

## NORTH OF THE BORDER

**Question: What has 24 cylinders, 827 B.H.P. and seats 6 people?**

**Answer: A 350i, a 390 SE and a 420 SEAC (tuned of course!)**

These were the cars in which we decided to boldly go where few Tivvers had been before, to seek out strange new civilisations..... - I'm sure you get the picture!

Anyway we (Paul & Margaret Gots) thought that a holiday was called for, having spent an enjoyable week touring the Highlands in 1989 in a 280i we thought that they would let us back after 3 years, especially as Margaret was born in Glasgow (although I don't hold it against her!)

Willing accomplices on this mission were Malcolm and Julie Griffin and Jim and Eve Gamsby, the plan being to combine our trip with the Doune Classic Weekend at the end of August.

Rather than leave at some unearthly hour and travel up in one day, we arranged an overnight stop in the Lake District at a pub called the Watermill Inn near Lake Windermere. They serve excellent food and a pint or two of Old Peculier is just the job after a long drive.

However, before we could take advantage of this we had a slight problem to contend with. Somewhere along the M6 the brakes on Malcolm's 390 decided to give up, with a pedal that went virtually to the floor, accompanied by a cloud of smoke from the engine bay every time the pedal was pressed. Fortunately we were travelling relatively slowly in heavy traffic at the time and we managed to get to a service area a couple of miles up the road without further incident. An inspection revealed that a brake pipe had been rubbing against the clutch pipe and eventually



Glencoe Visitor Centre

worn a hole through the metal, resulting in a loss of hydraulic pressure and brake fluid being sprayed onto a hot engine, producing the smoke - fortunately without igniting. The bad news was that the pipe in question was the one leading to the rear callipers, the good news was that I had remembered to bring my axle stands. About 2 hours later a new pipe was installed having been made up in the commercial service area.

Another problem that we had to contend with was what do you do when stuck in a queue of intermittently moving traffic in the middle of a three lane motorway with the roof down and the rain beginning to fall? (don't you just hate it when that happens!). Malcolm and Jim decided to risk getting out of their cars to put the lids on, but I didn't reckon that this was such a good idea and settled for getting wet and looking a complete idiot in front of the surrounding tin boxes!

We eventually arrived in the Lake District at about 7.30pm after having waved goodbye to Jim and Eve who were staying with relations in Carlisle, about 40 miles away.

The next morning, having arranged a meeting point, we set off (roof down of course) over the Kirkstone Pass (approx. 2,500ft.) and alongside Ullswater to rejoin the M6 and our fellow travellers for the border crossing (now where did I put that passport and phrase). After crossing the Forth Bridge, we continued through Perth along the A9. I had taken the precaution of buying a radar detector (strictly non-operational of course) but despite the signs along this particular road warning of unmarked patrol cars operating, we saw very little of any police presence throughout our trip, and certainly no speed traps.

Our arrival in Pitlochry on a busy Saturday afternoon was certainly an event that did not go unnoticed. After collecting the keys to our cottage we set off back down the High Street attracting yet more attention from people wondering where the terrific noise was coming from. Five minutes later we had finally arrived at our base for the week. Fortunately the driveway to the cottage was easily big enough to accommodate our 3 cars, however, owing to minimal ground clearance over the section of pavement between the road and the driveway, parking was best achieved by reversing through the gateway - but even at the slowest possible speed it was almost certain that the exhausts on all 3 cars would bottom-out. At the end of the week there was a series of scrapes and gouges on the pavement to remember us by!

Sunday morning arrived with what is supposedly traditional weather for Doune - rain. During the trip of about 40 miles south we encountered another problem - TVR's with vented bonnets do not like heavy rain. It seems that the spray from vehicles ahead combined with the falling rain was being forced into the intake directly over the air filter in Jim's SEAC causing the engine to run extremely roughly. A temporary cure was to stop a couple of times along the way and let the car idle for a few minutes, with occasional blips of the throttle from Jim. This seemed to allow heat to build up in the engine bay and presumably evaporate most of the water.

We eventually arrived at Doune at about 11 o'clock and joined the club members already there on our allocated pitch. By this time the rain had just about stopped, so we wandered over and said hello to Alasdair Mackenzie and checked out the other cars on our stand - eventually 30 altogether. After a leisurely stroll around the museum and a snack we returned to the cars to witness Richard Thorpe, Duke Kendall and a few others having fun with some water pistols (as if it wasn't wet enough already!). However we had come armed ourselves - and not to be outdone we produced a 2 foot long pump-action water rifle - range about 30 feet. After scoring a direct hit on Richard, Duke wisely decided to refuge in his car. However, Margaret had brought a along a water pistol cunningly disguised as a Pepsi can, with a battery powering a small electric motor. This was borrowed by Richard who casually wandered over to Duke, and after persuading him to lower his window, produced the innocent looking can and promptly soaked his victim, much to the amusement of all watching.

The scheduled autotest unfortunately had to be cancelled after a practice run by some German built car (I think it was called a Porsche 911). Apparently the organisers thought that the field would become too muddy after the rain - I mistakenly thought that was half the fun!

After watching the parade of cars taking part in the forthcoming auction, we decided that it would be a good time to say our goodbyes and head back to Pitlochry.

During the following week we put the excellent roads of the Highlands to good use, including visits to the dam and salmon ladder at Pitlochry (unfortunately we never say any leaping), Spital of Glenshee Ski Centre where we





**General Wades Military Road, South Side Of Loch Ness. Appropriate Sign?...**

took a trip up in the chair lifts and Glencoe, where I got soaked taking photographs. We did a complete lap of Loch Ness (250 mile round trip), and tried white water rafting on the Tay when it didn't matter if it was raining because everyone got soaked from the river anyway. At Balmoral Castle where the Royal Standard was flying, we stopped at the main gate for Malcolm to ask the policeman on duty whether H.M. was in, only to be told that she had gone out (I think we blew our chances of afternoon tea!). Afterwards there was a trip to the spectacular Linn of Dee, and of course you cannot go to Scotland without visiting a distillery - we went to Dalwhinnie, the highest in Scotland - well worth it for the free tasting.

During our holiday Jim had planned to take some video footage of the cars in action, and had made up a mounting for the camera using the slots in the windscreen frame and the rear header where the roof would normally fit, giving a much higher viewpoint than normal. For added effect, he had mounted an external microphone under the wing, directly over the exhaust. After choosing a dry day and roads which were deserted, we proceeded to play leapfrog - the camera car cruising at a constant speed whilst the other two went hurtling past, then slowing down to allow the SEAC to overtake in a similar manner. This, combined with some convoy shots, looked quite effective when played back that evening, despite some vibration affecting the picture. However, the sound was virtually non-existent, except for some interference from the car's ignition system. After much puzzling I decided to unscrew the external microphone and discovered that no batteries had been fitted! At least it was a good excuse for a repeat performance the next day. We also thought that it would be a good idea to take some shots from the roadside of all 3 cars being driven fairly rapidly. Julie was nominated to stand on a freezing windswept hillside with the camera whilst the rest of us drove off into the distance (I think she was worried that we might leave her there). We then turned around and made a couple of high speed passes before collecting Julie again.

Unfortunately, our week seemed to pass all too quickly, and on Saturday morning, after saying goodbye to Malcolm and Julie, who were staying on for a few more days to take in the Highland games and a spot of fishing, we began our journey home, the plan being to cover the 550 mile return trip in one day.

In spite of the distance, we only encountered 2 other TVR's that day - an 'S' on the motorway and a Griffith at a service station on the M6. As we drove into the carpark, we spotted it's driver attempting to remove the roof panel. Naturally we wandered over and introduced ourselves. It transpired that he had just collected a press demonstrator from the factory for a week's driving to form the basis of a television programme for Granada T.V. with the working title "California G.B." (I'll have to try that one when the A.J.P comes out!) After introducing him to the delights of our 2 wedges we asked that he contact us with details of the likely transmission date.

We finally arrived home at about 8 p.m., our week's motoring having totalled approximately 2,100 miles with fuel consumption fractionally over 23 m.p.g., which I thought was fairly good considering the manner in which the 350 was driven.



**Taymouth Castle**

My outstanding memories of this holiday are:-

1. A drive to the west coast to see the much photographed Castle Stalker along the A85 through Glen Lochy and the spectacular Pass of Brander, returning along what is probably my favourite road, the A82 through Glencoe and across the desolate wilderness of the largest moor in Scotland - Rannoch Moor. Coincidentally, this road was included in a list of "Best Biking roads in Britain" by Motor Cycle News - with good reason.
2. The howl of 3 V8's on full song against the backdrop of the best scenery in the country.
3. Consistently leaving the other cars being in a 'mere' 350i on wet roads, and having to allow them to catch up! I put this down to having confidence in my tyres (Yokohama AVS's), but it could be better driveability of the car in bad conditions, superior driving skills or just the fact that I had left my brain cell behind that week! - I'll allow the reader to decide.

Anyhow, if you plan a visit you will not be disappointed, and as Arnie says:

**I'LL BE BACK !!**

*Paul Gotts*



## ***Wedges on Tour***

**Paul & Margeret Gotts' 350i, Malcolm & Julie Griffin's 390SE and Jim & Eve Gamsby's 420 SEAC at the side of Loch Creran in Scotland. (See full article in March's Sprint).**

