



# Jogging to victory



Dacia's  
seven  
seater  
takes  
our  
CoTY  
crown

Best wishes for the festive season to all our friends



# Dacia the way to do it!

DACIA'S new Jogger has sprinted past some high-class and much more expensive opposition to take the crown as the 2022 Northern Car of the Year.

The seven-seater MPV began its journey to the title by taking the class win in the family car category - beating off opposition from the likes of the BMW 2 Series Active Tourer and Peugeot 308. Northern Group members took part in an initial online vote which covered all new and significantly revised models launched over the previous 12 months.

Following the online vote, a team of 13 members met up at Coniston Hall hotel near Skipton to test drive the class winners and cast their votes for the winning car.

And the bargain-basement Jogger outclassed much more expensive top brand models to take the overall Car of the Year title by a record-breaking margin, with all but one of our voting panel putting the Jogger in first place.

It was the first time that the Renault-owned, Romanian brand had figured in the final, six-category shortlist for the Northern Group award and, after driving the Jogger at the test day, group member Graham King summed up its achievement.

"The Dacia Jogger appears ruthlessly efficient," said Graham. "There's seven-adult-



space, a massive boot, it has just enough power, it uses little fuel, there's all the equipment you really need and it costs the lowest possible price.

"But it's more than simply efficient: it's a fun, willing companion that'll make family motoring more enjoyable."

The Car of the Year trophy - a brass miner's lamp affectionately known as the Arthur, after one-time miner's leader Arthur Scargill - will be presented to Dacia in due course.

## Car of the Year 2022 - The roll of honour

Family Car & Overall Car of the Year: **Dacia Jogger**

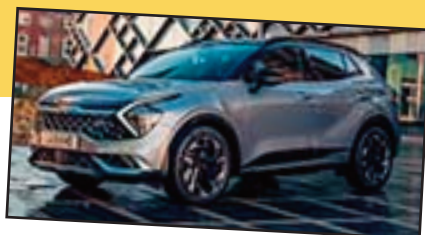
Luxury Car: **Audi A8**

Fun Car: **Toyota GR86**

SUV: **Kia Sportage**

Small Car: **Skoda Fabia**

Electric Vehicle: **Volvo C40**



## ngmw News

The pandemic may be over, but its legacy lives on for some members of the Northern Group, several of whom are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain the facilities to help them do their jobs thanks to the changing media priorities of some PR departments.

In this edition of NGMW News, Steve Teale argues that individual members need to do more to promote themselves and to show motoring PRs what they are missing by not providing some of our members with the opportunity to drive their products.

In addition, we have the usual mix of news and features highlighting the exploits of our members and, of course, our regular round up of the latest moves in motor industry PR.

- David Whinyates  
Editor

[david.whinyates@ngmw.co.uk](mailto:david.whinyates@ngmw.co.uk)

NGMW News is produced by the Northern Group of Motoring Writers, Britain's longest-established regional motoring writers' group. The Group represents writers working for print and digital media with regional, national and worldwide audiences.

Opinions expressed in NGMW News are those of the individual contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Northern Group of Motoring Writers.

Main contributor: Alan Domville.

Contributors: Malcolm Bobbitt, Andrew Evans, Andy Harris, Graham King, Guy Loveridge, Frederic Manby, Ben Quirk, Steve Teale and Martin Ward.

Contributions are always welcome - send your stories and pictures to Alan Domville at [e.domville@btinternet.com](mailto:e.domville@btinternet.com)



# A little friend in the city...



...but the poor rural charging infrastructure means that the intriguing Ami isn't really suited to life out in the sticks



ONE of the downsides of getting older is an ever-increasing number of funerals to attend.

The automotive world recently bade farewell to Ian Donaldson, who was the longstanding president and former chairman of the Midland Group of Motoring Writers. And, as I write this, the forthcoming week will see the send-off for the dear wife of one of our members, taken far too young.

On the same day, I will be in Kent representing the group at Sue Baker's funeral. Much loved and respected by all in the industry, there will doubtless be a big turnout from friends and colleagues.

However, most important of all, she was a mother and grandma and so, on behalf of the group, I offer our condolences to Ian, Hannah and the boys.

My diary continues to be as busy as ever, though December sees a gentle easing off the pedal as we head towards the festive season. For me, it is a chance to rest and relax, drive a little less and catch up on my writing.

Test cars still seem to come thick and fast, most now with some form of electrification. The intriguing Ami from Citroen came to stay and whilst it is unsuited to my life in rural North

## FROM THE CHAIR with Andy Harris

**"My local market town has two chargers but at just 7kW, EV drivers better be prepared to spend the whole day exploring its delights..."**



Yorkshire, I can see the appeal for the urban dweller.

Another driveway visitor was a fully electric SUV – a premium offering. From the accompanying bumf I learnt that fully charged the range should be around 250 miles, yet after an overnight fill from my home charger the read-out was a disappointing 180.

With some 500 miles to cover over a busy weekend and working on the basis that fast charging while out and about would only reach 80 per cent, or 144 miles, I opted to leave it at home in favour of my elderly diesel 4x4.

The charging infrastructure away from the cities leaves a lot to be desired too. My local market town now has two chargers, but at just 7kW, any EV-driving visitors had better be prepared to spend the whole day exploring its delights.

A little further away, in the town which titles itself the Gateway to the Yorkshire Dales, the council has recently turned down an application to build a dedicated charging hub with shops on an ideally placed site on the edge of town. Surely this is what we are going to need everywhere and soon?

Whilst on my soapbox, I would also like to mention the disparity in price between petrol and diesel. The latter always used to be a tad dearer, but now the difference seems to vary between 20 and 30p a litre.

With most of our goods moved by diesel-powered vehicles, this is surely heaping yet more pressure on the price of everyday goods we buy in the shops.

Let me end on a positive note, by personally welcoming recent new members Dave Thomas and Graham King. We continue to thrive and next year we will celebrate our half-century, most definitely not out! We will be celebrating this milestone.

May I also wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.



# Twisted but not bitter

From North Yorkshire to the Cote d'Azur, our man **MARTIN WARD** travels near and far to get his regular automotive fix.

Here Martin reports on two of his latest motoring adventures taking in two distinctly different, but equally iconic vehicles



LAND Rover Defender re-engineering specialists Twisted Automotive recently announced that it was opening the order books for bespoke work on the company's factory-fresh Defender 110s.

So it was fitting that group members were invited by Twisted's PR manager, Faye Hatton, who many will remember from her time at JLR, to have a look around the company's HQ in Thirsk, North Yorkshire.

The company's new showroom opened recently, transforming the town's old cinema into a very modern space to exhibit Land Rovers, classic cars and boats. It also has a small cafe, and Faye treated us to bacon sandwiches, tea and coffee.

Amongst other things in stock, Twisted have more than 50 '16' Plate, delivery mileage Defenders in an assortment of models and bodies. All are unused and brand new with delivery mileage only.

They did have around 240, but most have



now been sold, with price tags well exceeding £100,000, and I mean... well exceeding.

The Twisted business was set up by Harrogate-born Charles R Fawcett who grew up near Northallerton and was surrounded by Land Rovers from an early age. His father had been involved in the sale and repair of Landies since the 1970s and ran a 4x4 off-road driving centre.

As early as 11 years old, Charles had his own Series 3 pickup. He joined the family business in 1995 and launched Twisted at the turn of the century as a tuning and performance operation. The rest, as they say, is history.

Nice to see Faye again, and some new Defenders...the butties were pretty good too!



## Bursting my bubble

**I POPPED** down to Cannes recently to visit, and drive, an old friend. We keep a 1959 BMW Isetta down there at my brother's place.

Due to the pandemic and various other things it's been a while since I'd had the chance to get behind the wheel of our little bubble car. We got a gallon of petrol (sorry...five litres) put it in, charged the battery, blew up the tyres and miraculously it fired up!

Over the past few months we have had new stripey red and white seat covers made and fitted to match the body colours.

We took it down to the front and drove along the promenade where it caused quite a stir. There were so many onlookers and admirers, many of whom wanted to take photos.

I felt quite the celeb. Even those in Lambos, McLarens and Bentleys wanted pics - it was quite extraordinary. But driving this little bubble car ain't easy - the 300cc, single-cylinder petrol engine struggles a bit, to say the least.

You don't realise how many hills there are in Cannes, until you drive an Isetta ... good fun though.







**The Northern Group's latest recruit is Lincolnshire based videographer David Thomas. His video road tests on his YouTube channel, AutoBears, have attracted more than three million views while his Facebook page has almost 700 followers. Here he outlines his motoring passion and career so far**

**I STARTED** my life in the automotive industry on the frontline as a sales executive, working for brands such as Kia, Skoda and Vauxhall.

Selling both new and used cars, I loved building a rapport with customers and understanding their needs in looking for a new or used car.

Later, I became an accredited service advisor for Skoda in Milton Keynes and enjoyed helping customers with their servicing needs and resolving any issues the customer might have with their vehicles.

Taking the skills I grew at the dealership, I combined them with my hobby of photography and from there I created AutoBears and filmed my first review - with the help of an Octavia vRS from Milton Keynes Skoda.

My love of filming and reviewing new cars grew even more, helping those looking for a new or used car by giving unbiased, honest reviews and advice.

I now reside in the quiet village of Scotton in Lincolnshire - I highly recommend the Three Horseshoes Pub - where I am situated between Blyton Race Track - you can hear the Ginettas in the distance during the week - and Kirton Off-Road Centre.

When I'm not creating videos, my day job takes me to Scunthorpe where I work as a warehouse operative. It's not glamorous, but it pays the bills.

When it comes to cars, I own a 2000 Toyota RAV 4 three-door. Nothing cooler than a three-door SUV! Before that I had a VW up! GTI which was an awesome little hatchback! Quite a contrast I know!

Outside of work and AutoBears I love walks with my black labrador Sam, a bit of photography, travel and enjoying a good pub meal with a pint or four!

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Email: [contact@autobears.co.uk](mailto:contact@autobears.co.uk)

Phone: 07846 812756

## We're just so in Concorde with Lotus' new SUV



**THERE'S** nothing quite like a Christmas caper - last year we attended Silverstone's Lap of Lights - in the fabulous MG ZS EV - and this year was a little closer to home, which encompassed something that Annabelle and I have wanted to experience for a long, long time now.

We first saw the Lotus Eletre at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed, but unfortunately, due to a glitch, all of our footage of it was lost so to be given a second chance to see it - well, we jumped at the chance!

We headed over to our rendezvous with Andy Harris, and set off on our jaunt in the scintillating Suzuki S-Cross. We arrived at

Manchester Airport - namely the Concorde hangar - for the unveiling of this new, fully electric Lotus SUV.

As soon as we walked through the doors, we were met by Richard Yarrow, the head of news and technology communications at Lotus.

Appropriately enough, the atmosphere was electric and we chatted over drinks and canapes as we waited for the unveiling, discussing the future of the brand and, primarily, how and when we can get behind the wheel of one...

It was apt to be under the delta wing of the iconic Concorde - a first in commercial supersonic travel - to witness the unveiling of this new, cutting-edge electric SUV, a first for Lotus.

Now many will be questioning: Why an SUV? Well, we know for a fact that SUVs outsell cars

and luxury brands are well aware of this.

Another lesser-known fact is that Colin Chapman didn't just have a parking space for his latest Lotus, he also had an adjoining parking space for his Range Rover, for when a two-seater just wasn't cricket.

Now that's forward-thinking, and we hope he would have approved of the direction Lotus is heading in.

Seeing that the Emira is a two-seater sports car, it's obvious that whilst the Eletre is a new direction for Lotus, it's still very much about the exhilaration and heritage of British sports cars as well.

A huge thank you to Richard Yarrow and his team for an evening of Lotus and Concorde.

**- Ben Quirk**



# How the Puma defined my love of cars

What leads perfectly sane and normal people to fall for fast and rewarding driving and ultimately the rarified life of the motoring writer and car tester?

**GRAHAM KING**, one of the Northern Group's newest members, reveals how a sporty Ford showed him the way...



THERE'S a left-right-left switchback followed by a long, open left-hand sweeper. It's quite a technical, closely-stacked sequence with clear sightlines, the kind that you can really commit to. There's no on-coming traffic as far as I can see, so I pick my line and turn into the first corner.

Oh, wow.

The next corner. Oh, wow. Again, and again, and again. I reach the straight after the sweeper and I'm buzzing, elated. It's like a bolt of lightning went from my fingertips, up my arms and right into the centre of my brain. I've never felt anything like it.

I'd been driving for seven years at this stage, always enthusiastically, and I had more cars, vans



and even buses under my belt than I care to count. Many of those vehicles were perfectly pleasant to drive, some of them were brilliant. But that moment was something else entirely. That moment was when I learned what driving is really all about.

“ That moment was something else - it was when I learned what driving is all about ”

What was the car that gave me this revelation? A 10-year-old Ford Puma.

I'd bought the car barely half an hour earlier, replacing a bag-of-nails SEAT. It had the 1.7-litre

engine, propellor-style alloys and it was painted in that lovely Ford dark blue.

The rear wheel arches were starting to go a bit crusty – inevitably – but otherwise it was in lovely condition and felt tight as a nut.

I knew the Puma's reputation, that's why I bought it. Home was 50 miles away, so I'd picked out a scenic route, across the flatlands and up the coast.

Bits of the route were more familiar than others but I knew that, by time I got home, I'd either know what all the fuss was about or be bitterly disappointed. The fuss, it turned out, was entirely justified.

Development of the Puma was led by Richard Parry-Jones, a former rally driver and one of the greatest chassis engineers in the history of the automobile. He ripped up and rewrote the rulebook on what a front-wheel-drive car could feel like to drive, as demonstrated by the seminal Mk.1 Ford Focus.

Above all, though, Parry-Jones loved driving. Really loved it. And that was as clear as day in the Puma.

The control weights were perfectly matched, the engine zinged, the gearchange snicked, the steering talked in unequivocal terms. The whole car felt of a piece and deliciously tactile. You felt like you were hardwired into the machine – you thought of it, it did it. Best of all, because the engine only had 123bhp, you could have the time of your life without ever troubling the speed limit.

Circumstances meant that I only kept the Puma for about nine months. In that time, I learned everything I know about driving a FWD car fast, how to heel-and-toe, how to left-foot brake. During the bitterly cold winter of 2009/2010, I also learned a lot about oversteer!

The Puma was fast disappearing from UK roads back then and it's a rare sight now. Drive one while you still can. It really is enormous fun.



❑ A Puma but not as I knew it - Graham King checks out Ford's compact SUV





# Wet? Guy just soaks it up to reach Brighton at last!

AFTER 40 years of being involved with the nation's most famous veteran car event, Guy Loveridge finally achieved something of an automotive ambition when he was invited by the National Motor Museum to ride with Beaulieu's own Doug Hill in the 1903 Gordon Bennett Trophy Napier on the London to Brighton Veteran Car Emancipation Celebration Run.

The "London to Brighton", as famously celebrated in the 1950s film *Genevieve*, is the world's longest-running motoring event, always starting from Hyde Park on the first Sunday in November and finishing on Brighton's Madeira Drive.

This year's event was, Guy says, "The wettest that I can remember in all of those 40 years!"

Guy's involvement began as a marshal with the 150 Motor Club in 1982 and since then he has progressed to being a sector controller and then trying to complete the event in both a 1903 Curved-Dash Oldsmobile and then a 1900 Renault. Each of these steeds repeatedly refused to last the course!

The Beaulieu Napier was one of three cars from the NMM collection taking part and was one of a trio of Gordon Bennett Napiers which had been drawn together from Holland and Argentina as well as Hampshire to celebrate the 120th anniversary of Napier's involvement in the legendary early 20th Century races.

Guy and Doug "led" the event for much of their run to the coast, only being passed by five other participants whilst they stopped at Pease Pottage for a much-needed warming-up session over a bacon butty! The sponsors laid on a superb Irish stew and mulled wine at the finish and all pronounced the spirits un-dampened despite the deluge!



☐ Top: Guy, already soaked to his underpants, poses with the Napier before the start.

Left: The Three Gordon Bennett Napiers lined up by the sea in Brighton.

Right: Guy and Doug Hill steaming in the sponsor's tent after the finish.

Pictures - Guy Loveridge and K Hartley.





# e-by gum, the game's afoot!

Forget the go-kart, mum, buy me a games console and driving rig for Christmas.

**ANDREW EVANS** reports on the exciting and potentially rewarding world of racing esports



I'M SITTING in a concert hall in Monaco watching a dozen of the best drivers in the world.

Sir Lewis Hamilton recently gave them a pep talk; F1 race winner Esteban Ocon is in the room, and representatives of car brands Ferrari, Genesis, Mazda and Toyota, along with Michelin and Brembo, are also here.

With such high-ranking VIP guests, you might be wondering what kind of driving it is – and it may come as a surprise to learn it doesn't actually involve cars at all. I'm attending the Gran Turismo World Final, a virtual competition using a racing video game.

This is the world of esports: "electronic" sports, which use video games rather than bats and balls – or, indeed, cars.

It's been hard to miss the recent rise of virtual motorsport, given the events of 2020-21. Every major motorsport event and championship was affected by the pandemic.

Restrictions on gathering in groups and on travel meant that flying teams of people and equipment from all around the world was simply not viable, and as a result many organisers turned to esports as an alternative.

That meant you could tune in to channels such as F1's official YouTube and Twitch to watch George Russell, Alexander Albon, Lando Norris, and Charles Leclerc doing battle with each other – and F1 drivers of the past and perhaps future – in virtual F1 cars, around virtual F1 circuits in place of cancelled races.

However racing esports was already a well-established phenomenon by this time. The Monaco event I'm at is actually being held for the third time, having first taken place in 2018, and it's not an outlier.

Every major racing series around the world has its own official esports championship now, and the drivers who take part in them are as well-known to the digital audiences as those who race in the real thing.

These series are all very well-funded too, by advertisers and key sponsors. F1 Esports has a €750,000 annual prize pool, while the winner of Esports WRC in 2020 won a Toyota GR Yaris.

A surprising number of car manufacturers have their own esports teams – Porsche, BMW, Ford, and Suzuki among them – and all ten of Formula One's official teams have their own esports squads too.

In fact F1's teams not only have contracted drivers, they also select



drivers for each season from a "draft" event too. More than any other esports event, racing esports provide an unusual real-world crossover. While playing FIFA football games doesn't make you any good at football, and Street Fighter doesn't prepare you for a career in MMA fighting, the skills used in racing esports are transferable to real cars.

**“Every major racing series in the world has its own esports championship now”**

Two of the best examples of this are both British drivers. Firstly there's James Baldwin - pictured, competing, above - who won a multi-disciplinary esports series in 2019 which awarded him a seat in British GT for the 2020 season. Baldwin won his first race in the series, driving the McLaren 720S GT3 to victory at Oulton Park.

It was a surprisingly well-trodden path by then though. Darlington-born Jann Mardenborough, pictured below, was one of several drivers

awarded race contracts after winning the annual Gran Turismo Academy competition.

Mardenborough won GT Academy in 2011 and went on to race for almost a decade - including in the top category at Le Mans. Sony Pictures is actually making a film about his experiences, called Gran Turismo, due to come out in August 2023.

This blurring of the lines between virtual and real reached new levels in 2021 when the GT World Challenge Europe race series added an esports component giving points towards the real championship.

Each team entered in the whole season nominates one of its pro drivers to race in the five-round series which combines with the Endurance and Sprint series to determine the overall champion.

The FIA itself has also taken an interest. It partnered with Gran Turismo to start the first GT World Series in 2018, with an aim to create a digital motorsport licence – in essence granting sufficiently competent esports racers with their first licence on the motorsports ladder.

This has yet to become a reality, but the Gran Turismo championship winners were recognised by the FIA at its annual Prize Giving alongside champions of real motorsport categories.

If that weren't quite enough, esports is part of the FIA's own "Motorsport Games" event as one of the categories in which the attending nations compete for medals, and "motorsport" was one of the five events in the first-ever Olympic Virtual Series in 2021.

With virtual motorsport undergoing such a rapid pace of development over just the last five years, it's going to be interesting to see how it changes in the next five.

If you want your children or grandchildren to have a career in motorsport, it might be an idea to get them a games console and a driving rig rather than a go-kart...





# Want a Jag? Don't leave yourself in the dark...



MUCH has been said of Jaguar Land Rover recently and its apparent decision to limit many of its test cars to bloggers and influencers.

There is concern among many of the traditional motoring press that this rules them out from borrowing a vehicle for a roadtest in print. But this move is nothing new. Ever since I started writing about cars and running road test reports in print, and later online too, there have been changing policies among many car companies.

Some would not send cars north (too far); others would not lend to smaller titles (not worth the cost); others would lend a car if you collected it from their premises.

**STEVE TEALE** believes some of us are too slow to blow our own trumpets and says self promotion is the key to gaining the support of automotive PR departments...

But, guess what? Every hard and fast rule eventually changes as new chiefs come in and try a fresh approach.

So while we might be unhappy that we cannot drive the latest JLR vehicle easily, we should focus on what we can do to show the value of a well-written, fair and balanced road test in a regional newspaper, magazine or website.

Send copies to the PR people – after all, the era of the cuttings agency seems to have long gone.

And if the PR people don't know that you have written a piece, how can they value your future approaches for a test car?

And send copies of road tests of rival models to companies which won't lend you a vehicle to show them what they are missing out on.

I know the breadth and depth of coverage in our group and I reckon we have more than 1,000 years of experience, spanning old hacks and young kids. And many of us were "influencers" long before it became a buzzword.

I reckon many of us – despite the outward confidence we display – are too slow to promote ourselves.

It's time we took off the shackles and started showing the industry what we do on a daily basis and why we are worth their support.

## A lady with that touch of sparkle

INGRID, partner of Steve Nelson for more than 40 years, died peacefully on November 6, in St Leonard's Hospice in York.

Even in the face of the awful effects of cancer and its treatment she remained in good spirits and attended many Group events.



She and Steve (above) enjoyed several days at the seaside and elsewhere before her condition deteriorated.

All of us have fond memories of her conversation, her smile and even a little mischief - and, of course, her touch of sparkle.

She leaves two children, Lucy and Jack.

Her funeral took place in York on November 30.

❑ With a wet spring in their step and expensive diesel in their tanks, Group members Julie Marshall (with Mark) and Frederic Manby (with Jo) spent a soggy September Sunday on Anglesey at the start of a week touring in Wales. This was the scene at Awelfryn farm campsite, with a Thule awning keeping the rain out between the coach-built Land Rover ambulance conversion and the Renault Trafic Adria.



A dry diversion nearby was the Anglesey Transport Museum at Niwbwrch, Llanfairpwllgwyngyll. Exhibits ranged from military trucks to a tweed grey Mini Van, like the one in which the young Manby learnt to drive.





# It's a devil of a drive



□ A Vauxhall 420-1 roaring up the loose slate track towards the summit of Honister Crag. Bottom of page: a weather and mud-stained Austin Seven tackles the ascent.

ANYONE familiar with England's Lake District will know the challenges involved in tackling the formidable passes connecting mountains, meres and valleys.

Some of the country's best motoring roads are to be found in this isolated corner of northwest England, but even for modern cars the routes over Newlands, Hard Knott and Wrynose often present difficulties, especially in winter.

And then there's Honister Pass with its long, narrow and steeply winding ascent from Crummock Water and Buttermere.

Honister is wild and sinister even in the more agreeable seasons, but on a November day it is decidedly hostile with a forceful wind, verging upon gale strength, howling through the sheer-sided valley and bringing with it heavy rain, hail and sometimes snow. Look skywards and you can imagine impending disaster should the mass of vertical rocks come crashing down as if struck by the Sword of Damocles.

Such a scenario hardly excites to the extent one is compelled to brave all and negotiate the very essence of Hades in a car approaching 100 years or older.

Yet this is exactly what Vintage Sports Car Club members thrive upon, this year being no exception when some 120 ancient machines showed their modern contemporaries the raw meaning of being driven over some of the most demanding roads found in the United Kingdom.

The VSCC's annual Lakeland Trial is one of the toughest old

**Armed with his camera, MALCOLM BOBBITT climbs a Cumbrian stairway to the heavens to report on an event which challenges ancient machines and their brave and dedicated drivers...**



car events, and one which tests machines, their drivers and trusting passengers to the limits.

Climbing near to one thousand feet to the summit of Honister Pass in a vintage car and enduring what seems an ice age is only part of the ordeal.

Having made the ascent there follows the chilling prospect of going off-road and scaling another 900 feet, this time over a steeply rising loose slate track that's bedevilled with hairpin bends.

You're literally scrambling up the side of the mountain and clinging onto the world by the

depth of a tyre tread, all the time being reminded of a sheer drop of several hundred feet to induce an adrenalin rush.

Having driven up this stairway to the heavens, admittedly at the wheel of a Jeep, I confess it is scary to say the least. But attempt it in a 1920s Austin Seven or, yet more bravely in an even older G.N, the first and best-known British cyclecar, and the whole affair becomes alarmingly daunting.

The recipe of light weight, skinny wheels and tyres plus a not always ideal power-to-weight ratio, and not least some 'bouncing' on behalf of the passenger to help maintain traction over the difficult bits of terrain, helps enormously.

For Alvis, vintage Bentleys, Bugatti and Chryslers, not to mention Ford Model As, Frazer Nash, Lea-Francis and Vauxhall 30-98s, the charge up Honister Pass and upwards to Honister Crag at nearly two thousand feet above sea level is all about stamina and skill, and no less so than for the little Austins, G.Ns, Rileys, Standards, Fiats et al.

The Lakeland Trial is not all about Honister, since the day-long event, starting at dawn and ending at dusk, sees an extensive list of other hill climbs and off-road tests through the forests of West Cumbria.

It might not sound like fun but the whole event is built around spirited motoring, camaraderie and the intimate relationship between driver and vehicle.

The first VSCC Lakeland Trial was staged in 1968, and 54 years on it is still as popular as ever and proving itself as one of the ultimate motoring tests.

For as long as it continues, I hope to be there with my camera.





## Obituary

Sue Baker

**SUE, a good friend of the Northern Group, died peacefully at her home in November at the age of 75 after a long battle with motor neurone disease.**

Never one to assert any status she had within her profession or with the industry, she greatly enjoyed friendship with our members during launches and other motoring events.

Sue had been a presenter with the BBC's Top Gear programme for 11 years and latterly worked as a freelance.

She started her career when women journalists were few in number and as a trainee with the

Kentish Times managed to persuade her editor to publish her reports on races at Brands Hatch. They were so good that she was recruited to run the motor racing news service based at the circuit.

She moved to Fleet Street, initially with the London Evening News and later The Observer as motoring correspondent for both. In 1978 Sue was elected the first female chair of the Guild and later she chaired the Southern Group.

The Northern Group was represented at her funeral service by chairman Andy Harris who pens his own personal tribute, below...

# I was lucky to be a friend

FOR many car enthusiasts growing up in the 1980s, myself included, Top Gear was a must-watch programme. Sue Baker was one of the leading presenters and little did I know then that I would not only one day meet her but would also be lucky enough to call her a friend.

After her stint with the motoring programme ended in 1991, she continued her career in journalism and was, amongst other things, motoring editor of The Observer for very many years.

I remember our first meeting on a car launch in a suitably glamorous location when she chose to sit next

to me at lunch. It was probably the only spare seat.

I must confess to being unusually tongue tied, but Sue had a knack of putting one at ease.

The conversation flowed and covered so very many topics in such a short time. Sue was both interesting and interested in others.

She had been suffering from motor neurone disease and bore her illness stoically, surrounded by her loving family for support. To them I offer my deepest condolences.

Since her passing, the close-knit community in the world of automotive media has been sharing stories and memories of the good times spent in Sue's company. There were so many of them.

Although I never personally shared



a car with her on a launch, I do gather that her driving was somewhat spirited, enough to scare the uninitiated. She certainly put the test cars through their paces.

My lasting memory though is of a kind and encouraging person, one who was happy to spend time with a mere regional hack such as me. She will be much missed.

Bon voyage Sue, and I hope in the next life, the coffee is strong, the roads empty and the cars fast!

- Andy Harris

## Tributes from our members

**Jonathan Smith:** It was on my first international launch in Monte Carlo in the mid-70s that I met Sue along with Observer motoring editor Frank Page. I was in awe of both towering figures but they couldn't have been more generous in their help and kindness to the young cub. Sue was meticulous in her work - the true professional and a solid news hound.

**Frederic Manby:** I met her at a Mitsubishi breakfast at the Geneva Motor Show in, I think, 1980. She was everything people have said about her. Usually last on the bus, usually first on the plane. I once tried to keep up with her on an ice skid circle. I'm not admitting anything here....

**Martin Ward:** She was very knowledgeable about all aspects of life, not just motoring. She was a real star...and brilliant company.

**Julie Marshall:** I have fond memories of driving with Sue many years ago in Morocco at a Kia event. I was showing off and didn't slow down on a sharp bend as I should have done. Sue just looked at me and said in a deadpan voice: "Have you ever thought about enrolling on an advanced driving course?" I never told her that I took her advice and was eventually awarded a gold certificate.

## Ian Donaldson

**IAN died in October at the age of 75 after a short battle with cancer.**

**He was a familiar figure to our members on launches and was chairman of the Midlands Group of Motoring Writers for 25 years. On stepping down earlier this year he was accorded the title of president.**

**During his long career Ian was associate editor and motoring editor of the Northants Evening Telegraph. He turned to motoring writing full-time in 1995 and went freelance two years later.**

**He is survived by his wife Jean and their family.**



**Among members' tributes were the following...**

**David Whinyates:** Ian was - almost literally - a giant of motoring journalism and was always good company at driving events around the world.

**Roy Woodcock:** Ian was a lovely guy. I always enjoyed driving with him. We went to the same school and started on local newspapers in Cambridgeshire - Ian at Wisbech and me in March. We would swap reminiscences for miles! A familiar face much missed!

**Frank Turner:** I was saddened to hear that Ian had died. I always found him good company at many events.



# Montana joins the JLR team

Motor Industry News with Alan Domville

.....



□ Montana Wright

JAGUAR Land Rover's public relations team has been joined by **Montana Wright** as a senior press officer.

Formerly involved in the public sector, Montana has joined **Mark Griffin** and **Charmaine Lewis** in the recently restructured PR office.

Over at Audi **Natalie Southerden** has re-joined the press office as events and internal communications manager.

Natalie acted as maternity cover for most of last year and in her new post she is part of the team that includes **Deb Oakly** and **Anastasia Vadera** who job-share.

Meanwhile, Renault has appointed **Daniel Zealander** as press relations manager, covering for **Lauren Prema** who is on maternity leave.

Daniel had previously spent more than two years with the SMMT press office. Reporting to **Rachel Goodwin**, he is working closely with **Charlie Roper**, brand and product affairs manager, and is our contact for Renault and Alpine while Charlie continues as our contact for Dacia.

Renault has also welcomed **Fraser Leggett** to the PR team. Having previously worked at Rickmansworth for a placement year, he has joined the team as press officer across the Renault Group brands. Fraser is also our contact for all press fleet inquiries.

Isuzu's new PR and digital assistant is **Daniel Able**. He is now handling the brand's press vehicle bookings along with press releases, media relations and digital copy.

**Nelly Kennedy** will take over as Volkswagen's chief marketing officer in mid-February. She has been recruited from Google in California where she was senior global brand manager.

DS Automobiles has appointed **Eugenio Franzetti** as director of its' performance arm. He has worked for Stellantis brand vehicles for many years, most recently with DS Italy.

Stellantis has created a new management team taking effect from January 1 with the following appointed managing directors: **Julie David** (Premium brands), **Greg Taylor** (Citroen), **Darren Dally** (Fiat and Abarth), **Jules Tilstone** (Jeep), **Adam Wood** (Peugeot), and **James Taylor** (Vauxhall). **Jeremy Townsend** remains responsible for communications and events.



□ Newcomers. From left: Renault's Fraser Leggett and Daniel Zealander and Daniel Able at Isuzu



# Such an unexceptional day out

FOR the second year running, I was looking forward to the Festival of the Unexceptional, a celebration of long forgotten cars.

First staged by Hagerty in 2014, the festival has earned its place in the automotive calendar as an attainable concours event offering a mix of rare cars and a prestigious location in an informal and friendly atmosphere.

Showcasing 'ordinary' classic cars of the late 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s, the Festival of the Unexceptional remains the only concours to champion everyday cars we all know and love.

This year I decided it would be a great opportunity to travel in style, in the 1991 Mercedes-Benz 230E I had just bought, sight unseen, from a friend. Perhaps not an unexceptional car, but one that would look good in the car park.

I don't have much success buying cars that I have not seen, and I blame eBay and beer for past forgettable purchases. An R107 Mercedes SL should have been ok, but the vendor had re-covered the seats in a kind of dralon fabric. It didn't drive very well either and was soon sold on. Then there's the E30 BMW 325i that was being sold by a distinctly dodgy dude in London. When I went to collect it, I felt it would not make the 250-mile trip home so left it at a friend's house and had it collected by trailer. It went back on to eBay more or less straight away.

Back to the E-Class then. With time always in short supply, the car was left for me by its emigrating seller with a friend and so the first time I saw it was on the eve of the festival.

To my shame it had been sitting there for a number of weeks and therefore wouldn't start. My boost pack didn't help, but hastily bought jump leads from Halfords soon saw some signs of life.

❑ On the eve of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders' annual northern driving day at Wetherby Racecourse, chairman Andy Harris once again organised a barbecue at Wood Hall in Linton. Journalists from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the other English regional groups along with SMMT officials joined us at the event which, as last year, was held indoors because of the inclement weather.



**Chairman ANDY HARRIS thought he would travel in style when he bought an old Mercedes E-Class sight unseen - but ended up in a cloud of steam!**

A quick spin around the block confirmed it drove as I expected a '90s Merc to drive – i.e., not fast. The oil level was checked, the coolant looked fine and after a quick wash it was ready for the 60 miles spin up the A1 in the morning.

The gentle cruise north was uneventful, but the fun started when I joined a very long and slow-moving queue trying to enter the grounds of Grimsthorpe Castle. I watched the needle on the coolant temperature gauge begin to climb and the



old trick of turning the heater on to its hottest setting made no difference.

Before long there was the inevitable cloud of steam, so a quick turn into a handy car park was made. Lifting the bonnet, there was coolant spraying everywhere. Disaster!

My dear friend, who had been following me, once he had recovered from laughing hysterically, graciously offered me a lift into the event. The errant Merc would have to wait until later.

Later, having managed to source a large canister of coolant from one of the show organisers, I topped up the now empty reservoir and pointed the 230E northwards once more.

Another 150 miles awaited, and Waze seemed to suggest no holdups on the A1. I plotted a convoluted route which would avoid any potential town centre delays, even though this added another 50 miles to my journey.

Arriving home was a relief and the next day I had the chance to inspect my new purchase properly. In the boot was a new thermostat, so I guess that was the cause of all my drama.

Next year, I shall travel to the festival in whatever shiny new press car adorns my driveway.



Find us at: [www.facebook.com/NGOMW](https://www.facebook.com/NGOMW)



Follow us at: <https://twitter.com/@NGMWCars>