

How to up your classic car ownership game

Paul Woodford (Clan Registrar), Barnetby, North Lincolnshire

If you're fed up of staring at your classic car sat in the garage, your deckchairs are threadbare from car show after car show, and your original dealer brochure has faded from its time displayed on the dashboard, perhaps it's time you found a new way to enjoy your Imp, Van, Husky, Clan, Davrian, Ginetta G15, Nymph (add/delete as appropriate).

In my case it's a Clan, and last summer I added my own very small bit of provenance to the Clan Motor Company's bulging motorsport heritage folder: I went rallying.

I should probably come clean at this point and tell you that I've done 'proper' stage rallying before now, in everything from a Mk2 Cortina to a Subaru Impreza World Rally Car. But I'm not talking about that.

I'm not even talking about 'proper' road rallying; hurtling down rough lanes through the night against the clock. Indeed, these events often require just as much car prep as a forest event these days.

Of course, some members reading this already partake in both these forms of rallying to good effect and in spectacular fashion. But if your kind of recce is checking out the level of salt on the roads in your modern car before firing up the classic for a short blast, there's a form of rallying that is right up your street.

I'm talking about a much less frantic, less car-damaging and more accessible form of rallying that offers a lot of fun, without the expense, logistics and preparation required once a competition licence is involved.

It doesn't really seem to have an official name, since the organisers are careful not to relate it



Classic tour rallying
is family friendly!
Photo: Paul Woodford

too closely to its competitive counterparts, but let's call it 'classic tour rallying'.

All you'll need is a road legal classic car, a willing navigator, and a few quid for the road book and rally plates. Oh, and you won't even look out of place polishing off the muck at the finish.

The Border Rally, organised by Border Motor Club on some fantastic roads on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds was to be my first classic tour rally. Most motor clubs organise similar events to these, so you'll probably find one being organised somewhere local to you.

The best bit about this type of event is how family friendly the format is. My 14-year-old son, Mason, joined me as navigator, and my wife and younger two boys joined us for the start at a local country park (ironically just a handful of miles from our house), and the grandparents had booked a table at the finish location – a pub somewhere off the beaten track in North Lincolnshire.

Flagged off from the start, we found ourselves sandwiched between a Morris Minor convertible and

a battle-weary road rally Imp, which had seen better days and wore them proudly on every panel – a delight, it has to be said!

A few miles in and Mason had got into the swing of measuring distances on a trip-meter app on his phone and calling directions from the road book. The organisers had gone to a great deal of effort to ensure the route was great to drive and avoided busy routes.

At times I found myself pulling gears on a single-track lane, feeling like I was Alan Conley on the Tour of Mull! I soon snapped back to reality as I overtook the afore-mentioned Moggy, only to find it was four-up, a hilarious flurry of headscarves greeting us as we pulled alongside for the pass! I'll level with you; I have never encountered that on a special stage.

This was the first time I'd spent any real time behind the wheel of the Clan, and certainly the first time I'd pushed the car, albeit moderately. It performed well;



Battle-scarred is
fine – it's all about fun!
Photo: Paul Woodford



Last-minute
fettling
Photo: Mason
Woodford



*Top two photos: Clan looking good!
Above: "Smile! You're in Impressions!"
Photos supplied by Paul Woodford
Main photo: Enjoying the drive
Main photo: Kenton Rose Photography*



Ubiquitous Castrol pennant – seen at motorsport events for decades!

Photo: Paul Woodford

reasonably rewarding to drive in a spirited fashion.

In fact, I found myself making a mental list of jobs needed: the steering was a bit notchy when there was any weight on the front end, most likely the steering rack, the turn-in wasn't as sharp as it should have been and bumpy corners

required a delicate balance of throttle and steering to keep the car composed; also the suspension. The winter job list was coming along nicely!

Like a road rally, there were code boards along the route to note down, and passage controls to ensure you were on the correct route. Given we weren't long out of the COVID 19 lockdowns, we were greeted with smiles at every touch and turn – everyone was a combination of relieved and grateful to be back out at a motoring event.

80 miles later, and the adventure was over far too soon – Mason, myself and the Clan all felt like we could have done at least another 80, but the sun was shining and we were second back to the finish, so we enjoyed a shandy and watched the rest of the participants arrive.



Mason (14) proved to be a great navigator

Photo: Paul Woodford

The event had attracted a fascinating and varied array of classics, from E-Type Jags to full rally prepared MK2 Escorts. The glorious weather had brought out the enthusiasts, and the Clan – along with many of the other cars – attracted a crowd of admirers. “What on earth is it?” could be

heard above the clinking of glasses in the beer garden and the thrum of classic engines.

This may not have been the most exhilarating, glamorous or sideways day's driving I'd ever done, but it was genuinely one of the most fun 'rallies' I've ever driven. I went on to do a further classic tour rally in the summer of 2021, and I find myself looking forward to the first one of summer 2022.

You know what? I might just have discovered the ultimate way to enjoy owning a classic car, and I urge you to put the deckchairs away and give classic rallying a try.

Mason and I even indulged in a spot of filming so we could document the adventure along the way – you can ride onboard with us and watch the film at www.CarFilms.co.uk.



Journey's end

Photo: Paul Woodford



“What on earth is it?” Clans have never been a common sight on the roads

Photo: Paul Woodford