

JUDY PORTWAY

A LIFE WITH A FIERCE EDWARDIAN RACING CAR

My first memory of the 1914 TT Humber was when I was a very little child and discovered that our cat had given birth to her kittens in the passenger seat.

But the car was present all my life as my father (Kenneth Neve) acquired it in 1939. This is a well documented story, but it's interesting that it was not until 1941 that he could test drive it because of war restrictions. The photo below shows the friends he shared this with, all famous club names, locals Philip 'Pork' Lees and Peter Wike, and those intrepidly journeying to Lancashire from the South...Sam Clutton and Anthony Heal. The conclusion was that it was the remaining Humber TT car, which had been in some doubt.



The 1941 road-test - in the car are Pork Lees and Sam Clutton with Anthony Heal, Peter Wike and Kenneth Neve looking on

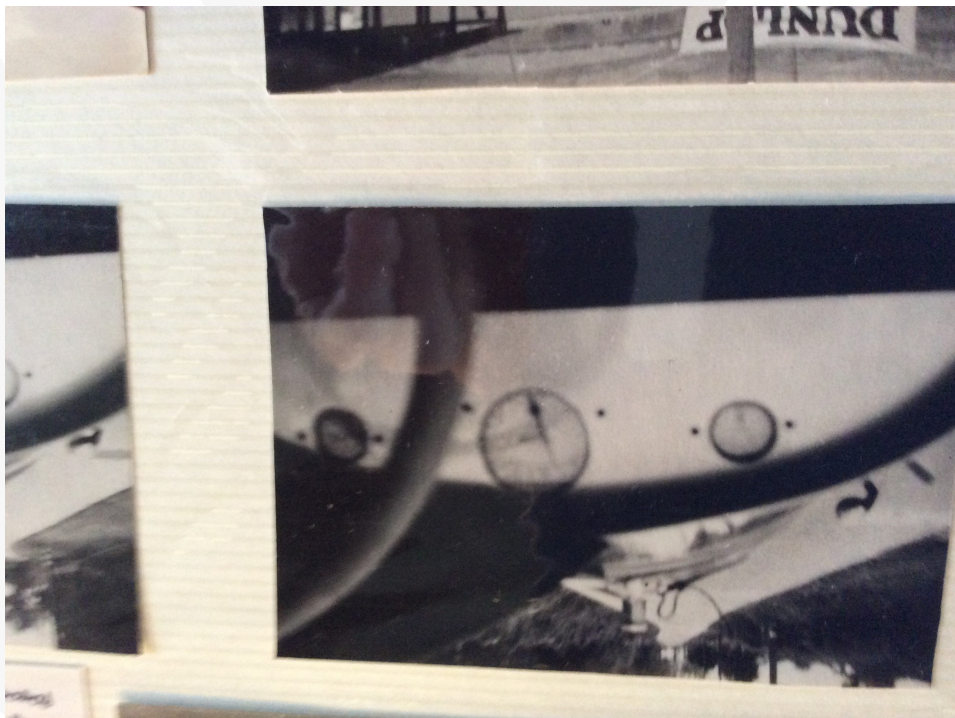


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It was the focus of my VSCC childhood, as my father missed very few meetings at Silverstone ,Shelsley and Prescott principally, and lots of local events including Oulton Park, where I could go as a passenger and sometimes hold the flyoff handbrake in Driving Tests .

He did not slow down in his completion life until I was about 48 years old when he suggested I take the Humber out on his local lanes. Pretty scary with him beside me. But I must have passed the test because he suggested a joint Curborough entry. I had already experienced Vintage competition in other cars, principally a Lancia Lambda, which taught me track racing was not for me, and loans of generous friends 30-98s .

(My mother drove anything very fast including large Rolls Royces; I wish she had continued her competitions in 30-98s, sadly, I never remember her driving the Humber).



The road ahead; not much to distract you on the dashboard

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This first drive was a more remarkable offer than it sounds, because since that first test drive in 1941 only a handful of people had driven the car, let alone campaigned it. You can add Nic, and Sean Danahar after it passed into our ownership, but that was it, apart from James and my son Nick once or twice.

I sat in the drivers seat, with several cushions. Obviously, no self-starter, no windscreen, the driver retarded the ignition lever and waited for an unfortunate strong man to wind the handle and hope it would catch.....a monumental noise followed with much vibration, then when the 3.3 ltr twin overhead cam engine was warmed up, the engagement of first gear - always a complaining graunch there, and then the fun started getting the revs right to change up! Gate change wrong way round. A bit of a gamble in the beginning....added to the mix a negligent footbrake and fly off handbrake. After a few miles the car smelt very warm and deliciously horsey, the clutch probably.....and there was an embarrassing necessity to keep the revs up when idling in order not to oil up the plugs .After a few entries at Prescott and Shelsley, I realised the cruellest thing you can do to a racing engine is to use it for a few minutes, so driving some miles to the event became the norm. It took some years for the car to realise I was in charge, but one Loton I took it out in the lunch break and came back after half an hour feeling a lot more confident. Our most enjoyable events were Vintage Monthlery, the Nurburgring Old Timers +Nordschleife and the Ardennes Commemoration, all of which had masses of fast road mileage .The Humber is a road racing car and so much more suited to that than hill climbs . My most dramatic event was an invitation to the Goodwood Festival of Speed, where I got lots of goes up the hill, and happened to chat at the top after one run with several of my heroes, including Stirling Moss.



The Shelsley return road, VSCC meeting 1994



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Nic and, later, Sean Danahar used the car as it was meant to be used ,as a fast racer, but my lasting memories are the camaraderie of the fellow drivers in the Edwardian Class at hill climbs and the lovely people who come up to tell you information about the car.

What a privilege .

Funny note to end on, when we returned from Goodwood late on the Sunday night we left the car on the trailer outside the door, next morning our Postman said:

'Lovely car.....I bet he never lets you drive that!'



Loton Park 1998

