

**The Magazine
of the Fairford
Classic Car**

Fc3

The Family Friendly Classic Car Club



**Winter Edition
January 2017**

WHAT'S ON

A summary of motoring events with Club activities highlighted. Check the Club **Website** and **Newsletters** for details, changes and information. If you have a question about any event, please call the coordinator or Bunny Lees-Smith (01666) 577275

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE	WHO
Wednesday 25th January	Classic Lunch Run	TBA	Barry Cooper 01285 851821
Saturday 11th Feb 19.00hrs	Film - First 50yrs of Powered Flight	Jet Age Museum (tickets) Cheltenham	Ken Hinton 01285 712522
Monday 20th March 14.00hrs	FCCC Committee Meeting	Crown of Crucis	Geoff Tebby 01453 883821
Friday 7th April	FCCC 30th Anniversary Lunch	Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester	Malcolm Cutler 01285 712173
Sunday 16th April	St George's Day Run Drive-It-Day	TBA	Ken Hinton 01285 712522
TBA	Talk on 'Fairford — Carriages to Concord' by Edwin Cuss	TBA	Malcolm Cutler 01285712173
TBA	Visit to 'Ten Tenths'	Rendcombe Airfield	Malcolm Cutler 01285 712173
TBA	Flour Mill and Rolling Rd Garage	Shipton Under Wychwood	David Chambers 01608 658603

Across The Pond

Bulldog: 'Ow long did it take you to write that MG 'Phoenix' piece Beave?'

Beaver: A bottle of French red, half a one of German white, several coffees full of Baileys and a wee dram.



FAIRFORD CLASSIC CAR CLUB

Member of the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs

Winter 2016/17



SUMMARY FC3 FEATURES

- NC 500—A Scottish Tale
- Phoenix Arising—Stage 11
- MGF Rattles
- A Norton Tale
- Familiar Facel
- Cox's Riley and Mice!
- New Year Quiz

REGULARS

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- Editor's Welcome
- From the Chair
- FBHVC News

Front Cover

- Start of the 'Christmas Blues Run' write up in Feb Newsletter
- Bentley's at Fiennes
- Castle Combe cake

Centrefold

Castle Combe Autumn classics 2016. A firm favourite on the FCCC calendar, even if this year it rained a little!

Back Cover

The FCCC group pose for a group photo at Fiennes Restorations—see article inside.

FC3 is published by the Fairford Classic Car

Web: www.fairfordclassicarclub.org.uk



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fairfordclassics/sets>

The winter months are usually the quietest for our club but not this year. In Dec we had visits to Rennishaw and Fiennes Restorations (see article), Barry's Lunch Run, a revisit to the Jet Age Museum, the Christmas Lunch, and End of Year Run. January and February may be a bit quieter but your committee is working on various possible events, Barry will be planning his lunch runs and we will soon be sending out details of our 30th Anniversary lunch on April 7th.

This edition of FC3 includes articles written by club members (many thanks) and others which are motoring orientated involving the Cotswolds or past club members. Stan Dibben, who wrote the article on Norton testing through the Cotswolds, came along to the start of the New Year's run at the Trout in Lechlade and I am hoping that we will organise an 'evening with Stan' in 2017.

Here's to safe and happy motoring in 2017.

FROM THE CHAIR

Malcolm Cutler



The terrible war and atrocities in Syria and particularly in Aleppo, have been headline news for most of 2016. At the time of writing the Syrian government are now claiming to have taken back Aleppo from the rebels – but at what cost to human life and the city itself! It may seem strange that I should bring up this subject in our magazine but, in 1978, I travelled to Syria and I often think about the people I met and my travel experiences in the country – especially now seeing the devastation on the TV.

Whilst I have travelled very widely in the world, my experiences in the Middle East have been somewhat mixed, although I have to say that I found the people I met warm and hospitable, however, dealing with the authorities was a different matter. In 1978 I flew to Damascus from Iran where I had inadvertently ‘crossed swords’ with the Iranian Army – not the best thing to do as it was during the Iran – Iraqi war and Westerners were not very welcome. I was booked into a hotel room in Tehran by my local agent who had to pay, let’s call it, a ‘premium’, to get the room, as all were booked. The problem was that I then started to get increasingly threatening calls throughout the evening demanding I left the room. I thought they said that it was needed by an Armenian, but as I was tired and jet

lagged, I told them to ‘get lost’ and shoved a chair under the door handle and went to bed. On returning to my room from breakfast the next morning I found that my clothes etc were being removed to another room. I was pretty incensed until it was explained to me that the floor I was on was booked by the Iranian Army (*not an Armenian*) and an Iranian General was demanding his room back. I decided that it was probably best if I accepted their offer of another room!

Anyway, back to Syria. My reason for visiting the country was to travel to Aleppo and the North to advise on sugar beet production – Syria was planning to expand their industry and my company were market leaders in sugar beet mechanisation. I flew into Damascus from Tehran, with the arrangements being that I would be met



and fly onto Aleppo. From memory I arrived about midday and was indeed met,

but was told that flights to Aleppo had been cancelled and that we would have to drive. OK, but when I saw the car I started having my doubts — it was a tiny Fiat and my two companions were not small. They insisted I went in the back, which with my height meant I was pretty well bent double!

I understand that there is now a major road, the M5, between the two cities, which takes about 4hrs to cover the 360km,



although it is reportedly very dangerous with bandits, road blocks and the odd stray bullet. This was not the case in 1978 and I remember it twisted through some fantastic scenery with beautiful views of mountains, but there was also mile after mile of desert and scrub. The road surface was sometimes non-existent and the driving, especially the large trucks coming at us, was terrifying. The car had no air-conditioning and by the time we got to Homs I had lost all feeling in my legs. I can't remember how long it took, but it was night by the time we got to Aleppo and I was not amused when the room I was initially given at the hotel had no glass in one

of the window panes!

Aleppo at that time was a vibrant city with typical local markets (souks) and life lived on the streets. It is unbelievable to see the results, on TV, of all the recent bombing and compare it with the city I remember. However, my time there was short and I was soon whisked out of the city to visit the agricultural areas and I remember that this time I was able to stretch my legs out in an old Mercedes Benz (probably a 190D). My agent explained that the farmer we were visiting was also trialling a new irrigation system that he had imported for him, but that it was not working properly. He was obviously very worried about this. On picking up the farmer we first stopped by the side of the field where the irrigation system was, and the two of them went off to have a look. Whilst it was nothing to do with me I soon got bored sitting in the heat of the car, so wondered over to see what the problem was. It was a sprinkler system where the water hits a spring balanced 'paddle', resulting in the water spraying out across the field — or it should have done but quite a number of the sprinklers were not sprinkling at all — more like the 'Manneken pis' in Brussels! The paddles are cast from non-ferrous metal and on closer inspection some of them appeared to have bent - in transit or sabotage? It did not take much to bend the first one so that it worked and I soon had a number of the others working again, although I did get a bit wet — but it

cooled me down! My agent and the farmer were ecstatic and after much discussion in Syrian, they bundled me back in the car and drove into the hills to what I can only describe as a shepherds hut. After a lot of shouting and sending people off in different directions, the farmer re-appeared with two sheep. He then gave a long speech, which my agent translated and apparently the sheep were a present to me for repairing the irrigation and that I should take them home for my wife to cook! It took some time to explain to him that sheep would probably not be too welcome on the plane and in any case I did not have two spare tickets (*Jill – thank goodness!*)! He was very disappointed but brightened up when we said that we



would stay for lunch, the only problem being that mutton was obviously on the menu and as the honoured guest, I had to watch as one of the sheep was dispatched, in local fashion, in front of me. The rest of the day was spent looking at the sugar beet fields, but the ground was so hard – just like concrete - that I decided they were better off digging them out

by hand, rather than risking the destruction of our mechanical harvesters.

Once back in Aleppo I remember being rushed to the airport, but once again

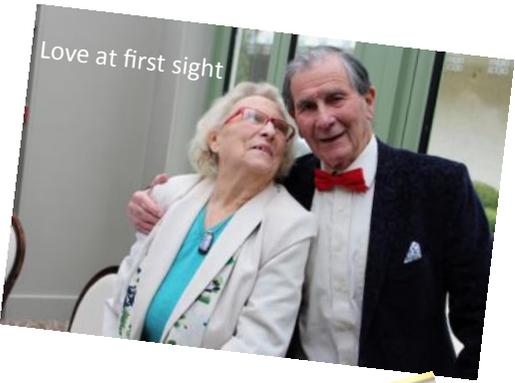


being told that there were no flights and all the buses were full. It was late in the evening and my flight from Damascus back to the UK left early the next morning. My agent was very embarrassed but they told me 'it is no problem' and took me to the local 'long distance' taxi rank where I was introduced to their version of car sharing. I remember it being a 1950's or '60's Chevrolet that turned up and with three in the back and myself and another passenger squeezed on the front bench seat next to the driver, we headed into the desert, but now in the dark! They say it is better not to see the accident coming, but I think I got to the point where I would have welcomed it, as each time a lorry (or car) came towards us they seemed to be on the same side of the road (or desert) and with no ability to go off high beam! Actually, with the ride, fragrant air in the car(!) and losing the will to live, I think I slept much of the

way. It was also a drop off/on taxi, so every time I woke up I seemed to have a different person next to me!

I did make the airport and the flight home was equally different because I was on a new Syrian Air Boeing 747SP (Special Performance). Only 45 of these were built and ,with the same engines and wings, but a lot less weight, than a normal 747 they had increased range, if not speed, to compete with Concord over the total journey time. The one I was in had only about 50 people aboard and took off like a fighter and was soon cruising at around 50,000ft – quite an experience.

I still have memories of this trip through the gifts my agent gave me for Jill – a solid silver necklace almost a yard long and dress material laced with gold thread – I hope he sold a lot of irrigation systems!



FCCC CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2016



The NC 500

(No it's not a race) - Martin Howard



Jenny and I were watching the BBC Country File program about a new Scotland experience, a road route around the north coast of Scotland, the North Coast 500. A well kept secret up to now. This was a 500 mile drive around the north coast of Scotland, its's answer to Route 66. From Inverness in the East across to Applecross on the West coast, then following a circular route north and then South back to Inverness. As we had for years wanted to visit the Highlands of Scotland, this looked the ideal trip, just what we wanted to do. Jenny suggesting how about doing it in the Morris Minor!!

So began my winter project to plan this journey, logging onto the official web site www.northcoast500.com and joining as a member, receiving the official route map was a great help. We agreed we would do the drive in September, as we believed by then the female midges would not be biting. Having driven around California, the Canada Rockies and New Zealand, Jenny and I were looking forward to this experience, as we wanted to have plenty of time to stop whenever we chose to take in the views and visit many of the spots mentioned.



On mentioning our plans to our friends Eddie and Gill Phibben (FCCC members), they asked to join us. It was decided, as we did not have much idea as to what conditions we would face on the drive, both their MG Midget and our Morris Minor would be best left in the garages, and we use our two modern days cars, our BMW and Gills Peugeot. I spent a few days looking into the best places to stop over night, as I believed there would not be a great choice and to leave it later would no doubt result in not finding any vacancies.



In September we begin our journey by meeting Eddie and Gill at Catlowdry outside Longtown at our first overnight B/B, before driving on to Inverness to begin the NC 500. By using a clockwise route we were always on the side of the road nearer the sea, not such a good idea sometimes, as both Jenny and Gill would comment this meant this would be a little too close for comfort to a long drop! So as to keep

in contact with each other we had two hand held UHF radios, which proved to be a great benefit to give warnings of animals in the road, on coming vehicles or sharp bends, which were plenty, also requests to stop for coffee etc?

I had allowed six days to complete the drive, so giving us plenty of time to enjoy the scenery and stop for photo opportunities of which there would be plenty of both!! To attempt to do this in less would be a shame, as there is so much to see and do.

Our first days drive on the Monday was about 70 miles, taking us from Inverness to a pretty B/B at Loch Carron, making a stop to take in the Rogie water falls where we watched the salmon jumping the falls. I had added in a little detour to the small pretty village harbour of Plockton, having visited it by train from Inverness a few years ago. The road here was only just the width of a car with many very tight bends, making progress very slow for a few miles. Having stop to take in the scenery here, it was suggested we make a brief trip over the bridge to Skye for coffee. Before heading back on the A890 and to join the 500 route again to our over night stop B/B in a lovely bungalow over looking Loch Carron. We discovered the owner had a classic Spitfire on the drive under a cover.



The next day, Tuesday, our B/B was in Ullapool a distance of 140 miles, the longest distance of the tour, so as we had plenty to see. We woke up to a warm dry morning, but with low cloud. Our route now took us onto the small village of Applecross over a steep winding narrow road, with spectacular views across the Inner sound to the island of Raasay and Skye in the far distance, we now knew we had arrived. As we climbed into the clouds for a short while this section being the third highest road in Scotland, which made

our drive a little more hazardous at times, as we had to watch out for any motor bikes or vehicles coming towards us, of which there were many. Then having to manoeuvre into a passing place with care to enable each to pass, at the same time informing Eddi and Gill behind that there was an oncoming vehicle. (This was a procedure we carried out many time during our journey.) This section of the drive taking over 2 hours, but well worth it. We arrived in Applecross to a tranquil scene across the loch to Rassay, with views of the mountains ahead (photo), but no time for stop for coffee. The remainder of the day was more knuckle clenching, with tight hairpin bends that switch back and forth, and up and down with gradients approaching 20% in places,

resulting in plenty of chatter between cars. We stopped to admire the view with a lovely bay and the isle of Rona, where on looking across the loch we spotted what we thought might be Nessie enjoying the sun, but soon realized it was a nuclear submarine on the surface, no doubt on its way to some far off destination.



Our route now taking us through Torridon, Kinlochewe, and on to Gairloch where we spent a couple of hours going around the sub-tropical styled garden of the Inverewe House and estate. Then onto the port of Ullapool for our next overnight stop, enjoying a great evening meal in the Arch Inn overlooking the harbour.

Wednesday we continued on our journey with the weather still holding out and little signs of rain, onto Lochinver, stopping to take pictures of the ruins of Ardvreck castle on the banks of Loch Assynt. Lochinver being our next coffee stop where we had been told about a cafe that excelled in producing a delicious range of pies, but deciding not to indulge as we still had a long drive ahead. Our journey taking us along a road so narrow and with many sharp bends and steep little climbs, we had to take great care not to run

into an on coming vehicle, Jenny being kept busy with also holding on to her seat. More important were the sheep asleep and long horn Scottish cows in the road, one of which took a great interest in me when I stopped and stood by the car to take a picture (photo). Many of which we came across, having to stop to allow them to move and enable us to pass with great care, the scenery was so different. At the village of Stoer we passed the narrow road to the light house, but decided we



would give this a miss as we had to be at our next B/B in Durness by 6.0pm, which was still a few hours drive away. On route stopping to take in the view over to Cape Wrath and the track down to the ferry. Our B/B was in a lovely position looking out over the North Sea.

To be continued

The Little Great White Shall Rise from the Ashes



Part 2: July to December 2016

When you last saw LGW he was heading over to Peter Plouf's shed for the next phase of his rise from the ashes. Without Peter, the car would never be on the road to recovery. Pete's wealth of knowledge, skill and meticulous approach to this project thoroughly fill all the spaces in his marvellous shed



that are not already occupied by every automotive tool known to modern man. And there is just enough room left in there for a small fridge full of *Stella Artois*.

Our first chore was to cut away the remaining debris from all four corners and much of the back end. With the car on stands, we were left with the basic shell and the inner wings, front and back though we cut the left front away as it was too badly mangled to straighten. Now for

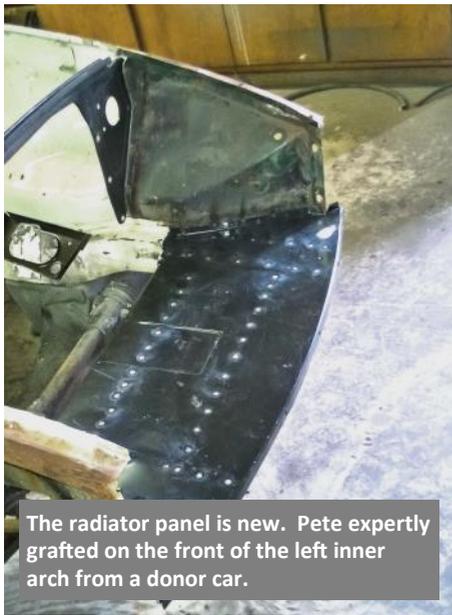


Pete and Dave contemplate their next move



Trial fitting the tin. The new bits are black, the original white and the boot lid and bonnet are the blue and orange of donor cars.

the fun of trial fitting the replacement panels. This is the point in a ground-up resto where you discover the veracity of the free, anecdotal advice about the quality of repair parts from around the world and over the ages – “fair



The radiator panel is new. Pete expertly grafted on the front of the left inner arch from a donor car.

dinkum" British tin from BMH, Steelcraft, the broad range of suppliers, big and small and in turn, from whom they have acquired their wares. "I got these trunk panels about twenty years ago, made in Asia. Buddy, they are half the price of the British ones." Yup, there is a reason for that. No thanks. The alloy bonnet I scrounged in Michigan for \$150 (a new one is \$1,300 Yankee Pesos) turned out to be too banged up to use and the boot lid that I saved \$800 on was also a bit suspect. With a bit of horse trading and

one more sprint across the border (*no wall yet*), I replaced the two items cheaply without spending \$3,000 Canuck Pesos for brand new ones.



A pleasant Sunday arvo. Davo stopped working on the rotisserie long enough to take the photo on his *phone*. (*hint to Club members*)

Satisfied that we could press on with making lots of sparks, the car went up onto the platform Pete uses to make sure things are square. With the doors as our datum, we built the car around them. There were many pleasant Sunday afternoons in that shed, metal dust everywhere; the smell of the welding and cutting was lovely! Often Pete's other mate, Pete,

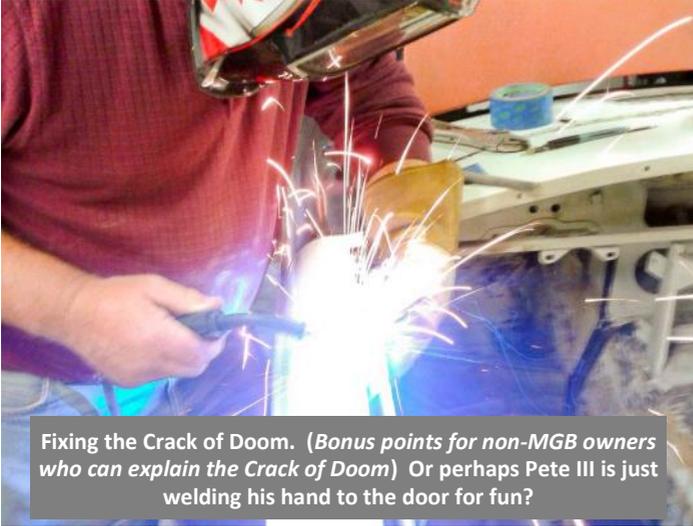


Starting to look like an MGB again

would be over as well as his other mate, Pete (yes really!) and the place would be a hive of activity and blokie banter. Davo's welding technique was judged too horrific to let him strike an arc on his own car so I was relegated to building the rotisserie and doing any other job where there was no danger of blowing a hole in



Getting LGW to rotation altitude. The rotisserie's height is adjustable.



Fixing the Crack of Doom. (Bonus points for non-MGB owners who can explain the Crack of Doom) Or perhaps Pete III is just welding his hand to the door for fun?

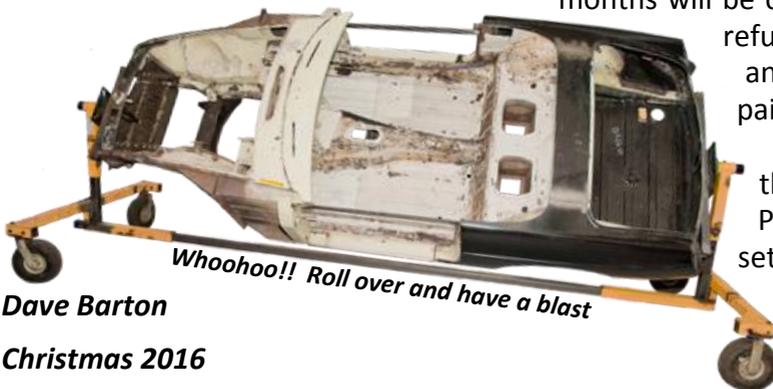
anything. Yes, some of the welds on my rotisserie are very ugly but yes, they will hold.

The little guy has been back home for a fortnight where I have been removing the last items and getting

him ready for a good bead blasting. The rotisserie is the best thing since sliced bread and zip top beer cans. No more slithering around upside-down on the cold concrete under the car on stands, in semi-darkness, struggling to bend a wrench in a direction your arm does not want to go. Two days ago Tony and I took him over to NASCO for his "car sauna". He will come back in mid-January (yeah I know, Christmas away from the family).

The coming months will be chockers with the

refurbishment of bits and pieces, a total paint job (of course in white!) and then putting the Pommie Meccano set back together.



Whoohoo!! Roll over and have a blast

Dave Barton

Christmas 2016





MGF—A RATTLING GOOD YARN—Part 2 Nigel Godwin

Barn door closed and much drinking took place down the local pub as I drowned my sorrows. I then met an old work colleague who was ‘an engine man’ at Williams F1. He had a listen and said ‘sounds like oil starvation’ have you checked the oil pressure. No, but I did shortly afterwards. Pressure was good at the oil pressure switch, but there was no way to check what it was up at the head level. Could it actually be the crank gear the seller had mentioned was wobbling on the crank and upsetting the VVC mechanisms? After all, the seller said the crank gear came off easily and it never did on any other Rover K series engines I had worked on.

Then I found an MGF VVC car going for ‘spares or repair’ on Gumtree in Wales for £275 ono. I contacted the seller and agreed to drive down and listen to the engine which he assured me was working fine and the reason for selling was due to MOT failure on the front suspension. Off I set. With the Severn bridge toll and a few gallons of fuel, call it £27 spent on a

due diligence trip.

Happy with the sound of the engine and the fact the car had the same interior trim and wheels as my project car, a new aluminium radiator, underfloor coolant pipes and brake disks plus it had paperwork to show it had a healthy emission pass at the last MOT and it revved freely to 7500rpm. I said I would be happy to buy it if we could agree on a sensible price. Two weeks later and at an agreed price of £200 I once again borrowed the trailer and set off to mid Wales and collected the car with another £27 for fuel and tolls. Once



home I checked out the car with my diagnostic computer and everything passed with flying colours. Now I set about completely stripping this new donor car in preparation for the removal of its rear subframe with engine and gearbox.

For those that know MGF's they have hydrostatic fluid suspension which requires depressurising before removal of the subframe. Previously, when working on my son's cars hydrostatic suspension, I had made a home brew version of the machine used by dealers. My version used a modified coolant tank and Snap-On coolant vacuum pump to evacuate the system and capture the old coolant, plus it would then evacuate the system of air. To fill the system I used a modified grease gun fitted with a Schrader (Tyre) valve, but this required hundreds of pumps to fill just one side of the car. I then remembered Mike Cox had a dealer system in his garage and asked if I could borrow that. It turns out he had in fact borrowed it from John Dodman. One quick call from Mike to John and it was agreed I could borrow the machine. On collecting it Mike said he had problems with it in the evacuation mode, but the pump part worked fine, so my plan was to use a combination of my home brew kit, plus John's machine, when I got to the point of pumping the suspension back up. Thinking I would soon be ready to pump up the suspension on my project car once I changed over the engine, I ordered 5L

of fresh hydrostatic fluid (£17).

Of course, if I were going to drop the engine and split it from the gearbox I



might as well fit a new clutch and release arm (£54+£36), new timing belts and tensioner (£52). Rather than just swop the engine over untouched it would be prudent to change the head gasket, water pump and head bolts (£34+£32+ £22) as the ones on the donor engine were of an unknown state. Once the head was off it was clear it needed a skim to remove firing ring indentations and the valve seats should be cleaned up, plus a stud was broken off in the head that needed extracting (£90). By this time I had run out of Loctite so a new bottle of genuine MG-Rover cam

carrier sealant was ordered (£12). This turned out to be stale and a new bottle (FOC) was requested from the supplier. A further £40 was spent on an engine stand to aid the rebuilding process.

This brings the story up to current day. My project car is sat in the barn exactly as it was parked three months ago whilst I started working on the donor car. That car, what



was left of it, has long since gone to the scrapyards and is probably now part of a new washing machine somewhere. Its emissions system has been fitted to my son's MGF to sort out his high level of CO in the exhaust gas and the removable body panels, wheels, lights and trim have been stored for future use, so it will continue to deliver value.

On the plus side I won't need to look

for a new 'project' for this winter, but I already know there are more jobs that will be done whilst the engine is out and the drain on my wallet will continue. I guess that's the cost of classic car ownership. Thankfully I don't play golf or have any other costly hobbies and my labour is free. If you see me driving the MGF in 2017 then feel free to have a listen, hopefully you won't hear any tapping noises but if so, please keep it to yourself!

DEALER SPEAK!

- Above Average** - we've polished it up
- As Found** - discovered by previous owner in hedge
- Attractive Proposition** - if you have every evening free for the next 5 yrs
- Ex-Works** - completely non standard
- Fair Condition** - scruffy
- For Restoration** - a complete wreck
- Goes well** - stopping is your concern
- In need of Attention** - needs scrapping immediately
- Investment** - outrageously overpriced
- Low Mileage** - this time around the clock
- Mechanically Sound** - Cylinder barrel recently repainted
- Stunning** - and so is the price
- Usable** - could get you home
- Very Rare** - exceptionally unpopular
- Works Replica** - professionally faked

FIENNES RESTORATIONS VISIT Malcolm Cutler

Many years ago the club visited Fiennes Restorations, when they were based in Little Clanfield but In 2011 they moved to their present 6.5ac premises near Filkins which include restoration, coach-work, machine and wood working shops, plus classic car storage. The business was started by Ralph Fiennes 40 years ago, providing the highest lev-



els of service to owners of Rolls Royce and Bentley cars. They now employ 33 staff and 60% of its income comes from their spares parts business.

Thirty members of FCCC were met by Ralph and Nigel Wearne on a wet and miserable morning, but a very welcome cup of coffee/tea and biscuits were on offer. Nigel provided introductions and then we split into two parties, guided by very helpful Fiennes employees. The range of Rolls, Bentleys and other makes being worked on in the workshops and the incredibly high quality of work being undertaken has to be seen to be believed. The work undertaken

producing parts for their restorations and for sale all over the world, is particularly impressive with their CNC and other state of the art tooling. The time taken in answering our



questions by all the people working at Fiennes was much appreciated. Following the visit we retired to the Five Alls in Filkins for an excellent



lunch and natter.

This was a particularly successful visit and we must thank all at Fiennes for being so welcoming to the club. For those who could not make the visit, or who wish to go again, Fiennes will be holding a series of 'open-days' throughout 2017— see their websites for dates and we will also publish one of these dates for a 'club visit' later in the year.

NORTON—'A ONE ONLY' MODEL Stan Dibben

The following article is reprinted from 'Roadholder', the Norton Owners Club Magazine, May 2015. A prolific motorcycle racer, in 1953 Stan was the World Sidecar Champion (in the chair with Eric Oliver)) and worked as a development engineer with BSA



and Norton. For 25 years he imported NGK spark plugs into the UK and in 1964 worked with Donald Campbell on his successful land speed record attempt, in Australia, in Bluebird.



How the machine appeared
when I test rode it

I saw after a very long time, in Sammy Miller's Museum, to my knowledge the one and only model of this type (*of Norton*) built in their Bracebridge Street, Birmingham factory. There it was, in immaculately restored condition. This motorcycle was I believe, never given road mileage tests, only extended engine testing on the dynamometer. Now that was a shame, and a money saving mistake.

On arrival at work one morning, (*at Norton's*) I was told to deliver it to its new keepers in the army at Borden in Hampshire for evaluation, putting it in a sidecar attached to a 16H Norton. I said that I thought it would be better if I proof rode it and came back using public transport. OK?



That was the start of a very interesting day for me, the experimental tester!

Setting off south towards Oxford on a

A MEATY FACEL—*Ready Steady!* Ron Barker

lovely sunny morning down through the Cotswolds, I went through my usual testing routines making mental notes. In this case, handling wouldn't be a problem in the well tried Norton trials 500T frame. However, whilst checking the maximum usable rpm, vibration periods, gearing, cruising along at about 60mph, disaster struck.

This 500cc side valve Twin, made to compete with Triumph and BSA for some of the military business, decided to detach its cylinder head from the rest of the engine, and came to a very noisy full stop half way up a full throttle incline. Here I was, about 50 miles from the factory, with a dead engine. Luckily there are a lot of stone built walls beside the road. Now that was very convenient. A large stone of appropriate size was chosen and forced between cylinder head and frame. Wonderful! It started first kick, and I headed off back to the factory with it running perfectly! I was not very popular on arrival.

"It's not a racing machine". "You must have been over revving it" "Riding it like an idiot" etc. My simple reply to all the critics: "Do you think the army despatch riders would nurse it through its life, or perhaps while being shot at by an enemy?"

Stan Dibben

The following is taken from an article in 'The Automobile', Nov 1999 — 'Ready Steady'. Many of you will remember our old friend and car enthusiast, Charlie Todd, so it is rather fitting that it was his Facel Vega that prompted Ron 'Steady' Barker, our club's first president, to delve into his memories. Having driven many miles in Charlie's Facel, I can concur with Ron regarding the 'bouncy' seat, however, I always saw it as a large car and it was certainly a brute around the Cotswold lanes!



"Last month I went on about the Gordon-Keeble. A few days after its visit, a local friend brought round a contemporary rival, his Facel Vega HK500, fresh from a major reconstruction that included building up the A-posts to support doors each surely heavy as a Mini! I have a soft spot for the HK500, but only because it shares memories of three treasured friends — Harry Mundy, George Abecassis and Lance Macklin. In my view it was great in its day, in terms of long-distance driving pleasure and mature behaviour; yet step-

ping out of it after a run, I was always amazed that it looked so compact – not usually a compliment.

In recent times there have been rather dismissive reports in classic car mags, lightly pooh-poohing the HK5 as an overweight disappointment, a clumsy old has-been, opinions no doubt based on experience with a private owner's rehashed job. A brief run in Charlie Todd's HK immediately restored self-confidence in my opinion



because, at least from the passenger's seat, it feels just about as taut and stable as I remember, and you can sense how a car handles by observing a driver's behaviour.

Charlie seems quite relaxed – no sweat beads on the brow, no wiping of sticky palms on trousers, no disconcertingly strained expression. The rebuilt Chrysler V-eight is silky smooth and quiet, still unobtrusive when delivering these great gobs of poke always in reserve with the superb US motors of that period. Let me remind you: *The Autocar's* Buyer's Guide for 1960 quotes, for the 5.9litre engine, 360bhp (gross) at 5200rpm and 490lb ft torque at 3600. Later a 390bhp 6.3litre was fitted. The coupé weighed about 4090lb (1860kg) and in 1960 weight was a luxury ingredient contributing to good ride and noise absorption.

On the negative side, I was reminded of

the springy seat cushions that degraded an otherwise sumptuously leather-lined cockpit, aggravating road spring reactions so that your head was rarely static in relation to the screen frame. Those names I mentioned earlier: Mundy was the then Tech Ed of *The Autocar* (previously, racing engine designer, later an engineering chief of Jaguar) Abecassis, an ex-racing driver, racing car builder and sole importer of Facels, Macklin also an ex-racing driver, at that time resident in France and responsible for Facel's development testing. I have happy HK memories of travelling with all three. With Lance, it was travelling the long arc of the Dorking By-pass, Lance driving and my boss, Maurice Smith, and self passengering, at a rate defying all the laws of gravity and rubber-tarmac adhesion, in what seemed like one full-throttle drift.

One wintry day in March, I set off for Paris with Harry Mundy and a photographer, aboard Harry's company car, a Ford Zodiac with Raymond Mays go-faster conversion.



We were to collect an HK500 *en passant* for a road test combined with covering the annual Geneva Show. The Continent was spread with snow and ice, but we needed maximum speed figures, so aimed north of Paris in the hope of finding better conditions on the famous Jabbeke motorway out of Ostend. En route, the photogra-

pher rammed the Ford into the Facel's derrière, resulting only in a disfigured nose for the aggressor. Belgium was also a bit of a wintry mess, but the motorway appeared to have some wet patches free of black ice, and – not without trepidation – we recorder 135-140mph. Can't remember whether we did the nought-



tos there and then, but and HK could usually hustle up to the ton in under 20sec.

Next, we trod a slippery path towards Geneva via Basle, and at one point I was ahead, in the dark, in the Facel with HM in pursuit aboard his Ford, pressing on hard with the prospect of food, wine and a warm pillow ahead, when I suddenly observed a steel bridge approaching fast, clearly surfaced with black ice. Cadence braking was the only hope of dramatically reducing speed, my brake lamps also alerting Harry. Only when I was on the ice could I see with horror the sharp turn right just beyond the bridge. After getting away with that one, with the Facel's full cooperation, my admiration for it became fade-free. There was another 'moment' soon after, when a tight left appeared at the bottom of a steep descent, and the Facel slithered round; in

the mirror I saw the Ford disappear from view, but through an open gate into a field.

When things were going well, Facel chief Jean Daninos thought he'd build a GP car, and to discuss the project Harry and his missus were invited over for a night in his luxurious Paris home, where a *cordon bleu* dinner was served by white-glove serfs. Harry spent hours of spare time at the drawing board creating a potential winner, and when Daninos abandoned the project poor Harry didn't even receive a *sou*. He was almost as put out by that as when Colin Chapman paid him a cash trifle for designing the twin-ohc head for the Lotus-Cortina, and didn't offer an extra penny when it became a commercial success.

Auf wiederfahren, Steady"



RILEY'S & MICE!

Mike Cox



It does not seem many weeks ago that I had to relive the horrors of the Abingdon Car Wash, so something a little gentler this time. Small jobs that have been done include the overhaul of the lawn mower, which my readers will remember from an article in a previous FC3 and putting it away in the shed for the winter. It still starts 1st time, although each year it seems to be getting heavier, or is me slowing down!!

The Riley has been in the doghouse and has not been worked on for some months now because of various electrical faults, and I am no electrician. It also does not help having a very cold garage but I have picked up an old/new stock dynamo which when fitted should clear up the charging warning light and ignition problems. So, keeping my fingers crossed, it may be out this coming year (*Ed: careful, it may end up being like my BMW CSI – in hibernation!*). The MGF has been 'sorned' and jacked up to get the wheels of the floor to prevent flat spots and all that. Its engine management problems have been sorted, fingers crossed, as can most problems be solved with the injection of large amounts of cash. Reading the earlier article in the FC3 it appears that Nigel Godwin's TF is

also consuming vast amounts of cash, bottomless pits come to mind, however have said that, I still think these MGs are good value for money compared with other makes of sports cars.

On another subject, reading an article in another well known car club magazine, they recommend putting a few mouse traps, baited with big lumps of best cheddar, in various places in the car where there is plenty of wiring and trim.



Apparently the little blighters and rats, chew the plastic sheathing of the wiring to sharpen their teeth so that they can attack the upholstery. This method of dealing with the so and so's works as I have been doing it for years and have never suffered any damage, but have caught plenty

of mice. Has anyone else had this problem? (*Ed: yes, they nested in the folded hood of the Sunbeam one very cold Christmas, ate a lot of the inner lining and pee'd on the hood! Teaches you to keep the hood up unless the sun shines!*).

That's it for this time, I haven't had much to say—makes a change some would say! So, before I composed my nice begging letter to Father Christmas requesting a brand new Aston Martin, I thought I would leave you with a little quiz for the New Year: **The Quiz can be found at the bottom of P 27—last page**

THE IRISH RAILWAY COMPANY COMPLAINT LETTER

Thanks to Colin Biles

The following is an actual exchange of correspondence between a customer and Irish Railway Company (*Ed: but it could just as easily been with Southern Rail!*)

Gentlemen,

I have been riding your trains for the last two year and the service on the line seems to be getting worse every day. I am tired of standing in the aisle all the time on a 14 mile trip. I think the transportation system is worse than that enjoyed by people 2000 years ago!

Yours truly, Patrick Finnegan

Dear Mr Finnegan,

We received your letter with reference to the shortcomings of our service and believe you are somewhat confused in your history. The only mode of transport 2000 years ago was by foot.

Sincerely, Irish Railway Company

Gentlemen,

I am in receipt of your letter and think you are the ones who are confused in your history. If you refer to the Bible and the Book of David, 9th Chapter, you will find that Balaam rode to town on his ass. And that, Gentlemen, is something I have not been able to do on your train in the last two years!

Yours truly, Patrick Finnegan

FBHVC NEWS REVIEW

Editor

The following is a brief review of the recent Historic Vehicle Survey undertaken by the FBHVC. The full survey can be reviewed on www.fbhvc.co.uk or ask the Ed for a hard copy:

The results are generally encouraging and show the effective strength the 'industry' has when combating future threats such as increased regulation:

8.2M - THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN BRITAIN WITH AN INTEREST IN HISTORIC VEHICLES

More than 8 million people in Britain have at least some interest in historic vehicles – be it owning, reading about them, visiting events, or maybe simply enjoying them when they drive past on the road. This equates to around 1 in 6 adults.

23M - PEOPLE SEE HISTORIC VEHICLES AS PART OF BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

Nearly half the British adult population (48%), or an estimated 25 million people, think historic vehicles should be preserved for people to enjoy in the future.

16M - PEOPLE THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO USE HISTORIC VEHICLES

Findings further reveal 1 in 3 (32%) adults think historic vehicles should be used rather than sit unused in a museum.

£662m - THE ANNUAL VALUE OF INCOME FROM OVERSEAS

International trade (i.e. exported products and services) is growing as a propor-

tion of turnover for British companies-providing services to the sector – it is now estimated at 25%, up from 20% in 2011). The trade remain optimistic about future growth in turnover.

1,039,950 - HISTORIC VEHICLES IN BRITAIN

There are more than 1 million vehicles registered before 1985 in Britain.

£17.8BN - ESTIMATED VALUE OF HISTORIC VEHICLES IN BRITAIN

£5.5BN - NATIONAL ANNUAL EXPENDITURE ON HISTORIC ACTIVITY

This estimate is 27.9% up on the 2011 equivalent figure (£4.3bn) and illustrates the growth of the sector over that time

34,900 - JOBS ESTIMATED NUMBER OF JOBS RELATED TO HISTORIC VEHICLE ACTIVITY

- Historic vehicle related employment has risen to 34,900 from 28,000 in 2011 – a 25% increase reflecting the growing spending, increased vehicle numbers and the positive attitude of businesses towards future turnover growth related to their historic vehicle activity.

- The industry provides more part-time jobs (7,600) and trainee/apprenticeships (3,800) than ever before, but skill shortages remain with 40% of employers struggling to find skilled staff.

- More than half the organisations operating in the historic vehicle trade expect their business to grow in the future (54%, up from 52% in 2011)

MORE THAN 6 IN 10 - THE PROPORTION OF BUSINESSES THAT ARE CONCERNED HISTORIC VEHICLE REGULATION WILL CAUSE THEM PROBLEMS



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Mike Cox's New Year Quiz

- 1) What are the missing letters in the names of two car manufacturers: AST A and APORO ETS.
 - 2) Which car company made the M21/M22/M24?
 - 3) How many wheels, not including the steering wheel, did the TOURETTE have?
 - 4) When did SKODA start producing cars?
 - 5) If PLEIN CIEL is open, what is closed?
 - 6) What is the engine capacity of the NSU R080?
 - 7) Name one of the three men who produced the MARAUDER?
 - 8) Who designed the FRISKY?
 - 9) Which high ranking Air-Force officer attempted to produce the FAIRTHORPE?
 - 10) An easy one to finish on: who produced the P1, J2, K2 and M1?
- Answers in the next edition of FC3 – or ask me next time we meet up.*

