

Lowflying

The magazine for Lotus and Caterham Seven enthusiasts

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CATERHAM

**In This Issue: Scotland, Spain,
Switzerland, Carrots, Lotus
Components and all your Classifieds**



Written by Bob Ruddock with a little help from his friends...

The participants
Dave and Linda Bridges
Steve and Christine Wright
Geof and Lois Carlton-Smith
Alex Minchen
Nifty Styles
Bob Ruddock



The Great Carrotland Blat Scotland 2003

The Route

Day 1 Sunday 31 August 2003

Well after all the planning and excitement and to paraphrase one of our groups more memorable verbal slips on a previous trip "today's the day then".

I left home 5.00am to Dave and Linda's and arrive at 5.40am. We arrive at Swaffham at 6.15am. We leave at 6.45am after trying out Steve's new mobile phone, comprising two tins and some string, whilst it worked quite well in the car park we all had doubts about Health and Safety implications of using it on the move! Everyone took me at my word (never pass a petrol pump or toilet) by making good use of the facilities before we finally left for Scotland.

Doncaster came up quickly at 9.00am. There were lots of camera lightening flashes around Cranwell that made everyone a bit twitchy but we soon put that behind us and pressed on with urgency. I think Geof's Road Angel was asleep being an early start and a Sunday.

Travelling up the A68 we came upon road signs not found in Suffolk - "Blind Summit". We soon found out what they meant and screams of enjoyment could be heard coming from the passengers (Lois wanted to go back and drive it again).

We met Richard Nicholson and his daughter Harriet - Niftys blat chat contact - just before Edinburgh and they had dinner with us at Fodell services at Dalkieth and lead us round Edinburgh to

the other side of the Forth Road Bridge. We arrived at Pitlochry at 4.30pm tired and ready for some sustenance. Alex had been there some time since he had travelled down from Montrose after leaving from Birmingham the day before and had used the time investigating the salmon ladders. (I was just wondering how they held onto the rungs when someone reminded me about fish fingers, hmmm)

We were met in the guesthouse car park by the Atholl Villa commandant! Interrogation began straight away about whether we had a booking and if we had was it for twin or double rooms. All very confusing after a long day driving, when

all we wanted was to get cleaned up and get some dinner and ale down our throats. In any event the rooms were fine and when we were suitably scrubbed and cleaned (some even managed a snooze!) we made our way out on the town. Old Black ale at the Old Mill House and Dinner at Victoria's. We went back to the Old Mill to meet Graham Innes and his friend for more beer. He had a nice car slightly spoilt by having three different makes of tyres on it, however he had not been around Caterhams long enough to catch upgradeitis, so things will change. Accommodation Atholl Villa Pitlochry. Mileage for the day 455. Average speed 58.1mph.



Fitting quarts into pint pots



A quick pitstop (above) whilst on the way to Helmsdale (below)



Day 2 Monday 1 September 2003

Breakfast at 8.00am, very good Scottish fare. As usual Dave started the day with his version of the full English breakfast (coffee and a cigarette). The female members decide the factory outlet opposite was too much of a temptation and make a bid for a visit. We leave at 10.15am. Good switchback drive to Cally bridge and on to Breamar where we stop for coffee. Slight detour at Balleter as I missed A939 turn off. Steve, Geoff and Dave make the correct turning leaving Alex, Nifty and me to try and catch up. We have a good go at it having a really fast run on excellent roads. I missed the next turn as well, Steve tried to indicate to the rest of us by going around the roundabout several times but we were oblivious. If only his string had been longer! I thought we were at Nairn but we had been having so much fun in fact we were only half way. We ended up on the A9. No problems though as a stop at Culloden called for a snack and break. We avoided the JacoBite café as being a bit naf and opted for the visitors centre. We get a good view of the parked oilrigs at Cromarty Firth and get to Customs House at Helmsdale around 5.30pm. Having had another superb days driving. Mrs MacDonald was very friendly and helpful and whilst there was no En-Suite there were homemade cakes and biscuits and tea outside in the garden. Alex & Nifty stay at Fish restaurant that was a cross between a memorial to Barbara Cartland and a fish and chip shop (but nothing to do with the one over the road). We then tucked up the cars and retired for a good nights sleep. Accommodation The Customs House Helmsdale.

Mileage for the day 215.

Average speed 49.9mph.

Day 3 Tuesday 2 September 2003

Up at 6.30am and down for the first shower just beating Steve who had to struggle to put on his Caterham slippers and dressing gown for the trip along the hall. Some of us had tea and coffee outside again.

Superb breakfast and just as Christine and Linda were feeling all maternal about



The Helmsdale MacDonalds. Where's the Golden Arches?

Alex and Nifty by smuggling out sausages and rolls Mrs MacDonald turns with a basket of bread and cheese etc to make some packing up for our journey, now that is true Scottish hospitality. Alex thought the breakfast at the fish restaurant would be similar to the food served up by Baldrick to Captain Blackadder so they wisely avoided the cappuccino and ratatouille, fearing the obvious.

We have the inevitable photo line up outside and promised a copy for Mrs Macdonald, who could refuse her after that breakfast. As Geof had been driving a little bit too enthusiastically for Lois with comments about corks in the sea Mrs MacDonald came to the rescue with a heart shaped cushion. I offered to take Lois on the next leg so Geof could say how careful his driving was but it was declined (I wonder why, the next hour or so would explain)

By now the trip had split into two groups, those on a mission to go as fast as conditions allow and those with a desire to see a little more of the scenery. Group one followed and then overtook a motorcyclist on a really fast run up to John 'o' Groats. Tea break, photos, and then off to Thurso

and the North Scottish coast we are now on the A838 watching out for kamikaze sheep on those long sweeping runs. As it turned most of the sheep we met were dead or disinterested to the point that most of them barely gave us a second glance.

Someone had moved the lighthouse from

Balnakial so we couldn't visit it, or it may just be me, and my memory was sure that was where it was. I later remember it was at Ardnamurchin point a part of the run I did not inflict on the group this year!

We passed a man on a bicycle, who was left in something of a spin by my slipstream, causing him to gesticulate with the time honoured two-finger salute when Nifty and Alex passed him. Further on we meet Finlay Macdonald and he joined us for a mad blast down to Ullapool. When we arrive at Ullapool the Calmac

ferry was starting to disgorge it's load and a manic and apoplectic traffic warden starts ranting and raving at Alex saying, "you can't park there" and "don't you know the Highway Code" and actually chasing us up the road threatening all sorts of dire

Guess where?





consequences if we don't move on. Good job he hadn't seen us a few moments earlier, on the other hand if he had blinked he would have missed us! With Finlay on his lonely way back to the Orkneys we sort out the rooms, and, although we don't know it yet get ready for the drinking pièce de résistance of the trip, Sheepshaggers bitter ale.

The supporting act was an Australian waitress in the adjoining restaurant in whom Nifty was showing a not inconsiderable interest. As usual the more mature members of the group offered their experience and finesse in these matters with such comments as "go on Nifty fill yer boots" and "yer in there Nifty". From comments made later I don't think we helped much. So Niftys chance of an antipodean romp disappeared. Accommodation Royal Hotel Ullapool.



Mileage for the day 214.3
Average speed 54.7mph.

Day 4 Wednesday 3 September 2003

After a good nights sleep we awake to another promise of fine weather. Alex sits on his own till his head clears. I think he

is still counting sheep by the pint! After a short walk along the seafront to clear our heads Lois was overheard telling Geof that she thinks a Morgan may be prettier than a Caterham. There was a deathly silence followed by murder!

By the time we leave everyone is looking forward to the next leg of the trip, Applecross pass. Some magnificent roads past mountains of the Torridon range lots of single carriageway and twisty bits.

The day starts with a climb out of Ullapool and overtaking several motorcyclists who we will see and overtake several times during the day. Once with Dave nearly taking out one of their party. On a photo shoot stop near Gairloch a seven blasts up the hill going the other way and with much waving and shouting we attract their attention and they turned around to introduce themselves as Andy and Al. On their way up to Ullapool. After some discourse they agree to follow us down to Kinlochewe and go the roundabout route to Ullapool. Judging by their subsequent remarks on Blat Chat they really enjoyed themselves. The advance party arrive at Applecross and stop for tea in the walled garden tearooms. Cream

'Was it something I said?'





Scotland '03

tea is the order of the day. The rearguard party were unable to find the well hidden cars of the advance party and enjoyed tea, coffee, scones, cakes and ice cream in a well decorated polytunnel

We press on over the Pass of Cattle 2100ft climb with signs saying "impassable in bad weather". Stunning views when reaching the top and a super blast down to the Fish Restaurant at Kishorn where we feast on Cullen Skink and Lobster Tails. We push on now to wide open roads to Strathcarron. Alex was running on vapour so we stopped for a fill. On phoning Linda in the following group she says we are just coming into Strathcarron when they appear around the corner, how is that for timing. We press on now for Glenmoriston. Fort Augustus, Invergarry and finally Fort William. Probably the fastest part of the trip sweeping past Loch Oich and on to Fort William and the Glenloch Guest House.

Dinner at the Alexandra Hotel turned out to be Old Folks night with a Jimmy Shand sound-alike and pensioners dancing in the aisles. The sad thing was many of us knew the songs being played! When the food arrived it was OK but the service was terrible. Steve didn't get his dinner until the rest had finished and whilst it didn't help him much we did get a couple of bottles wine thrown in and didn't pay for the one we had ordered. No

Australian waitresses here.

Accommodation Glenloch Guest House Fort William.

Mileage for the day 246.

Average speed 50.7mph.

Day 5 Thursday 6 September 2003

Breakfast at the Glenloch guesthouse was a more regimented affair with an order slip to be handed in the night before, needless to say the solo boys forgot and it had to be slipped in early. I opted for porridge and kippers, very Scottish, but forgot to cancel the cereal

and ended up eating both. Alex had to leave at this point and went before the photo line up. I offered the lead but no one accepted Steve citing a sore head where Christine had been hitting him with the map on previous runs because he refused to follow instructions. Sounds about right to me.

We moved off at a leisurely pace soon arriving at Connell Bridge and then Oban. As usual the red mist settled and the group split up reforming at the designated stop at Lochgilphead. It was decided that we should press on to Inverary for a



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break. Now it's on to Tarbet and Loch Lomond. We soon leave behind some of the best roads in the British Isles for dual carriageway. Nifty presses on to Glasgow and the rest of us go over the Erskine bridge and motorway to Port Glasgow, Gourock, and onto Largs where we meet Alex Rae who joins us for tea and cakes at a most accommodating tearoom on the sea front. Accommodating because whilst we are stewing around trying to find parking places for five cars (almost impossible except in the middle of nowhere on a Sunday) the owner suggests we park on his forecourt. Brilliant, well done that man.

Alex decides to accompany us to Dumfries before turning back home to Moffat. He also suggests a better route for tomorrow's leg of the trip but more of that later. A good fast blast on the A713 and A712 through Patna, Loch Muk and Dalry. At Castle Douglas we say our cheerio's to Alex Rae and he peels off at Dumfries.

We get to the Travel Inn only to realise when the booking clerk cannot find our reservation we should be at the Travel Lodge just down the road. Whoops. Good dinner, with beer and wine, and everyone is ready for bed. Accommodation Travel Lodge Dumfries
Mileage for the day 278.9 Average speed 44.2mph

Day 6 Friday 5 September 2003

The worst bit of the trip, the drive home loomed large. The only light at the end of the proverbial tunnel was the alternative route suggested by Alex Rae. I had opted for main roads whilst his route took in smaller roads, much less traffic, and far more interesting. We have some super driving experiences to thank him for.

We took the A689 and B62377 to Castle Douglas where we stopped for tea. We passed through such places as Slaggyford, Newbiggin and Middleton in Teesdale, spectacular scenery, and almost empty roads. Geof saved a lot of

wear on his tyres by managing to keep his car bottoming more of the way on this part of the trip than any other!

The rest of the trip as they say is history boring old A66 and A1. Nifty peeled off near Doncaster to visit friend in Yorkshire and we split up with Steve and Christine and Geof and Lois at Kings Lynn and Dave Linda and I part company to much tooting and waving at Norwich.

Sadly the trip was over - till next year we hope.

Mileage for the day 344.12

Average speed 49.9mph

Total for trip 1753

Epilogue by Geof Carlton-Smith.

Without exception the drivers all agreed that this was their best ever sustained driving experience. Bob did a superb job organising it, the weather was kind and many of the roads absolutely superb. We all want more.