irrelevant look at motoring and motorsport

I read in last month's magazine that John Graham had returned to do a spot of navigating after a lay off of 28 years and realized that I was probably doing the driving when that momentous event took place more than a quarter of a century ago. As far as I can remember the event in question was one of the multi-venue "Solway Stages" which took place at Hadrian's Camp, Great Orton and Kirkbride and although I was never noted for massive speed I'd obviously done quite enough for John round Hadrian's Camp as at the finish he was spitting out fillings as a result of gritting his teeth too tightly. We potted out to Great Orton and as we sat in the queue to start Stage 2 we watched the bloodied and shaken up figures of Alan and Eleanor Glendenning trudging out having comprehensively marmalized their TR8 at the 90 left at the end of the first long straight.

Anyway, I think we also had a quick spin later on and certainly a bit of a "hoo-la" at a split junction, which our Editor, who was marshalling at that point managed to overlook, therefore not getting us excluded. Bearing the above in mind I hope it wasn't my fault it took him so long to pluck up the courage to come back!

Apparently our government are considering a two tier system of road tax whereby those who pay more will be allowed to use motorways and those who pay less won't. Now what happens to the family who want to visit friends in Birmingham maybe twice a year and also have a holiday in Cornwall, are they really going to be expected to pay the same as the driver who commutes 50 miles up and down the M40 ever working day? It would be very interesting to try to plan a sensible route from Carlisle, to let's say Canterbury, not using motorways. It would no doubt take the best part of a day minimum, probably involve driving through central London, with it's Congestion Charge, and guzzle many extra gallons of fuel through getting lost and jammed up solid in city centres. Another half-baked scheme!

Finally, have you ever noticed how motor sport makes you a liar? The Abu Dhabi Grand Prix turned out to be an absolute "corker" after I'd spent most of the preceding week telling my better half it wouldn't be worth watching as it was always a procession. I'll have to keep my trap shut in future.

Ends

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What's On

WMC events and other events we are invited to

December

1st	FDMC	Grizedale Stages
1- 4	HERO	Le JOG
29th	NAC	Christmas Stages at Croft
30th	WMC	Festive Frolics Autotest

January

10-13		Autosport Show
20th	D&DMC	Jack Frost Stages at Croft

February

2nd	WMC	Annual Awards Dinner
3rd	S&DMC	Croft Historic Rally
16th	FAC	Northern Trial
22-24		Race Retro at Stoneleigh

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