

Friends for 50 years

Julian and I were friends for 50 years, which considering how different we were is something of a miracle that our friendship survived.

It started when I lived in Kent and we had a shared interest in 4x4 trials and motorbike trials. Julian taught me to ride trials, but I never achieved his level on a motorbike.

In trials Julian was fearless and competitive only restricted by his dreadful maintenance and less than perfect machines. The same applied to the trials in the Jeep, which nearly always ended up in a breakdown of some sort. Julian had a lifelong aversion to maintenance and this became worse as the years rolled on.

Skiing was another shared interest and we skied with friends in France and Austria over many years. Again Julian excelled taking on the biggest challenges on equipment that was not the finest.

A memorable trip to Austria in Julian's car was made more interesting by a shuddering from the front wheel. Julian informed us that he had bought a tyre from a scrapyard and fitted it himself but had not had it balanced. The following year we were returning to Austria and yes, the same tyre and the same wobble.

These trips were also made memorable by Julian's refusal to believe the sat nav and his insistence on following routes he remembered from the past despite new motorways having been built in the interim. Sat navs, computers, and cell phones were the work of the devil in Julian's opinion.

Julian's had considerable knowledge on many subjects: shipping and his experience from working on the Baltic Exchange was only one area where he excelled. His historical knowledge of the First and Second World War made trips through France and Germany interesting. Then there was his interest in weaponry, again when Julian engaged with a subject his knowledge would be accurate and precise.

Likewise with cars and motorbikes. We attended many events both in the UK and France. The last Le Mans Classic Julian took his 12 litre LaFrance monster and I took a 600 cc 2CV.

Julian and I have in the past purchased vehicles jointly: the most unusual being a Scammel tank transporter which did 4 mpg (if driven carefully). We used it for the 1977 jubilee celebrations and the local girl guides decorated it with rolls of baking foil turning it into a silver monster. We later sold it at a moderate profit.

Julian had superb negotiating skills, and I learnt a lot from him and took advice from him all through our friendship.

Although I moved to Scotland in 1981, our friendship continued and we spoke weekly on the phone and continued to meet up several times a year at events: Le Mans, Paris, Dorset steam fair, the North 500, and Beaulieu to name a few.

Our last trip together was just a few months ago: we took my 2CV to Orkney where Julian found the Churchill barriers and Scapa Flow fascinating.

However, on this trip Julian announced that he recognised nothing on the restaurant menu. I asked what would he like and he said, "liver and onions." I had to break the news to him that it was now 2022 not 1942 and even in Orkney they no longer sell liver and onions.

Julian was probably born 100 years too late but he tried to make the best of it.

He drove a 100 year old car

He collected guns from the 1800s

And he maintained his vehicles as if they were farm carts.

He was eccentric

He was brave

He was funny (sometimes unintentionally.)

He was daring

He was a good friend