

**Wigton Motor Club**

***Start Line***

**January Supplement**

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**Annual Awards Dinner**

Skiddaw Hotel, Keswick

**Saturday, February 2nd 2013**

with

**Special guest speaker Malcolm Wilson**

**Tickets £28 from David Agnew - 01946 841455**

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We are delighted to announce that Malcolm will be our guest speaker at the dinner. Malcolm rarely does these sort of events and he is also very busy with the new sponsors he has in the Gulf but he has managed to slot our event in.

**Don't miss it!**

## My Story in Motorsport

A potted history of Cumbrian motorsport as it was in the beginning for some of us at least!

Every now and then a person has a big effect on the future of not only those who are closely connected to that person but for various reasons it affects lots of other people and their respective paths in life. This is such a story.

In the 1950s a person started a vehicle dismantlers business at Winscales near Workington on his dad's farm and very soon this moved to a piece of land just outside Branthwaite where eventually he built a bungalow and lived with his wife and their very small son, the business also sold tyres and oils and such like products to the farming community and the general public.

The person was called William Kenneth Wilson, his wife's name was Pearl and the small son's name was Malcolm.

WK, Kenny or Ken as most people called him worked very hard and helped tremendously by his wife the business grew and grew and soon it became the place to go in West Cumbria to buy discount tyres and second hand parts for cars.

In the little spare time he had Ken was a very keen Workington Town rugby league supporter but also became involved with the newly introduced sport of Go Karts and was one of the founder members involved in buying and establishing a kart track at Rowrah and working on its construction together with Iredale Edgar of Rowrah and John Timmins of Cleator Moor to mention just two important motor trade people of the day.

Ken's business was expanding rapidly and more and more cars and trucks were being dismantled and it was a very popular place to go as there were no discount places to buy new parts for cars in those days. In fact many people still couldn't afford a car and many of those who had cars couldn't have kept them on the road without access to reasonable priced parts particularly engines and gearboxes as oils and technology weren't like they are today and engines were often worn out at 50,000 miles.

I had been competing in motorsport whilst still at school despite having no money as a very keen navigator for various motor club members who were mainly business people in those early days. Ken was giving special deals to the United Steels Social Organisation Motor Club where unbelievably in the 1960s over 6500 people worked in the steel industry in the Workington area and many people joined USSO motor club just to get discounts not to compete in motorsport. I gradually got to know Ken and his family quite well and later we all became great friends.

By 1967 I had completed my apprenticeship at British Steel as a structural plater and being able to weld and do mechanical jobs because of the fantastic training given in the steelwork's training school I started to buy the odd damaged car from Ken and rebuild them for family members or friends and earned a bit of spare pocket money doing what I enjoyed.

Sometimes I would buy a damaged car such as a Ford Cortina or Escort then get a brand new body shell from Ken and build the damaged car into the new shell then repair the damaged shell using other parts from "down the yard" as Ken would say and this is how I managed to afford to build my rally cars.

The Ford body shells came from County Garage Ltd, Ford main dealers with several branches in Cumbria which was a large company owned by Bert Gilligan and family, the two sons Mike and Paul are Wigton MC members and Paul writes each month for the Wigton magazine. The general manager of the branch in Whitehaven that generally supplied the body shells was none other than another Wigton MC stalwart Ron Palmer who has been a competitor since in his teens and is still competing and organising top class events even today often in partnership with Charles Graves.

Other club members also did this and this is how virtually all of us were able to go rallying. Ian Burnyeat, Eddie Farrell, Ivor Clark, Owen Wilson, Charles Graves, Harry Moody, Gerald McEwan, Ernie Harrison, John Hunter, Eric Brown, Bob Martin, Russell Grant, Mike Beaty, Bill Henderson, Alan Smith, Tony Grisedale and Edwin Cook were just a few of the names who competed in motorsport in those days and bought parts from Ken. Many of names you will recognise are still competing and some are still competing and have offspring competing even today.

In the late sixties I was organising auto tests, autocross, 12 cars and rallies and I initiated and organised a rally I called "The Peak Revs" which was virtually all farm track type special stages joined up by a fast road sections and run through the night. I did course opening car in my Downton tuned Mini Cooper and

had a very young Malcolm Wilson in the back seat as a passenger and we had to drive at competitive speeds running just in front of the rally cars to check all controls were in place and open.

My Mini Cooper burned a valve out at Kirkbride airfield and we limped to the petrol halt at Watsons of Waverton (now DA Harrisons) where the owner Wilson Watson was a rally driver and a person I sometimes navigated for in his Sunbeam Rapier or later in his Lotus Cortina which was the first one in this area and had the A frame rear suspension. I left Malcolm with friends and John Harkness from Carlisle whom I knew kindly drove me round the rest of the rally route to open the controls in a very quick 1293 Cooper S. Malcolm had loved it going down the loose farm tracks with the sump guard crashing on the stones in my Mini Cooper and was a bit miffed when I left him at Waverton and me going off in the "S"

I also took Malcolm to a Ford exhibition at Carlisle organised by County Garage where Timo Makinen launched the new Ford GT70 at the Cosmo ballroom. There is a picture of Malcolm and myself in the front row in the excellent book called "25 years of motoring history" by Jim Turner, buy the book if you can get hold of a copy, it's a great read

I also arranged to take him to the racing car show which was in London and on a Friday so he asked permission from Cockermouth school but it was refused as it would affect his education. Dad Ken phoned up the school and said he would learn more going to the show than he would ever learn at school so we went without permission, this was a typical attitude Ken took to authority

Perhaps Ken's judgement was correct when you see how well Malcolm has done today without that one day at school! Malcolm's form teacher probably remembers it well as it was Ken Rudkin Wigton MC member often seen out marshalling with wife Gleny's in the white MGB !

Malcolm had already had his competition debut by now but "unofficially" of course driving a "sit up and beg" type E93A Ford Pop in an autocross we organised at Stargill Farm near Oily Johnnies' pub on Winscales just along from the Lillyhall roundabout near Workington. Blocks had been fitted to the pedals so that young Malcolm could reach them, his mother Pearl had a great cine film showing him in this event just about big enough to peep out of the cars windows. Malcolm also went on to navigate for Gerald McEwan in his Cortina GTs and became a very proficient navigator which stood him in good stead in later life of course.

Another couple of people who went to Kens to buy cars and new body shells not Fords but always Minis was Stewart and Alistair Martin from Newcastleton just over the border in Scotland and we all became really great friends. Stewart had a Mini pick up with a full length roof rack rather like Lovejoy's antique dealers and it was a really funny sight as he carried brand new Mini body shells on the top of the pick up through Carlisle back to Newcastleton and it looked like a double decker mini, a most unusual sight.

I was now competing in forest rallies and wanted to do the "Scottish" a five day international contested by all the big works teams in those days but couldn't afford it so three of us, myself, Gerald McEwan and Ernie Harrison who were all friends and regular competitors at local level teamed up built a MK2 Cortina GT from a damaged car again from Kens emporium and the three of us drove it on the Scottish International, each driving one third of the stages and sharing the cost three ways. We had fitted three full harness belts donated by Carlisle manufacturer Kangol and a single hoop roll cage with no diagonal brace as was the norm in those days. We often carried twelve gallons of petrol in the two tanks, a proper trolley jack, lots of spares and it was powered by a mildly tuned 1500 pre crossflow GT engine giving about 95 BHP but went very well somehow despite its heavy load. Lots of people from West Cumbria came to watch and support us and we all a great time.

As the car was now fitted with three seat belts I was able to take young Malcolm on a few more events so with Carol my girlfriend navigating, later to become my long suffering wife and still navigating for me we took Malcolm on the Jim Clark rally, a rally that used Otterburn ranges, Keilder forest and closed roads just as they do today.

Another big event we did with Malcolm in the back was the Lindisfarne Rally also using the Keilder forests and after many stages broke not only the halfshafts but also bent the rear axle casing and couldn't fix the car so we had to retire. Our service crew brought another axle after the

into his narrow Corbeau GT4 bucket seat which was painful. The car that started one minute behind us never caught us and couldn't believe the state of our car at the end of the stage as it was immaculate at the start. I have a great photo of the car upside down with the spectators running to help us taken by a professional photographer, he obviously knew the tricky stage much better than I did.

We carried on with virtually no glass and the roof pushed down and a temporary screen, bent rear springs etc and battled on in snow, ice and blizzard conditions right up to the north of Scotland rebuilding the car on the way round with our brilliant service crew of 16 year old Malcolm, Mike Beaty, John Donovan and a couple of other lads changing parts on the way round Ken having phoned home several times from various telephone boxes telling an employee which parts to take off scrap cars for spares. These spares were sent up to us at Dufftons garage in Carlisle where rapid bodywork jobs were completed before entering the main control which was at the Hilltop hotel nearby.

It was a fantastic rally, Makinen won the main event from Stig Blomquist and Sandro Munari in the Stratos was third. We won the clubman's event by one and a half minutes giving us a free guaranteed entry to the 1975 RAC rally and bonuses from Dunlop, Duckham's, Bilstein and Champion plugs so it offset our expenses quite a bit thanks to Kens tough negotiating skills. Our total stage time was 326 minutes 34 secs which shows how many stage miles it was in 1974, a tough six day event with very little sleep except for one night after three days.

The Scottish became so popular in the 1970s there were over twenty cars from our area alone competing with Mike Telford, Malcolm Wright, Gavin Waugh, Ann Williamson, Chris Stephenson, Mike & Paul Gilligan immediately springing to mind. Sadly Mike Telford who was still a very active competitor at seventy five years of age has just been killed in a car crash, hit by an oncoming car on a main road whilst driving home on the Abbeytown to Wigton road in his Citroen 2CV. We wish Shirley and his family and his regular navigator in events for the last ten years or so Alan Smith our deepest sympathy.

When he was seventeen Malcolm had inherited our shell from BRM730K and it was completely rebuilt and it soon had Atlas axle, ZF gearbox, potent Cosworth Twin Cam and was really flying in Malcolm's hands winning many events outright, again well documented in Jim Turners book. We ran two identical looking cars for a couple of seasons but we usually had a 1300cc crossflow GT engine and Malcolm a big Twin Cam or a BDA engine. I distinctly remember going with Ken one frosty night just before Christmas to Hawkshead to a guys house who owned the Norseman Restaurant and Ken spending some serious money buying some works type parts for Malcolm's rally car for his Christmas present. On the journey home we discussed the expense of the present and Ken said his own father would never help or allow him to buy a motor bike and this was something Ken always regretted and held against his dad. He then said "at least Malcolm can never say I didn't help him start rallying which is what he wants to do" and I suppose we can all see now Ken never said a truer word.

Malcolm then went on to beat Graham Elsmore and an Australian named Lang in a major competition being sponsored by Ford and first prize was a works drive in the new RS2000. Malcolm subsequently did lots of work with Ford and developed the RS2000 for Ford competing at the very highest level and Ron Palmer was often a co driver who guided Malcolm for many events and a big asset to the team.

Eventually sponsored by Total Oils Malcolm won the British rally championship two years running and I would sometimes service for him and on a few occasions I was lucky enough to co drive for him if Terry Harriman couldn't make it. This was the biggest thrill ever being driven by Malcolm in the ex works Ford MK 2 Escort HHJ 701 N with a 245 BHP, 1800cc BDA engine screaming and competing against Mikkola and Vatanen in same spec cars. Again I am fortunate to have a superb photo taken on an event by a professional photographer with the car right up on up on two wheels sliding sideways down towards a hairpin and this photo was used in the main rally report in Autosport 12<sup>th</sup> April 1979

We had won the York Motor Clubs British championship event in the very fast Yorkshire forests by four minutes in 1979 from George Hill's Chevette and David Stokes's RS1800 also beating the likes of Tony Pond in the works TR7V8 and Jimmy McRae's Dealer Team Vauxhall 2300 Vauxhall Chevette (Colins Dad). Sitting beside Malcolm in these events made me realise just how fast and

stage had closed and we fitted it in order to drive the car home, no trailers for us in those days. We were putting up very respectable times on all the stages in those rallies and won a few awards but I don't know what health and safety would say these days.

Malcolm would be fourteen or fifteen by now and I let him drive the car out of the stage on the Lindisfarne and it was quite a long way in the forest. He loved it and wanted his dad to buy a scrapyard in the Keilder forest, his time for the stage was probably quicker than mine. He was now a true forest rally driver and it was the start of a career, a worldwide business and a whole way of life not only for Malcolm but for people all over the world.

When Malcolm was sixteen he built a 105E Ford Anglia with a tuned 1500cc Cortina GT motor with twin 40DCOE Webers but he wasn't old enough to drive it. I drove it and he navigated for me on events such as the Tour of Cumbria. We were putting up some great times in this car on stages such as Wythop, Whinlater Greystoke etc and were right up the leader board, but at Kirkbride airfield as we were going up a runway a glider came in to land on our runway which was a big surprise to us obviously. We avoided each other and although got a shock we thought we had a good stage time despite our heart stopping moment. All was well when provisional results were announced as we were still up at the top of the leader board but suddenly we had a stage maximum given against us which dropped us right down. Wigton MC were marshalling Kirkbride and we would be competing for USSO MC or WCMC in those days and a certain Graeme Forrester had come in and reported we had missed out part of a small loop out on the perimeter track so done the stage incorrectly hence our maximum time.

It turned out to be on the runway with the glider landing and poor Malcolm had been distracted from the stage diagram so we were now also ran and a real disappointment to both of us. Relations were a bit strained for a while between Wigton MC and the West Cumbria contingent rather like Celtic and Rangers in the football world !



About this time Ken Wilson, Stewart and Alistair Martin from Newcastleton and another motorsport fan Johnny Hislop from Hawick decided to start motor factors so Teviot Motor Factors was born. The name Teviot coming from Teviothead near Hawick where Johnny lived. The first branch was opened in Hawick then a branch was soon opened in Workington then other branches followed until it was a big business with several branches.

Ken Wilson and myself were now great friends so in 1972 we built an Escort GT for the "Scottish" using a brand new shell and it was registered BRM 730K. I drove this car on a few Scottish internationals with Ken who actually entered and owned the car as my co driver although we shared all the other running expenses such as entry fees, petrol etc and service crews did it without getting paid although we met their expenses generally. We had numerous arguments with scrutineers as the car was lettered up "WK Wilson Vehicle Dismantler" in 4 inch high letters. They wanted to see our trade entrant licence which cost hundreds of pounds but we didn't have one but argued that as Ken was the entrant and he owned and could drive the car if he wished to, as he had an international licence the same as mine we didn't need one. Often we were made to cover up the "Vehicle Dismantler" part which we did with tissue paper which unfortunately kept blowing off when we got over 15 mph ! This action almost got us excluded from one Scottish rally as saloon car ace John Cleland's dad was chief scrutineer and wasn't pleased with our disregarding his instruction to cover up the lettering so more masking tape had to be applied that didn't come off to satisfy him.

Ken and I did the 1974 RAC rally in another Escort UHH709J with a standard RS1600 BDA engine giving 120BHP taken from a rolled car in Kens yard. The engine must have been top heavy or something as I too rolled the car only 3 miles into the very first stage doing the car no good at all ! The spectators were great and really quickly rolled us back over on to our wheels just as Ken had unfastened his seat belt and crashed down onto the roof, he then crashed back

how good you had to be to win at this level, it's a completely different world where skill and reactions are on another plane.

Malcolm went on to be a works driver of various Fords, Vauxhalls, Metro 6R4s, an Audi Quattro and other cars, he founded his own company later to become M sport and ran the works Ford



Lombard RAC Photography by Foster & Skelington

team giving them the fantastic success including the World championship that they achieved under Malcolm's direction. He married Elaine daughter of another ex rally driver Malcolm Wright and of course they have their one son Mathew who is a WRC rally driver also. His regular co driver was Scott Martin who's dad is Alistair one of the founders of Teviot and TMS motor factors. Scott has just signed up to be a co-driver in the Citroen works team for 2013. Mathew Wilson is engaged to Katie Ann Gate daughter of Robert Gate owner of Cumbria's biggest tyre distributors Gates Tyres. Robert of course is very well known as the racing

driver who competes either in one of his Bentleys or in one of his E type Jaguars and has competed at Lemans historic 24 hour race sharing Eddie Farrells E type with Eddie. I met my wife Carol when navigated by Bob Martin I demolished the bridge wall at the end of the "Blindbothe" white road that Carol was standing on whilst marshalling the finish control on a USSO MC event. That really was an expensive accident when I think how much its cost since we were married ! Cheap at twice the price I can hear her say. It's funny how people meet, its a small world really I suppose.

Kens wife Pearl was Malcolm's PR person in the early days, provider of food at all times day and night, a superb navigator and a very quick driver who used to throw Rover 2000s around on 12 cars in the 1970s with great skill indeed with Ken on the maps usually. For lots of years and even today she is still the main driving force behind the West Cumbria Motorsport Club and a mentor and adviser to Willie Jarman !

I packed up driving rally cars about 1979 after the birth of our first child as lack of salary from a working wife meant there was no spare money available. I started my own very small garage business in 1980 with advice from Ken and I almost went into partnership with him but after a long think about it decided to stay on my own in a very small way with as little pressure as possible as Ken was quite difficult to get on with at times and I valued the friendship too much to risk it.

Ken was in partnership with Bill Dobie another Cumbrian for a short while and started Dobson's tyre and auto services at Whitehaven ( an amalgam of their names ) and knowing them both well during this period I saw it wasn't always a smooth passage as they had very similar personalities as Bill i'm sure will tell you. Bill also competed in rallies and won the British Rally Championship after Malcolm. He then went on to establish several large car dealerships and other businesses in Cumbria which are well known today.



Lombard RAC Photography by Foster & Skelington

I am still here 33 years later running much the same very small garage business, much poorer financially than I would have been if I had partnered Ken I'm

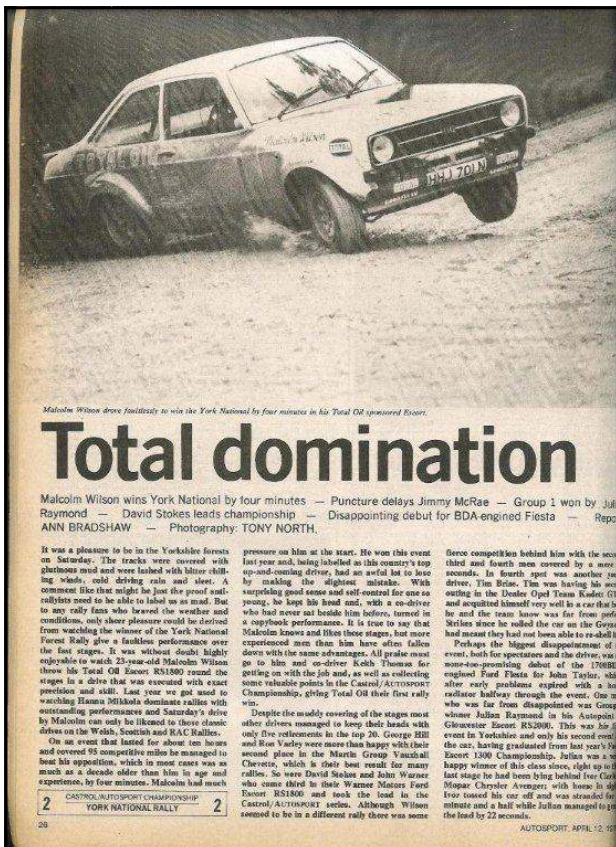
sure as he was a forceful guy, a workaholic and an absolute midas at making money. I took up dinghy sailing where it doesn't cost a lot of money, if the boat turns upside down it costs nothing it just pops up again undamaged unlike rally cars.

Ken went on to co drive for Graham Walker, Louise Aitken Walkers husband and Ivor Clark in

works supported Avengers for the next few years as well as backing and supporting Malcolm, then gradually eased out of motorsport and got more and more involved in his first passion that of rugby league. Eventually they sold Teviot Motor Factors but along with Stewart and Alistair started another motor factors called TMS and this has developed into the massive business that it is today. This now has well over twenty branches all over Scotland and Northern England and employs over three hundred people and has one hundred and fifty vans on the road. In later years Ken channelled most of efforts into TMS and Workington Town rugby club of which he was Chairman, still being the forceful dominant character as usual and always striving to succeed and be better.

Ken could be a very difficult character to deal with, he always thought he was right and wouldn't easily see things any other way and this caused personal relationship problems. That said, Ken helped countless people start up in business, sometimes with financial backing, sometimes as a shareholder, sometimes just giving help and advice. He was like a cross between a hedgehog and a tortoise with a prickly and a hard shell on the outside but a soft and warm person on the inside. Getting to the warm person on the inside and staying there wasn't always easy I can tell you but he was a superb friend to me and a great many other people and to various clubs, charities and other causes.

Sadly he died on July 3<sup>rd</sup> after a sudden deterioration in health and he lost his fight against cancer which he had been battling for a couple of years but wouldn't admit to having as was his normal way. He was still working a few weeks prior to his death at 78 years of age, stacking shelves in the Workington TMS store as he always did and he kept saying to me "if you stop peddling you fall off the bike".



I had restarted motorsport in 2002 with my Buckler which I bought from Max De Redder and restored it, then started competing in sprint hill climbs such as Prescott, Shelsley Walsh, Barbon, Boness and Wiscombe, doing and the odd trial and historic rally and loved it and again I am meeting fellow enthusiasts every bit as friendly and helpful as those in rallying all those years ago which is a great.

Kens funeral was a massive one and bore testimony to all those who respected him and had a lot to thank him for, he will be a great miss to a great many people. I for one felt that with Kens death and Ford pulling out of the WRC it was the end of an important era and some of the events that led up to this point should to be written down for posterity and was a story that deserved to be told.

Thankfully Malcolm has found a new major sponsor in Qatar so the WRC and all it entails will ensure jobs and continued employment so critical to a great many families all over the world.

Ken's actions and deeds in the past have had a tremendous bearing on so many lives and not forgetting Pearl of course the things they started have been like the ripple effect of a stone that's cast onto still water, the ripples get wider and wider as they spread out.

So next time you see a rally car be it in Cumbria, Scandanavia, Europe, Middle East, South America or anywhere else in the whole world just think of all those who's livelihoods are derived from rallying either directly or indirectly. Buy a component in a motor factors anywhere



in Scotland or northern England, a bulb at an electrical factors in Workington or a car at a garage be it in Duns, Moffat, Langholm, Cumbria or lots of other places its quite likely that somewhere in the past the first seed in that story can be traced back to a farmers son who started up at Winscales near Workington all those years ago.

Thanks to Ken, Pearl and Malcolm from all of us that you helped we appreciate it greatly, not only has motorsport benefitted in West Cumbria but economies here and all over the world have

derived benefit from the Wilson family involvement.

Thank you.

Keith Thomas.



# **Wigton Motor Club Ltd**

**Events Run For Enthusiasts By Enthusiasts**

## **‘Galloway Gallop 2013’**

**26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> April**

The three day tour running for the sixth year starts near Carlisle around noon on Friday, spends two nights in Stranraer and finishes back in the Carlisle area on Sunday afternoon. There are group dinners on both evenings, opportunities to visit heritage locations of interest and up to 140 miles of quiet interesting roads each day.



## **Lake District Classic Rally**

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

A long established historic rally organised by seasoned active competitors with straightforward navigation, no on road timing, and up to sixteen timed tests. The route of up to 100 miles will be conveniently based in the Penrith area close to Jct. 40 of the M6.

## **Cumbria Classic Weekend**

**August 17/18<sup>th</sup>**

*Consisting of:*

### **Rose and Thistle Challenge**

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August**

This is a low cost touring event for interesting and classic cars from 1912 to 2013 with up to 140 miles of interesting roads in the Scottish borders, Northumbria and Cumbria.

*And the*

### **Cumbria Classic Show**

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August**

The biggest classic car show in the region held in the beautiful settings of the parkland at Dalemain, 1 mile from junction 40 of the M6. Over 500 cars are expected.

## **Solway Autumn Classic Weekend**

**October 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Saturday: The Allerdale Amble Tour**

**Sunday: The Solway Historic Rally & Solway Saunter**

The Club is based in north Cumbria and has over 600 members. We run monthly pub runs in the summer as well as other full day runs on Sundays.

For the competitively minded we run autotests, auto solos and sprints. We also organise the Northern Historic Rally Awards and the Cross Border Speed Championship.

We won the national MSA Motor Club of the Year Competition in 2005

For full details of our events see [www.wigtonmc.co.uk](http://www.wigtonmc.co.uk)