

Wigton Motor Club Ltd

Start Line

Issue 2026/04

www.wigtonmc.co.uk

May 2026

Four Events In A Month!



Cars & Coffee



Autosolo



Roof of |England Tour



Drive It Day

For Members By Members

WMC Committee

OFFICIALS

President:.	Charles Graves	
Vice Pres.	Ron Palmer & David Turnbull,	
Life Member	Ron Palmer	
Secretary & Editor	Graeme Forrester	gtfmg@yahoo.co.uk
Treasurer	Chris Leece	chris_1lowtherview@yahoo.co.uk
Membership Sec	John Sloan	wigtonmcmemb@outlook.com
Social Sec.:	Charles Graves	charles.graves@armathwaite-hall.com
Equipment Officers	Eddie Parsons	eddieparsons5@icloud.com
	Mary Parsons	maryparsons5@icloud.com
Catering Exec	Lynda Graham	jlg86mpa@hotmail.co.uk
Safe Guarding	Jacqui Raine	jaxr1986@hotmail.co.uk
	Lei Mashiter	tebaylei@gmail.com
Autotests	Steve Fishwick	fishwick38@gmail.com
Chief Marshal	Chris Bailey	chrissbailey32@gmail.com

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Graham	jlg86mpa@hotmail.co.uk
Jim Crockett	jamesmccrockett@yahoo.co.uk
David Agnew	DAVIDWAGNEW@aol.com
Rob Grant	robincumbria@hotmail.com ,
John Holliday	johnholl403@gmail.com ,

Please ensure that you contact the appropriate official on the correct email address.

Face Book: Wigton Motor Club & Wigton Motor Club Members

Forthcoming Events

John Peel Meander

For pre 1950 cars

May 6th

Starts from the Motor House

Cars & Coffee

At the Motor House 10 until 12

May 10th

Followed by the club AGM at 12.00

May Autosolo

At Maryport

May 17th

Entry forms are on line.

Cars and Coffee at M-Sport

Saturday 13th June

By kind permission of Malcolm Wilson OBE, the Club 'Cars and Coffee' for June will be held at M-Sport, Dovenby, Cockermouth CA13 0PN. Starting at 10am and finishing at Noon it will be open only to current Wigton Motor Club members who have entered in advance, there will be a maximum of 80 cars accepted, there will be NO ENTRIES on the day. Please complete the entry form (on the website) in full and return it having paid a £5 donation for each person. This will be donated to support 'Cash for Kids' - the M-Sport nominated charity. On arrival report to the gatehouse for admission, not before 9.50am. We will display the cars on the apron next to the test circuit – there will be no access to the competition workshop on this occasion but there will be lots of interest to see.

Driving Motorsport Forward

Talking Point

Topical Comment on Motoring & Motorsport

Being a member of WMC and other clubs has given me a huge amount of fun and pleasure over many years. It's also great that so many of those friendships have lasted for 30 or 40 or even more years. Competitors, organisers, mechanics, and restorers. When I go to events just about anywhere in the country, I will be sure to meet with folk I know, all brought together by our motoring interests.

On the Roof of England Tour, we had members who have had successful years as competing in rallying and other events and have maintained their interest with touring, restoration and marshalling. That's what it is all about hopefully.

These days of course, the joys of email and social media have made keeping in touch much easier. It's also helped in that organisers all over the country can share ideas and problems, in the same way enthusiasts for particular marques of models can help each other with problems and how to access parts. We are all enthusiasts and friends.

Sadly, though in recent years I've noticed that some competitors, mainly in stage rallies and racing, just like to turn up, compete and go home, and not socialise with their fellow competitors, let alone the organisers and marshals. Fortunately, it's not happened in our events where I hope the social side is every bit as important as competing, displaying or touring.

Changing the subject to that of awards. I recently threw about 200 awards I had won over the years in the bin. They had sat in boxes in the loft for thirty years. I felt a bit sad doing it as each one brought back a memory. Nearly all were what we now call "dust gatherers" the things that SWMBO hates. Over the years we have tried to vary the awards we give on events, whether to competitors, or as finishers or attendance awards. We have even given certificates plus cash for our championships. For the Classic Show we have the slate coasters since the start, so regular exhibitors much have enough slate to cover their roofs.

For the tours we have had plaques, slates, pens, torches and this year a promo bag. We'd love to hear from members what they would like to receive, so drop us an email.

GTF



Editor: Graeme Forrester - gtfmg@yahoo.co.uk

Contributions are welcomed - deadline the 25th of each month

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

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Club News

Annual General Meeting Of *Wigton Motor Club Ltd*

May 10th

Following Cars & Coffee

Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Minutes of the 2025 AGM

Any Matters Arising

Secretary's report

Treasurer's Report

Acceptance of the Reports

Election of Officers and Committee

Any Other Business

Events in June & July

June	13th	Cars & Coffee at M Sport (booking essential)
June	14th	The Gallop Tour to south Cumbria
June	21st	Autotest
July	12th	Cars & Coffee at the Motor House
July	19th	Autotest



**motor
sport
UK**

**Recognised
Club**

**The Motorcycle club –
Lands' End Trial first run in 1902
Dave Miller/Brian Hodgson, Rickman Ranger**



I was contacted by friend and fellow WMC member Dave Miller who a few years back had taken up Stage Rallies in his MK1 Escorts, and I had C/o driven for him.

I had bumped into him on occasion, any way he contacted me saying did I fancy doing the Lands' end trial with him, I had a chat and asked a few questions what car? He said a Rickman Ranger, reply what the hell is that, a kit car based on ford parts, how does the event work oh it starts on Good Friday night and finishes around teatime on Saturday, I thought about it and said why not, I checked it out on

the web and Dave got the entry in.

I had a trip to Silloth to check out the Rickman and it looked ok (it's a 1980 Ford based kit car) it all sounded fun.

I had to print the road book off myself before the event.

Good Friday arrived Dave picked me up in his old MK3 transit van with the Rickman on the trailer, I thought it would be ok but steady over Shap but sure.

We got over the hilly bits of the journey, then the van was just cruising along at a steady pace, plenty of time in hand we were heading to Dave's friend Dennis who normally sits with him but was just getting over a hip op.



We were approaching Keele services when we smelt a warm engine smell, we pulled into the services and took a look at the engine, the radiator bung was no more just a plastic thing I think also as we came to a halt the oil light had flickered on, Dave Quickley phoned the AA who arrived within the hour we chatted with the AA man who was a good sort.

We unloaded the Rickman and the AA man got his Dolly out of his van and winched the van on.

He said he could not take the trailer Dave didn't fancy leaving the trailer at the services so Luckily the Rickman had a tow bar, so we hitched it on the Rickman, we carried on our journey to Glouster to Dennise's house who was outside, when we arrived he looked and laughed, and asked for an explanation luckily we still had plenty of time.



About 7 we set off for Bridgewater to the start venue at the Rugby club, there are around 400 entrants to the event over 200 motorbikes and around 200 cars of all sorts, a quick scrutineer and then sign on time for a coffee and a bit of a chill before our 22 28 start time there were 2 other crews who were running near us who Dave new from past events.

We set off soon out of the town and six miles of country roads and me getting used to the navigation a hand brake test on a steep bit of country road Called Wal-ford's Giblet, all ok more country roads to our first Hill Fellon Oaks, I didn't know what to expect tyres deflated to 12psi and I hop in the back for ballast, and away Dave gave the Rickman it all and we cleaned the first hill, tyres reflat and off to the next Road section, Through some great Somerset roads we went through Parlock which I remember doing on a Somerset Rally some 20odd years back 54 miles completed a fuel halt and book in at the village hall for tea and 30 minutes later back on the road, a short road section and

in to the Beggars Roost section first used in 1922 tyres deflated and away we go cleaned the section no bother.

More navigation 76 miles covered to the Riverton test, tyres down in the back and up the hill we go restart on the way up, just to make it more difficult! Only ¼ of a mile further away and the Yollo-come test against the clock no bother.

Next more navigating along quite country lanes and lots of junctions to arrive at the Sutcombe a rough bit of track tyres down and off we go it was now 4am, it was just like doing an old-fashioned road rally!



Some local villagers had set up a refreshment stop in their garage so we stopped and had a brew before carrying on a few miles on there was fuel available in the village of Bradworthy more road section before a control in a layby.

Next up another section called Darracott first used in 1933 tyres down Brian in the back off we go no problem, tyres reinflated and more road sections then to the next section called Cutcliff Lane first used in 1967 tyres down in the back again up the hill ok tyres blown up then on the go again, more roads sections to a route check at Widemouth Bay

it was now around 7am it had been a long night but lots more to do!

More road section to do the next section was called Crackington Haven where it is customary for the stop start area to be full of clarty mud, first used in 1936 tyres down me in the back and away we go no bother, tyres up and more road section to a breakfast halt at Wisey Down hotel adjacent to the cattle auction it was now 8 21 book in 1 hour halt coffee check the car over then book out and away



again, more navigation then the Ruses Mill test first used in 1930 this was a timed test.

Next more navigation to a holding control at Panters Bridge, before the test at called Warleggan first used in 1968 completed ok.

More road sections we had now completed nearly 200 miles!

Next up a very slippery access down a field to a test called Eddys branch line1 a bit of old railway timed and very slippy next to the adjoining section called Eddys Branch line 2 a real slippy affair but ok.

More road sections followed before a control at a fuel station in Perranporth where we booked in, 231 miles done, Dave was not buying any fuel as he had some bad fuel on another occasion.

More country roads to the final two sections at Bluehills 1 and 2, first used 1n 1936, when you first drop down to this you can see the hill on the other side of the valley with cars going up, it looks impossible, we get to the start of the first one and away we go stop start on this section we hit a flag and fail to stop so no good, next Bluehills 2 realy steep Dave gives it all we get up the hill and do the restart ok but fail to stop in the box so another bad mark.



Another road section to the final Control at The Inn For All Season's at Redruth, to check in and collect our finishers certificates 247 miles covered it was now 3.30 in the afternoon.

A quick look on the map and quickly onto the A30 a quick top up of fuel and Dave jumped in the passenger seat and I got to drive the Rickman for a couple of hours, back towards Dennis's near Gloucester some 215 miles away, we swapped back over and I got to have a snooze and we duly arrived at Dennis s whare his wife Ginny had made us a lovely stew, we then went to the Seven bore Inn for a drink or two we finally went to bed around 11 30 some 40 hours out of bed !

Next morning we were up around 8 and with a good breakfast cooked by Dennis we headed home Rickman towing the trailer now with CVH engine on it, steady away we trundled home Dave dropped

me off at Penrith and I went home.

It had been a great few days, great we can still do things like this.

Thanks' Dave for asking me (would I do it again, to right I would) There may be some inaccurate here as it was a long night.

Results were posted a few days later we were not in the medals but it was an interesting outing.

The adventure Continues

PG Tips

Peter Reflects On His Month

It's a short one this month as I am about to embark on walking Hadrian's wall again and I won't be taking my laptop!

Heidi and I marshalled at the White Heather targa rally at the end of March and had a cracking day out helping run the M Sport tests (and The Long One in the middle) in changeable weather, although to describe the weather as changeable would be the understatement of the week. It was in late March so I wasn't expecting to be stood in a t shirt and shorts but I also wasn't expecting a white out hail storm that briefly turned the whole airfield into a winter snowscape! Poor Heidi was so cold at times that her whole body was shivering and while she is a tough young thing she did go and sit in the car with the heated seat on for 5 minutes when the last few cars came through our test for the second time in the morning. During the day we also had rain, high winds and sunshine. Basically we had all the weather in one day – apart from warmth because the wind ensured that however sunny it got there was no escape from the cold.



My friends Nick Trivett and Andy Potter were competing in a targa for the first time in Nick's Sylva kit car, a car that was basically wholly unsuitable for a targa rally in March, being low slung and having no roof. They were brave and did quite well despite being unable to really use the power and speed of the car due to the rough and muddy surfaces on the airfield. I certainly wouldn't have even considered doing it in such a car but they braved the elements and enjoyed their day out.

I have almost no car news to give this month, the VX220 is still sat at JDM up at Kirkbride but has its engine in and a new exhaust, after I mentioned that the one on it was a bit loud. The reason it was loud turned out to be that the single massive exhaust silencer in the system was empty other than a few small rattly pieces of presumably melted sound proofing. Once off the car Jonathon rattled it like a maraca for me to demonstrate the reasoning, and said that as it was so big (7" round) it probably amplified the exhaust noise rather than dampened it! Similarly the Lotus Excel is just sat awaiting Mario trimming finishing my seats – his sewing machine had been broken and required some specialist repair which has delayed things, but

hopefully by the time you read this my seats will be done. In the meantime I've been doing small upgrades to things like powering the woeful electric window motors directly from the fusebox via some modern relays, rather than through the ancient Lucas switches. In standard form the Lucas switches drain away up to 6 of the 12V going to the motors making the windows slow and clunky. After the modification they go up and down quickly, almost like a modern car in fact!

That's it for this month, I will hopefully be at the next coffee and cars in one of my fun cars (said with fingers crossed while touching wood!) assuming I survive 6 days of walking and drinking across

Elderly Utterances

The Voice of Experience!

Ron Palmer has his say

The 'Roof of England' got the touring season off to a grand start on Sunday 19th April. Graeme and Chris had put on a scenic route of 138 miles which involved Jim Stairs and I on a drive just short of 200 miles door to door. The planned route got under way from Tebay services southbound and 42 cars were attracted to the start. There were many of the regulars but some new cars I hadn't seen before including an elegant, pale blue Jaguar XJC Coupe which was making good progress throughout the day.



The field was numbered in age order so was led away by Andy and Gill Gibbs in the XK150 coupe followed by MGA, Cresta PA, Cooper S and Mk1 Lotus Cortina. Charles Graves was running at 42 in his XK150 OTS being a late entry with his grandson Harry on the roadbook – start them early at 11 years old!



Coffee halt at the Station Inn by Ribbleshead viaduct was a brief affair and was surrounded by scores of parked cars and motor cycles – whose riders were out for a sunny ride or perhaps waiting for a passing steam train. The second part of the route took us to lunch at the impressive Tenants auction house in Leyburn – well worth a visit if you are past that way. The roads we used were involving and fairly quiet with the exception of the motor cyclists and the occasional Sunday dawdlers who created bottle necks and couldn't find their reverse gear to unblock a situation. The station at Alston was the finish venue and the adjacent Hub museum concluded a satisfying tour – thanks to Graeme and Chris.

The John Peel Meander has at the time of writing 21 entries - a few down on last year but interesting cars will make it worth a look with no less than six Bentleys and three Jeeps among the entries. There's still room for late entries if you are quick.

John and Christine Ross are organising the Gallop again this year on Sunday 14th June with the start at Base Camp on the A66 with bacon sandwich and coffee. The route takes you down through the Lakes with a lunch at Café Ambio by The Lakeland Motor Museum at Backbarrow. The finish will be at the Penrith Golf Club after 120 miles. Another good value event run by experts – enter now. Ron.

Membership

WMC is registered with the Information Commissioner to hold members data.

Welcome to new members

Neil Telford	of Kendal
David Moffat	of Carlisle
John Woodburn	of Wigton
Mike George	of Workington
Jacob Salter	of Alston
Thomas Parsons-Munn	of South Shields
John & Anne Chamley	of Seaton
Luke Jarman	of Penrith
G & L Visarge	of Hemel Hempstead
John France	of Penrith



CAREERS

All vacancies can be viewed online at:
www.m-sport.co.uk via the **Careers Page**

To apply for any of these roles, please visit our website and complete the relevant job application

If you have any questions, please contact our recruitment team at: recruitment@m-sport.co.uk



Spring Autotest

The first autosolo of the year saw a full entry at Maryport including some novices. A goo day was has by all and thanks to Steve and his team.

Car No	Driver	Class	Pos	TOTAL SCORE	TEST 1	TEST 2	TEST 3	TEST 4	TEST 5	TEST 6	TEST 7	TEST 8	TEST 9	TEST 10	TOTAL SCORE
9	Tom Breen	1401+ FWD	1st	734	79	79	81	78	72	71	69	68	69	68	734
2	Tom Robinson	1401+ FWD	2nd	748	99	77	72	72	71	69	69	68	67	84	748
18	Bobby Peat. JUN	1401+ FWD	3rd 1st JUN	772	102	82	73	87	91	70	68	67	66	66	772
8	Luke Henley	1401+ FWD	4th	774	93	90	81	77	74	72	72	71	72	72	774
12	Chris Addison	1401+ FWD	5th	791	93	82	78	80	76	74	72	88	76	72	791
10	Brian Bradley	1401+ FWD	6th	834	99	97	92	77	73	73	75	68	74	86	834
6	Keelan Watson	1401+ FWD	7th	865	99	97	92	84	91	78	81	76	86	81	865
14	Nick Stamper	1401+ FWD	8th	866	99	84	83	92	86	89	87	88	80	78	866
19	Charlie Breen JUN	1401+ FWD	9th	884	99	97	92	92	81	91	81	88	89	74	884
1	David O'Connor	1401+ R/AVD	1 O/A	696	71	73	71	71	70	68	70	67	68	67	696
15	Nigel Moffat	1401+ R/AVD	1st	744	75	74	71	79	90	70	69	68	68	80	744
13	John Sloan	1401+ R/AVD	2nd	750	91	72	70	91	74	70	71	69	69	73	750
17	Mark Aspin	1401+ R/AVD	3rd	779	91	81	74	82	75	72	70	87	76	71	779
16	James Constable	1401+ R/AVD	4th	787	91	82	77	83	76	77	90	71	70	70	787
7	Andrew Widdop	1401+ R/AVD	5th	811	93	84	78	91	84	78	79	74	72	78	811
5	Dom Constable	1401+ R/AVD	6th	874	91	117	90	93	89	81	81	76	79	77	874
4	Mark Milne	Upto 1400	1st	760	85	77	93	72	82	72	70	70	69	70	760
11	Lai Mashiter	Upto 1400	2nd	763	85	81	73	78	79	73	75	74	73	72	763
3	Peter Masters	Upto 1400	3rd	769	75	97	80	75	76	75	74	73	72	72	769
20	George Milne JUN	Upto 1400	4th	858	93	97	86	87	82	84	84	84	82	79	858



2026 WMC Historic & Targa Championship

The 2026 WMC Historic and Targa Championships will consist of 8 rounds, with the best 6 scores to count towards the Final Championship.

Positions after White Heather Targa

HISTORIC

Driver			Navigator		
1	Ian Curwen	49	1	Bob Hargreaves	49
2	David O'Connor	25	2	Oli Wragg	25
3	Bernard Watkins	24	3	Adam Roper	24
4	David Alexander	23	4	Callum Alexander	23
5	Ian Maxwell	22	5	Kirstin Maxwell	22
6	Alex Willan	21	6	Ross Blyth	21
7	Brian Bradley	20	7	Stuart Davis	20

TARGA

Driver			Navigator		
1	Michael Horne	42	1	Alfie Sharp	38
2	Dave Sharp	34	2	Matthew Horne	36
3	Phillip Hodgson	25	3	Lewis Hodgson	25
4=	Michael Pears	24	4	Philip Jones	24
4=	Richard Jones	24	5	Chris Addison	23
6	Miles Fieldhouse	23	6	Richard Chapelhow	22
7	Drew McLean	22	7	Niall Paterson	21
8	Tom Robinson	21	8	Martin Breen	20
9	Paul Grierson	20	9	Oliver Horne	19
10	Luke Henley	19	10	Sam Naylor	18
11	Thomas Breen	18	11	Adam Roper	17
12	Lindie Turner-Gibb	16	12	Andy Potter	16
13	Bernard Watkins	15	13	Daniel Wyatt	15
14	Paddy Jones	14	14	Dave Nicholson	13
15	Nick Trivett	13	15	John Whitelaw	12
16	Michael Wyatt	12	16	Clara Taylor	10
17	Sarah Nicholson	10	17	Robert Iveson	9
18	Alan McCluskie	9	18	Miles Fieldhouse	R
19	Steven Newton	8			
20	Russell Robertson	7			
-	JonPaul Challinor	R			
-	Ben Jude	R			
-	David Garstang	R			

Qualifying Rounds:

	Dishforth Targa	14 th February	Clitheroe & DMC
	White Heather Targa	28 th March	Wigton MC
	Berwick Classic	2 nd /3 rd May	Berwick & DMC
	Blue Streak Targa	28 th June	Spadeadam MC
	Northern Dales Targa	5 th July	Hexham & District MC
<i>Reserve</i>	<i>Wearside</i>	<i>6th September</i>	<i>Durham AC</i>
	Kielder Targa	12 th September	Hexham & District MC
	Doonhamer Targa	20 th September	South of Scotland CC
	Solway Targa	25 th October	Wigton MC

ROstyle Wheels

By Nick Owen

Rubery Owen started business as Rubery Brothers in 1884, manufacturing gates and fences. In 1893 Alfred Ernest Owen joined the brothers and in 1903 the name was changed to Rubery Owen. On John Rubery's retirement in 1912, the partnership was bought out by Owen.

Owen quickly identified additional opportunities across motor frames, wheels, structural steel and aviation, and as the motor industry grew, so did the range of products and services that Rubery Owen offered. Rubery Owen continued to expand between the wars and contributed significantly to the later war effort.

Post-WWII, Rubery Owen entered its heyday, with 17,000 employees in 63 companies, extending beyond the motor industry into agriculture, aerospace, roadmaking, forklift trucks and office equipment. It also saw many high-profile successes with BRM and Graham Hill winning the Formula 1 World Championship in 1962. In 1963, the Rover-BRM was the first gas turbine to compete at Le Mans, and in 1964 Donald Campbell set the land speed record in Bluebird.

The ROstyle Wheel

Walk around events such as the NEC Classic Car Show and car club events, and it's great to see the ROstyle wheel still out in force on many vehicles.

The wheel was manufactured by Rubery Owen, based in Darlaston, South Staffordshire. The name ROstyle came from an amalgam of the initial letters of Rubery Owen and 'style'. They were manufactured by the company's motor division which, at the time, was one of the biggest suppliers to the British Motor Industry of componentry and pressed steel items.

The wheel was immediately identifiable with its pressed steel form, designed for use without the need for hubcaps or wheel covers, and usually had a centre cap displaying the car manufacturer's emblem.

The wheel was launched in 1966 and the first design was for the new Jensen saloon – the Jensen Interceptor II. In the words of the Rubery Owen company magazine, Goodwill: "Nothing succeeds so greatly as success", and within a short period of time the new Rover appeared with the design, and then onwards to a high-volume production car, the Ford Cortina 1600 E.

R. M. Sinclair, Sales Manager of the Rubery Owen Motor Division described the car as: "A swash-buckling motor car for the enthusiast and family man seeking that 'go faster' look."

At the 1969 Earls Court Motor Show, the ROstyle wheel appeared to dominate, with one popular newspaper describing it as the 'ROstyle Show', as all the cars worth looking at (MG Midget, Mini 1275 GT, Ford Cortina and Capri, the new Hillman GT and the Sunbeam Rapier) were fitted with the ROstyle wheel!

It was clear that a whole variety of motor manufacturers now viewed the ROstyle wheel as an important selling point, and in keeping with the period, the sales and marketing approach often focussed on using 'cool couples' to emphasise the image being conveyed.

Courtesy of the FBHVC Magazine

My Motoring Month

April was a busy month, interrupted by Easter. We actually managed four events with two on the same day which must be some sort of record.

After a rally there is always quite a bit of paperwork to be done and bills to be paid. Then it was on with the Roof of England Tour. I had a route on the map and all the venues booked and early in the month Chris and I set off to do the road book. Things started badly with a whole series of minor roads closed within ten miles of the start as we kept having to redo sections. The ways of the various county councils in terms of road closures do seem uncoordinated.

Anyway, the rest of the route, mostly in Yorkshire, was all clear. With having to negotiate Penrith in the late afternoon to get back to Chris's it meant I had been out for nearly nine hours. Having done the road book for the first ten miles of so from the various versions we had, I decided to head down there a week later and check that the roads were now open, which they were. Road closure for the odd pot hole seems to be the norm now and are a nightmare for event organisers.

The dreadful weather we had had this month has meant none of the fun cars have been out so far. The MX5 is still waiting to have its Lanolin treatment which should have been done during the winter and in time for April 1st. Thus, I am not a happy bunny. It also meant that I've got very little gardening done and Storm Dave managed to smash two greenhouse glass panels that had just been put in to replace those smashed in the winter. GRRR!

There was a good turnout for Cars & Coffee and once again some unseen cars and some new members and it was great to catch up with so many people.



The weather finally changed for the Roof of England Tour and 42 cars arrived ready for the four-section route from Westmorland services. We were joined in the car park by some of the VSCC folk who had been doing the Scottish Trial the day before and were heading home. We had some lovely cars on the run and many of the crews were lifelong enthusiasts who had competed very successfully in their younger days and were now equally enthusiastic about classic

events.

After Chris had set the cars off, I headed up Hartside to Alston and Nenthead. Hartside was surprisingly quiet, sadly there is no café or even food van there to make the most of the views. Nenthead also looked very quiet and I got to Alston with lots of time to spare and had a walk round. I've not been since before COVID but the town has certainly gone downhill. A sunny spring morning and very little was open.

I then headed down to the Hive museum and met up with the team there and then Chris arrived. We had a good chat with the guys there about their various cars, several of which had spent most of their life in Alston. It was a bit like an episode of "Shed & Buried"! We had a wander across to the station and we were admiring a Polish engine when the driver said "Hello Graeme", it was a former member from the NE who used to do our events in an MGB.



The cars started arriving on time and most of the crews had a browse around the museum or head to the station café and loos! Everyone said how much they had enjoyed it, no doubt helped by the first sunny day we had for a while. Again, it was great to chat to so many of our members.

The month finished with Drive It Day which attracted some 200 cars. It was all pretty informal, although a bit dull and showery to start with, the sun came out later and many folks had brought chairs. I saw that some of the crews were buying the many varieties of marmalade on sale following the previous day's Marmalade Festival. I was manning the club gazebo and promoting our events and taking memberships, so there was lots of good craic!

Graeme

Photos by John France

Jottings

A photo of Hartley Quarry near Kirkby Stephen popped up on an old Cumberland history FB page recently. I copied it to our members' page to see who could remember it. There were quite a few wrong guesses which reminded me of the various quarries we have used on events over the years.

We ran a single venue there just once and I think it was quite hairy! The availability of quarries dried up due to security concerns regarding the IRA getting explosives and also H&S legislation.

The first Solway used two quarries, Aikshaw and Clints (just next to where the Motor House is now). With the Solway being fifty years old I was remembering that it had sixteen different venues and only Kirkbride was used twice. Not only did we have the venues; three airfields, Hadrian's Camp, two quarries and lots of farm tracks. None of those, other than Kirkbride still exist, or are available and even Kirkbride is unsuitable for stage rallies now. We also managed to man them all, there were about a dozen clubs in Cumbria and it was the norm to marshal on each other's events. Again, times change.

There used to be a number of multi venue stage rallies, in Cumbria we had the Derwent, Fellside and Bullough as well as the Solway. Now I am not aware of any non-forest multi venue stage events.

We also ran single venue stage rallies in Clints Quarry and in Greystoke Quarry.

I see Alan McNish is to become racing director for the Audi F1 team. Alan hails from Dumfries where his family owned the Cross Flags BMW dealership. He had an illustrious racing career, winning at Le Mans and racing in F1 before moving into management, even with the Formula E circus.

Also, David Coulthard's lad Dayton has won his first Formula 4 race. He is unusual in that he only started karting at the age of ten with his first low key race at Rowrah where he finished at the back. These days most kids seem to start while still in nappies!

There was an article recently about how much it costs to get into F1, unless you have very rich parents you need not bother to try! Even top-level karting is £130,000 a year. With Jess and Jorge Edgar racing at that level, the family business will have to sell a good number of Nissans and Hyundais! Plus, it will only get more expensive as they move up into cars.

While most of the top drivers have girl friends who are models or actresses, I saw a nice story about Oscar Piastrì, the Australian McLaren driver. He was sent to school in England to further his racing career and when he was fifteen, he bonded with a fellow pupil and they have been a couple ever since. She went to university and got an engineering degree and now works for McLaren. Certainly not a bit of crumpet!

Do you like the new F1? It roars back into action this weekend (nearly said whines!) Surely the driver should be in control and showing his skills, rather than the power until deciding how much power he has and when?

The WRC is getting a bit boring, it's a matter of which Toyota driver will win with the Hyundais a bit behind and the Fords third. The TV coverage is poor in that it only covers the three teams and Joe Public is unlikely to realise it's a major event with perhaps a hundred entries.

Meanwhile back in the UK, the few forest rallies that do take place are struggling for entries. No wonder if it costs the best part of a grand to reach the start line! Some events are struggling to break even and I would not be surprised to see events later in the year cancelled due to lack of entries.

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Andy's Armchair

Andy Armstrong takes an irreverent look at motoring and motorsport

I've just finished re reading the book about Gerry Birrell "Lost before his time", and it made me think seriously about the talented Scot. I'm pretty sure every member of WMC will have heard the names Clark, Stewart, and Coulthard but equally sure many won't have heard of Birrell.

Gerry died aged 28 in June 1973 when his F2 Chevron crashed at the Rouen circuit in France, the car suffering a punctured left front tyre approaching "Les six Freres" corner at 150 mph. He died instantly in the ensuing accident.

He was regarded as a future potential champion and it was strongly rumoured; he would have been joining the Tyrell F1 team for 1974. It appears Ken Tyrell had all his plans made, he knew Stewart his team leader was retiring at seasons end and his new number one would be the promoted Francois Cevert with Birrell coming in to inherit the Frenchman's number two role. Sadly, Birrell was lost at Rouen and months later Cevert died at Watkins Glen. I think it's fair to say that these tragedies, even though they carried on for many years caused Tyrell never really to return as a truly "major" player in the F1 paddock.

Anyway, here's a question for you which I hope someone out there can answer in the affirmative. Is there a monument to Birrell and the other 5 drivers killed at Rouen? In the book mentioned above Mike Mitchell, writing in 2022 appears to have things in hand stating the memorial should be sited by the 50th anniversary of Birrell's death (23/6/73). He lists many people who have contributed to the scheme saying the site is near a small lay by at six freres bend. Apparently, he had the necessary local government permissions etc and seemed happy it would be erected, but various searches have come to nought. All I can find is that some of his mechanics from the Chevron team carved an inscription into a nearby tree at the time of the accident. I do hope someone can tell me the permanent tribute is in place. The lad certainly deserves it.

Carrying on the theme of deceased drivers, I recently heard on the radio about an ancient church in Little Budworth near Oulton Park which has a valuable old master painting to sell. It was a convoluted story which I won't bother you with but it got me recalling a story concerning a racing driver called Paul Hawkins.

He was an Aussie who had raced in Europe at the highest levels for several years, and can best be described as a likeable tear away who was brave enough to be involved in the original development of the Porsche 917, a car which scared most other drivers senseless.

One weekend in May 1969 he was entered in race at Oulton Park in his Lola T70 and on the Saturday before the event he was known to have spent a good amount of time in the aforementioned church.

As things turned out this visit led to a strange story being born after he was killed the following day in a fiery accident at Island bend.

His father, a church minister was of the opinion that Paul had had a premonition of the accident and had made the visit to make his peace with his maker. Friends and fellow competitors think this would have been highly unlikely and claim he'd merely been sheltering from the heavy rain. Nevertheless, there are still many who believe the former tale and look on it as something of an eerie spiritual occurrence. It makes you think!

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