

# TALK

April 2020



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Welcome to Aprils magazine, this month we have some words of encouragement from our Chairman Andy Brown. Already in 2020 Andy has been stuck in Mexico, had too close a brush with the possibility of Covid 19 and if you read last months report, a brush with a solid object as well.

But that pales into insignificance at the report from Andy Hutchinson and his amazing powers of engendering "Gremlins".

Scarcely a month goes by without another walk of shame pic featuring "Hutch the Jonah" but if you thought Andys origami job of fitting in a Darrian was worthy of a thought, look at the pounding a poor Mini Classic took from the silly seat!

Of course we're all in danger of taking on a few extra kilos of "strengthening" whilst the lock down stretches into the future, but as the weather becomes less winter like I am sure many of you will be turning your thoughts from moaning about your lost licence fee and more towards what you can experiment with...

Ah yes after you have re-decorated the house and got bored of the gardening leave so popular in the Motorsports Industry, you will be sloping off to your beasties lair with spurious excuses of "just gotta sort some nuts out"

So we want you to tell us of your plans, your dreams or even your failures.

Somewhere I have enough pictures and words to detail my last full build, the lessons learnt there all now but forgotten, the naivety and enthusiasm now replaced as often as it can be by cold hard cash. So show me yours and I will show you mine!

Does anyone have any gossip, any tall tales from the past that have passed the statute of limitations?

Remember as a DAC member your part of a small yet discrete club, I would be amazed if it gets out into the wider world.....

Motorsport UK is taking a bit of a battering with its views on licence fee refunds, at least in the Social Media Circles.

There's a viewpoint that carping on about such a amount, then spending a grand lightening a car when really laying off the pies would be much more effective, is, well its just typically British isn't it?

I think we are in a Churchillian quote netherworld at the moment, personally I think if anything we are close to the end of the beginning and that what we said and meant last week may be as redundant as spending money on anything with a Use By Date!

Except those pies of course! But we wont be out to play by June, we may not see any action this year, you may find that your licence for next year may be free or able to be carried over from this year.

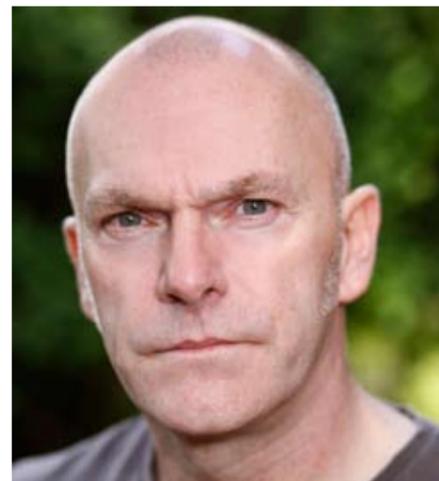
All bets are off and if we want to keep playing with our toys we really do have make sure we deserve the opportunity.

Our community needs to appreciate the bigger picture and work as a collective so we don't become a casualty like much of the leisure Industry seems to be heading.

Its our social side that I miss the most and I hope we recognise and protect it when this dust settles, the only thing your missing from work is mixing with others isn't it?

Stay Safe

Alan Hawdon  
Editor



# THINGS TO DO IN 2020

## CONTINUE DAC MEMBERSHIP



~~APPLY FOR YOUR~~

~~COMPETITION LICENCE~~

**F**irstly I hope this edition of Torque Talk finds you safe and well.

Well its been nearly a month since the Government asked us to stay at home and social distance ourselves from each other.

**M**otorsport UK cancelled all event permits to protect Officials, Marshals, Competitors and Spectators.

At this point in time there are no permits until 30th June. I guess sometime in June they will make a decision as to whether to extend the date or not. It will all depend on where the country is at the time.

Luckily the Malcolm Wilson Forest stages managed to run by the skin of its teeth. Competitors covering stages in Cumbria before the lockdown took effect.

Other events weren't so lucky and had to cancel with full entry lists. To help out clubs, Motorsport UK have released a fund of 1 million pounds.

So If any clubs have lost clubs funds due to the Covid pandemic, they can claim this back from Motorsport UK.

**A**s a club, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel the Classics at the Castle in late March.

Planning was well on track and a healthy number of entries, the organising team felt in the current climate, the lockdown could last well into May/June.

Finally when the Motorsport UK extended the ban on permits until the end of June, we felt cancelling the classic was still the only option to be inline with the

Government and Motorsport UK directives.

One positive thing to remember is the forests, country roads, tarmac and gravel area's will still exist for rallies, 12 cars, targas and autotests etc in the future. Its just all on hold, not gone for good.

**B**ut in these times the internet is now being used for events. I've seen some virtual classic car shows, virtual classic car runs, motorsport quizzes.

What have you seen?

**I**t is with great sadness that we lost a legend this week.

RIP Sir Stirling Moss! Stirling, a motorsport legend and household name, lost his fight against a long term illness.

I met Stirling, 20 years ago in 2000 when I graduated with my degree.

Stirling was presented with an honorary doctorate of Technology and presented all of the degrees to the students.

**I** have been "furloughed" by work so my cars are clean, petrol is cheaper and the roads are quiet, ok you cant drive anywhere but 2 out of 3 aint bad.

**I**t's a shame we can't play with our big boys toys but it's not the end of the world and if everyone stays at home and stays safe, we will all be back out ASAP.

Please stay safe and I will see you all sometime very soon.

Andy Brown  
Chairman





## FUCHS LUBRICANTS CLASSIC MINI CHALLENGE



SSION FOR QUALITY • BREWED WITH

Classic Mini racing has been given a huge boost with the launch of a new eight-round championship.

Clitheroe & District Motor Club has joined forces with leading lubricant manufacturer FUCHS LUBRICANTS (UK) plc to create the Classic Mini Challenge.

The FUCHS LUBRICANTS Classic Mini Challenge will run from February to September, taking in Lincolnshire, Mid Wales, Cumbria, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, southern Scotland and south east Wales.

Championship coordinator Chris Woodcock has devised a format with a simple class structure, allowing contenders to demonstrate their skills and abilities

**Words**      **Andy Hutchinson**  
**Pics**        **Cath Hutchinson**

This is a brand new venture for me as a navigator, something I've always wanted to have a go at so the chance came along and I took it.

We set off to Donnington Park on the Saturday to meet up with my new Pilot Barry Stenhouse and get scrutineering all done ready for Sunday Rally Day .





Having got down to Donnington in our motorhome we stayed at the Donnington Farmhouse Caravan site which is ideal for events, situated right behind the paddock.

We made our way onto the circuit to meet Barry and some of the others competing.

I have to say what a really nice bunch of people, very friendly bunch and nothing a bit of bother.

Having got the car through scrutineering with only a seized engine cut off cable, nothing new there! We were set for the Sunday Rally day.

After a few beers, food and a bit craic with everyone we retired for a good nights rest.

Sunday Morning we woke up to heavy rain, not what you want, but hey ho we can't help the weather.

Start time was 9.39 everything was set, wet tyres on and away to the start, all's good and away we went, having covered just over half of the first stage lightning struck the car down and we coasted to a halt!

Bonnet off we found the gremlin a broken coil wire, well it was actually a broken spade terminal on the actual coil.

We tried in vein to get it sorted track side but as you can imagine it's not the best place to be fixing a car just beyond a long sweeping corner when you have a Mk2 escort coming sideways at you.

We moved to a safe place until the stage end and waited for recovery back to the garages for some repair works all done by Rick, our Team Mechanic for the weekend.

On closer inspection the coil had boiled itself in turn melting the points!

Stage 2 was lining up but sadly the car wasn't fixed in time so Rick focused on the problem by fitting a new set of points, condenser and put it back together only to find we had no spark! BUGGER.

Never give up they say and by the magic of rallying we had a new distributor brought to us off Jim a fellow mini competitor . Rick fitted the new dizzy and hey presto she fired back into life.

Right let's get back out there, Stage 3 it was, the weather was foul but we had a hoot in the car, doing a double 360 spin in a mini is a lot of fun, by hell it was slippy but we finished the stage having had a good laugh on board.

Stages 4 and 5 were still very slippy but no major dramas, just big smiles . Stages 6 and 7 were reversed and in places a little trickier with us actually going off onto the loose for about 50 metres or so but all the same huge amounts of fun.

By this time the track had dried out and you could tell as the times were half decent considering everything. We finished the rally fourth out of four in the minis but we had some fun.



On reflection, considering it was our first time out together, me and Barry have forged a good relationship, he's a grand fella and a canny pilot.

A huge thank you to all concerned for the Hospitality, repairs, spare parts etc etc . Next round was going to be at Warcop camp but this Corona has put paid to any rallying for the foreseeable future as we are now all aware of . What will happen who knows but in the meantime folks stay safe.

Andrew Hutchinson + Barry Stenhouse.

# INSIDE THE INDUSTRY

Sorry there is only one subject this month.

The tragic effects of Coronavirus dominate and make anything else of no importance at all.

essential" retail outlets were included.

Things had started slowing even before that announcement with people afraid to travel unless necessary and many working from home.

April sales are likely to be "negligible".

Some of this will be recovered when things begin to return to normal, whenever that might be.

An awful lot of sold vehicles didn't get delivered before the shutdown and dealers tell me they have had few cancellations. most customers who had ordered a new car for delivery in late March or April still intending to take delivery when possible.

Of course for manufacturers this isn't just a UK situation. March sales were 85% down in Italy, 72% down on France and 69% down in Spain, and all will suffer probably equally badly in April.

I'm typing this on April 13th to meet the first deadline so no doubt things will have changed significantly by the time you read it, sadly I doubt if the changes will be for the better.

Currently there isn't a car factory in Europe open for business as far as I'm aware. Nor is there a UK car showroom open to visitors officially at least, although some are ignoring the rules.

Most dealer workshops are open for NHS and emergency cars only although commercial vehicle workshops continue to work on, not just for those but also the vans and trucks vital to keep the nation's supplies, particularly food, moving.

The current crisis has made many people look at what's important in life and hopefully one change is an appreciation of the often vilified truckers.

The UK lockdown started with the pubs being closed on Friday 13th March (how appropriate!) with the closures extended dramatically on Monday 16th when car showrooms and other "non

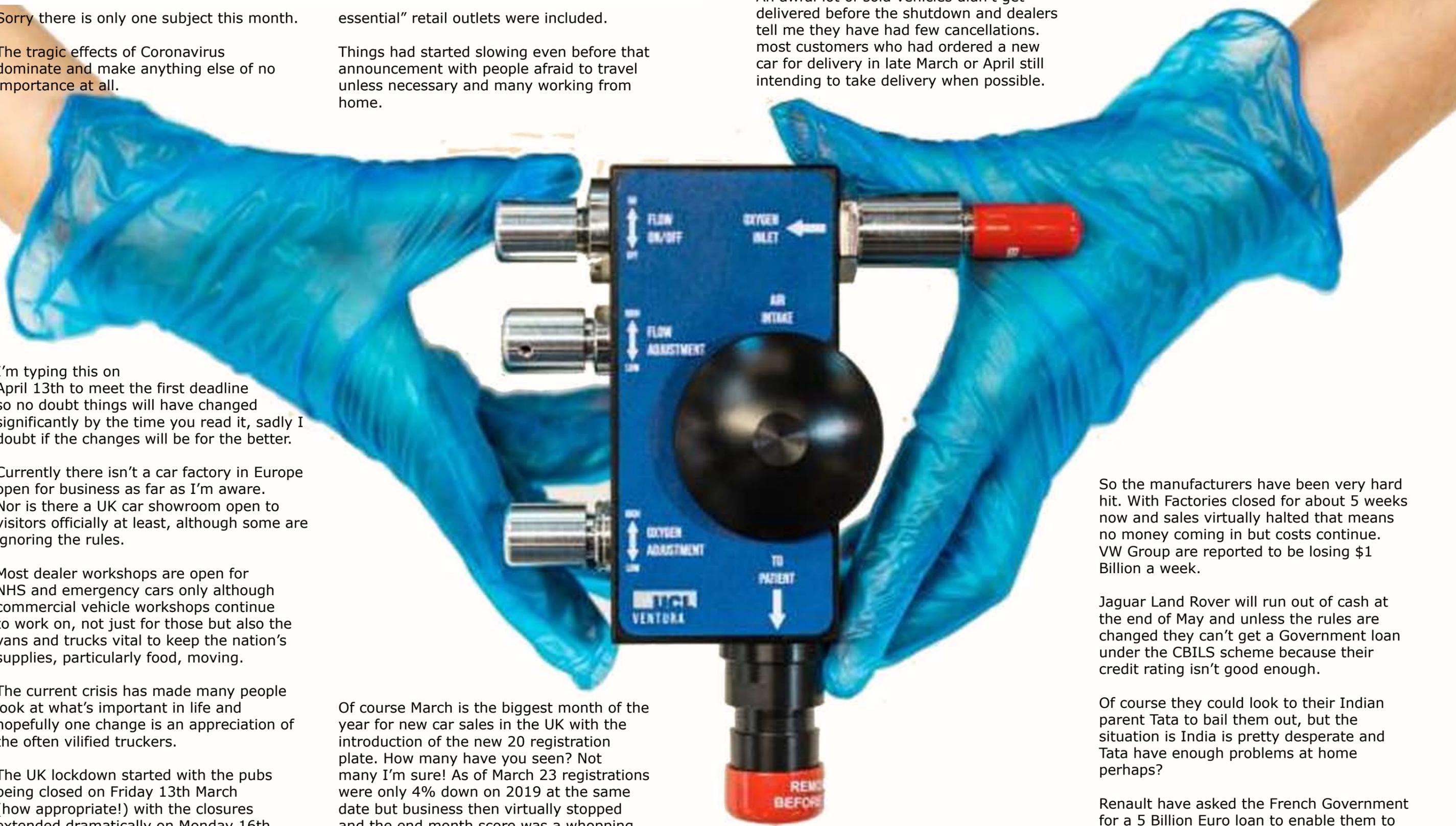
Of course March is the biggest month of the year for new car sales in the UK with the introduction of the new 20 registration plate. How many have you seen? Not many I'm sure! As of March 23 registrations were only 4% down on 2019 at the same date but business then virtually stopped and the end month score was a whopping 44% down on 2019 - that's 200,000 sales!

So the manufacturers have been very hard hit. With Factories closed for about 5 weeks now and sales virtually halted that means no money coming in but costs continue. VW Group are reported to be losing \$1 Billion a week.

Jaguar Land Rover will run out of cash at the end of May and unless the rules are changed they can't get a Government loan under the CBILS scheme because their credit rating isn't good enough.

Of course they could look to their Indian parent Tata to bail them out, but the situation in India is pretty desperate and Tata have enough problems at home perhaps?

Renault have asked the French Government for a 5 Billion Euro loan to enable them to survive.



Had Aston Martin not received the financial rescue package from a consortium led by Canadian tycoon Laurence Stroll in March, they would undoubtedly be bankrupt by now. So that's where we are, and where we'll remain for a while at least.

However there seems to be an acceptance that UK lock down can't last for very much longer or we won't have an economy left. You'll know more I imagine by the time you read this.

Most dealers I know are planning on the basis the showrooms will reopen sometime in May, the optimists (and you wouldn't be in this industry if you weren't optimistic) think early May. Of course that doesn't mean the car factories will reopen at that point, it's harder to achieve social distancing in a factory environment, although I know the manufacturers have been working hard on that for some time now.

Whenever things do restart there are two big questions. Will customers still want to buy a new or used car and what will be available for them to buy if they do?

Search engines like Car Wow and Autotrader report continuing interest from potential buyers with search volumes holding up well, in some areas increasing. One has to ask if that means people are genuinely interested in a new car or are simply filling in the extra spare time they have when confined to their homes?

Autotrader surveyed those searching their site and 14% said they wanted to buy a car as soon as possible with another 58% saying they fully intended to buy but later in the year.

Dealers and manufacturers alike will take some reassurance from that. And of course there is the factor of pent up demand. A proportion of those who intended to buy a new or used car in late March and April will still want to do that so that will be a start for the industry.

Equally many businesses and individuals will have used up their reserves and taken on fresh debt during the crisis which will make them less likely to make a major purchase.

And sadly most forecasters expect significant redundancies to be declared once the furlough schemes end. I've no doubt unfortunately this will be very true for those involved on dealership sales roles. With dealers battered by a period with no income and sales for the rest of the year certain to be down I fear 10-20% of car salespeople will be made redundant shortly.

So will cars be available to buy? Obviously some will, the unsold stock that was there in mid March is still there and manufacturers and dealers starved of cash will be desperate to turn any available metal into money. Therefore I don't expect manufacturers to reduce discounts, perhaps quite the opposite.

Ford have already announced an offer that covers 6 months' finance payments for those ordering a new car or van in April and May. I think others will have similar offers soon. However not everything will be available, until the factories restart there simply is what there is. And when those factories restart there will be component shortages because the factories that provide them have been closed also, so in many cases car makers will have to build what they can, it may not necessarily be what they and the customers want.

Certainly we're advising our customers that if they factory order a car or van they should plan on getting it by Christmas and if its any earlier take that as a bonus! Also manufacturers will be looking to build what they can sell quickly as that means cash in the bank earlier. Jaguar Land Rover have already said they will prioritise building Range Rover, Range Rover Sport and New Defender models as these sell quickest and are also their most profitable cars. The new all electric XJ and the facelift on the XE have been put back.

Used vehicles will also be in short supply. There was a shortage in January and February as I've mentioned before. It was expected that part exchanges coming in against new cars sold in March would cure that, but of course March came in about 40% below forecast so 40% less part exchanges.

As with new, the used car stock that was there in mid March is pretty well still there but whether that is enough to supply the demand depends entirely on the strength of that demand.

Near new cars will be particularly short because the rental companies won't be selling anything like the usual volume of cars. Reason being their car fleets have pretty well stood idle since early March. Their customers are business travellers and tourists, both have been in very short supply and that seems likely to continue for a long time yet.

In most cases rental companies have contracts with the manufacturers that say they can't sell the cars until they reach a certain age and mileage. Whilst they may currently

have reached the required age it is most unlikely that many of them are up to the specified mileages.

Like many other areas of life the industry won't emerge from all this unchanged. Sadly there will be dealers who won't survive financially. The manufacturers have almost all given financial support to their dealers but their ability to do this is certainly not unlimited.

Even the most optimistic forecasters believe that UK new car sales will end the year 20-25% down on 2019, and 2019 wasn't a wonderful year. Used car sales will also be down, perhaps by a little less. Both dealers and manufacturers will have to cut costs.

This is why I expect redundancies in the showrooms. It's also expected that more customers will be for awhile at least prefer to deal remotely, buying online and having the car delivered direct. With manufacturers desperate to cut costs changes like Ford reducing its dealer network by almost 50% will probably happen quicker than was previously planned.

The required cost cuts will impact on motorsport (see below). The change to electric vehicles will likely happen more slowly. First the extra cost of these over internal combustion will be less attractive to cash strapped buyers. Second the dramatically lower oil price will filter through to the pumps making the fuel cost saving of electric less. And third I expect the launch of new and improved electric cars to slow as manufacturers will have no choice but to cut development budgets.

This slowing of electric sales will make it even more difficult than it already was for manufacturers to achieve the stringent EC emission targets, with failure resulting in vast fines. The EC may well have to relax on this or face bankrupting the European industry?

Of course in the UK there is another motor industry, the motorsport one.

Motorsport as we all know has stopped. Whilst there are increasingly desperate efforts to put some sort of an F1 calendar together even if behind closed doors for the TV audience only it seems unlikely anything will happen before July, more likely August.

Same applies to WRC with hopes but no certainty that may restart with Rally Finland in August. And the lack of activity goes right down to grassroots level.

As they say the bigger they are the harder they fall. There are no bigger spender than the F1 teams so the financial hurt is greatest there. With budgets ranging up to and over \$300M a year not travelling to races only saves a fraction of this. Currently there are 10 F1 teams.

It's thought that when things eventually restart at least one, Haas, will be missing from the grid.





There are several others in danger though. Williams have re-mortgaged just about everything they have to secure new funding. Assets pledged as security include all their land and buildings, all factory plant and equipment and even the priceless collection of over 100 Williams F1 cars going back 42 years.

However I think that the manufacturer teams are also in question. I mentioned above that Renault are seeking a loan of 5 Billion Euros from the French Government. Would you not expect those responsible for French taxpayers' cash to question the F1 budget before parting with the Euros?

Mercedes like every maker will be under enormous pressure to cut costs. Again the F1 expenditure is bound to come under close scrutiny.

And of course that doesn't just cover what manufacturers spend on F1. It means what they spend on motor sport, F1, WEC, WRC, Formula E, DTM,

NASCAR, Indy, and so on through all categories. Amateur motorsport will be affected as much as professional. Most private owners can afford their racing or rallying because they have a successful business, often in the motor trade. If that business becomes less successful the "fun money" disappears.

This means cars don't need prepared or repaired, engines don't need built or rebuilt, spare parts and tyres don't get bought.

Motorsport is a big industry in the UK and sadly the effects of the virus are going to be felt at all levels of that industry.

You may find this hard to believe but I normally enjoy writing this article every month, but not this time. Of course everything I've said pales into utter insignificance against the tragic loss of life experienced all over the UK, all over the World.

Let us hope that the efforts of our medical professionals and scientists mean there can be even a hint of good news next month.



Gilligan Vehicle Consulting  
Paul Gilligan  
pg@gilliganvehicleconsulting.co.uk  
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## We have moved!

After years of planning and a hectic week of unloading office supplies, Great North Air Ambulance Service's new HQ is open for business!



The move to Progress House in Urray Nook, Eaglescliffe, has brought fundraising, lottery and admin teams together under the same roof for the first time. Office staff are excited to welcome the operational team based at Durham Tees Valley Airport to the new headquarters later in the year, while our Cumbrian base in Langwathby will continue to operate in the West.



**£120,000**

each year

is how much we will save on rent and other expenses by moving to our very own headquarters



**395**

cubic metres of concrete

has been poured to make the base of the hangar as we get ready for the helicopter to join us

### Our new address:

Progress House  
Urray Nook Road  
Eaglescliffe  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS16 0QB



Social distancing!

What we need is for these people to start Auto testing, that may teach them some spatial awareness, I must admit I am a bit biased, I have been practising social distancing for years now, but some people just need to be taught, how many times does banging into a fridge have to happen before you realise that taking the racing line past the yoghurts is a fools errand!

Many of us will be in uncharted waters almost everyday, I am trying to avoid the descent into youtube land, I swear they are mind readers, they know just what will keep you watching until your battery runs out don't they?

I think its time I dragged the rally car out of storage, confront the damage the Stocktonian inflicted and carry on the retrogressive steps in the cars specification as I make it as close to Historic spec as I can get away with.

I am sure I have touched on this before, but we are a sport that has quite a sanguine approach to cheating. The Blue Book exists purely to keep us in line, yeah there's some stuff in there about safety, but its mainly concerned with keeping us in line!

My approach in the last few years has been to focus on the stuff that keeps the car going, not necessarily faster, but more reliably, tougher. When the

Peugeot had a very standard engine in it, it was quick, but at times not quick enough, my head was in front of it most of the time, I needed more power to make me think and whilst its not much gruntier, its quick enough for me.

I am not a top speed guy, not keen on straight bumpy roads at speed...and if you have ever driven a Volvo PV544 in such a situation, you may well have some sympathy with me. For me its all about the twisty bits, I am sometimes as quick around them as I am on the straight bits in between!

But breaking a car is always a disappointment, especially if its something stupid, something weak.

My cars suspension appears to be a mix of Group A and N parts, you can tell as the Group N dampers are the ones that are leaking, I am looking to get those up rated, some would question the motives behind taking what's ostensibly a stage car and road rallying it, gradually adding weight to an over engineered car...but I have seen it from both sides.

I am not particularly hard on my cars, but the car I used between the 205 and the PV was an almost bog standard 1.4 Puma, just a few seasons of limited events and it was starting to fall apart, front springs first then other bits would break and the shell was being ripped apart by the punishment. It never let us down but it was retired before it did, the writing was on the wall. It felt very fragile as did I with just a standard interior and belts, the air con was wonderful, but I just fancied another proper built car.

The Volvo was built to stage standard, the whole build made that easy and I do intend to write up its journey. But the only times it let us down were the bits we neglected to do properly, a front cross member and a under engineered alternator solution, otherwise mechanically it was and still is, in fine fettle 25 years later.

The old maxim to finish first, first you must finish has been my watchword, and to be honest sometimes finishing where I usually did was OK, I had taken the choice to have some aspects of the 205 more modern which meant competing in the Targa class more often than not.

But my heart has always been in historic events, the 205 in its 8V format is being well left behind by more modern machinery and to be brutally honest far quicker drivers as well, we are competing purely for fun, much like pitting the Volvo against Mini's, Porsches and latterly Escorts had been.

For sure there were times when events suited the Volvo and me, but they were usually ones which combined medium speed flowing tests with a need for dogged endurance...but I fear even that has left me now! the dogged endurance bit!

Some aspects of the Historic scene still annoy me, the tyre restrictions are ancient in that your only allowed to go down to 65 series tyres, which for the 205 means non standard sized tyres, even back in the early 80's cars were running 60 series tyres as standard! Its one of those annoying things that gets peoples backs up, like low powered reversing lights!

But on balance I think a move back to Historics is the way for me to go, I am increasingly concerned at the attitudes of those trying to make targa rallies stage rallies on the cheap, and the money being thrown at some of the more modern solutions is frankly crazy.

The corona virus re-set will surely not stop that particular arms race, especially as soon a whole load of turbo cars fitting the regulations will start appearing, some of these little engines can push out as much as a works Escort used to back in the day!

Yes the level playing field is a misnomer, I remember once chatting to Russell Brookes as he was talking about how much time he had spent with a drill lightening one of his cars...all the while thinking, maybe laying off the beer would get better results!

But I think that's the point, its not looking at what makes other people faster, its what makes you slower!

My old co-driver Hugo used to prepare well for a rally then undo it by having too much Red Wine the night before and then complaining when I would shout at his fuzzy head!, We were always playing catch up, similarly too much cash spent on shiny things makes you slower as does tyres you can't really afford to destroy or even petrol you can't afford to waste, we all have budgets and restrictions we need to accept and work within. There's no point blaming MSUK, or the FIA if your one of those unable to measure 2m by eye you blithering idiot!

..FFS!

Alan the Fowl Mouthed Fox



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Please note the presence of a Calendar of events is purely as an aide memoir so you remember what one looked like.....

## 2020 NESCR0 CHALLENGE

Sun 16th	August	Blue Streak Spadeadam MCHistoric/Targa
Sun 6th	Sept	Wearside Durham ACHistoric/Targa
Sun 20th	Sept	Doonhamer South of Scotland CCHistoric/Targa
Sun 18th	Oct	Solway Wigton Motor ClubHistoric/Targa
Sun 22nd	Nov	Saltire Saltire Rally ClubHistoric/Targa

When these events are confirmed they will be added permanently to the Challenge.

Sun 25th	Oct	Tynemouth Targa NewcastleHistoric/Targa
Sun 29th	Nov	Solway Coast Targa KirkcudbrightHistoric/Targa

## North of England Tarmacadam Rally Championship

May 31st	Jim Clark Reivers Rally
Aug 2nd	Tyneside Stages
Aug 30th	Pendragon Stages
Sep 27th	Cheviot Stages

# FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

For Sale

OMP Corsica  
Full dish suede Steering Wheel fitted but never used, no Horn Button  
£80

1 Pair of OMP 3 Point Harnesses  
snap hook out of date  
£40

1 Pair of Sparco 3 point Harnesses  
snap hook out of date  
£40

Set of BMW 336M Staggered Alloys to fit X5/6  
With barely legal Pirelli runflats some marks,  
no cracks or buckles  
£500

All of the above, contact me, Alan on  
07940304242

Many Thanks to the contributions from

Andy Brown  
Paul Gilligan  
Paul Simmonds  
Andrew Hutchinson  
Cath Hutchinson

