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THE BULLETIN

OF THE

VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB

NO. 327 SPRING 2025



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1954 ASTON MARTIN DB2/4 SPORTS SALOON

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ESTABLISHED 1934

Yes to an old car MOT

News that old cars may no longer be exempt from an MOT-style test at first seemed like a worrying omen. A survey conducted by the government found that two in five people favour the introduction of a new annual test for cars which are 40 years old or more. Some headlines seemed to suggest that this was the beginning of the end for old cars, which would be 'forced off the road' as a result.

Quite the opposite is true. Our cars have only been exempt from the MOT since 2018, although the idea was first mooted in 2012. The argument used to introduce the exemption was that the requirements made of a modern car cannot realistically be applied to old ones. Although in many ways it seemed like a good thing, not least as we would save the fifty quid cost of taking a test, there was a sneaking suspicion that an ulterior motive was at play, that it was the beginning of a process to quietly edge old cars off the roads.

That proved not to be true, and the old car movement is as strong as ever. But it must be better for old cars to be brought back into the regulatory fold, and to be subjected to some kind of annual inspection, especially if the criteria can be tailored to older cars. It would reassure other road users that our cars are properly maintained, as well as helping us to keep track of what maintenance is required, even if most of us are making constant repairs and adjustments. A fresh pair of eyes is never a bad thing, but more importantly, it would bring old cars back into the mainstream, rather than in this peculiar place they currently occupy of being officially outside the rules.

The VSCC has always championed the use of old cars in everyday use, with many members using prewar cars for daily errands. There was a time when competitors were penalised for bringing their cars to events on a trailer, and there are some who would welcome a reintroduction of this rule. On the other hand, driving conditions have deteriorated in the last two decades, with a massive increase in the volume of traffic and a worsening in standards among motorists. Worryingly, some drivers seem so isolated from the outside world by their computerised cocoons that they do not take into account the longer braking distances our types of car require.

What matters above all is that our cars are allowed unfettered access to public roads, and that we should be able to use them as one would a modern car. For that to continue, they must be safe to use and seen to be safe. It is incumbent upon us all to use our old cars as much as possible so that they continue to have a presence on the roads. In this way, they will continue to be a part of everyday life, rather than becoming some kind of freakish rarity which could one day be all too easy to extinguish.

THE BULLETIN OF THE VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB

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Cover: *As we have an Austro-Daimler on the centrespread of this issue we thought why not have one on the cover too? This one is a 2,613 cc tourer entered by R. C. Rowland in the MCC's London to Edinburgh trial of May 1929, seen here ascending Stake Moss in Yorkshire. Austro-Daimlers were a reasonably popular choice of touring car in period, to judge by how many were for sale secondhand in the small ads of motoring magazines in the 1920s and '30s (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)*

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The Downhams skate on ice

This photo of a sporty Edwardian tourer comes from Matt Shepherd who bought it from the estate of the late Tim Harding, who had identified the car as an Ariès of circa 1914. The registration, though illegible (BN131?), is British, though Ariès was a French marque based in Courbevoie, Seine, founded in 1903. Matt says the body reminds him of a Gordon Watney effort, especially as he often favoured disc wheels, and the style is like some bodies he made for Mercedes. Other splendid features here are the giant lamps and ornate mascot

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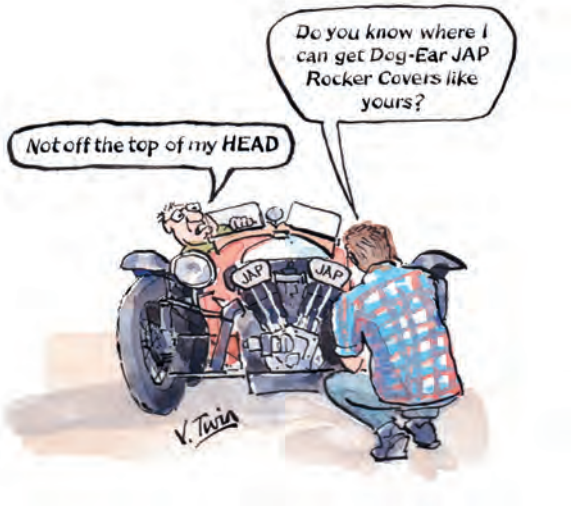
Sidelights

Copy deadlines
Someone has pointed out that it would be useful to know what the cut-off dates are for submitting copy to *The Bulletin*. This is a good point, especially if people are being put off from writing for the magazine because they don't know what the schedule is. Sign-off for the next issue is mid-May, so ideally we would have all copy in by 30 April. For the autumn issue by 31 July and for the winter issue by 31 October. Thank you to whoever made the suggestion.

Late breaking
As if to prove the above point above, we received the following email just after the letters page had been sent off. Happily we have space to squeeze it in here, so here goes. It comes from William Lees of Welford, Northamptonshire: 'I read the article about Benjamin Britten with much interest as my wife and I know that part of Suffolk very well, having visited it over many years, in particular Saxmundham. I was at school with Peter Woodruff who married a Suffolk lady from Earl Soham near Saxmundham and I was Peter's best man. In 1973 they bought the business of Smith & Wesby from Margaret Wesby and ran the business till about 2010. When Smith & Wesby was started in 1915 they built a garage with fuel pumps on what was the A12 but is now the main street through the town called South Entrance. When Peter and Deborah bought the business they demolished the building and moved the pumps further back from the road as regulations had changed and built a new building to house the showroom for new cars. I have read *The Bulletin* over many years and always look forward to it arriving with its unusual and interesting articles.'

Prescott Jazz
Apropos our piece on jazz at Prescott, Michael Riley writes in to say he first took his wife Janet to Prescott in 2004. 'She was sure she had been before but couldn't work out why,' he says. 'When the band appeared, all was explained. Her late first husband had played the sousaphone in a Marching Band and she had been to Prescott with the band. Her husband played the double bass as well. Does anyone from the jazz world remember Dick Webb? We have attended the Prescott August weekend every year since 2004 and the accommodation is booked ready for this year. Happy Jazz and Happy Motoring.'

The 'Foster Royale'
Ed Foster writes in to say his godfather Kirk Rylands sent him the picture of the 'Foster Royale' in the last issue (Kerbside Encounters, p. 7). 'Cuthbert was my great-uncle and my father regaled me with stories of the family Royale,' he says. 'Sadly, the stories are as close as I have ever been to it as I am yet to see it in the flesh. Maybe one day. While the family remains huge petrol heads, my Series IIA Land Rover is a far cry from Cuthbert's wheels of choice. The family had done very well in the cloth trade and owned a yacht called 'Portia' which would have made even the owners of the Monaco GP yachts blush. Sadly, the money was spent faster than the Royale drank fuel.'



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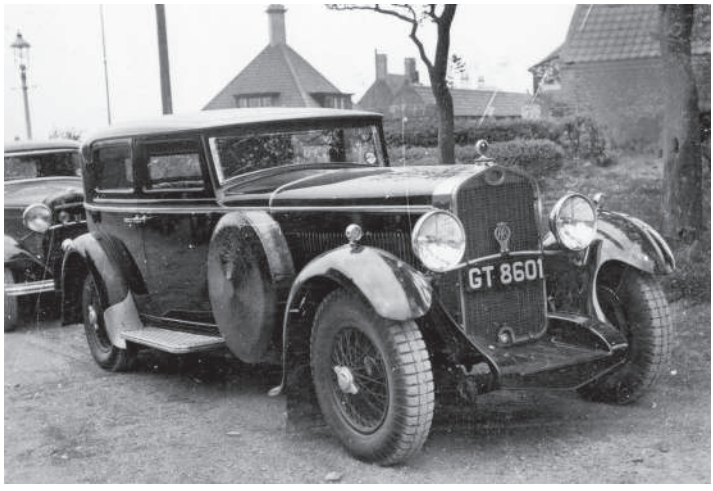
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Kerbside Encounters

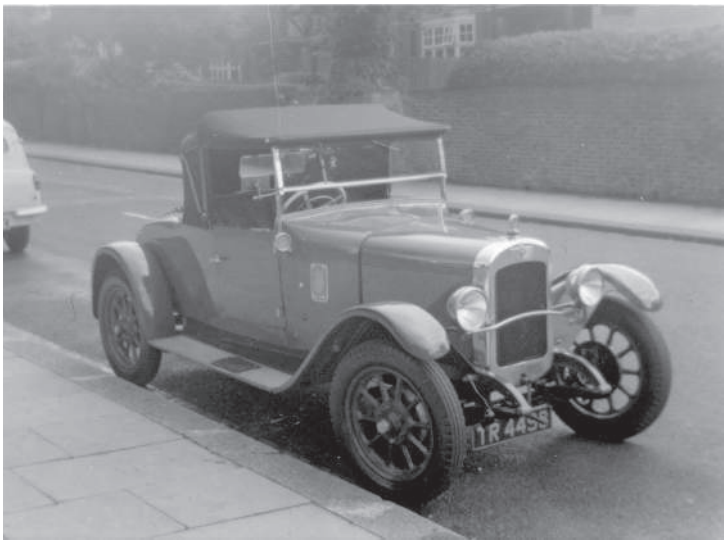
Some more photographs of prewar cars when they were still in everyday use supplied by **MATT SHEPHERD**

Above: This photo was used by car dealers Richards & Brown of Bromley, Kent, in their *Motor Sport* advertisement in March 1953. Offered at £225 was this 4½-litre Invicta drophead coupé (of an unknown coachbuilder) finished in black. It looks like one of the later high-chassis cars from around 1930, possibly an A Type model. What happened to this car I haven't been able to find out. Does any reader know any more?



Right: A 1931 Delage D8 Berline with coachwork by Henri Chapron. A very similar car was posted in an earlier Kerbside Encounters (*Bulletin* 315); that was registered GT 8604, so these two cars were presumably sold in this country at the same time. GT 8601 is pictured in Old Hunstanton likely in the 1930s. Its whereabouts since then I have not found.

Above: A pair of early 3-litre Bentleys both with modified bodywork and short non-original registration numbers. 32HK is chassis 299, which started life with a Harrison coupé body. It was bought from dealer Cecil Bendall by John Ambrose for £35 in 1956 as a pickup. Ambrose then shortened the chassis by 14″ and made a body using steel tubing and sheet steel. It was given its Essex number then. A more recent owner had an 8-litre engine installed and has turned the car into a sports-racing two-seater. K19, an early Liverpool number, was put on in the early life of this 1922 ex-demonstrator 3-litre (chassis 155) which had a Watson tourer body when new. The body in the photo was built by Automarine of Brighton in 1949 when the car was owned by a Mrs Thallon. In 1967 it was driven by James Bond (played by David Niven) in the *Casino Royale* film. The car survives. Location of this photo unknown, does anybody recognise it?



Left: This Austin 12 two-seater was first registered in October 1927 and still survives to this day, according to the DVLA database. Its colour is recorded as brown. The Twelve engine was a five-bearing magneto ignition side-valve four, displacing 1,861cc from 1927 for which the factory claimed 27bhp at just 2,000rpm, sufficient for 40–45 mph cruising, at which speed the Twelve returned around 26mpg.



'We did it!' Jubilation in the Bowyer Ford on Drumhill en route to a 3rd class award

The Lakeland Trial

When **KEITH THOMAS** *was offered a last-minute opportunity to bounce in a class-topping car, he leapt at the chance, and the results were equally exciting*

When I agreed to write a report on the Lakeland Trial, I was part of the organising team and, as I usually do, would be able to travel between sections giving recovery assistance to anyone who needed it, gather tidbits of information and take some photos. Things changed when, the day before the trial, Simon Price telephoned to ask if I would passenger for him as his usual bouncer, a lady paramedic, couldn't come because of work commitments. I checked with the clerk of the course, David Rushton, and was given the go-ahead as David said he would sort out alternative recovery if needed.

A few years ago, the future of the trial was on a knife-edge due to a lack of marshals, clashes of personalities, health and safety issues and vastly involved paperwork needed when trying to put on events in the Lake District National Park and in Forestry Commission land. It became an organisational nightmare and at one point it looked as if the whole thing would fold. Luckily, there is a group of local motoring enthusiasts who meet on the second Wednesday of every month for a drink, informally known as the 'Dirty Fingernail Club'.

When the continuation of the trial looked bleak David Rushton asked me to put out feelers to the Dirty Fingernailers and see if we could gauge the enthusiasm of the locals as work would be needed not just on the day but in the weeks building up to the event, cutting down overhanging branches and doing suchlike jobs on the sections. I called the group to a meeting and asked them to spread the word and bring as many of their friends as possible if they wanted to save the Lakeland Trial.

On the night Andrew Tarring came up from Oxford; we got tremendous support from far and wide and to a packed room Andrew and David Rushton stressed the future of the Lakeland was in the hands of those very gentlefolk gathered in that room that night. It worked. We got offers of help to marshal, set up sections, store equipment, put up notices in the forests and so forth. Dave Nicholson offered to write up risk assessments for the trial, as one is needed for every single section of the trial and not only that but how to mitigate those risks, which is a major task that hardly anyone is aware of. The trial was saved.



Lee Patterson's Singer sports a usefully 'high vis' colour scheme



David Leigh on his way to clearing Drumhouse in his 'Nash

Since then, various kind landowners who are motoring enthusiasts have offered land on which we could set up new sections. People like Malcolm Wilson and the Kyle family were two on whose land we had sections this year and of course the owners of Honister Slate Mine are absolute gems. They tolerate the trial disrupting all their operations for the entire day but hopefully the income from the trial enthusiasts using their café and visiting the shop makes it worth their while. It's a wonderful place to visit at any time of year. They have a visitor centre, mine tours, and Via Ferrata high-wire adrenaline activities as well as the shop and cosy café so please consider holidaying in the area at some stage and visiting Honister mine.

Some of us are members of Bassenthwaite Sailing Club so we obtained permission to use it as a start venue and to park trailers. There is an excellent clubhouse and seven acres of land with roadways circling the clubhouse and grounds. Several non-motoring members offered to assist with parking and providing bacon butties and similar refreshments just after 7am, which is really kind of them. I gather the galley was a bit overwhelmed at times keeping up with demand; this we will try to overcome for future events but it's hard to judge just how many will have already eaten at their B&B or holiday cottage.

The sailing club is only half a mile from The Pheasant Hotel and Wythop forest and just over a mile or so from the sections held on Malcolm Wilson's land near the Lakes distillery, so it's ideal for purpose. This year 65 entrants were starting from the club. Scrutineering here was done by Stuart Baxter, Andrew Smith and Simon Riley. The remainder of entrants started from a layby just outside Lorton village where there are absolutely no facilities or creature comforts. However once scrutineered by Dick Goodman and Simon Smith the cars can set off for Honister, and on the way competitors can enjoy seeing daylight breaking over the mountains, lighting up the spectacular scenery, particularly the stunning autumn colours of the trees that are so special at this time of year. The early morning was flat calm, so the fabulous scenery was mirrored in the lakes of Crummock and Buttermere – what a wonderful sight.

At Honister Slate Mine, after climbing up the steep pass which has gradients of 1 in 3 at times, many people get the feeling they are on top of the world. They are certainly not, though, as if you look south-west towards Great Gable, towering above you are the inhospitable rocky crags of Fleetwith Pike. This is certainly the top of this part of the world, and is much better known known in VSCC circles by another name – Drumhouse. The question is, can you and your car make it to the top? Some can but a great many can't, or don't, as the conditions vary dramatically from year to year. Nothing is certain here. The weather can be extreme and quite frankly dangerous but that is the challenge of many sports, trialling being one of them.

The section starts up a straight fairly steep incline but after a few hundred yards it suddenly gets much steeper and at intervals there are huge steel girders of about 12×6-inch section set across the track on their



Mark Groves made it to 20 on Drumhouse in the Salmson GN



Alex Jordan's passenger attempts to exit the car without him noticing



Winner of Class 1a Michael Power in the Anzani GN



Richard Matthews on his way to a 3rd in the Singer

side. The top of the flanges are just about level with the track surface to act as drainage channels because this is the wettest place in the British Isles and without these girders the track would be washed away in no time. Then the hairpins start: there are quite a few of them, which increase in gradient from very steep to even steeper. The surface is loose, very loose in places, with big lumps of slate, shale and rocks everywhere. As each car passes or attempts to pass its wheels are spinning, struggling for grip and traction, shifting the rocks about so conditions are slightly different for the next car attempting to climb. Every so often there are more 12×6-inch girders across the track, some at an angle to direct the water to one side or the other, making it even more difficult to traverse.

Onwards and upwards – generally it's impossible for a bog-standard Austin Seven to get up here but if it's 'breathed on' it may make it. Cars with lots of power often cannot get sufficient grip so vigorous bouncing by enthusiastic passengers in the four-seater cars is much in evidence here. If you do make the top then elation usually leads to a cheer, a punch of the air or a satisfied smirk, though the passengers are not allowed to ride down the hill in the car for safety reasons, they all must walk. Cars with brakes on only two wheels are shackled to a heavy 4×4 at the rear and the 4×4 lowers the competing car safely down to the bottom. It's probably a 1,000-foot drop over the edge in some places, so a very sensible rule.

Simon Price is a Lakeland regular, having competed in the trial for the last 37 years. He is also a first-aider and retained firefighter and has many other business interests, and I was really looking forward to my day with him. His car is a Ford Model A special; his son Matt has a very similar car so we were running together all day. Both cars have 3,300cc Ford Model A engines but have open bodies, and both drivers have won many trials. As a navigator/ bouncer you are well aware you cannot win the trial but making a mistake, such as not telling the driver which section has a 'Stop/ Restart' on it, and failing to get an arrival signature in the correct box can lose him the trial, so there is certainly trepidation passengering for a top competitor. It's rather like co-driving for a top-class rally driver which I have done in the past, co-driving for Malcolm Wilson. You try to make sure you feed information and observe where there are hazards – in the case of trials, tree roots, rocks and suchlike to avoid but you need to do it without annoying your driver or distracting him.

We climbed really well all day, clearing section after section but suddenly we were plagued by a bad misfire in a really deep muddy section called Darling How. Fortunately we climbed that successfully but before the next section we stopped, Simon opened the bonnet, and a distributor fault was diagnosed. Fortunately, Simon carries a spare distributor so after ten minutes we were on our way again with the new distributor bringing the car back to full power.



David Bond clears Drumhouse; he finished a point behind the class winner



Sarah Blake and Hughie Walker in VAT 69



In the battle of the Baxter Chryslers, James finished just behind Richard in his '60'



Moral support is often as useful as bouncing, as in this Ford Phaeton

Near the Lakes distillery on land owned by Malcolm Wilson a section was laid out in a field with a slippery uphill slope through a gate then quite a tight turn 90 degrees right. We discussed the best tactics here and as the car is quite wide compared to an Austin Seven, Simon thought it best not to rush it in case we understeered into the left-side markers on the tight 90-degree right bend. My instructions were to sit as far back as possible keeping my bum on the seat leaning backwards to get as much weight as possible over the rear axle and only bounce if he said so. We got through the gate and up to the 24 marker but suddenly lost traction so didn't quite make the 25 marker to clean the section. It was a great shame as Simon drove brilliantly all day, and was only a couple of inches short. Son Matt had watched us as he was the next car to tackle the section and attempted the hill a little bit faster; they bounced like mad, just made it to the top, and retained their clean sheet. Well done, Matt.

On next to the final sections which for us were in the Wythop forest complex with familiar names such as Routenbeck Rise, No. 17, Nanny's Peep and Sale Fell, all of which both Simon and Matt cleaned. Most of the day we were running with just a couple of other cars, the Amilcar of Robert Brown, Don Skelton in his Austin Seven and Dennis Bingham in his Riley 12/4 special and they all seemed to be climbing well too. Waiting our turn to start Sale Fell, which is a steep climb up and reverse all the way back down, there was suddenly a lot of shouting and commotion from up in the section. We rushed up to find an Austin Seven had slewed around while reversing and was at 90 degrees to the rutted track. However, with the help of a few marshals and competitors the little car was manhandled around and was able to be driven down out of the section quite safely. It just shows how quickly an incident can arise.

After completing the rest of the sections both our cars had cleaned them all so Matt couldn't be beaten but we were one point behind him. When the results came out one other car driven by Pete Batty had also cleaned every hill so in our class, 1c, Short Wheelbase Experts, those two were joint first and we were in 2nd place – a great result by a brilliant driver. In other classes, Michael Power won the class for Standard Short Wheelbase cars in his Anzani GN, while Richard Houlgate topped a long list of Austin Sevens in the Short Wheelbase Clubman's class, 1b. It was a close run thing in the Long Wheelbase classes, with John Wiseman finishing just a point ahead of Dominic Boulton, both in Model A Fords, to win the Standard class, 2a, while in the Modified Long Wheelbase class, Mike New in his Morris Oxford was just one point ahead of David Bond's Morris Cowley and Richard Baxter's Chrysler, thus taking home the Kirkstyle Plate.

One of the marshals from the Dirty Fingernail Club in Wythop called Chris Spencer has a Scarab Formula



Our reporter passengering for Simon Price in the Ford A Special



George Daniell going well to clear Drumhouse in his Chummy



A delighted Will Marsh clears Drumhouse; he finished second in class



Winner of the Roy Paterson Trophy David Golightly aboard the Ford T Special

Vee racing car as well as no less than three Crossley vintage cars. When we pulled up at his section he was chatting to a driver in an Austin Seven, who turned out to be the chap who built Chris's Formula Vee racing car, Andy Storer. They had an interesting chat for a few minutes while awaiting Andy's turn to tackle the section.

The weather had been excellent, dry but not warm, especially up on Honister or when travelling between sections, but for the Lakeland in November it was wonderful. I was wrapped in all kinds of layers – a warm waterproof suit and padded jacket plus fleece hat strapped on tightly. Yet I noticed many ladies had no hats and were sitting there as if it was mid-July and they were on a trip to the seaside. Tough people, these VSCC types.

All that remained for us now was a gentle meander back to Lorton and hand in our card, then for me to toddle off the 10 miles or so home for a bath and a little sleep before going out to the Royal Yew pub in Dean where we knew a fabulous meal would await us. I had been up since 5.30am and was just going into our house, quite exhausted, when my mobile phone rang. Someone had broken down. Of course, I was still listed in the final instructions for recovery/ breakdown assistance but had been drafted into passengering for Simon. An Austin Seven had broken down just after the dual carriageway on the A66 near Braithwaite, about 20 miles away.

My X-Trail was still loaded up with flashing orange beacon, tools, general spares, petrol, oil, water, tow pole etc. Toby Ireland, one of the competitors staying with us, kindly offered to come with me and help so off we set to see what we could do. Fortunately, the driver had a hire van parked in Keswick so we collected the two of them, drove to Keswick, and found their van parked in a back street near their B&B; then they were going back over to the finish at the Wheatsheaf at Lorton where their mates were going to help load the car in the van. Phew!

I was really shattered by now so fighting an Austin Seven into a hire van wasn't top of my 'to-do list' but I wanted to make sure they got away okay and was only too pleased to be able to help. When the crew got out the chap whose name I don't even know popped some money into the centre console of my car, saying 'buy yourself a drink'. When I emptied my X-Trail the following day there was a £20 note. What a kind guy – I will try to find out who he was to thank him.

The VSCC really appreciated just how many sections were manned by Dirty Fingernail people; they are fully aware of course that we all belong to various motor clubs, however they find it easier to get information to people by using the bush telegraph of the DFC system, so well done, everyone. It had been another memorable day in motorsport and as usual I met some more wonderful people, Long may it continue.

All photos by Bertram Hill



Andy Johnson's T13 Bugatti clearing Drumhouse



Elysia Garland's was the only Lea-Francis this year

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C. R. Morrall in DD 4420 at Blue Hills Mine on the 1927 Land's End Trial

Trials by Alvis with George Foxlee

Rarely seen on trials nowadays, the Alvis 12-50 was once a popular mount, as a recently discovered cache of photographs reveals. **GREG WRAPSON** *tells the story*

This article was inspired by the recent acquisition of a small collection of photographs, all clearly from the same album. None of them had a caption or date, but from the content they were taken in the mid- to late-1930s and associated with engineer George F. Foxlee, a Lancia and Alvis aficionado who was one of the earliest members of the VSCC and a very keen trials driver. Born in 1908, he was the son of a West End restaurant proprietor. He wrote about his Alvis experiences in two articles which appeared in the press during WWII. The first, published on 25 October 1940 in *The Autocar*'s popular wartime 'Talking of Sports Cars' series, was entitled 'A Plus Alvis – Much-rebuilt Machine Owned by a Trials Enthusiast who is now in the RAF'. The second appeared in *Motor Sport* in May 1943 and was entitled 'Three Years of Wartime Motoring'. From these and other contemporary sources it has been possible to add some background to the photographs.

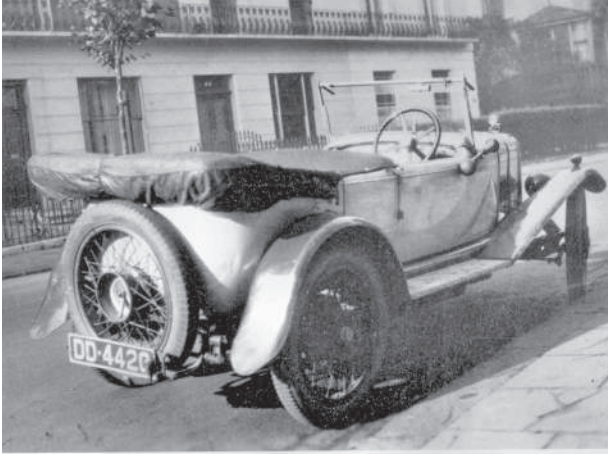
George Foxlee's main trials mount in the later '30s was the 12-50 Special that he developed from the crashed Car no 10871, originally a TG 12-50 Cross & Ellis sports tourer despatched to Henlys in London on 7 September 1927 and registered YT 8742. His introduction to Alvis, however, was through a 1924 SB 12-50, Car no 8088. This car, chassis no. 2727, engine no. 3083, was sent to the coachbuilders, Cross & Ellis, on 3 April 1924, fitted with a polished aluminium four-seater sports body (Body No 1027) and returned to the works for final completion on 16 April. It was despatched to Leckhampton Motor Co. in Cheltenham on 18 April, having been registered DD 4420 by Gloucestershire CC on 12 April.

The first owner of this handsome car was Mrs Clara G. Muir, of Postlip Hall, Winchcombe, a fine Jacobean manor house not far from Prescott. Mrs Muir had been widowed in 1922 when her husband, Capt. Matthew W. Muir, a well-known polo player who was Master of the Cotswold Hunt, died following a hunting accident. She remarried in 1925, to Capt. David Mitchell, whose family home was Highgrove near Tetbury, now the country home of the King. The Mitchells continued to live at Postlip Hall after their marriage, and three more polished aluminium Alvises are known to have followed DD 4420, including in June 1926 a TE 12-50 sports tourer registered DD 9881, in January 1928 a TA 14.75 Carbodies sports saloon, and in September 1929 a TA 16.95 Carbodies six-light saloon. One feels that they must have had an exceptionally conscientious man to keep these cars in sparkling condition.

The next owner of DD 4420 was Cyrus R. Morrall, then an Oxford undergraduate, and later to become a

farmer in Kenya. Writing in 1967, he recalled that 'DD 4420 was a 1924 four-seater sports model with polished aluminium Charlesworth (*sic*) body. I bought him secondhand for £275 from Henlys in 1926.' He immediately introduced the car to competition, primarily in Inter-Varsity events. He recorded that it was the 'highest placed car in the Oxford team which won against Cambridge in November 1926. We had chains on throughout, on tarmac and macadam roads and all the rest. We also won the OUMC Closed Reliability Trial the next month.' A broken gear selector fork thwarted Morrall's climb at the Inter-Varsity hill climb at Ewelme Down in March 1927, but this was put right in time to earn a Gold award in the MCC Land's End on 15/16 April. The accompanying picture appeared in *The Autocar* of 22 April 1927, showing DD 4420 just succeeding in rounding the hairpin on Blue Hills Mine in that event, one of the stub axle stops having been cut off in preparation.

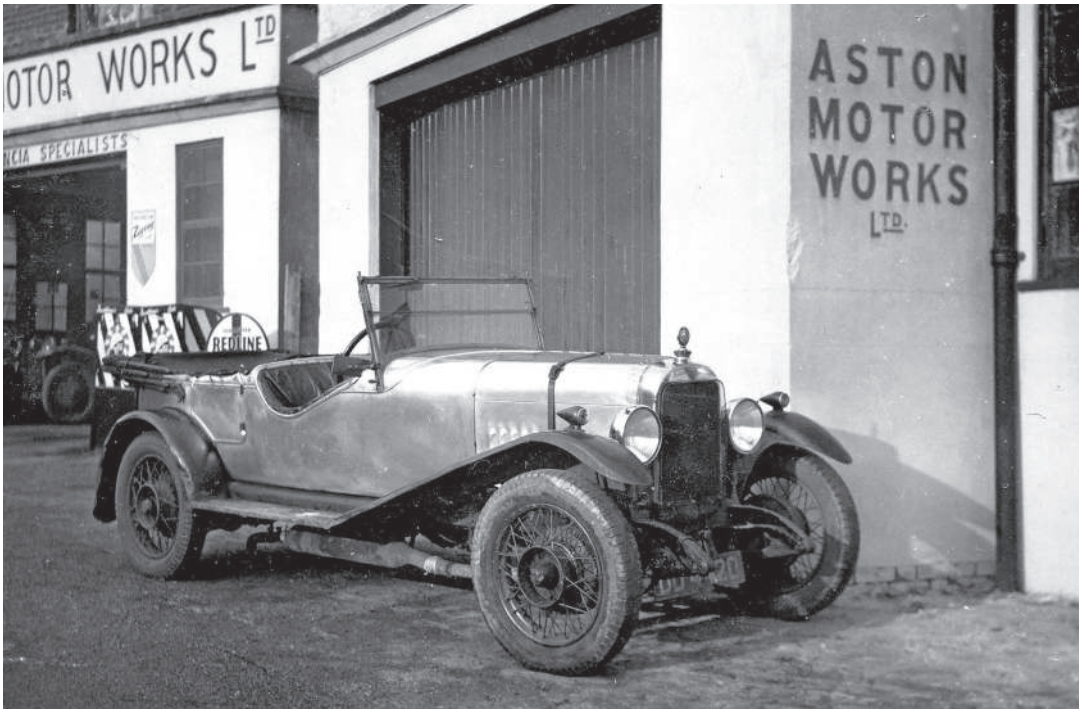
C. R. Morrall's notes tell that in 1928 he sold DD 4420 to Robert 'Bobby' Beaver. Born in 1906, the latter was educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford, before completing his medical training at St Thomas' Hospital in London. He later became a distinguished anaesthetist. He was also an accomplished athlete, gaining an Oxford blue for the pole vault, and he was a member of the British pole vault team for the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. He had previously competed in motoring competition, including



The SB 12-50 when owned by Robert Beaver, probably in London in the late '20s

Inter-Varsity events, in Morgan and GN cars. The accompanying photograph is from his own album.

No detailed information has yet come to light about the car's competition history in Robert Beaver's hands, the main clue to this being George Foxlee's recollections in his 1940 article referred to above. Having previously been a devotee of the Lancia Lambda, he wrote that he had found the car (probably in the latter half of 1934) at the premises of Lancia specialists West & Chittenden in Southwark, describing it as 'obviously very "dealt with"'. He went on: 'Bob West told me that it was a car they had built and run on the track for Doc Beaver, of London Hospital, but that they were now coping with a special 30-98



The SB 12-50 outside Aston Motor Works in Letchworth 1934/35



DD 4420, possibly at the first Chilterns Trial, January 1935

for him.' Modifications carried out during Robert Beaver's ownership included the addition of a Hillman front axle to provide front-wheel brakes, while both Laystalls and West & Chittenden had 'breathed' on the engine, which had been fitted with a big-port head.

This would imply that Robert Beaver ran the car at Brooklands, but to date I have been unable to find any definite confirmation of this. As detailed in my article 'Spring on the Riviera – 1933' which appeared in *Bulletin* 247 (Spring 2005), early in 1933 Beaver bought the modified SA 16.95 Silver Eagle Car no. 12863 in which Philip Fotheringham-Parker had gone over the Brooklands banking, fortunately without serious injury, at the August Bank Holiday Meeting on 1 August 1932, but he didn't keep it very long before selling it to Michael May, turning to the Vauxhall 30-98 in which he competed regularly at Brooklands over the next couple of years.

There is reference in *Motor Sport*'s report for December 1932 of the Inter-Varsity Trial recently held in the Chilterns to R. A. Beaver's Alvis (likely to have been the 12-50 DD 4420) having failed on Crowell Hill near Chinnor, baulking another competitor. There was also the following rather curious report: 'Beaver's Alvis ran out of water early in the trial, but by dint of using the oil in his auxiliary tank the engine was prevented from receiving violent damage. Incidentally, this car was used by the Alvis team for practising for the 1926 Essex Club's Six Hour Race.' Quite what the water/oil issue was is unexplained, and there was



Victoria Worsley with the SB 12-50 during the SUNBAC Colmore Trophy Trial, February 1935



Unidentified trial and unidentified chassis, but the same body



The same car earlier in the day

no such race in 1926, the writer perhaps meaning the JCC Production Car Race.

The details of the next period of DD 4420's life are somewhat unclear, particularly as to dates. As we know that he took part in the VSCC's first Chilterns Trial on 20 January 1935, it would seem reasonable to conclude that George Foxlee must have bought the car at some point in the previous year. In a letter to *Motor Sport* published in the February 1942 edition he explained that he had contemplated building a special using a Lancia front end grafted on to a 12-50 chassis. He wrote: 'I gave up because, having owned a number of the early Lancias, fifth, seventh and eighth series, it was obvious that the whole principle of the system depended on an absolutely rigid chassis. I had a cracked radiator shell on a fifth series, and it completely spoilt steering and suspension, and later other peculiarities were all traced to similar sources. I could not think of a really practical way of making the Alvis chassis rigid, so I bought the old Doctor Beaver "silver car" on which West and Chittenden, of Lancia fame, had fitted a wider and lower front axle.' At this time George Foxlee lived in Letchworth and was associated with the Aston Motor Works, who as can be seen in the accompanying photograph with the SB 12-50 in pole position outside, promoted themselves as 'Bentley & Lancia Specialists'. A Lambda can be seen peeping coyly out of the main workshop.

His initial impressions of the Alvis do not seem to have been favourable, and it sounds as though the



Glittering in its newness, the 1927 TG 12-50 Sports Tourer which formed the basis of the Foxlee Special



The Foxlee Special as modified for the 1937–38 season during a VSCC Chilterns Trial, probably on Old Stanway in November 1937

car was rather well-worn by then. In his 1940 *Motor Sport* article he wrote: 'For a while I drove the car "standard" to try to get used to the difference from the Lancia. The engine performance amazed me; but the steering and suspension and the noise from almost everything! Anyhow, I put in another gearbox taken from an old saloon and tightened up the Timken tapered bearings as much as I dared, packed them with grease and hoped for the best. About half a turn of the three-quarters available was removed from the steering.'

After the Chilterns Trial, the car's next outing appears to have been in the hands of keen trials competitor and Austin and MG racing driver Victoria Worsley, who took a third class award in the Colmore Trophy Trial organised in the Cotswolds by the Sutton Coldfield & North Birmingham Automobile Club (SUNBAC) on 23 February 1935. The car may have been used in other events around this time, but details are lacking. It is clear that the end for the car as a complete entity was near, however, as George Foxlee wrote that 'this was scrapped as a car', and licensing records show that the last licence expired on 10 May 1935. The name of the last owner is recorded as 'Mr G. Hoxler' (presumably a misreading of 'Foxlee') of 15 Leys Avenue, Letchworth. Unless the car was subsequently run on trade plates, therefore, we must assume that the car was withdrawn from service and subsequently dismantled around this time.



An apparent lack of forward motion

Although nothing more is known of the fate of the main mechanical components of the car, another photograph from the collection shows what is presumably a different Alvis chassis in a rather undignified situation during a trial. The car is wearing what is clearly the body from DD 4420, but now with simple plyboard wings replacing the originals. A rear view of the car shows the rather indistinct but distinctive registration number YM 7777.

No confirmed details are recorded about this car at that time, but the registration resurfaced when prominent VSCC 30-98 and Frazer Nash exponent Tony Jones joined the Alvis Register in the early 1970s. His 12-50, which he had bought in 1961 following long-term ownership by a family named Gooding, was described simply as 'a bitza'. It was reported that he was told that the car had been used at Brooklands. There things rested until the car was bought by John Potter in 1982 and beautifully restored by him, YM 7777 subsequently becoming a familiar sight with an outstandingly successful record on the VSCC rally scene.

The persuasive link between the stranded trials car in the photographs and YM 7777 today is the sports tourer body, which had been reskinned when John Potter acquired the car. The short-height doors and rear-mounted spare wheel are both features of an early body. During restoration, John found that much of the ash framework was original and that the number 201027 was stamped on the framework of all three doors. Initially it was thought that this was the date of construction, but as noted above, the Cross & Ellis body number of the SB 12-50 DD 4420 was 1027, and this must be regarded as the strongest evidence that this body did indeed come from this earlier car. In John's care it wears its long and eventful history lightly, and is a fine survival of a particularly attractive design.

The timing of what happened next has to be somewhat speculative. George Foxlee told that he had bought the wrecked 12-50 (YT 8742) which formed the basis of the Foxlee Special in the summer of 1936, which would have meant that there was a gap of around a year or more when DD 4420 had seemingly been decommissioned and the new car was being constructed. But in a letter to *Motor Sport* published in February 1943, C. Stanley Porter, who in the mid-30s was competing extensively in trials and speed events in Ireland with the rather special ex-Works SD 12-50 two-seater which had been driven by Maurice Harvey at Boulogne in 1927, wrote: 'When in London late in 1935, quite by accident, I met George Foxlee. At that time his works were out at Letchworth and he took me there in a very modern Frazer Nash. He was a mine of information about 12-50s and his own special competition job was just about completed.'

Further evidence of the sequence of events is found in *Motor Sport*'s report of the VSCC's Chilterns Trial held on 16 February 1936 which revealed that 'Foxlee left his petrol tank behind' on the very rutted Cowell Hill near Chinnor, despite which he took a Premier award. Because of its design, this seems much more likely to have happened to the new car, so that we may reasonably surmise that the components of the Special were actually acquired in 1935 rather

than 1936. Some parts from the earlier car were incorporated into the new one, including the Hillman front axle fitted by West & Chittenden to widen the track and improve the front brakes. Engine parts swapped to the new car included the crank and rods, together with the modified big-port head.

We now need to rewind a few years to September 1927. On the 7th of that month, a person unknown took delivery from Henlys in London of the TG 12-50 sports tourer, car no 10871, registered YT 8742 and painted black with red beading. As can be seen from the accompanying photograph of the clearly new car, it was finished to an extremely high standard, enhanced by the elegant André bumper and the gimbal-mounted windscreen pillar lamp.

George Foxlee takes up the story again. 'I ran into Powys-Lybbe, who told me a lot of things which "could be done", thereby helping me a lot, as also did Michael May; so in the summer of 1936 (*sic*) I bought a 12-50 tourer which had been turned over and had the body wrecked. The chassis had a nice U-bend in the middle. This was easily straightened by lashing a railway sleeper to the concave member with a chain and putting it up against the concrete post of my garage door, "borrowing" a length of scaffold pole from some nearby building operations and putting it against the point of the convex side at one end and between it and the other door post an hydraulic jack, then firmly winding the handle. Result, one chassis absolutely dead true! Horrific, but effective. The back end of the chassis was lowered on ali blocks, and the Hillman front axle fitted from the old car (DD 4420) modified by West and Chit. This gave 8½in crab track and 2½in lower, with much better front brakes. The brake mechanism was altered with several Lancia parts, and a spot of Frazer Nash to give better leverage. All the road springs were flattened and re-tempered.



Dennis Clapham and George Foxlee with 1924 SB 12-50 at Hindhead during the Inter-Varsity Trial, November 1935

'The engine was rebuilt using the 1927 crankcase, sump and timing wheels, with the Ambrosia (Ambrose Shardlow) shaft and steel rods and genuine "big-port" head from the old car "dealt with" even more by West and Chit. The original clutch and flywheel assembly, with the flywheel and clutch casing, were lightened. A new U-type Zenith carb was used on the old updraught pipe, but, due to the heat generated at the hot-spot and the very high-lift cams, carburation was never very satisfactory.

'Next the body, a light, steam-bent ash frame, using proper carpenter's joints, glued and screwed, was made by a local man and covered by us with three-ply, cotton wool and fabric. When finished it was light enough for one person to pick up and walk away with, saving four cwts on the old body. Two spare wheels with Michelin extra-low-pressure "snow-mud" treads were built and mounted on top of the petrol tank, which was between the rear dumb irons.'

George Foxlee used the car in this form for the 1936–37 trials season and describes in his article further major work undertaken in a quest for more power for 1937–38. A flavour is given by the following extract: 'The steel clutch housing, which had been lightened, burst with a most impressive bang on a speed trial just previously, so this was replaced by an ali one cast and machined locally. On test, this also went off with an even bigger bang and nearly disastrous results to my legs, at 5,200 in second. A modified version was cast with "chillings" around the toggle bolt holes and, with a different type of toggle bolt, was perfect. Rotating weight was reduced from 30lb 4oz to 13lb 6oz, if I remember correctly.' Further improvements followed, including a downdraught Zenith-Stromberg carburettor and a complete engine rebuild, including duralumin fully floating con-rods, special pistons and Hoyt No. 11 bearing metal. A replacement crankcase was needed after the centre main pulled out at the end of the 1938 season, but the work had only just been completed when WW2 broke out, and the car was driven up to the Scottish RAF base from which the article was written, towing a 'caravan and contents, weighing about 1½ tons, plus a 250cc Francis-Barnett Cruiser inside'.

Writing of his motoring adventures during the early part of the war in his entertaining piece 'Three Years of Wartime Motoring', Foxlee told how close to his Scottish aerodrome he found a 'very fine line in trials hills going up the side of the Carricks from the sea, with a real gradient and a loose shale surface. At this time also, a lovely coloured liquid was obtainable which, mixed with puddle and some oil, made the Alvis quite lively. Much of my time off duty was taken up with climbs of this find.' After being posted back to White Waltham and also getting married in 1941, he acquired a more commodious 12-50 two-seater. 'The new Alvis then settled down to some very hard work, running all over the south of England',



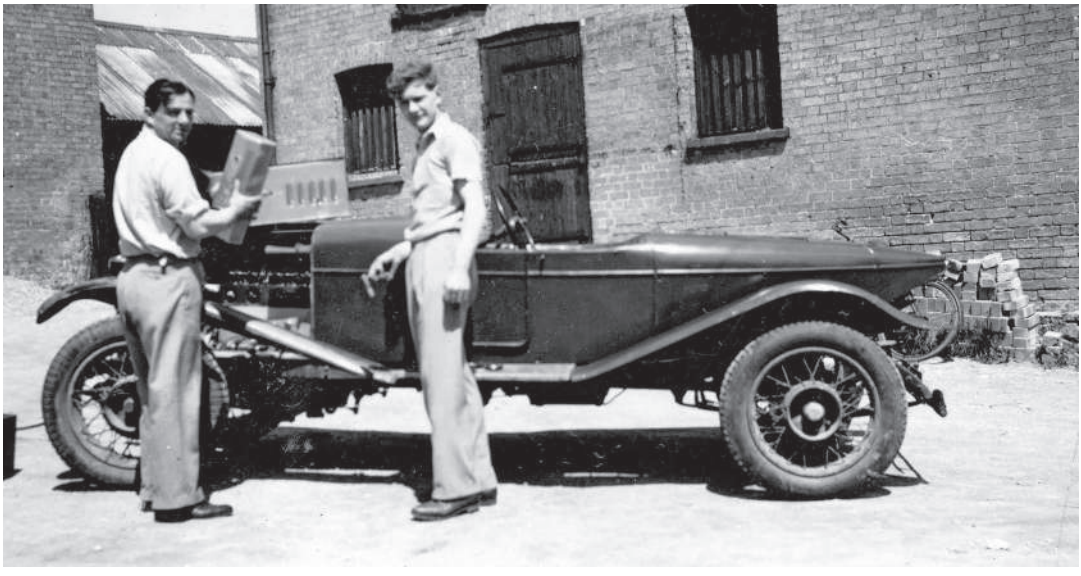
Dennis Clapham's second trials car, constructed in 1936, based on a 1928 TG 12-50

this in connection with his work as an aero engine inspector. In September 1941 he was able to recover the trials special from Scotland, 'the most perfect 430 miles of motoring I have ever had, and certainly the fastest. It was my first really long trip in the car at high speed since the last modification, and it far exceeded my hopes and expectations.' Other highlights from these years were controlled ice-skating on the frozen aerodrome with a six-wheel Crossley fire engine, a fast run with Michael May in the ex-Powys-Lybbe TT Silver Eagle, and 'from 0 to 97mph in a surprisingly short distance' on May's Vincent HRD Rapide.

As tends to happen, George Foxlee's enthusiasm and knowledge attracted the attention of others of like mind, and visitors were drawn to his various bases to seek advice and parts, discuss plans, work on their cars, and on occasion compete together. One such was Dennis Clapham, son of a Letchworth-based dental surgeon and recently down from Cambridge having completed the Mechanical Sciences Tripos, then working at the compressor makers and general engineers Broom & Wade of High Wycombe. He also contributed to *The Autocar*'s 'Talking of Sports Cars' series, his article appearing in the issue of 7 November 1941. The heading was 'This "12-50" Business. Vintage Alvis Enthusiasm – A Cult Limited Only by the Supply of Cars of this Type'. He told of his adventures with the three Alvis cars he had owned up to that time, the first by coincidence being another 1924 SB 12-50 sports tourer KU 3538, which may have been the car advertised by the Aston Motor Works in *Motor Sport* for November 1935 as 'Special 12-50 Alvis four-Seater Sports. Taxed and insured. New tyres, and with a modernised engine, including liners and special pistons, and new "V" type Zenith carburettor. £37 10*s*.'

One of the new owner's first outings in the car, accompanied by George Foxlee, was to take part in the extremely wet Inter-Varsity Trial on 2 November 1935. The accompanying photograph shows the crew with the car at the lunch stop at the Royal Huts Hotel at Hindhead. This was by no means the car's first experience of competition, as in the hands of its original owner, George Hepworth of piston manufacturers Hepworth & Grandage of Bradford, it had, along with the two similar cars belonging to his brothers William and Joseph Hepworth, taken part in a number of trials, including the 'freak' hill climbs such as Hepolite Scar so popular amongst the hardy folk in that part of the world.

This initial foray into the world of trialling clearly inspired Dennis Clapham to develop a more competitive car, and for the 1936–37 season he acquired a TG 12-50, originally fitted with Cross & Ellis two-seater de luxe coachwork and despatched to Henlys, London, on 9 March 1928. Bought 'for a song', he



George Foxlee and Geoffrey Robson with the 1924 12-50 duck's-back

'tore the body off and patched up a plywood affair myself'. The accompanying photo shows the practical, if not entirely elegant, result. Mechanical attention comprised a 'very thorough' overhaul of the engine, with new bearings and a 'reground racing short-stroke crankshaft'. High compression pistons and lightened clutch housing to reduce flywheel weight gave the car 'quite surprising low-speed performance, and nearly as good a top-gear performance as a Ford V8 up to 60 m.p.h.' With this car he made best vintage performance in the under 2-litres class in the 1937 VSCC Chilterns Trial. Still not satisfied with the performance because, he wrote, having a small-port head, the engine 'wouldn't rev', he then acquired an SD 12-50 beetle-back two-seater into which he fitted the rebuilt engine from the second car, but retaining the SD's big-port head. With the new car he took a second class award in the Gloucester Trial in November 1937, and won the under-1½-litre class in the first Northern Trial in January 1938. Early in the war, in which both he and Foxlee worked as aircraft engine inspectors, Clapham decided to start a project to modify the car, which involved moving the engine back some four inches in the frame, lowering the radiator and fitting a Stromberg carburettor. A certain amount of work was completed, but the outcome is not recorded.



Two 12-50s and a mid-30s Silver Eagle in Little Stubbings Dovecote

Another visitor was Geoffrey Robson, a young architecture student who, despite opining that the 12-50 Alvis was 'just about the finest car in its class ever made', persisted in remaining a Lambda enthusiast. His 'Cars I Have Owned' article appeared in *Motor Sport* in December 1942. He described the set-up when he first met Foxlee late in 1938 as follows: 'At the time he was living in a farmhouse in North Hertfordshire, surrounded by barns full of vintage motors belonging to himself and to various other enthusiastic friends; apart from weekend visitors there were at least three 12-50 Alvises, a Silver Eagle, three or four Lambdas, a 3-litre Lagonda chassis, a 2-litre OM, a side-valve Aston Martin and dozens of engines, gearboxes and bits and pieces generally. During the winter I spent most of my weekends at George's farm dismantling the engine and front suspension of the Lancia. I shall never forget some of the sunny winter's mornings there, frost on the ground and the smell of rich mixture and Castrol R in the keen air as cars warmed up with a burble or a sharp crackle of exhaust in the yard behind the white farmhouse, or fast runs in a 1924 boat-tailed 12-50 Alvis, the quiet exhaust note becoming instantly crisp when one opened the throttle, the engine turning effortlessly and smoothly and yet with a feeling of toughness and solidity, which nothing built nowadays seems to give. George was busy rebuilding his trials 12-50, spending weeks fitting the bearings, and the place was full of activities, from amateur trials in the surrounding fields to dancing on the excellent home-made floor above one of the barns.'

When Foxlee returned south from Scotland in 1941, he lived at Stubbings Farm at Burchetts Green near Maidenhead. One of the photographs shows three Alvises comfortably housed in the white weather-boarded eighteenth-century dovecote, now listed Grade II.

In a letter published in *Motor Sport* in February 1942, he extended 'an open invitation to any of the old enthusiasts, VSCC or otherwise, who happen to be in the neighbourhood to drop in on a Sunday or any other evening', and a number of the photographs show that Alvis and other activity continued apace in leisure moments. Later reports tell that late in 1943 Foxlee was 'very thoroughly rebuilding a 1928 beetle-back 12-50', and in the spring of 1944 that he was 'building up a special from a 1929 saloon chassis, 1932 Silver Eagle beetle-back body, and many other ingredients'.

Neither George Foxlee nor Dennis Clapham appear to have continued their trialling activities post-war, and nothing further is known about the wartime special projects outlined above. If anyone knows more, I would be most interested to hear from them. The Foxlee Special survives, having been sold around 1946 and subsequently appearing, much modified, in VSCC and other speed events and trials in the hands of Ralph Hill, Derek Christian and Alan Neale. The second Clapham special survived the war, at some point acquiring a six-cylinder engine, but was only known to the Alvis Register briefly in the late 1940s and was presumably scrapped around that time. George Foxlee himself became managing director of a garage business holding Citroen and VW agencies in Lymington. He died in 1962 at the early age of 53.



Lewis Fox's elegant Bentley 3-Litre secured a 2nd class award (Paul Freeman)

The Winter Driving Tests

How better to round off the anniversary year than with a full entry of 100 cars at the annual Bicester wiggle-woggle, as **DUNCAN CARTWRIGHT** *reports*

Fresh from a successful day on the Cotswold Novice Trial for daughter Mara, I suggested that we might extend her ongoing vintage car education by a double entry in the Winter Driving Tests at Bicester. Mara was keen, and so entries were submitted for the family Riley Monaco Saloon.

VSCC driving tests attract perhaps the most diverse array of cars than any other discipline, largely due to the fact that they are generally less harsh on the car, but also the handicapping system allows for a well driven car of modest performance to compete with the more potent and nimble varieties. Perusing the regulations showed that our humble Monaco would attract a number of bonuses – Saloon cars (10%), Standard cars (2%), 9ft wheelbase (5%), totalling a healthy 17% bonus to be taken off our final score. This seemed a pretty good starting point in the Touring Car class where we would be up against the likes of plenty of Austin 7 Chummies and Model A Ford Phaetons.

So, on the morning of 30 November, we arrived at Bicester Heritage for our first ever visit, expecting a cold windswept airfield and freezing fog (based on previous reports of the event), but found the site to be dry, bright and mild – apparently a most unusual set of weather conditions. Underfoot, the conditions were damp, however, which would help or hinder the drivers to varying degrees.



Simon Ponseele in his rakish Ford Model T Racearound (Mike Griffin)



Splendid patina on Ian Morgan's Ford Model T – he scored a 2nd (Paul Freeman)



Dr Molly Birch shared the use of Toby Bruce's jaunty Singer 9 (Phil Johnson)

The entry list showed a full turnout of around 100 cars, split across seven classes. The Edwardian class was a small, all-American affair of Dodge, Model T and Overland, although Guy Lachlan had decided that his chances in the pretty 1914 Le Zebre were best served in the Cyclecars, Oddities and LCES class. (Presumably 'Oddities' refers to the cars rather than the entrants?) Sadly, the wonderful Oddities of Phil Dobbin (Peugeot Quadrilette) and Paul Rogers (New Carden) were both non-starters. Others in the class included GN, Austin 7, Bullnose Morris, Rover and Salmson to give an eclectic mix.

The Touring Cars were represented by five of both Austin 7 and Model A Ford entrants, three Riley (including our double entry), the palatial Dodge Victory Six, Singer and Tim Britnell's Bicester perennial, and rather handsome, De Dion Bouton IS – a wonderful machine.

There was a veritable invasion of Singer 9s, which seemed to appear *en masse* and menace the other competitors with their noisy first gears. These included four soft-top versions entered in the Standard Sports-Cars class as well as Neil Thorp's attractive sports coupé version, mixing it with the Touring Cars. MG M-Types – a solid driving test mount – were also out in force with six entrants. Surprisingly, there was



Edwardians provide good visibility, as Emily Fraser demonstrates (Mick Herring)



Guy Lachlan hurries along his delightful Le Zebre Model C (Mike Griffin)



Rufus Flann speeds to a 3rd in the tough Modified Sports-Car class (Mike Griffin)



George Scudamore lists to port in the Ford, later winning a 2nd (Phil Johnson)

but one Austin 7 in the Standard Sports-Car class, the Arrow Foursome jointly entered by Bethany and Simon Candlin. Lewis Fox's meticulously presented Bentley 3-Litre rounded out the Standard Sports-Cars with some weighty quality.

The Modified Sports-Cars class represented the sharp end of the competition with a whopping 42 entrants, with more than half mounted on Austin 7s. There was a relatively small number of Frazer Nashes at seven entrants, another seven Rileys (including David Pryke's ridiculously fast and light Morgan/Riley hillclimb special), a smattering of MG, Amilcar, AJS and the specials of Angelica Fuentes (Peugeot Lockhart Special) and Competition Secretary Andrew Tarring (Humber 9/28).

The Heritage Skills Academy again had an invited class for their students which attracted a healthy entry of six, competing in Austins, MG and a further Singer 9. The final class for Pre-'55 Sports-Cars comprised two cars at opposite ends of the motoring spectrum, Andrew Howe-Davies' double-entered throaty Allard, and the Austin 7 Cambridge of Trevor Goldberg.

The tests themselves, devised by Mark Elder and his team, followed the usual format of being arranged around the airfield. The first four were located on the tarmac aprons adjacent to the former hangars, with the remainder spread out around the airfield perimeter road on a mixture of tarmac, concrete, gravel, mud and/or a combination of the above. The competitors were distributed around the tests in approximate class order, which allowed some comparison of times and approach between oneself and one's nemesis.

Our first test was Test 2 (Tunnicliffe's Turn) which was arguably the most difficult test and quite a daunting first experience for Mara. The main challenge was provided by not only slaloming up and down the apron but then having to reverse around certain cones at various points and through a gate. Having done fairly limited reversing before, let alone trying to navigate around 18″ high bollards, Mara found this to be quite the baptism of fire – managing to collect a cone and then drag it halfway across the test before a kindly marshal paused her for a moment to extract it – she was relieved to get over the line with a slow time and several bollard infringements. However, with this first horror out of the way, she quickly got the hang of things and her confidence grew exponentially with each successive test, and in fact she only accrued one more penalty on the rest of the tests which was a great progression.

Several of the tests were sufficiently long to enable some speed to be attained, even for the lower powered cars, with the greasy surface allowing neat donuts to be performed on Test 4 (Smith's Slide). We found that starting in second gear was preferable on a number of tests as it negated the time-consuming up-change and encouraged a bit of drifting around the tighter corners (yes, even in a Riley 9 saloon).

At the outer reaches of the airfield the tests became even more muddy with some deep puddles



Andrew Howe-Davies's Allard won the Pre-'55 class (Phil Johnson)



Charming Salmson AL22 in the hands of Rebel Eratt-Camp (Mick Herring)

in places which meant that by the time all were done the cars looked more as though they had completed a trial. David Pryke may have started to regret using the Morgan/Riley as he was as mud-spattered as the rest of the car.

David Bond was putting in some fast times in the family Chummy, which he had to, being on zero bonus points, but he was clearly enjoying himself and seemed to be doing as much slaloming on the straights as when directed by the bollards. David was fastest of all in the Touring Car class but was pipped into third place by Harry Colledge's well driven Model A saloon and yours truly, once the bonus percentages had been accounted for.

Chris Cook took the Edwardian Class in the Dodge by a comfortable margin from Ian Morgan's Model T. In the Standard Sports-Cars Toby Bruce had a successful day in his buttercup yellow Singer 9, taking the laurels from driving test expert David Rushton in the MG M-Type, followed by another Singer 9, and it was great to see Fox's 3-Litre Bentley coming away with a second class award.

In the serious class (Modified Sports-Cars), George Diffey came out on top in his effective golden/bronze Austin 7 Ulster, after a closely fought contest with William Marsh in a similar car. These two were followed by another two Austins before the Frazer Nashes of Geraint Owen and Matthew Moore, both benefiting from their longer wheelbase bonus. The remaining awards were shared between more Austins, Frazer Nash and the Morgan/Riley. Andrew Tarring's efforts in the Humber were sadly curtailed by expensive noises emanating from the diff department.

Archie Bullett was the runaway winner in the Cyclecars, Oddities and LCES in the GN Vitesse, with a final score a mere five marks off George Diffey's best overall score of 520.4 – no doubt Archie will be looking to find those elusive five seconds next year.

The Heritage Skills class was another closely fought affair with George Murphy coming out on top in his Austin York from Morgan Wallace's MG PA. Andrew Howe-Davies was the comfortable winner in the Pre-'55 Sports-Cars albeit the Austin 7 Cambridge scoring several fastest times in the class.

By the time we departed at 3pm after sampling a selection of excellent charity cakes home-baked by Ethan Harris, Mara's driving confidence had been hiked again – ready for more, and the temperature had risen to a balmy 14 degrees Celsius. Irrespective of the individual performance or the inevitable car maladies afflicting a number of competitors, everyone appeared to be in good spirits and the full entry and array of award winners show that VSCC driving tests are in fine fettle.



Walking the course is vital (Stuart Yates)



Angelica Fuentes and the Peugeot Lockhart Special (Phil Johnson)



Sam with a young Tim Rolt on the lawn at Stanley Pontlarge, August 1955 (note the watch chain)

Short rides in fast machines

Memories of Sam

Cecil Clutton, known as Sam, was one of the great figures of the VSCC until his death in 1991, serving as President, Editor of The Bulletin *and vigorously campaigning the 12-litre Itala. He was also an exemplary godfather, as* **TIM ROLT** *recalls*

Sam Clutton was my godfather and in recalling him, I am struck by how diligent he must have been in attending to this duty, for I have such a rich parade of memories from over many years. I would like to share a few of these. Sam initially met my dad Tom at the Phoenix pub at Hartley Wintney in Hampshire where my dad was then running a garage with John Passini. He teamed up with the landlord of the pub, Tim Carson, in forming the VSCC. Sam was an early adopter of the club and became, as many of you will know, a key player within the VSCC, forever associated with his beloved 1908 12-litre grand prix Itala. Sam, along with Tom and Tim Carson, was also instrumental in securing Prescott as a motor racing venue. When the VSCC realised the cost of buying the hill was too much for the young club, it was Sam who suggested divulging the news to Eric Giles of the wealthier Bugatti Owners Club. This was done on the condition that the BOC allow the VSCC one meeting a year; an agreement which holds to this day. Sam also became and remained an extremely loyal friend to Tom and our family.

Strangely, reviewing my memories of Sam, I do not have any especially singular recollections of Sam and the Itala. I conclude that this may be because that car and Sam were such an intrinsic part of my life, from earliest childhood onwards. Sam would visit our home at Stanley Pontlarge at least twice a year with the Itala, and the car is ingrained in my childhood. As a child I had a little wooden truck that went with a red steam engine that belonged to my brother. I remember naming this truck Floretta and painting a sign onto its front, in imitation of the Floretta nameplate in the footwell of the Itala. So whilst I have a vivid recollection of a one-off thrill ride, sitting high up in the single rear seat of Douglas Fitzpatrick's Métallurgique, flying effortlessly through the Gloucestershire landscape, the Itala I cannot bring so specifically to mind, although I must have travelled in it much more often. I conclude that this has more to do with how the memory works. I do remember accompanying Sam on one occasion to pick the Itala up from where it was habitually stabled, with Jack Williamson near Towcester, and driving from there to Stanley Pontlarge for Prescott, but what I now mostly remember from this is the responsibility of keeping the fuel supply going by means of the hand pump. The Itala was so much part of life then and its effortless low-revving power has given me a lifelong appreciation of this era of automobile. But the memories I am mostly going to share with you relate to Sam in other spheres and with other machines.

Sam brought a touch of metropolitan London glamour for me as a young boy born and brought up in rural Gloucestershire. Trips to stay with him in Blackheath and visits to his office in Great College Street Westminster seemed the height of urban exoticism and glamour. Looking back I realise he intro-





Left: *Tom Rolt's snap of Sam with the Itala at Stanley Pontlarge probably dating from 1938, for the first Prescott* ***Right:*** *Characteristic shot of Sam in action with the Itala*

duced me to an adult world, even a gentleman's world. He never took me to the zoo, or to see some other child-orientated attraction. Instead what I remember are trips to restaurants, clubs and odd places associated with Sam's special interests. Sam treated me as an adult, not as a child to be pandered to.

One of my earliest motoring memories of Sam is of him coming to visit me in Gloucester where I was then at boarding school. This would be before I reached eleven years old. Sam was picking me up from school and taking me back to Stanley Pontlarge in his grey hard-top XK120 Jaguar. I remember seeing the speedometer flickering near 100mph on a section of road I still frequent to this day. It now has a 40mph restriction and is, and always was, far from straight. I marvel now at the idea of doing the ton on this short sinuous section of B-road. You see, Sam never ever drove slowly and each and every journey with him was a flat-out white-knuckle ride. For many, the experience of being driven by Sam engendered feelings of exhilaration mixed with terror, but perhaps because I had accompanied Sam from a very young age, I was partially inoculated against these feelings.

A year or two later Sam was responsible for me moving schools, from King's Gloucester to King's Worcester. Sam had himself gone to the Worcester school and he would visit and take me to various hostelries in and around Worcestershire where we would dine, before another breakneck ride back to the centre of Worcester to drop me off. By this time the Jaguar had been replaced with a V8 Rover.

My dad used to remark, not in Sam's hearing, that Sam lacked any mechanical imagination. It may well be the case. Certainly he drove every vehicle to its absolute maximum at all times. But if Sam lacked mechanical imagination, he made up for it with the sheer breadth of his mechanical enthusiasms. Besides cars, chamber and pipe organs, watches, and vintage aeroplanes were some of Sam's other interests. Probably my earliest infant memory of Sam is the bewitching sight and sound of the fob watches that Sam invariably had with him, worn on the end of a gold chain. At least one of these watches had chiming bells (repeaters as they were known, as they struck the last hour and then sounded the quarters to the nearest quarter of an hour). They were dazzling gold with elegant roman numeral faces and the backs opened to reveal exquisitely crafted escapements. Staring into these jewel-like tiny mechanisms I was entranced. Much later I came to learn that most of them were the work of French watchmaker Louis Breguet, with several dating from the 18th century.

I think Sam was, for many years, needled by the fact that the Edwardian Prescott class record remained tantalisingly out of the Itala's reach. Anthony Heal had recorded a time in his 10-litre Fiat of 55.91 seconds at the first August 1938 VSCC meeting. This phenomenal time held good for very many years. Sam began a programme of minor modifications to the Itala in an attempt to better this record. First he changed the back wheels to accommodate larger tyres. Later still he removed the heavy four-seat body that had graced the car since soon after the first war, replacing it with a stripped down two-seat version, that probably rendered the car closer to how it had been in its initial pre-1914 Grand Prix racing days. I have a feeling that my dad did not altogether see eye to eye with Sam over these changes. Sam did eventually better the Anthony Heal time, recording a time of 53.50 seconds at the August 1973 meeting. This finally gave Sam and the Itala the Edwardian record, until, in 1980, Nigel Arnold-Forster, driving a 5-litre Bugatti Type 18, bettered it.

Weirdly, in the early 1970s, Sam developed an enthusiasm for modern cars and specifically modern cars which could not be described as gentlemanly. I particularly remember him appearing at Stanley Pontlarge with a new Ford Capri in mustard yellow with black vinyl finish on the roof. I can date this to 1972, when my dad was still alive. This car at the time would have been aimed at the boy racer and trendy social climber and certainly not someone in tweeds pushing sixty. Looking back, I realise now my brother and I had travelled by train and bicycle to Belgium, where we had witnessed a Ford Capri finish first at the 1971 Spa 24-hour race. So we were certainly familiar with the marque, my dad probably less so. Sam insisted my dad take a spin in Sam's new

wheels. We all piled in and as we approached a bend and my dad eased off, Sam announced with his usual characteristic abruptness 'you do know this is a 75 mile an hour corner.'

One often reads, in descriptions of drivers and their cars, of how a driver is exhibiting a relationship based on an intrinsic harmony between man and machine, the driver operating in symbiotic accord with the machine. I don't think this applied to Sam; rather he operated more combatively, wrestling and battling with any given machine. I remember listening to him playing the chamber organ and even here there was a staccato sense of confrontation between man and instrument. I think his driving followed this template, often spectacular to watch, but not necessarily the fastest, smoothest, or most efficacious.

Later, post the Capri, Sam purchased another seventies icon for the young flash Harry, a Ford Escort Mexico Mk II in a metallic finish. This is the last modern car I can remember in association with Sam. Perhaps he subsequently got over this mid-life crisis?

If there was never any personal chat with Sam, he certainly took me to many things and introduced me unapologetically to his world. I remember being taken for a meal in the restaurant at the top of the Post Office tower off the Tottenham Court Road, which slowly revolved as we ate. He took me to see plays in the West End – on one occasion, Spike Milligan was in bed for the entire play, I recall – and other theatre outings too. There were trips into east London, to Mander organ builders' workshop. Other places I remember visiting include a cheese shop in Jermyn Street, a shoemaker in Piccadilly and a watchmaker in Clerkenwell. There was a visit to somewhere in south London where, in a mews, we met up with George Daniels, who, I later understood, Sam had become a kind of a mentor to. Sam had given George a commission to build him a watch. I believe this may have been the very first watch that George made, cementing his reputation, and paving the way for an illustrious career as a watchmaker who would ascend to the pinnacle of this profession.

There were often surprises with Sam. Driving back from Wales – had he been to see me at Aberystwyth where I was a student at the university? – after stopping in to see Bill Boddy near Rhayader, Sam announced he wanted to check on an organ case he was advising on. We pulled up at an out-of-the-way place that I now know to be Old Radnor church. Inside there was, quite unexpectedly, a magnificent and highly ornate organ case of great antiquity and historical importance. These kind of chance felicitous discoveries were very much part of Sam, and may be one of the bonds that my father had shared with him. For both Tom and Sam had a deep and keen specialist knowledge of aspects of this country that remain hidden for many; there was a sense that Sam had a highly refined and developed discernment, for people, places, and above all, things.

On another earlier occasion I remember driving with him somewhere out of London and he announced, 'I think we will just drop in to see if Gerry is at home.' Duly we drove through an imposing gateway into a large country house estate. We crunched over private gravel, drawing up in front of a magnificent house. Knocking at the door, an elderly uniformed member of staff answered, telling us that Gerry had just gone over to the church and would be back in a matter of minutes. We said we would wait. Shortly, a diminutive black Austin A30 saloon appeared, heading down the long avenue from the church. 'This is my godson, Tim – Gerry, the Duke of Wellington.' I had not been forewarned; perhaps I was expected to have worked it out for myself.

A particularly memorable occasion was accompanying Sam in a Tiger Moth aeroplane – this plane I was told at the time was the oldest registered Tiger Moth still flying. We flew from Redhill and it was



Sam takes Canon Bobby Myles for a spin. Bobby had just taken a service in the church at Stanley Pontlarge and is still in his full ecclesiastical finery

my first ever experience of flight. Did a seat cushion fall from under me as we flew upside down, or have I dreamt this? I certainly remember the sensation of sitting in the open front seat, with Sam in the seat behind me; between my legs, the joystick disconcertingly relaying all the moves that Sam was making to control our passage. I also remember being grateful when, afterwards, he explained apologetically that he had not attempted to loop the loop with me as he had only ever accomplished this while flying solo and he was concerned about the possibility of stalling the plane with my additional weight.

Mortifyingly for me, on our way back to London after this flight, with Sam driving at his customary helter-skelter pace, my stomach succumbed to the assault and I had to ask him to pull over so I could be sick. The next thing I remember is several white quell pills and a glass of something fizzy in Boodles, Sam's club in St James'.

Many years later I had the privilege of sharing a flight with another VSCC legend, Hamish Moffatt, in one of his vintage biplanes, making a short memorable journey from Shobdon to his home in Herefordshire. After a glorious flight and a smooth landing, he told me as, between the two of us, we manhandled the astonishingly light biplane back to its shed, a story of a shared air trip with Sam, which knowing Sam as I did, amused me enormously.

The two of them were to appear at an air event somewhere in the East Midlands, and they set off in the open-seat biplane with Sam in the front seat and Hamish behind him. The rudimentary speaking tube communication between front and rear was not functioning, so Sam was tasked with map reading and a pencil and paper utilized for passing the information back. Sam became more and more enraged, with Hamish disregarding, or misinterpreting, the supplied direction notes and eventually, in a pique, Sam threw the pencil out of the plane. Hamish then resorted to coming down to a hundred feet or so in an attempt to read the larger road signs and to navigate in this way. Lost and with dwindling fuel, they put down at an unidentified airfield with an extremely long runway. As their diminutive plane pulled to a halt on the vast tarmac expanse several military vehicles hove into view on the horizon and drew up to surround the tiny plane. It turned out Sam and Hamish had landed at Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire, which at the time was an important US air force base. Of course the old biplane had no radio to communicate and flying in unannounced they had broken every security protocol going. Somehow they talked their way out of this and were allowed to depart.

After my dad's death in 1974, Sam remained very much part of our lives and became a somewhat unlikely good friend to my mother. Amongst other things Sonia would share recipe ideas with Sam. He had by then moved to the Isle of Man but invariably returned every year for Prescott in August and often for other meetings too and customarily stayed with us at Stanley Pontlarge.

We also went to visit him on the Isle of Man on several occasions. I remember he generously let me try out the various vehicles he had with him at this time on the island. These were: a Scott Squirrel motorcycle – probably the easiest and most placidly accommodating of his varied machines; a Brough Superior, the exciting and awe-inspiring super bike of its day, which he generously and bravely encouraged me to ride solo around a section of the TT course. I most remember being afraid of stalling the bike, when turning it round, and then being unable to restart it and Sam having to come and find me. I do recall I avoided this fate, succeeding in getting the bike back to Lezayre running and still in one piece.

Then there was the big black Bugatti, a Type 57, I



Sam at Stanley Pontlarge in the 1980s



Sam with Tim's mother Sonia Rolt on the Isle of Man in the 1980s, snapped by Tim



The Itala with Sam's racing body; Tom Rolt didn't entirely approve

think, which, if memory serves, was his regular transport on the island. I certainly remember him meeting us in this when we came over to stay with him for Christmas one year. I don't recall ever having the opportunity to drive it. Then there was the eccentric 1950s Jowett van which he used for shopping trips to nearby Ramsey. Finally the Type 40 Bugatti. This he did let me have a drive in, which I can recollect.

I was used to driving the 12/50 Alvises which we had been brought up with in Gloucestershire, but this was quite a different kettle of fish. I remember the sensitivity of the throttle – the merest touch of which would cause, in my memory, the engine to zip up to high revs, seemingly in no time, something like an electric drill, rather than the calm tractability of the Alvis. This Bugatti felt like a nervous and not easily tamed thoroughbred racehorse compared to the sturdy and placid shire horse tractability of the 12/50. I seem to remember Sam telling me the car had no, or a very light, flywheel to moderate its free revving – can this be true? Sam accompanied me, as we drove out over the Snaefell mountain. I was proceeding judiciously, but Sam was urging me to go faster on the open roads of the high moorland. Here sheep were free to roam and frequently running onto the road. As Sam spurred me on, a sheep burst across the road in front of us and my right foot deviated from the accelerator, hovering towards the brake pedal. Sam barked out a brief 'never emergency brake!' The sheep had the narrowest of escapes, as Sam blithely went on to explain how sudden braking could cause the front axle to fold up underneath the car. We returned to Lezayre, with me somewhat chastened.

Maybe my dad's supposition about Sam lacking mechanical imagination is not quite fair. Perhaps it was rather that Sam just expected any piece of equipment to be able to perform at its maximum at any given moment (i.e. always). Certainly I think he was always more interested in a machine's capacity for the fastest possible forward motion than he was in its stopping efficiency, or indeed, any other safety or comfort consideration. He believed flat out was the optimum default setting for any vehicle; this way of being was applied to pretty much every aspect of how Sam conducted himself.

So Sam himself was invariably extremely forthright and abrupt. Everything was done quickly; there was never any idling with Sam. Food was bolted down. On the Isle of Man, his marble topped dining table turned food cold in seconds. But I think that Sam had the bolting habit well before he acquired the marble table. He wrote regular letters to me with an instantly recognisable confident jagged italic hand – terse and to the point. Telephone conversations were even more brusque, abrupt to the point of rudeness. Everything was done in an entirely inimitable Sam-like way. Driving, walking, cooking, talking, writing, were all quite uniquely characterfully his.

At first impression this hasty, spiky demeanour could be daunting and many took it simply as rude. But as you came to know him one realised that beyond this somewhat frightening carapace there lurked an immensely loyal and generous human. Rather like the John Adams piece of music that inspired my title for this piece, Sam's presence was always invigorating, life-enhancing, and very often surprising too. I feel privileged that I was given the opportunity to have him in my life, and I thank him for the memories and experiences that he gave me.



As it had been before, as a four-seater



A famous photo of Sam and Itala, always lovely to see

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HCVA



Winston and Isabel Teague arrive at Much Marcle in their T35 Bugatti (Phil Jones)

New Year's Day

Adverse weather warnings caused some meetings, such as at Stony Stratford, to be postponed until March but others pressed on regardless or delayed by just a couple of days

HEREFORDSHIRE

The weather forecast for Herefordshire for January 1 promised strong winds and driving rain. By any standards, it seemed a good day to sit in front of a fire and delve into the books that Santa had kindly brought the week before. Someone, however, must record the goings on at the Royal Oak at Much Marcle, the 45th New Year's Day gathering of the VSCC in Herefordshire, so your correspondent woke up his Silver Eagle and braved the wind and rain for the 20 miles between home and Hannah Slade's pub. It was past 10am when we arrived, the writer damp and decidedly cold, and recruited Hugh Girvan's help to erect the hood, so there'd be somewhere to keep the notebook dry. His arrival brought the attendance up to six cars.

Over the next couple of hours the wind and rain petered out. It remained cool and cloudy for the rest of the day, but then, it was 1 January. It was a reminder that it's not the weather that affects the attendance, it's the previous day's weather forecast. The faithful continued to arrive in ones and twos. Steve Loveridge brought his 12/50 sports saloon, a total of five heroes brought three-wheeler Morgans with a variety of engines, Matchless, Anzani, JAP and Ford. David Exell had brought his Morris 8 tourer and it was joined by a saloon and a two-seater and then a 20hp Morris arrived to boost the numbers. A splendid early Buick 6 with exposed push rods and rockers came. Tony and Annie Peake arrived in a splendid Lagonda to be joined by Mark Yeomans' LG45 saloon and Bunty Moffatt's 11.9, bringing the Lagonda count to three.

The arrival of one of the very rare and handsome British Salmson 20/90 sports cars was quite a treat. These 2.6-litre, twin-cam sixes made in the late 1930s must have been as attractive a prospect then as now. Harry Bowers arrived with his Peugeot 202, a very stylish contrast with the British small cars of the '30s, most of which copied the style of the Ford 8. Only two Rileys came this year, a nice 12/4 Lynx and Paul Tebbett's 9hp Gamecock.

Terry McGrath arrived with Sheila in his 12/60, Hugh Stirling in his early Speed 20 and Alan Lloyd in his post-vintage Silver Eagle to bring the Alvis numbers up to five. Brian and Monica Gray came in their Anzani 'Nash, the sight of which prompted Geraint Owen to comment that it looked as good with the hood up as down, a mark of good styling of an open car. Geraint had brought his family in his Model A Ford Tudor Sedan. It was one of five Model As at the Royal Oak that included one of the less-commonly



Harry Bowers brought this cosy Peugeot (Phil Jones)



Brian Gray makes an elegant exit from his 'Nash with hood up (Phil Jones)

seen Sport Coupé fixed head coupés. It was good to see an early Ford V8 as well. It's interesting to reflect that while the V8 had twice as many cylinders, it had only 10% more cubic capacity than the Model A, yet it claimed over 60% more power.

As ever, Austins were the most numerous marque, with nine of them present. There was quite some variety with Chummies and Rubys and, unusually, an early Pearl, one of those with landau irons to support the hood. Three Rolls-Royces were present to raise the tone a bit and a Railton and a large Rover looked very suitable for the day. Guy Gregory brought his Talbot 90 and there were single examples of Chrysler and Wolseley but sadly no Bentleys or Vauxhalls. It was about lunchtime when Winston and Isobel Teague arrived in their Type 35 Bugatti. It must have been a damp trip without wings or windscreen. In total, 49 pre-war cars brought their owners to greet their friends on the first day of 2025.

Many retired to the pub to warm up and enjoy a fine lunch, with mulled wine, or any of the other fine beverages available there. It was good to warm up while wishing friends a happy new year. Mark Garfitt assembled the voting forms for the car you'd most like to take home and the winner was Hugh Stirling's SA Speed 20. Second was Harry Bowers' Peugeot 202 and Mark Yeomans' Lagonda took the third prize. The landlady's distance award went to Len Critchlow, who'd brought his Morgan 44 miles from Alvechurch.

Dick Wilkinson

CHESHIRE

The New Year weather, in the form of Storm Darragh, proved rather better than forecast in South Cheshire, in stark contrast to the flooded north of the county. Dire predictions and wet roads seemed to have little impact on the enthusiasm of members driving to the Nag's Head at Haughton Moss, Tarporley, in a variety of old cars. The oldest steed to arrive was Mark Farrall's 1901 Albion dog cart, accompanied by the intrepid Paul Adams, widely rumoured to be of a similar vintage. Steve Moore's 1929 Alvis 12/50 wide-bodied two-seater and dickey was much admired, as was his commitment in journeying from Buxton in a car only acquired three months ago. Similarly committed driving from the flooded north, in his perfectly unrestored Jowett pick-up truck, was Mike Fishwick.

The evolving style of Jaguar was well displayed, running from a nice SS90-esque special, through Mk V and Mk VII to XK150. Jaguar is dead. Long live Jaguars. MG, Lagonda, Riley, Chrysler, Sunbeam and Star were all represented with Riley enthusiasts being able to talk to Adrian Smith, co-author of the much awaited and definitive history of the Riley Brooklands.

Of the pair of Model A Fords, the 1930 Coupé of Martin Cheetham was the more striking, being a recreation of a car as stolen by Bonnie and Clyde, complete with bullet holes and a correct and original de-commissioned Tommy gun in the rear window.

More respectable by far, though distinctly a car for the more sporting driver, was the 1934 Bentley 3½-litre



Hugh Stirling's Alvis SA19.82 Speed 20 (Phil Jones)



A British Salmson 20/90 is a rare sight (Phil Jones)



Mark Yeomans' Lagonda LG45 Saloon (Phil Jones)



A 1923 Morris and 1901 Albion at the Nag's Head

of Eddie Howell with all-alloy Park Ward sports saloon coachwork. Of the various Austin Sevens present Richard Thomson's delightfully original Ruby is well known locally, in almost daily use around Nantwich, whilst Tim Hooper's long-rumoured Chummy made its VSCC New Year debut appearance, arriving well laden with four adults and hood up. Sadly, since our meeting, though not we believe because of it, the Nag's Head has succumbed to current financial pressures and is now closed. The search has started for a fitting venue to mark the arrival of 2026.

Bob Bunn

SURREY AND SW LONDON

Considering the weather, our meeting at The Shy Horse pub in Chessington on 4 January was well attended, although some came in moderns. A central open fire seared welcome heat into our shivering bodies in a very cosy setting. Andy Hall's delightful French blue Amilcar graced the car park next to Phil Kerkham's 1932 Austin RN saloon and Richard Fayter's 1922 Ansaldo Torpedo two-litre ohc tourer. My father came in his 1930 3.3-litre Vauxhall Hurlingham T80RA with original radiator muff; my first ride in that car was as an embryo. Andy Harding came in his agile 1951 HRG, a marque that continued the traditions of Frazer Nash, while other cars included a 1927 Austin Chummy and the very comfortable 1963 Rover 95 of Richard Fripp. Good conversation, good ale and good food made for a fine afternoon.

Nigel Irving



The Bonnie and Clyde Ford with an Alvis 12-50



Andy Hall's Amilcar at The Shy Horse on 4 January

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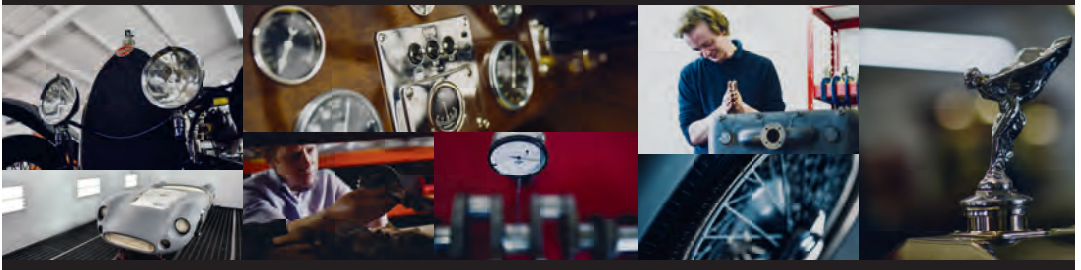


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Wilbur Gunn – His Part In My Downfall

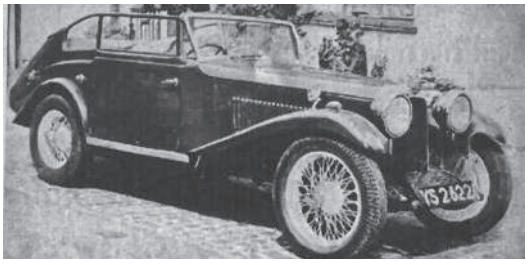
(with apologies to Spike Milligan)

Oh I do love a Lagonda, says **MIKE HALLOWES**

The start of my motoring world was fairly typical of the time (1957), a 1922 Royal Enfield motorcycle when I was 15, bought for £2/10/-. I had to push it six miles home. That was followed by the obligatory £5 Austin 7 Chummy at 16 which, after standing outside in Guildford for God knows how many years, started, following some fresh fuel and a push. College came and went with transport including an Ambassador 197 motorcycle, two Morris Eights and a Ford Y Type all at the by now obligatory £5 each. These were followed by a left-hand-drive Morris Minor Convertible and a brand new Mini on my 21st. At this point 'vintage' cars had not appeared on my to-do list as vehicles up until this point had been for transport only. This all changed when I met my friend John Spear who owned a magnificent 16/80 Lagonda Tourer.

I travelled many happy miles with John in his wonderful car and it was during this time I vowed to have my own Lagonda in the not too distant future. In 1966, YS 2622 came into my life via an advertisement in *Exchange and Mart*. A trip to North London ensued and I found myself the owner of a Lagonda Rapier with the most extraordinary coachwork. I can't say it was love at first sight but more a case of 'I've come all this way so I have to buy it.' I don't think I'm alone on this one.

Although looking a bit strange, it was wonderful to drive, performing lustily with its 1,100cc twin-cam engine and the delightful pre-select gearbox, although this was to bite me during a bit of home maintenance: there was a bit of slippage in reverse and I misunderstood how to adjust the offending band and slackened it instead of tightening it, the end result being that the adjusting nut fell into the bottom of the box and I no longer enjoyed the luxury of reverse. I had no time, or indeed the knowledge, to proceed further and for the next few months I had to rely on the good nature of passers-by to help me park and unpark. By this time YS 2622 was my only transport and I travelled daily from Queen's Gardens in London to Purley as my commute and the Lagonda never let me down.



Mike's first Lagonda, a Rapier: it was not love at first sight

The job in Purley came to an end so I returned to the family home and decided to tackle the gearbox. I found a very helpful book on MGs in the local library which had an entire chapter on pre-select gearboxes so I took the gearbox out of the car and prepared to do battle. I managed to find the bits that had fallen to the bottom of the box but I chickened out on dismantling it any further as it looked very daunting. It really needed the lining replaced on the affected band but I could see it all ending in tears so I reassembled it and adjusted the band as far as it would go but with some slip still apparent. I returned the book to the library hoping no one would notice the rather oil-stained gearbox description pages.

YS 2262 continued to give me good service but a house purchase and the need for curtains and carpets and other domestic trivia necessitated its release via one of the first Vintage and Classic auctions at Blackbushe where I just about broke even. Since then I am pleased to report that YS 2622 is alive and well and now sporting a much more appropriate body.

Not realising the bug had bitten I continued through life without any real thought of the Rapier's replacement until I was alerted to the existence of a dilapidated Lagonda at an address in Guildford. £25 changed hands and I was the proud owner of Lagonda 16/80 tourer FS 7125. John Spear, whose fault this all is, kindly brought it by trailer to my long-suffering parents' house where I was to undertake its restoration. An initial list of missing parts required was prepared and I was advised to visit Capt. Ivan Forshaw to procure said items. This was a memorable visit to his Dorset home where the garden was littered by many Lagondas and associated parts in various sheds and outbuildings. Ivan was quite charming and was able to come up with all the items on my list. His handwritten correspondence and invoices are legend and I still have some examples all these years later.

Now it will probably not come as any surprise that the proposed restoration never actually took



The body was somewhat eccentric



Next was a dilapidated 16/80, here being unloaded at Mike's parents' house

place for many reasons including the fact that I don't possess the necessary skills or patience to achieve such an undertaking, although I omitted to take this into account at the time of purchase. Another important factor was that another Lagonda, a 1932 16/80 Vanden Plas two-seat tourer with dickey, hoved into view, being sold by a master at Eton College. Of this more anon. I sold most of FS 7125 to Peter Whenman in Hartley Wintney for his Lagonda restoration business but the chassis eventually was obtained by Mark Butterworth who created a most wonderful Lagonda V12-engined special which I believe now resides on the continent. I bumped into Mark at Prescott one year and learned that he had the car. Amazingly I still had its original front number plate along with the chassis plate which now adorn the car. A gentlemanly bottle of fine whisky changed hands for this transaction. An idle surfing of the internet revealed a photograph of FS 7125 at Edinburgh's Princes Street Station in 1935. This was later followed up by a painting of the same scene.

At this point my parents had embarked on a well-earned world cruise with their parting words ringing in my ears about not buying any more cars. YY 5595 was towed home on a piece of string as the differential had failed and was the reason for its disposal. It was acquired for the princely sum of £107/10/-. How we arrived at that random figure I don't know. I had arranged to purchase this car prior to parting with the component parts of FS 7125 and knowing that the differential was at fault on the replacement car retained said item for the new arrival. By teatime on arrival day the differential was installed and the car up and running.

When first purchased, YY 5595 had a vestigial pair of rear wings more suited to a motorcycle than a car and looked most ungainly. With the help of a draughtsman friend we went to visit a similarly bodied 16/80 and prepared a set of drawings so that a new pair could be fabricated in aluminium. Subsequently the entire car was repainted in midnight blue and looked wonderful. It had no seats in the dickey but a friend had a pair from the rear of a Bergerac Triumph Roadster which fitted a treat.

I travelled many miles in this car, using it as a daily driver, and completed various road rallies, a tour to the Lake District to visit my godmother as well as a memorable trip in 1974 to Mumm's champagne house with four other Lagondas. As is often the case on these escapades, one or two events remain firmly in mind for evermore. The event in this instance involved a lovely but amazingly clumsy chap called James who came as a navigator for the owner of one the Lagondas. During the course of the trip he managed to demolish the render of an ancient French house while exiting the car and falling with his considerable substance against the venerable structure. In addition to this, when entering the car again he failed to notice a tube of Hermatite on the floor, the outcome of which was the sight of a demented red snake of sealant squirming across the immaculate carpets. Owner not amused. I bumped into James a year or so later at a steam rally where he was administering to an elderly road roller. He was busy shelling some



The car at Prince's Street Station, Edinburgh, in 1935



A painting of the same scene



Mike's third Lagonda was this 16/80 with broken diff – note the ungainly rear wings



YY 5595 following restoration

prawns which he had cooked on the engine. When he started the peeling process his hands were that delightful shade of dark grey beloved of steam enthusiasts but became remarkably cleaner as the operation wore on. I politely declined the offer to partake of a few.

During this time I lusted after a high-chassis 2-litre tourer owned by a friend of mine in Guildford whom I pestered mercilessly to be its next custodian. At last my time came as he had taken on a Chain Gang 'Nash rebuild and funds were required. Sadly YY 5595 had to go at this point and a trip to Dan Margulies in London saw me coming home on the train with a cheque just £200 short of the 2-litre price.

KW 5743 remained with me for approximately twelve years and did we have some fun! Apart from a very minor sprint meeting with my Mini back in 1964, the world of motor sport participation had eluded me but this was about to change. Being a member of the VSCC was an excellent introduction to competition. An appropriate licence was acquired and the first of many Vintage Prescotts was entered. This evolved into a Lagonda private event with about five Lagondas in amongst all the much faster Chain Gang 'Nashes that seemed to dominate our class. Representing other 2-litre Lags were Jeff Ody, Alan Elliot, James Woollard and me and the very rapid 16/80 of Dick Sage. Each year we would have our own private competition with varying results.

VSCC Silverstone was also a must and I competed in a seven-lap Bentley/Lagonda handicap race and the wonderful 30-minute High Speed Blind. This was like a race but without the red mist descending. Safety was always to the forefront and apart from the mandatory crash helmet one was also advised to roll one's sleeves down. During one High Speed Blind I duly called into the pits for the valve cap removal and refit but where was my faithful pit crew? In the bar. I had to get out and do it myself. To add insult to injury I had not taken into account the vagaries of the Autovac and managed to drain the unit of fuel; not enough had replenished due to extended full throttle as opposed to deceleration moments. The net result of this was sailing to a halt on the Hangar Straight and failing to cover the requisite amount of laps, so no big cigar. The one image that remains very clearly in my mind is being passed by Sam Clutton in the Itala at goodness knows what speed when I was flat strap on the straight.

1979 was KW's fiftieth birthday and I felt it should be celebrated in some way. A friend worked for Renshaws who happened to be the importers of Pol Roger champagne to the UK and he suggested a visit to Reims would be fun. Amazingly he sold the idea to Pol Roger and they invited us as their guests for an unforgettable weekend. Further sponsorship was obtained from Burmah Oils whose petrol we sold at Bell and Colvill where I was service manager. On top of that we received a couple of quid from the Milk Marketing Board through another friend in exchange for signage promoting British cheese. Unfortunately the signage never arrived but we had already had the money. Finances for the trip were topped up by a 50%



The 2-litre was even used as a wedding car



The Pol Roger beano started at El Vino's on Fleet Street



Mike's fourth Lagonda stayed with him for 12 years, seen here at Prescott



Mike raced his 2-litre at Silverstone

discount on the hovercraft in return for a publicity photocall. Before we left we had a boozy send-off from El Vino's in Fleet Street, which seemed to be a publicity exercise for the West End musical *Chicago*, with several members of the cast in attendance.

The motley crew that set off for Epernay were myself, my brother Peter and George Bird who dreamed up the whole thing. Pol Roger's hospitality was second to none. On arrival we were greeted by Christian Pol Roger and Christian de Billy at their beautiful chateau headquarters and in the courtyard we were entertained with 1929 vintages of the product plus an enormous birthday cake for the car, which had a cut-out to receive a bottle of 1929 Pol Roger which I still have unopened. All champagne corks were saved and displayed among the spokes of the spare wheel for many months to come. During the course of the weekend we were given a guided tour of the facility including the amazing caves where the champagne is nursed carefully to readiness over quite a period of time. Our stay was rounded off by a magnificent lunch with our hosts at a nearby Relais et Chateaux hostelry. The next day we set off for home but not before visiting the historic pits on the old Reims Grand Prix circuit. The entire trip was undertaken without a working dynamo so downhill parking was always preferable.

KW 5743 took part in several Daffodil Runs to Bournemouth and also managed to win a Lagonda Club treasure hunt in the New Forest. Mechanically she was pretty reliable and only really let me down on a trip to the VSCC film show in London when the fibre timing wheel stripped in Roehampton. We left the car on a garage forecourt and luckily it was still there the next day having returned home for repairs. During my stewardship I also had the radiator rebuilt and fitted a new second gear. It all came to an end when I decided to replace the worn spring shackles and foolishly decided to lift the body from the chassis to repaint it at the same time. Bad move! Due to the pressure of a career change I sold KW in pieces but I am pleased to say it is now alive and well, restored to its former glory and I have spotted her at Prescott a couple of times since. Amazingly I never quite got round to registering her in my name during my entire twelve-year ownership. This is the one car I have owned that I wouldn't mind having back again.

There then followed a fairly lengthy gap in Lagonda ownership and I also carelessly got fired from what was meant to be dream job but turned out to be the complete opposite. Two children in private school and a mortgage to pay does grab one's attention so I embarked on a spot of classic and vintage car trading from home which I found utterly exhilarating and profitable. Also during this time I was asked to help supply some vehicles for a TV commercial for *Exchange and Mart* (our paths cross once again) by my old friend John Dabbs who was working for Nick Mason and his Ten Tenths organisation. That was 1985 and many more TV commercials and historic race meetings later, I'm still there to this day.

Part Two to follow, if The Editor allows



Sponsorship also came from a hovercraft company



Celebrating in style at Chateau Pol Roger

The Measham

Ice-packed lanes and freezing temperatures provided some of the thrills on the club's annual night rally based this year at the Duffin family farm just north of Leicester, as **HARRY COLLEDGE** *reports*

Thirty days has September,
April, June and November.
Unless a leap year is its fate,
February has twenty-eight.
All the rest have three days more,
Excepting January,
Which has six thousand,
one hundred and eighty-four.

I often conclude that Brian Bilston is right. Fortunately, though, the post-Christmas gloom soon vanished as we realised we only had ten days after 2025 dawned to ready ourselves for the club's best event, The Measham night rally, which this year was scheduled for the night of Saturday 11th January going into Sunday 12th. This year, the circus moved away from Leominster in Herefordshire to the new base of Stonehurst Farm at Mountsorrel, midway between Loughborough and Leicester. The Duffin family generously played host to an entry of 48 cars by opening up their great home/farm/museum and farm shop to us, so that the collective of intrepid competitors, hardy marshals, stalwart organisers and officials had an excellent start, mid-way halt, and end for the event.

Adjacent to the farm shop-cum-café was a blaring brazier around which a crowd of VSCC hobos were seen to gather as we all assembled in the late afternoon. Quite rightly, we were all encouraged to patronise the café – efficiently managed and led by various Duffin family members – which served great food, soups, teas and coffees from before the official arrival time of 4pm, and all and sundry ensured that a roaring trade was assured.

Entrants were split into seven classes: four that were navigating and competing against defined average speeds: fast and slow vintage, fast and slow post-vintage; and three that were not: Clubman's Speed, and two 'Champagne' classes. The entries were bookended age-wise by the oldest, a 1922 GN piloted by (possibly) the youngest driver, Archie Bullett, navigated by the ever youthful John Wiseman, with the youngest car being some 46 years younger in the form of an MG C-type Roadster, pedalled and navigated by Andy and Thomas Fincham respectively.

The snake-like trail of cars making their way round to the hay-filled barn-cum-scrutineering bay started at 5:30pm with a few entrants doing inevitable last-minute shaking of light bulbs (and trees from which they were seeking excuses for non-functioning parts of their cars) to the ever-patient Ian Patton who oversaw the roadworthiness of cars.

A senior team of VSCC stalwarts kept order as competitors signed on, with one-time *Bulletin* editor Michael Elsom overseeing all marshals, Ray Edge acting as Event Steward, and the Office being represented by Ethan Harris working as Chief Timekeeper and Secretary of the meeting with Andrew Tarring supporting as Deputy Secretary of the Meeting.

Despite the usual kerfuffle of everyone having to dress like the Michelin Man and do final checks to their respective steeds, everyone was ready to be



Matilda Jones navigating father Tim to a 3rd in their 30-98 (Paul Freeman)



The scene at Stonehurst Farm, our reporter's Ford visible right (Paul Freeman)



The floodlit scrutineering bay overseen by Ian Patton (Stuart Yates)



Dood Pearce studies the maps (Paul Freeman)

called to the competitors' briefing provided by our incomparable Clerk of the Course, Annabel Jones. It was a personal disappointment to see that Stephen Fry was this year knighted while Charles III failed to bestow Ms A. M. Jones with a Damehood for Services to Navigation and Vehicular Orienteering. Maybe he should be informed of the need for such in 2026.

The nature of the briefing was its usual crisp self, this year delivered by Annabel from a set of outdoor stairs lending a semblance to Juliet's balcony, with Andrew Tarring photographing competitors from the upper landing of the stairs, though not resembling Romeo. We were duly informed: we can promise you a beautiful route (but we'll have to take your word for that from the pitch black of night); we can promise you plenty of ice (some already noticed, lots not); the first half of the route will take you into about 80–90 miles of (mainly) Leicestershire; the second half will see you venture from Leicestershire into Staffordshire, briefly into Derbyshire as well as Warwickshire along a route of a similar distance, meaning that you should be finished around dawn; navigation was, as usual, determined by adopting the shortest route between each successive eight-digit grid reference (with no use of particular classes of roads, particularly A-roads and white roads) unless specifically told to do so; the first Time Control for both the start of the event, and the second half of the event would be approximately 10 minutes from Stonehurst Farm, so that residents would not be disturbed by a cacophony of competitors' engines.

Duly informed, and hopefully a little more knowledgeable, last-minute checks were done, soup slurped and cars readied to allow the first competitor – Simon Arscott and Emily Anderson in their 1937 2-litre Aston Martin – to depart at 8:31pm, with subsequent entrants leaving at one-minute intervals thereafter until Emily Martin and Anthea Barlett in their side-valve 1957 Morris Minor brought up the rear to be the last car to leave the farm.

As the driver of car number 4, your scribe simply acted as a dumb terminal as the recipient of eight hours of tireless instruction from his superb navigator – Dr Andrew 'Google Maps' Tongue. Even at night, he would periodically explain that '… once we get past the unfenced section of C road, we will then pass a gatepost and then a small copse on the left … We used this section of the route on the LC&ES rally that Charlotte and I organised fifteen years ago!' Oh, and he was right. The way different peoples' brains, and specifically their hippocampuses, work fascinates me.

Despite only leaving at minute intervals, it was interesting how little we saw of other competitors during the night, especially those who had left at approximately the same time as us. Our main compatriots were the Railton Ranalah Sports of Neil Thorp



Car number 1, Simon Arscott's 2-litre Aston Martin, leaves the start (Paul Freeman)



The Duffin family's Vauxhall 23-60 stays warm and dry



The Frazer Nashes of Wilf Cawley and Rachel Blake at the start

and Christopher Pearson, the car verging on silent in comparison to the sonorous delights of Tim and Matilda Jones's 30-98 Wensum.

Richard Baxter was noted for running a red-light marshalling post at Time Controls 2 and 9. Rear bicycle lights only: nothing untoward you understand, readers! Notwithstanding which, his delightful female colleagues will not be named, simply to keep their honourable reputations intact.

Other marshalling posts varied from lonely looking two-man-band affairs to one setup whose size and structure would have rivalled a Tuesday afternoon ensemble at a provincial bandstand, with what looked like one intrepid member on trombone, another on the triangle and a further band member stooped over, stirring soup. Regardless of size and structure, we were extremely grateful for their willingness to stay out all night in freezing conditions to indulge our competitive urges.

Around 60 miles into the first half, we were suddenly aware of the advance of modern, shorter stroke engines, and a wall of light first from the Lancia Fulvia of Paul and Sandra Healey and then Alan Pettit, ably navigated by Mike Cochrane in the



Dick Patten's newly acquired MG and the Daniells' A7 saloon

1962 Volvo Amazon. Though the Model A was not really holding them up, the last thing we wanted to do was to baulk anyone, so we pulled aside, allowing for some water for my car-sick navigator, chocolate and a bit more plotting.

A last surge through the remaining Time Controls and on via the remaining Route Boards allowed us to catch up with the Editorial Morris Bullnose and make out the lights of Mountsorrel, itself a welcome oasis, beckoning us as 1am approached.

With results collected en route by diligent organisers, entrants were interested to see the leader board at half-time, itself not always a predictor of final standings.

This year, it was a pleasant change not to have spent 90 minutes in a ditch, meaning that no remedial work was required on the car at the mid-way point. To mark this change, soup was had along with the chance to warm up. We hoped that the twists and turns of the first half would be reduced to provide some reprieve after 'lunch'. This discussion continued until Andrew Tarring thrust instructions into our hands for the second half of the event at 01:49. With only 15 minutes to prepare the route, I made myself scarce, so that Andrew could prepare us for the off.

Rather than making myself scarce, I *should* have read the fine print in the instructions, including clear advice that A-roads were only to be used as the shortest route between two points where prescribed, meaning that unless identified as such, this class of



Fourth time consecutive winner of The Measham Trophy, the Dodds/Wood Riley (Paul Freeman)



Paul Dyas and Martin Taylor had a good first half in their Bentley (Paul Freeman)



Seasoned rallyist John Fort leaves the start in his Porsche 356 (Stuart Yates)



Neil Thorp and Chris Pearson on their way to a 2nd in the Railton (Paul Freeman)

road was proscribed. That was my first error of the second half. The second was to set off thinking that the more sweeping B roads we found ourselves on would mean it would be easier to keep up the higher average speed set along what appeared to be an easier route. Whilst the Model A was able to stretch its legs, this was all to 'not much' as we ended up using A-roads where we shouldn't have. Hey-ho!

The route was, nonetheless, excellent and knowing some of it through regular use during daylight hours, it was very pretty, just as Annabel had promised.

A return to base shortly before dawn saw nearly all competing cars huddle around the Duffins' barns and sheds. After an excellent breakfast results were announced as follows:

Class	Winner
Trophy–fast average speed	Andrew Isherwood & Dave Middleditch: MG PA
Trophy–slow average speed	Matthew Bell & Ian Dobinson: Morris Oxford
Clubmans–Vintage	Andrew Mortimer & Hannah Warren: Riley 12/6 Lynx
Champagne–Vintage	Andrew Frank & David Frank: Buick Standard 6 Touring 2
Trophy–Invited	Paul Heaney & Sarah Heaney: Lancia Fulvia
Clubmans–Invited	David Morris & Tim Sawyer: Ford Cortina
Champagne–Invited	Matthew Moore & Kit Jackson: Austin A40

Congratulations to Peter Dodds and Douglas Woods who won the Measham Trophy for the fourth year running for the best performance in a Vintage Car in the Trophy Fast category, while the Richard Dames-Longworth cup for best performance in a PVT car goes to the Isherwood/Middleditch MG. Before the event, Peter admitted he had competed in about 20 Measham without ever winning an award, and so was getting rather nervous of his current winning streak. Let's see if he can win it a fifth time next year.

The decision to open the event up to a broader age range of cars has definitely played its part in rejuvenating the event's lifeblood in the last few years, with approaching 25% of entries now coming from postwar cars. If it helps keep interest up in this most testing but excellent of events, then long may such an approach be encouraged. With results announced and final thanks to marshals, officials and fellow competitors we headed off, resolved to read the small print in 2026.



Andy Ballantine gets his maps in order in Bernard Northmore's Healey 3000 (Paul Freeman)



Old Mr Morris, the Editorial steed (Paul Freeman)

How (not) to do the Measham

They have sailed small boats together in Salcombe and have a child who doesn't sleep, so **CHRIS** *and* **ANDREA DOWNHAM** *were perfectly prepared for their first night rally in the 'experts' class … or were they?*

In September 2023 we purchased our beautiful black three-owner and very original Riley 12/4 Lynx 'Special Series' under the guise of participating in some more family-friendly VSCC events, in addition to hill-climbing our other Riley in Class Nine. Obviously, our children, aged two and five at the time, were in agreement with this, and promptly named the car 'Bagheera'.

First event on the list was the Measham, that semi-mythical event that only real VSCC hard-nuts do and is revered as a rite-of-passage. In 2024 the plan was quickly shelved as the car needed 'winterising' first. Well, that was the excuse. After new tyres, underbody rust protection and a new traffic clutch we had a wonderful year of adventures with 'Baggie', including a trip to Scotland. November rolled around and noises began again regarding the Measham. We secured Granny for childcare and loosely committed to give it a shot. Having never done anything like this before, either as a driver, or a navigator, the ultimate VSCC challenge seemed like a great place to start.

T – Two weeks

Measham entry was completed with much debate over which class to enter. We came to the conclusion that really you just have to 'give it a go' and get on with it. Vintage Trophy Fast Class it was, then! Grand plans were hatched to calibrate odometer and speedometer, generate average speed charts and do some practice with stopwatches and measured distances. A list of navigation equipment and other essentials was generated, and the required OS maps were ordered.



Measham calibration run in the Riley Lynx – the children were not impressed

T – One week

The Measham entry list was published. Panic set in as seasoned Measham competitors told us that we had entered the wrong class. Warnings over the risks to marital harmony and misery that we would be heaping upon ourselves started to cause some concern. So we re-read the VSCC rally guide 'Finding Your Way' and ordered the Don Barrow Navigation Course. That should sort it. The mechanical prep also started at this point: oil change, greasers twiddled, antifreeze topped-up and wiper blades changed (hope, not expectation). The provisional supplementary instructions were consulted which explicitly stated: 'no LEDs', so spare old fashioned battery flattening bulbs ordered.

T – Six days

Odometer and speedometer calibrated on a jolly family outing. Not sure the children appreciated this experience as it was a particularly chilly day and the roof was down. Thankfully both speed and distance were accurate enough for our needs, minimal correction work required.

T – Four days

Don Barrow arrived in our lives. After getting the children to bed the maps were laid out on the kitchen floor and we began plotting practice. By 11pm the navigator went on strike, in desperate need of sleep but relieved that orienteering in freezing Scottish woodlands as a youth was proving to be useful. We were glad that there wouldn't be any herringbones.

T –Three days

Life stopped navigation play as a combination of parental responsibilities and the need to do some gainful work trumped playing with maps and causing more anxiety. We ploughed some energy into attempting to find someone who could share what the Measham instructions might look like so that we could either really panic or decide it was going to be okay. We had limited success with this strategy, but decided it would be fine.

T –Two days

Contemplated changing classes, but had a word with ourselves. We committed to just giving it a go and focusing on getting round, even if we were far off the

pace. Promises were made not to get cross with each other, no matter what. For context, we have sailed small boats together. The 'bag' in Salcombe during Merlin Week in light winds is the biggest pressure cooker for marital harmony, so we felt we had relevant transferable experience. A navigation bag was packed with everything we could possibly need, plus spares. The warmest clothes and ski kit were located and thrown into bags.

T – One day

The modern was packed to drive to the Midlands immediately after school to stay with Granny. Promises were made by the navigator to prep the maps once the children were in bed (trim off the edges, add some grid references and identify the joining points), but drinking wine that evening seemed a far better option.

Back at base in Chichester the final prep was happening. Tyres inflated, windscreen cleaned and polished, and thermostat tweaked. Quick run to the pub with a fellow VSCC-er to road-test demonstrated that >100 degrees C in the top hose was possible, so thermostat hastily reopened. Every tool under the sun packed, boxes for hydraulic and electrical spares and fittings, and a wide selection of adhesive tapes. Driver questioned whether his moral fibre would be up to making big roadside repairs, or if in reality we would just call the breakdown service.



Who needs a Poti when you have this weapon, pinched from your four-year-old?

The big night

'Measham Day' dawned too early, bright and absolutely freezing. Darling child No. 2 firmly believes in 'sleeping is cheating' and had duly delivered on a very poor night's sleep for the navigator. Excellent training. Meanwhile driver / mechanic had pulled a late one in the shed (pub) and was embarking on the four-hour drive north from the south coast. Excellent preparation all round. A beautiful sunrise over the South Downs was tempered by the –4 degree air temperature. In case you're unconvinced, I can tell you there is almost no car more enjoyable or practical on poor B roads than a 12/4 Riley Lynx. However, I wish I'd got around to getting the Luvax shock absorbers rebuilt.

Late morning the call came through from Oxford: freezing fog on the nicely cleaned and polished windscreen was becoming a bit of an issue to manage and might stop play. New wipers ineffective. Whilst mulling the implications over a hot chocolate, driver decided that spraying de-icer with one hand whilst driving along was a feasible solution. Application was triggered when visibility to the front was worse than through the non-glazed sides. At T – 4hrs north Birmingham was reached, and a pleasant (restful?) afternoon was had with the children.

T – 2hrs

Fortunately the freezing fog lifted and we handed over the children so that we could be released to travel to the start. We set off, navigator in the modern, filled to the brim with warm clothes, food, spares, tools and oil. No extra fuel for the Riley though. As is often the case, driving the non-motorway route took longer than anticipated and, friends of ours will be unsurprised to read, we were the last to be scrutineered. Navigator legged it to listen to the briefing, whilst driver did the necessary. So much for the plan of arriving in plenty of time, loading the car thoughtfully with items we might need within reach, checking the navigator's board for the maps fitted in the car, getting togged up for the night ahead and feeling generally ready for the event! T – 30mins. Anxiety building nicely.

There's nothing quite like that sinking feeling of listening to people who already have their entry pack and have marked off their 'no-go areas' already and are standing together as a team listening to the brief briefing, whilst you are desperately awaiting the scrutineering sign-off to get your mitts on this sacred pack and feeling uneasy that you're not even sure which way to exit the site. And then, it happened: deep sartorial jealousy upon seeing Wilf Cawley's discotastic ski-cum-binman outfit. We got over it, thank goodness.

We were car number 9, so before we knew it, we had the magic manila rally instruction envelope in our hands and, having identified a flat spot to use, got plotting as much as we could before running to the car. Apologies to the lovely Jo White who witnessed this sudden flurry of focus/panic as we realised what we had let ourselves in for.

T – 0

We had 10 minutes to locate Time Control (TC) 1. First challenge of exiting the site from the correct gate was achieved and we were off! We had a little bit of an issue with locating TC1… this could be a long night. Error corrected (driver had drawn a number 5 over the crucial tiny junction in the first village (*just trying to help with aforementioned map marking - Driver*) and we were back on track. Neither of us said it, but at this point we were both a little concerned that this was going to be a disaster.

TC1 appeared out of the darkness and we were duly told off for not having a clipboard ready with our card on it. A helpful marshal gave us what felt like a cryptic message that: 'the information you need is on the laminated sign in front of you'. What information did we need? We looked at each other alarmed. Turns out that the information was section times: oh well, can't see the stopwatches and haven't had time to work out how to use them anyway. Press on!

Confidence grew as we started to discover what route cards looked like and what you do with the letters on them. The essential clipboard was located and stuffed within reach. The wonderful bright head torch was banned by driver due to the glare. The weapon of choice for navigation was now a child's illuminated bug magnifying glass (in need of new batteries).

Time controls came and went in a blur, we had no idea how we were progressing but the aim was just to get through and worry about it later. We were enjoying ourselves zipping around the countryside in the dead of night, although the odd experience of meeting 20 other cars doing the same thing in very irregular tranches was a little off-putting. Especially when going in opposite directions. Were they in a different class, did they have a different route? It was uncanny just how many times we had to turn right at a church. The competitive juices were beginning to flow.

In the very wee hours we were on a steep upward slope and came round a left-hand bend to find ourselves on Leicestershire's answer to the North Face of the Eiger, and a stopped Volvo at the bottom. Brake! We watched the Volvo Amazon squat down, engage its winter tyres and disappear into the distance as we slipped helplessly sideways into the verge. Hopping out to do 'something helpful' (not sure what) navigator promptly hit the deck and confirmed that 'yes, we are on sheet ice'. Dim lights and a revving engine announced the arrival of Matthew Bell in the Morris Oxford who passed us before also discovering that traction was going to be an issue. More lights, more engines and suddenly we were the cork of an icy bottleneck! Jack Bond to the rescue – jumped out of his car calling for others to get out and give a shove. It was feared that extensive first aid might be needed for Winston Teague as he dramatically hit the deck, but all was well. We were slid sideways off the verge and down to a flattish gravelly section to have a proper crack at the hill. This time driver gunned it all the way to the top, not stopping for anything and making sure he was really up the hill and beyond. Concerned thoughts about the original crank in the engine, but, hey! This is motorsport! Navigator legged it up after, arriving at the car parked up with driver heading back down to help others. Turns out we weren't needed and we ran back up the hill again and got going. We were now definitely not cold, nor tired, but we were very, very, late.

The final TC of part one proved a bit of a challenge for the navigator. The route was not obvious but with a bit of creativity it could work so we set off. Doubt crept in though as time passed with no route cards, no competitors and no TC … error spotted that the approach direction was 180 degrees out. Ah. Final TC wasn't located and we returned to base feeling somewhat dejected and frustrated.

Arriving back at the warm, bright café, we discovered that our anticipated break was going to be 30 minutes shorter than advertised, which was, frankly, like being sawn off at the knees in terms of disappointment. Given our late arrival we now only had 20 minutes to eat, warm up, check the oil and get going again. Oh, and the fuel gauge? Hovering around 50%, which is actually about 30% and we've never explored the lower reaches. No time to fill-up, no fuel in the tender, so let's hope we pass a filling station at some point.

In some ways only having a short break may have saved us as there were fleeting thoughts of chucking it in, but, before we knew it, we had envelope number two, the maps were out and we were off for the second half.

This time we were more confident and started to really get the hang of route planning and anticipating where route cards and TCs would come (Nav) and



Setting off (Motorsport Imagery)



Andrea and Chris Downham at 7:30am the next morning – they did it

keeping the pedal to the metal (Driver). We noted the times for sections (but still couldn't see the watches or the odo). Fewer points were plotted before setting off this time and the challenge of navigating across maps and plotting at the same time was all-consuming. The time slipped by and before we knew it, we were at 6am and apparently had about another hour left! We then came to the second icy TC of the event, where there was an unscheduled rest due to Will Twelvetrees' Riley succumbing with half shaft failure in classic fashion. We even managed to find and stop at a petrol station mid-section (didn't help our times, not recommended).

We were delighted to locate the final TC and finish our first Measham. We headed back to Mountsorrel feeling very proud to have finished and survived with senses of humour, marriage and car intact. Trusty Bagheera had done us proud, despite some slippery, rutted and pot-holed roads, although we must get those shocks rebuilt this year.

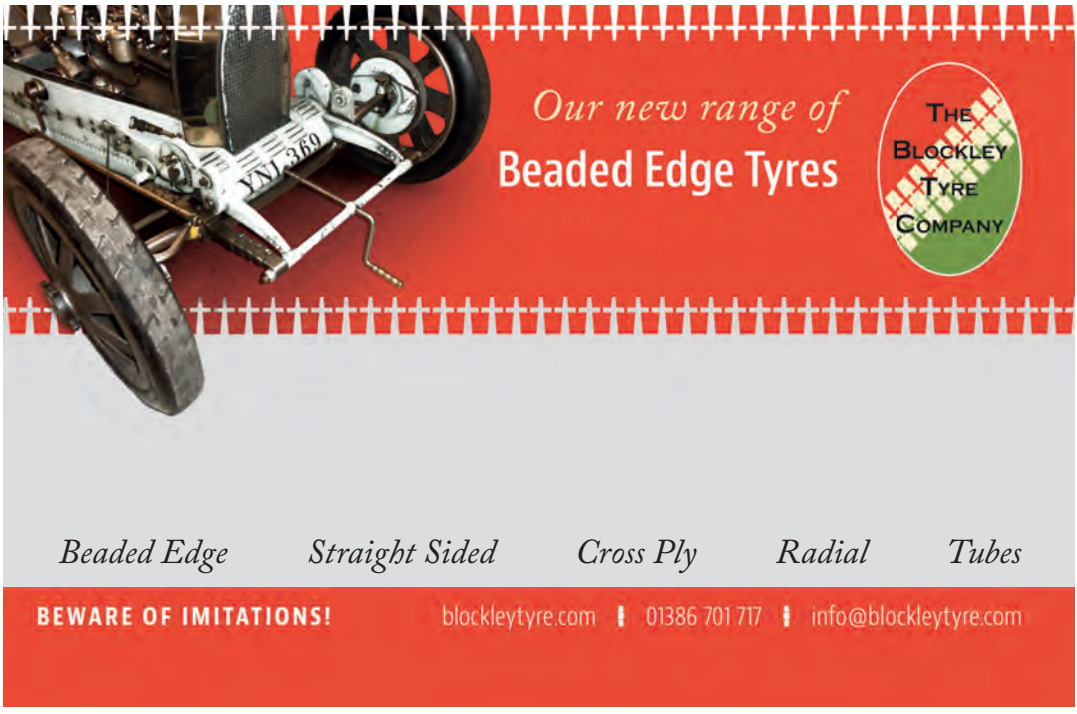
The café was full of other finishers, marshals and supporters with a real buzz of excitement as tales of the night were re-told over very welcome cups of tea and breakfast. However, provisional half-time results had us down as last in our class. Maybe our friends were correct? Cars dispersed fairly quickly, and we finally got motivated to move ourselves and face the journey home. 20 minutes down the road we had to stop to sleep before driving home to be reunited with the children and face the drive south again. At this point our only regret was not booking the Monday off work.



The Measham-stained Riley after the event

We ended up 7th overall, about halfway, in Trophy Fast, and but for (excuses, excuses) a couple of biggish blunders that cost time, distance and missed TCs would have done even better. As first-timers to the Measham we were naive, under-cooked and inexperienced, however we have confidence in our car, some experience with maps and regular exposure to sleep deprivation. Turns out it's totally possible to do it with the original dynamo and cut out, candlepower bulbs and an undersized battery. LEDs are for wimps (*and should be banned in the trophy class? Discuss!*)

The Measham is a great event, we had a brilliant night and learned a huge amount by just getting stuck in. The car will no doubt recover. Thanks to Annabel, marshals, scrutineers and other volunteers, VSCC office, the Duffins and team at Stonehurst Farm. And, if you're even thinking of it, just give it a go. It might not be around for ever. Bring on 2026!



William Rhodes-Moorhouse, the definition of a hero

The centrespread of the last Bulletin *featured a dashing young man at the wheel of a Lion-Peugeot. Now we can reveal his identity and tell the story of his extraordinary life and death, for which he was the first airman to be awarded the Victoria Cross*

Old photographs often capture a remarkable moment but unless the context is jotted down on the back, the significance can be lost. This was the case with the centrespread in the last issue: the car was identifiable as a Lion-Peugeot, but the driver's identity remained a mystery. The photo had belonged to the late Oliver Heal, son of VSCC founding member Anthony, whose archive was recently sold off. Luckily this photo, along with the one we publish in this issue overleaf, was acquired by *Bulletin* contributor Matt Shepherd, who has accumulated one of the most prolific collections of photographs of vintage cars in period.

Following publication of the last issue, member Alastair Inglis got in touch to tell us that the man at the wheel is none other than William Rhodes-Moorhouse, a fascinating figure of the early twentieth century whose short life was shaped by world events. He was fortunate enough to be a wealthy young man living in the early days of motoring and aviation and was very much involved with both. But with grim inevitability, those happy Edwardian days would come to an end with the advent of war, and brave young men such as Rhodes-Moorhouse were to sacrifice everything for the defence of their country.

The story begins on 26 September1887, when William was born in London and took the surname of his father, Edward Moorhouse. Later in life he would change his name to include that of his mother's father, William Barnard Rhodes, a Yorkshireman who was one of the early colonisers of New Zealand. While there, Rhodes adopted a Maori girl, Maryann, who met and married the Englishman Edward Moorhouse, who would become our protagonist's mother. Rhodes left a large part of his fortune to Maryann, and it was apparently a condition of the will that her eldest son adopt his surname.

Edward and Maryann moved to England in 1884 to spend the winters in Northamptonshire because he was mad on hunting. The Pytchley was his preferred hunt, so a lease was taken on Lamport Hall, a Tudor manor with 17th- and 18th-century extensions, which



William Rhodes-Moorhouse, the bravest of pilots

lies within its country. As a sidenote, Sir Charles Isham, their landlord, started the fashion for garden gnomes after introducing a number of terracotta figures to the gardens in the 1840s. The house came with 24 bedrooms which Edward and Maryann did their best to try and fill, having four children, two girls and two boys.

After various rent increases, the Moorhouses switched to renting Spratton Grange, a more modern country house nearby. As it happens, the village of Spratton today has a very active history society which was how a biography came to be written of William Rhodes-Moorhouse by member Enid Jarvis, published in 2015 to mark the centenary of his death. The book was reviewed on pp. 91–92 of *Bulletin* 290.

From an early age William, or Billy, showed a passion for machines, treasuring the steam engines and locomotives bought for him at the newly opened Bassett-Lowke factory in Northampton. He was not a natural student, however, and after prep school at the Golden Parsonage Preparatory School in Hertfordshire he attended Harrow and then a crammer to get

him into Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He was described as 'physically powerful and full of beans, with reddish fair hair and vivid green eyes'. By now he was able to indulge his passion for motorbikes and then for fast cars, much to his father's disappointment, who had tried but failed to channel his passion for speed into hunting.

By 1906, Billy owned a 6hp Riley and a 5hp Humber, which were soon replaced with a 20-30hp Fiat. In 1909 he upgraded to a pale blue 70hp Fiat. This he christened 'Linda', after Linda Beatrice Morritt, a friend of his older sister Anne. If it was a ploy to woo her, it worked, as in June 1912 they were married. Linda also loved adventure, and during a visit to St. Moritz in which he survived the Cresta Run, she joined Lord Carberry in his six 'man' bobsleigh. Billy was building quite a stable of cars including two Rolls-Royce Silver Ghosts, one a coupé-limousine, the other a landaulet, both bodied by Arthur Mulliner. These were joined by an Hispano Suiza Alfonso XIII and then in 1912 by the Austro-Daimler 'Prinz Heinrich' 22/80 designed by Ferdinand Porsche, photographed overleaf. According to Jarvis's researches, this car immediately preceded the Lion-Peugeot.

Running parallel to Billy's passion for cars was his interest in airplanes, having learned to fly at Huntingdon. There he met James Radley with whom he teamed up to acquire a Gnome-engined Blériot, with which they flew across America, making money at air shows by performing tricks in an activity known as 'barnstorming'. Back home, they developed their own aircraft, the Radley-Moorhouse monoplane, similar to the Blériot. According to *Grace's Guide*: 'In 1911 he came 2nd in the Aerial Derby race around London. He also made the first cargo flight, carrying Barratts boots from Northampton to Hendon. At about this time it is thought he demonstrated the first tail slides and possibly even a loop.'

After getting married, Will and Linda went to Belgium to take delivery of a Breguet featuring a Salmson Canton-Unne engine. Upon their return they hit bad weather and were forced to crash-land near Ashford. They survived but Linda apparently suffered a miscarriage soon after. By now William had come into his fortune, with which he acquired Parnham House just outside Beaminster, one of the most important houses in Dorset. It is here that Matt Shepherd's photographs appear to have been taken, although perhaps on different occasions as William wears different clothes. As a side note, Parnham House was bought in 2001 by an Austrian hedge fund manager, Michael Treichl, who spent fifteen years restoring the house and its contents, which had undergone some decline in the twentieth century, having been used as a country club and nursing home. But all was lost in a savage fire in 2017, and two months later Treichl was found dead in Lake Geneva, apparently devastated by the loss. The ruins have since been bought by a renowned country house developer.

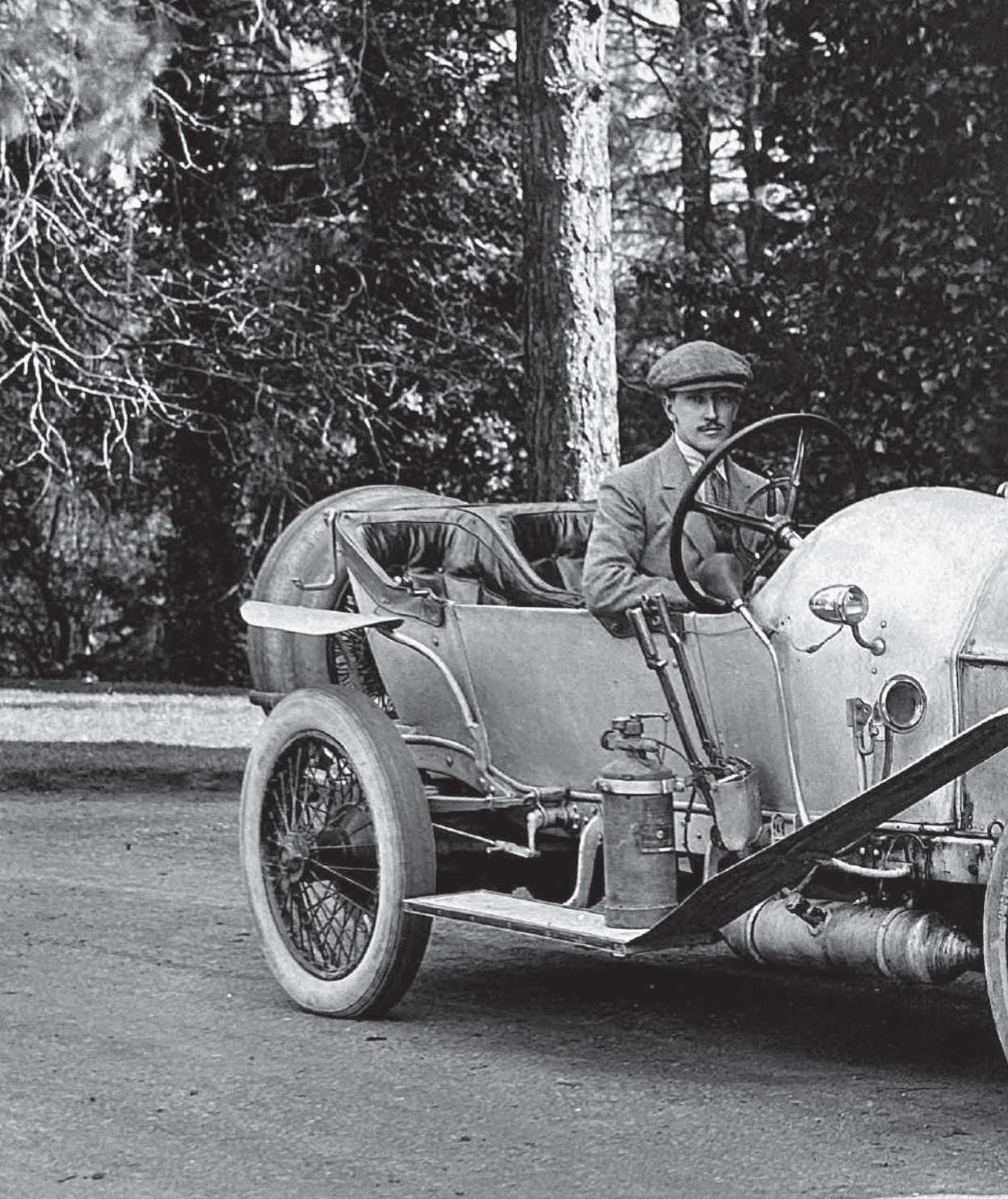
To return to our hero, and we do not use the word lightly: when war broke out in 1914, he immediately joined the Royal Flying Corps as a 2nd lieutenant, then aged 27. His son Willie had been born in March that year. By the spring of 1915, William was based at Merville, just west of Lille, flying regularly on aerial reconnaissance missions under order from Hugh Trenchard. Ivor Lloyd, a Sandhurst graduate who observed regularly for him, described how they would chase enemy aircraft, getting so close they could fire their revolvers at the pilots. The 2nd Battle of Ypres started on 22 April. On 26 April, the RFC was ordered to bomb the enemy's railway network to prevent reinforcements reaching the front lines. Rhodes-Moorhouse, who had been due leave, was instructed to bomb the strategically vital railway junction at Courtrai – one of three targets for four aircraft. He took off alone from Merville at 15.05 hours, having been asked to release his 100lb bomb from just below cloud level.

Before setting off he wrote a letter to Linda, describing how he would have to fly very low, at a height of 300ft, to ensure hitting the target: 'I am off on a trip from which I don't expect to return but which

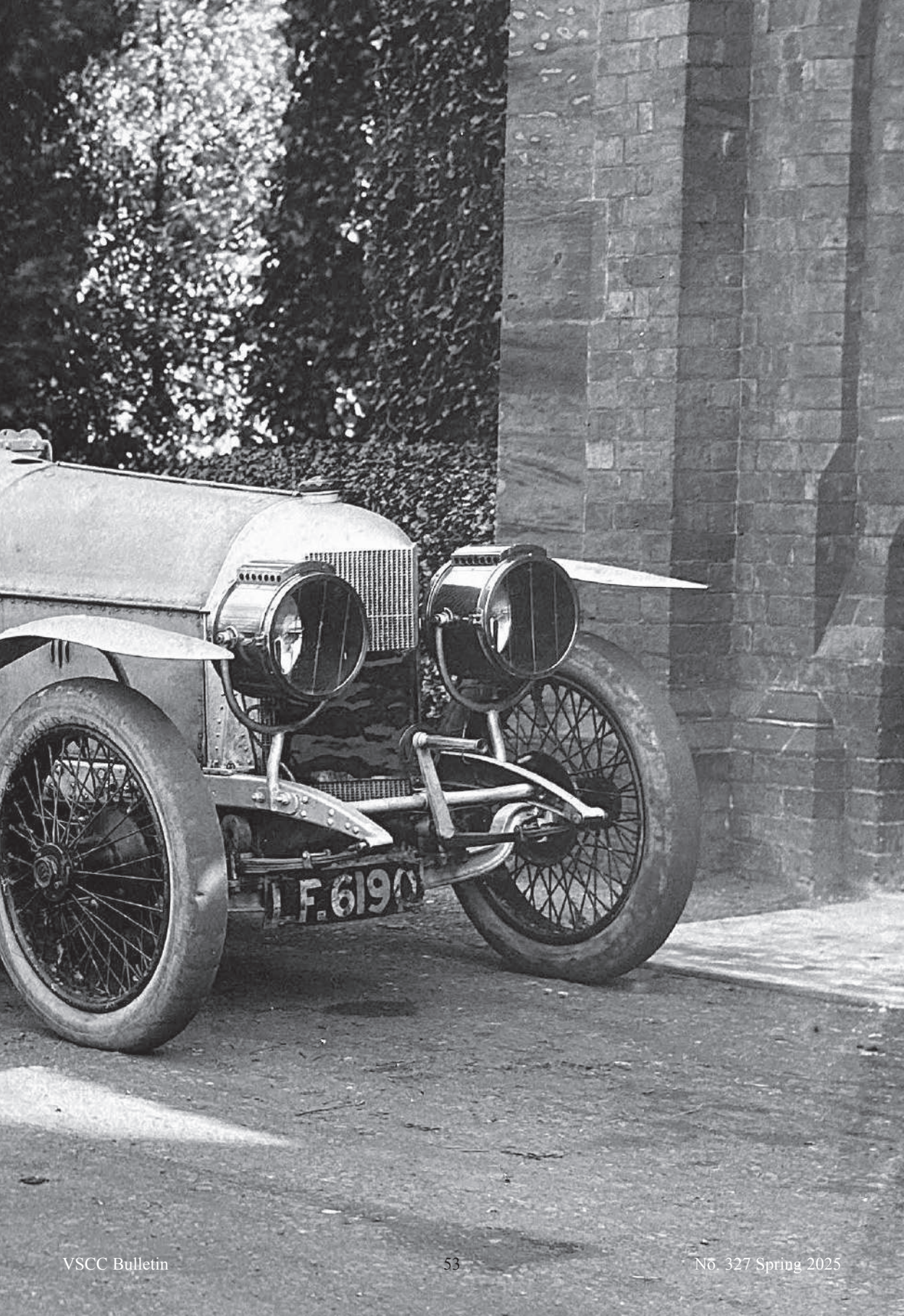
Continued on p. 54



On his wedding day to Linda Morritt, June 1912



William Rhodes-Moorhouse at the wheel of his Austro-Daimler (Matt Shepherd collection)


F.6190



William Rhodes-Moorhouse's home, Parnham House in Dorset, where he is buried

Continued from p. 51

I hope will shorten the war a bit. I shall probably be blown up by my own bomb or, if not, killed by rifle fire.' He also left a letter addressed to his son to read on his 21st birthday.

The aircraft came under intense enemy fire from a machine-gun located in the belfry of Courtrai Church and from the ground. He was hit by a burst of machine-gun fire and his aircraft was peppered by bullets and struck by shrapnel from the bomb explosion. He carried on and after making the thirty-two-mile flight, he dropped right down to 300 feet to ensure a direct hit. He was greeted instantly with a volley of rifle and machine-gun fire, and when he was directly over the target a further burst of machine-gun fire perforated his aircraft's fuselage and smashed into his thigh. At the same time, fragments from his own bomb ripped through the wings and tailplane.

Rhodes-Moorhouse, badly wounded and in great pain, had two options: land behind enemy lines where he would at least receive urgent medical attention and survive, albeit as a Prisoner of War; or limp back to base with the vital intelligence he had gathered. Choosing the latter option, he dropped a further 200 feet to gain some extra speed and again encountered heavy fire from the ground. This led to two new wounds to his hand and abdomen. He landed at Merville airfield at 16:12 and had to be lifted out of the cockpit by his mechanics. He insisted on reporting the success of his mission to his Flight Commander before being taken to a Casualty Clearing Station where he died. As a result of his action, the German reinforcements were delayed for a critical 16-hour period.

For his bravery and self-sacrifice, Rhodes-Moorhouse was awarded the Victoria Cross, the first person from an airborne division to receive the honour in the First World War. Unusually, he was not buried in France, as was government policy, but his request to be repatriated and buried at Parnham House was granted by Trenchard. On 5 May, a funeral was conducted in the Great Hall, after which his body was interned on a hill overlooking the house, as a trumpeter played 'The Last Post'. His son also became a pilot and was killed 25 years later in the Battle of Britain. He is buried next to his father.

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The morning scene outside the Brooklands clubhouse (Steve Welsh)

The New Year's Driving Tests

Take one historic venue, pepper with Kevin Lee's fiendish tests and souse in a liberal downpour and you have the recipe for a vintage day out, says **BRUCE GIRVAN**

This year's visit to Brooklands for the New Year Driving Tests on Sunday 26 January was another classic. Twelve tests had been devised, with one change being that the main straight featured two rather than three. But having more space meant a larger area for the driver to forget where they were meant to be – there were almost as many cones out as on the M1. And did I mention the weather?

I should wind back to 7am when, with porridge inside, wrapped in many layers, I was scraping ice off Eddie the Jowett's windscreen as dark began to think about giving way to light. Living in mid-Sussex means Brooklands is my nearest venue but it still requires 39 miles of lanes and A-roads before heading through the Campbell entrance to the Clubhouse. Never easy in a 6-volt powered Light Car, but great fun. Eddie is a 1930 7hp fabric bodied 'Economy' tourer designed by Jowett to challenge that rascal of a car from Austin. The 907cc twin may not rev like a banshee, but it has a twin-cylinder thrum that makes driving swiftly a pleasure. So there we were, heading west along the A272 with the frost turning hedges and fields aglow with millions of jewels as the sun popped up in the clear sky to ignite the glass of the radiator calorimeter aflame with gold. Could vintage motoring be any better? According to the weather forecast it was going to get worse – and they were right.

Brooklands is magic. As soon as you drop down towards the Clubhouse in a vintage car, it feels right. There are friendly faces, some old, some new as scrutineering is done without fuss to the right level of detail by those with VSCC knowledge. With chit in hand, I climbed the outer stairs to the registration lounge to pick up number and instructions, while vintage engines burbled below. That gathering of vintage sports cars, with the Brooklands scoreboard behind, is a wonderful sight. The second event of the VSCC 2025 calendar was about to get underway.

But not before chatting to the Hockley Heath team and a gathering of marshals. Then it was the serious matter of deciphering and committing to memory what Kevin Lee had devised using crosses, squiggles and lines with test instructions that always seems to make sense on paper, but never after the marshal's flag has dropped, and you have left the start line to face a sea of cones with no line nor route marks to guide you. Adding in the 100-plus-year-old surface and January conditions means eagerness on the throttle and generous leverage of brakes allows wheels to lock and slide beyond those imaginary lines the wheelbase is supposed to straddle. Which is



First-floor view as competitors are scrutineered (Noel Skeats)



The Hoskins' Lea-Francis at speed (Noel Skeats)

why neither the fastest car nor the fastest driver wins, but the one who matches their capability with that of the car, the surface and the test aims. That's what I tell myself, anyway, to justify my Jowett's progress. Eddie would say that the car is rarely at fault.

The morning tests numbered six, including the Test Hill, Members' Banking, two on the start/finish straight, one in front of the Wellington Hangar and the gravelled surface of the Paddock. They offered a wide range of driving befuddlement involving speed, braking, line-straddling, deftness of steering input, reversing and car location against the clock. The weather was still dry, but the wind was rising and temperatures still fresh as the 59 entries and 66 drivers headed off to their allotted starting points.

It paid to walk the course on Test Six and not rely on the paper map as the straddle line and garages were confusingly different for those that did not. I headed to Test One, the Test Hill – or Brooklands Flying School as it was named for the morning. No flying today, as the slippery start by the bottom gate meant momentum was spun away, losing valuable speed to tackle the ever-steepening hill. That statement may bewilder the drivers of cars with more powerful engines, but for the heavier standard cars every mph not gained at the bottom of the hill counts. Eddie's twin may have dropped some revs as we hit the final 1-in-4 climb section, but its Yorkshire heritage means it can manage a hill, even if slowly. It is easy in hindsight to say, 'if only I had lined up on a dry line'. Several cars were unable to grace the top of the hill, which was a shame but shows how much of a test the Hill still is.

Test Two on the Members' Banking was a classic for a driving test. Just a forward and back but long enough for speed and stopping to be worst of friends. The general slipperiness of that area meant the Ulster ahead of me seemed to sail with some speed and all four wheels locked past the first straddle line, ditto for the third line. The less revvy Jowett had no such problems but I was glad for the warning. The surface in that area is visibly getting worse by the year, which is a shame. As I waited for my turn I could almost hear the thunder of cars 100 years ago high up on the banking, getting airborne and without a safety fence or airbag in sight.

Tests Three and Four on the start–finish straight were delightful alterations on classics, extended for the increased space offered by removing a test from that section. This works really well for the slower cars as it challenges the need to maintain speed and smooth changes of direction. It also challenges the memory. While I lined up for the start I was wondering if some of the drivers in front were reading the same instructions. Once out on Test Three, the cones came on fast and counting them became harder, but I found a lovely mix of speed and rhythm as the 23 changes of direction around the cones threatened to ruin time if overdriven in a car that 'likes to lean'.



James Miles and Archie Miller shared this 1927 Chummy (Noel Skeats)



Michael Patterson manoeuvres his Morris Minor 'flea' into a box (Mike Stokes)



Winner of Class Three, Wilf Cawley in the Frazer Nash Super Sports (Mike Stokes)

Test Four also seemed to bewilder some, principally the long reverse in a straight line that required a straddle (or not) at the end followed by slaloming cones that looked an awfully long way away whilst trying to remember that there was a fine line to thread the double finish line. Watching the longer wheelbase cars – especially Tim Britnell's stately Sunbeam saloon – handle the cones brought home the need to be in harmony with the capability of the car unless, of course, you have a 'Nash where you can slide for the photographer at will. Hats off to the Morgan Aero, so easy to understeer or spin up the rear yet Tim Colledge seemed to have it all under control in a most unassuming but quick way. Distributor gremlins hit Angelica Fuentes early on, necessitating a retirement; such a shame as Angelica normally delights the crowds with the wonderful exhaust note and rapid changes of direction of the Peugeot Lockhart Special. We look forward to seeing Angelica back soon. On a happier note, seeing a Rover Eight Tourer shared by Mark and Megan Lynch and a Salmson AL22 driven very nicely by Rebel Erratt-Camp in Class Five added to the eclectic mix of motors on show. Archie Miller showed just what a carefully managed Austin Seven can achieve by coming out top in Class Five, some great driving, Archie, says the driver who came second …

Test Five required mental and car dexterity to avoid losing time and gaining penalties on the gravel surface in the Paddock area as the hail started to come down from the dark sky above. The faster cars were entertaining here, particularly the winner of Class Four (Modified Sports-Cars) and overall winner David Pryke in the ever-fast Morgan Riley, and winner of Class Three for Standard Sports-Cars, Wilfred Cawley in the 'Nash Super Sports. The Ulsters of William and Richard Marsh were rapid enough (should I mention that Will was consistently quicker, but did he really have the hood up later?) and enjoyed a close fight with the wonderful-sounding Wolseley Aerees Special driven by Paul Compton and the quicker Austin Seven Sports skilfully piloted by David Wallom. I am always impressed by competing saloons and their drivers, and Dee Searle piloting the very pretty BMW 315 no doubt felt quite smug given a very rapid and tidy set of tests and remaining out of the rain while working the wheel in the afternoon. The Class Two tourers were well represented in marques with the Riley Monaco of Duncan Cartwright coming out on top against Dee, while the Riley Nine Mark IV of Matthew Smethurst and Ruben Cartwright, Duncan's son sharing his Monaco, finished close behind. Also present were a Ford A Tudor, Seven Saloon, Singer and that lovely Sunbeam. A great selection of saloon cars.



Sophie Wiseman and her 'Nash embrace the weather (Steve Welsh)

Which brings us to the afternoon tests. A deluge and gale swept in during lunch and stayed on and off for the remainder of the day and into the night. Both Test Seven, the re-run of the Test Hill, and Test Eight on the Members' Banking, were cancelled, but the other tests went on. That the VSCC could continue yet again highlights how lucky the VSCC is to have such a dedicated band of marshals. They donned whatever protection they could and headed out into the downpour. Those heroes in orange kept smiling as things got very, very wet. Fortunately, vintage car tyres rarely encounter aquaplaning, though some may have come close at times. Test Nine, 'Competition from France', involved a memory of which order to tackle two lines of cones with a usual mix of straddling a few lines which were underwater as much as the poor start-line marshal's shoes. Photographer Steve Shelley was out braving the elements to get some cracking shots of the cars in action in the rain as he tested out a new lens. If you have not seen them then I urge you to do so. This was the only test to have caused Class One winner, Harry Fraser in the Overland, to have an issue. Considering how exposed he was sitting atop such a large car he seemed to thread the cones very nicely; perhaps he was above the rain clouds when perched up there.

Test Ten was almost a flip of Test Five, however the wet surface on the top incline of the start–finish straight made careful braking and gentle acceleration the order of the day to avoid too much wheelspin or locking up depending on whether you were pointing up or down the slope. What appeared a simple test



More of a marquee than a car, Andrew Howe-Davies's hoodless Austin (Steve Welsh)

run on paper produced many a wrong test once the red flag dopped. It didn't phase Eddie as I deliberately went slow and used 2nd gear throughout once underway. It also didn't phase the lovely MG TA of Class Three runner-up Martin Neal who recorded a respectable 79 seconds and must have wondered just what Wilf Cawley's winning 'Nash had under the bonnet as he recorded a 50-second run. MGs were well represented in this class, which just reminds us how well engineered these performance cars are – I'd love to try one, but at 6′ 2″ I would need shorter legs.

Test 11, '1925 Easter Monday', did not involve any chocolate eggs, but did involve stopping inside six of eight garages and always produces a varied range of methods and is a lot of fun to watch. It was a quite brilliant 38 seconds by Daniel Pearson in his modified Ulster in Class Four that stole the test, beating the next best by six seconds. I thought I had done well, recording 53 seconds yet I was clearly deluded as Archie Miller recorded a 45-second run. What is it with these damned Austin Sevens?

Test 12 was a snail-shell test in front of the Wellington Hangar involving circling four times and stop–starting but with a twist on the first circle. Eight stop-astrides were required, yet David Pryke still managed to record 41 seconds on a very wet surface. Impressive. As was Archie Miller who cracked it in 49 seconds in the standard Austin Seven while the rest of the class were looking at 60 seconds plus. By this point I'll confess to thinking I needed a bilge pump to clear the water in the footwell. I had not put the hood up to avoid upsetting the car in the strong gusts, but I had put the tonneau on and my waterproofs. Top marks to Andrew Howe-Davies and his Austin Seven being driven with a large umbrella affixed to the car and neatly tethered to each corner. It would appear to have been devised to keep car and driver dry, but I wonder if it was designed to act as an aero device? Mary Poppins or airbrake? No one could say that VSCC competitors are conventional.

At last the cones were packed away and the marshals headed off to dry out. The VSCC NYDT team and Brooklands Museum should be proud of letting this form of fun continue, particularly as it allows the public such close viewing of the action and a chance to chat and wander among the cars and drivers as they circulate and wait for the tests. So it was with hood down, buffeting wind and lashing rain that I pointed Eddie south towards the coast, me wearing that post-event smile while Eddie's twin thrummed happily away with headlights vaguely picking out the route ahead; no doubt we were considered mad by other road users. Who cares, it was another superb VSCC day at Brooklands. I hope everyone got home safely, and thank you to the NYDT team, especially to our marshals.



Tim Colledge's Morgan enjoys some water-cooling (Steve Welsh)

A Revival Revived

In 1936, it was decided to build ten new 'vintage' Bentleys from a cache of new old stock and reconditioned parts at the Hendon works. Only the first of the series, RC41, retains its original body, the rest now inevitably reclothed as Le Mans reps. So when this unique survivor came up for auction in 2019 after 30 years in a Stockport garage, it was lucky to find the right buyer, as **BAUMPFLANZER** *explains*

It was on the back nine of Pezula golf course in South Africa that Tony McEwan casually mentioned to Trevor Kells that a 1936 Bentley 4½-litre would soon be coming up for auction. Although Trevor by no means saw himself as an expert in Bentley history, he knew that his old chum had made an embarrassing error. For wasn't it well-known that Bentley had introduced the new 4¼-litre in 1936?

Between greens and tees, Tony gave Trevor a tutorial in the curious story of the RC Bentley series. Nobby Clarke, who had built the first Bentley engine and became the Works Team Manager, and Hubert Pike, a director of the first Bentley Company, who had known W.O. from his prep school days, had been employed by Rolls-Royce to run the Service Department in Kingsbury in the thirties, partly to fulfil the five-year guarantees with which the Cricklewood cars were sold. In 1936, they came up with the idea of building a limited number of the 'old style' Bentleys, using the stock of new and reconditioned parts which Rolls-Royce had taken over in 1931. Apart from the opportunity to show off the skills of the Service Department, this project brought the additional benefit of keeping the staff occupied during slacker periods.

The Service Department eventually built four 3-litres and six 4½-litres during the course of the year. The 3-litres were constructed from a combination of new and reconditioned parts and incorporated such outdated components as a cone clutch, but for the 4½-litres the best and largely new parts from four- and six-cylinder Cricklewood models were sourced from the Spares Department. A late specification 10′ 10″ chassis was mated to a standard crankshaft engine incorporating all the improvements introduced during its production life. This ultimate combination of chassis and engine was enhanced by the careful curation of the sporting D-type gearbox, a 6½-litre back axle with a 3.53:1 ratio, servo self-wrapping front brakes attached to a heavy pattern front axle and 4-litre steering gear. In keeping with the theme of modernisation, RC chassis were fitted with an electric fuel pump and 19″ wheels.



RC41 in period with its elegant body by Vanden Plas of 1936

All the 4½-litres except RC 46, which wore a Corsica saloon body, were bodied by Vanden Plas as four-seater tourers in contemporary style. Messrs Clarke and Pike had created the ideal 'old style' Bentley, updated for mid-thirties motoring. RC 41 was shown to her first owner, Colonel Guy Bedford, when he called at Kingsbury to collect his 3-litre from a service. Bedford returned regularly with RC41 until 1939, when the Department's doors shut for the last time.

After a spell in Switzerland with Bedford in the forties, RC41 returned to the UK, where it was looked after by first H. R. Owen and thereafter by the potty-mouthed S. J. (Syd) Lawrence, who had been trained at Bentley Motors in the twenties. After the war, the failure of its cross-shaft gears caused the Colonel to abandon it in an orchard behind R. E. Hunt's garage near Redhill, where it was spotted, lurking under a tarpaulin, by Philip Blackham, who had served with distinction in WWII, flying Lancaster bombers. In the first dozen years of his longtime ownership, Blackham made a number of 'improvements' to RC41. Blackham's detailed account of the modifications which he made can be found in the Bentley Drivers Club *Review* for April 1965. His sign-off paragraph said: 'The fact that complete and absolute approval has been expressed by other BDC members who have driven her, some of them owners of standard 4½ cars, has been a source of satisfaction to me and a wonderful return for the efforts and expense involved.' Blackham's statement confirms just how far attitudes to the

modifying of old Bentleys have changed since the sixties. The key point, though, was whilst RC41 had been altered, the essential RC series Bentleys had survived.

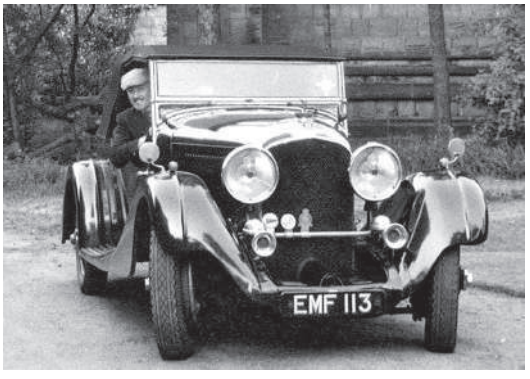
Trevor Kells is first and foremost a sportsman: avian and piscatorial life is rightly nervous when he is in the vicinity. Trevor is also a serial entrepreneur: if ever Peter Jones vacates his chair on *Dragons' Den*, Trevor would be a shoo-in. He is also a man who likes to do things differently and can spot an opportunity where others are blind; his interest in RC41 had been piqued by Tony's description. The next time that the pair convened was at the auction preview to inspect the car which had been put up for sale by Blackham's estate. They were joined by Wayne Huckle, a second-generation restorer of Cricklewood Bentleys with a reputation for high quality rebuilds. Wayne gave the pair his candid opinion of RC41's condition, which was not comforting.

Following a clutch failure, RC41 had been abandoned for the second time: thirty-odd years of storage in the semi-open, with a sheet which protected only half the bodywork, had left RC41 in need of a complete restoration. After their inspection, Trevor and Tony set off for a Bentley Drivers Club trip to France, Tony in his 4½ and Trevor in his Mk VI Le Mans lookalike from the swanky end of the Crewe special spectrum. Trevor's faux racer suffered a failure of a minor modern electrical component, causing a breakdown. It was at this point that fellow tourist and current chairman of the BDC entered the picture, observing: 'If you'd bought yourself a proper Bentley, this would never have happened.' Stung by this remark, Trevor rose to the fly and appointed Wayne as his bidding agent at the auction where RC41 was to appear.

The auction house estimate for RC 41 was in long-chassis 3-litre territory. Trevor instructed Wayne to start high in order to see off dealers and chancers looking for a bargain. For once, the master of negotiation had misread his market. The estimate was quickly passed and bidding reached the price of a pukka Speed Model. Wayne called for further instructions. Momentarily, Trevor wavered. It was at this point that Mrs Kells intervened. Hadn't Trevor just recovered from a serious illness? Wouldn't RC41 be just the project to celebrate a return to health? Could he afford it? How well Hilary knows her husband. Wayne was instructed to pay whatever it took and trade quality 4½ Le Mans replica money eventually bought RC41. (By the time RC41 was finished, Trevor could have bought himself a weapons-grade Blower replica.)

RC41 safely delivered to Wayne's premises, a monumental decision was taken: RC41 would be reinstated to the Bentley which had caught Bedford's eye at Kingsbury. It would have been simpler, quicker and considerably cheaper to have built yet another Le Mans replica. (All bar one other RC series Bentley have been stamped out as Le Mans replicas in relatively recent times – and the only other RC still wearing its 1930s body is not on its original chassis.) This was a vanishingly rare opportunity to do the right thing with a matching numbers machine, using as much of its constituent parts as could be saved. Despite Blackham's 'improvements' in the sixties, RC 41 retained much of its original equipment, including such rarely kept items as the jack, mallet and tools.

As Wayne started the process of dismantling RC41, the ravages of its inadequate storage fully revealed themselves, the uncovered side of RC41 being particularly poor. The seized engine was suspended just off the workshop floor whilst the penetrating oil went about its work. A few days later during a short tea break in an adjoining room, Wayne and his assistant, Stuart, heard a dull thud as, at long last, the crankcase released its grip on the block. The crankcase was stripped and cleaned and a new seat machined for the pressure relief ball. A new Phoenix crankshaft and rods were ordered. The block was pressure tested and found to be staunch. The bores, though,



Supplied new to Colonel Guy Bedford, it was issued with a Middlesex number



The car as unearthed from a garage in Stockport



Photos taken by the auction house show restoration was needed



Incredibly, the body had survived

were very corroded and were taken out to +40 thousandths. New Arias pistons were sourced which give a compression ratio of 6.8:1, a slight increase on that chosen by Blackham in the sixties, providing all the verve necessary for touring whilst avoiding camshaft chatter. The original camshaft, which showed no sign of wear, was refitted, whilst new bearings and valves and valve guides were replaced. Blockages in oil drain tubes were cleared and the missing water pump was replaced.

If the engine presented its challenges, the repair of the very tired body to its original state was possibly a higher test of Wayne's skills – the accent being on time-consuming, and hence expensive, preservation of the craftsmanship exhibited by the workforce at Kingsbury, nearly ninety years ago. The aluminium skin was gently eased off to reveal the extent of decay in the ash frame. Where an inch or two of wood had rotted in contact with panel pins, it was cut out and new piece spliced into the sound part. The door strike plates were rusty and had to be restored, after which great time and care was taken to make the three-hinge doors fit properly. The result of this painstaking work is that around eighty percent of the body has been retained. Mercifully, Blackham had not cut down the radiator when lowering the bonnet line, but had instead dropped the entire radiator by modifying the mounting brackets and the headlamp stanchions. This meant that the radiator could be recored and rechromed by Vintage Radiators, one of the few jobs which was subcontracted. With the mounting brackets repositioned and the radiator reinstalled, new metal was let into the bonnet sides to complete RC41's return to its 1936 profile.

New pieces of aluminium were let into the modified front wings to reinstate their original lines, Wayne leaving the weld marks under the wings undressed so that it can never be doubted that these are the wings which Blackham attacked with his cutter. It is impossible to find high-quality cellulose paint these days, such are the myriad regulations which surround its sale. Whereas two-pack paint normally leaves the appearance of a boiled sweet, skilful users of the spray gun employing subtle techniques can replicate the soft finish of cellulose. Painstaking rubbing down with very fine wet and dry paper assists in achieving a deep and lustrous finish. Eight topcoats of two-pack thus applied is equivalent to between twenty and thirty coats of cellulose. It is more than likely that the result is better than that accomplished by Vanden Plas in the thirties.

There was, sadly, one element of RC41 which was beyond even Wayne's incredible restorative powers: the trim. Eight hides were purchased and the original trim used as patterns to cut the new leather. The hood had been lowered by Blackham expediently by using the original brackets on the inside of the body and cutting the hood frame to suit the new location. Wayne restored the brackets to their earlier position and welded in some new pieces to the shortened sticks,



Despite being made of vintage bones, the body is unmistakably later



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A cluttered yet pleasing array of lamps and horns



The original interior in oxblood red

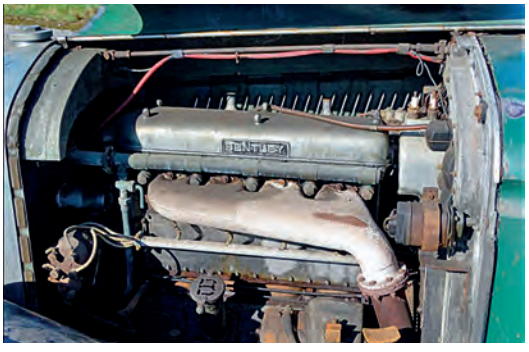
after which a new mohair hood was cut and sewn and the pre-Blackham line reinstated.

Pressures of business allowed Trevor only the very occasional visit to Sleaford, usually accompanied by friends. One friend, not known for his interest in ancient Bentleys, seemed to be deeply absorbed by the work being performed by Stuart. On investigation, it turned out that they were discussing fly fishing. During the course of the rebuild, a decision was taken to retain one modification made by Blackham and incorporate three departures from the Kingsbury design. Blackham had had Rolls-Royce make a switchplate for the dashboard which echoed the type which were used on Merlin-powered aircraft in WWII. The switchplate was in deplorable condition and its restoration was a very tricky process. Wayne removed the traces of paint and cleaned up the embossed chrome lettering. He then acid etched the plate by hand to key up the background. The chrome lettering was cleaned off after each application of new paint. After the top coat was painted, it was removed from the chrome and the lettering was gently polished without damaging the background.

The most significant alteration was the construction of a boot. Wayne discovered that the fixtures were in place for a boot lid. Probably for reasons of cost, the work had not been completed. Cost no longer being an issue, the aborted work was completed eighty-eight years later. There is just sufficient room to stow a large Toblerone.

The second modification was the installation of a concealed drinks cabinet which was added, no doubt, to keep Trevor and his fellow guns suitably refreshed in the field. And then there is Trevor's Folly, which is the cording of RC41's steering wheel, which is more Brooklands than Great North Road and which will have to be removed if RC41 is to mix it at the upper echelons of the Concours d'Elegance world. Any member who has been involved in the restoration of an old car will know that adherence to a timetable is seemingly impossible. Unforeseen problems arise, there are delays with suppliers and so deadlines come and go. In RC41's case, Covid intervened.

A huge push was made to finish RC41 for Walton Hall in 2024. Despite the extraordinarily high quality of the restoration and a special mention from the Chairman in the publicity blurb for the Summer Concours, Trevor was becomingly modest about RC41's prospects of success. He needn't have been, as RC41 carried off the President's Trophy for the best vintage Bentley and the W.O. Bentley Memorial Foundation Trophy for the best in show. This was a relief for the writer, who had offered to eat his Panama hat – essential wear at a concours event – if RC41 failed to take the top spot. This chapter of RC41's story opened on a golf course by the Indian Ocean and it seems likely that it will close on another, as there is a strong possibility that the restoration of the century will be submitted to further critical examination by men wearing Panama hats on a golf course by the North Pacific.



Nearside view of the 4½-litre engine



The end result: it won best in show

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One of ten Citroen Kégresses on display

Rétromobile

The annual exhibition in Paris had plenty to entertain VSCC members, **MATT SHEPHERD** *among them, and raised the question of whether the Citroen Kégresse might not make the ideal trials car*

The cold and wet of January is gone, the days are getting longer and there is a hint of sunshine in the sky. I walk my daughter to school, kiss my wife goodbye and head to the train station. No commuting to the office today, I'm off to Paris for Rétromobile. I arrive at St Pancras in good time and head up to the Champagne Bar to meet the other VSCC members joining me on this trip. After more champagne on the Eurostar and looking out of the windows at the endless wintry fields of northern France broken up by the occasional small village, which each seems to have a church, we arrive at the Gard du Nord. From here we head across the road to the brasserie at the 25 Hours Hotel Terminus Nord, a superb dining hall with great food. After *huîtres* (oysters), *canard et frites* (duck and chips) and a *crème brûlée* (no translation needed), we head to the hotel. I confidently lead the party on a mile or two walk but get slightly lost – I



If you are going to be stretchered off the battlefield it might as well be on this Bugatti trailer



1924 GP Sunbeam 'The Cub'



Type 59 Bugattis are having a moment, with a definitive book coming out



How many Austro-Daimlers can we get in this issue? Here's a third

don't think anyone noticed. Later we meet up with some more Rétromobile-bound VSCC members for a few drinks in Le Petit Fer à Cheval in the Marais. It was the perfect start to a great couple of days.

Rétromobile is held annually in the vast exhibition halls of the Porte de Versailles, and entry this year cost 24 euros per person (about £20). We entered via the main hall and the first car we saw was a baby Bugatti Royale (Type 46) which was unrestored and on display from the former Schlumpf Collection. Almost as interesting was the trailer next to it, which was fitted with a pair of GP Bugatti wheels. It seemed to have a stretcher on. It's unclear if being transported on this would help or hinder any injuries as it didn't look particularly well sprung. The first stand we went to was the Phoenix Green Garage where we had a chat with owner Nick Benwell, a longstanding VSCC member, and admired the many Lancias he had for sale. We took him up on his kind offer to leave coats here (it does get hot in these halls). Opposite this stand was the Renault stand, where they had four modern electric versions of older models, including a 1920s record-breaking car. Its reimagined modern version was quite cool but I'm not sure if it was built just for show or for some actual record-breaking. The modern Renault 4s and 5s just looked far bigger than the cars they were modelled on, but had the the odd nod to the earlier models.

The show is so big that I won't give you a stand-by-stand review but I will tell you about some of the more interesting cars on display, which you'll be pleased to know were mainly pre-war. One car that some older readers may recall being raced at VSCC events by Anthony Heal and others was the GP Sunbeam known as 'The Cub'. For many years it was on display at Beaulieu. This superb 1924 Grand Prix car was also raced at Brooklands by Kaye Don and others and was sold by Heal to the Rootes Group in the mid-1950s. Later Peugeot, who had bought the Rootes Group, took it back from Beaulieu in more recent years. Sold to its current owner as a non-runner, it's now been sympathetically restored and looks fantastic. It was on the stand of French auction house Aguttes and for sale. It would be great to see it running again in the UK, especially alongside its sister car 'Puppy' which is nearing roadworthy condition, after an even longer period of not running.

The Bugatti Type 59 is the subject of a forthcoming book and the team behind it had a stand dedicated to the new book which is to be published shortly. A trio of the cars was on this stand, these being (chassis) 59121, the Charlie Martin car later owned



The Austro-Daimler's three-litre engine is fed by four carburetors



Oozing style was this award-winning Mercedes



This Lancia Lambda caught our reporter's eye



Vast 1912 Lancia 30hp Victoria with leather wings

by Stafford East for many years; 59124, the Noel Rees/Brian Lewis car and later with Rodney Clarke after the war registered as LPG 211; and 57248, the sports car version of King Leopold III which we saw in a couple of VSCC events around 15 years ago with then owner Hubert Fabri or Tim Dutton driving. This car was judged Best of Show at Pebble Beach last year, the first time an unrestored car has won this prestigious award. I had a look at the book (or books, as it comprises three volumes) and from a quick inspection it really does look like the definitive work on these cars, with lots of period photos, plus photos of the cars now and loads of information and history on these cars that have fascinated me since I was a child. It's a book I would very much like but I'm not sure I can justify spending 1,595 euros on a book, that being the cheapest option, with only 295 of these made in five lots of 59 (geddit?). More expensive and even more limited edition versions are also available.

Other Type 59s were to be found at Rétromobile, including the single-seater with a 3-litre 50B engine known as 'The Cork Car' and raced by Tom Dark in recent years, now for sale. The Phoenix Green Garage had on display the Marks family Type 59, built on frame number eight, and Tula Precision also had a Type 59 which was seen at VSCC Prescott last year, plus an ace child's version they have recently completed on a similar scale to a Bugatti Type 52.

One car I really liked was a barn-find 1927 Austro-Daimler ADM 3-litre sports torpedo that was on display with Christoph Grohe and presumably for sale. These impressive vintage sports-cars won the team prize in the 1928 Tourist Trophy with a trio of British registered cars; this was not one of them but one with coachwork by Köllensperger and it had period Austrian hillclimb history. German dealer Axel Schütte had an impressive display of four big pre-war Mercedes-Benzes, all looking immaculate. The one I liked best was a 1928 'S' type with coachwork by J. Saoutchik, finished in grey with dark red. It looked sporty and stylish and I was not surprised to see it was a previous Pebble Beach 'best of show' winner. A very original Lancia Lambda with roadster style bodywork by Casaro was another which took my eye; this had lots of good patina and was a 7th series on the short wheelbase, one of the best types of these cars.

The French veteran car club 'Teuf Teuf' had many early and unusual French cars from its members, nothing too exciting but many makes not often seen in the UK, including a 1910 Léon-Bollée which had a particularly stylish script on its radiator shell. Staying



This Delage was a powerful vintage tourer



Elegant 1930s streamlining on this later Delage



Recreation of Citroen's famous DS launch concept



Lovely Léon-Bollée with flamboyant script on radiator

with Edwardian cars, the Auto Veteran Company had a couple of unrestored Edwardians which both sold during the show. A vast 1912 Lancia 30hp Victoria was a handsome and sporty car. Unusually it had leather wings. This car had been owned in the past by former Italian racing driver Count 'Johnny' Lurani. The other seller here was a vast 1908 De Dion Bouton. One car on this stand that hadn't sold at this point was a 1923 Delage CO2 tourer. This ex-Schlumpf Collection car was a rare model and with a 4½-litre OHV six-cylinder engine would make for an excellent big vintage tourer.

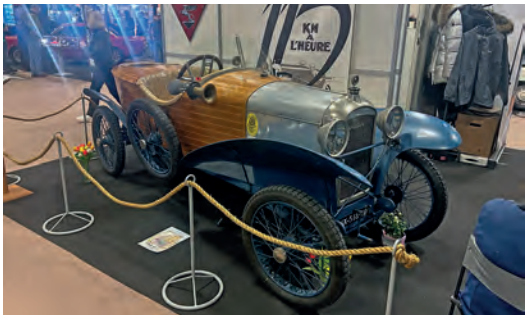
The main display and star of the poster was the Citroen DS, which is 70 years old this year. The famous unveiling of the car without wheels but on 'balloons' at the 1955 Paris Motor Show was replicated. There seemed to be even more Ferraris than usual at the show, and the Richard Mille stand had a timeline of Ferrari Formula One cars from the 1960s up to quite recent ones. Other GP cars of the same time period were also celebrated in the other hall with a display of French and French-engined ones.

Having looked at lots of cars we realised we were yet to look at the cars in the other hall, so pottered off up the stairs (escalators are available). The walkway between the two halls normally has a display of some theme and this year it was the Citroen Kégresse, with around 10 of these vehicles with normal wheels at the front but a half-track at the rear which were famed for expeditions in the 1920s and '30s. A wide variety spanning around 20 years, there were some fitted with guns and even a bus version. The 1920s car versions got us wondering if they were eligible for VSCC trials?

Upstairs were club stands, motorcycles, 'Young Timers' ('80s/'90s cars) and the Artcurial auction. We didn't have a catalogue for the auction, so it was only the club stands that we were really interested in up here. French clubs for Bugatti, Delage and Amilcar all had stands showing their respective cars, but the star of the upper halls was the Alfa Romeo Disco Volante from the Motor Museum in Turin.

We headed back down to the autojumble, which varies a lot. Some stalls you can easily walk past as we are not after a leather flying jacket or tin of car polish. The proper autojumble stalls have lots of nice bits and pieces but are often overpriced, as are many of the photographs, but I did find a few to take home at a reasonable price. Thirsty work, all this, so it was time for a beer and a break from walking. We had a chat about what we had seen or may have missed, did a bit more wandering around to see those bits we had been told we missed, followed by a bit more chatting on the Phoenix stand and then it was time to leave and head out for dinner.

All photos by Matt Shepherd



The Amilcar Club of France had this delightful exhibit



Star of the upper hall was this exotic Alfa Romeo



Gerry Richards fulfils his dream of racing at Silverstone last April (Dennis Rushton)

A beginner's guide to circuit racing

Always dreamed of going racing but never had the courage or money? You don't need as much of either as you might think, says new convert **GERRY RICHARDS**

Will it be scary? Will I get in the way? What if I damage the car? Or worse still, myself? How much do I need to spend up front on safety gear and getting my licence? How often will my engine need to be rebuilt and what will that cost? What do I need to do to prepare my car and will it get through scrutineering?

These are just some of the questions you might ask yourself if considering circuit racing as a novice and/or on a relatively modest budget. I say 'relatively' as motor sport can never be truly cheap in comparison with certain other pastimes, but more on that later. Or to put it another way, there are quite a few reasons not to go circuit racing.

Like so many rewarding pursuits, there has to be a measure of difficulty to create the sense of achievement. But the point of this article is to try and convince you to give it a go if you're undecided, having chewed over most of these questions myself at some point. Fortunately, there are also many good reasons to go circuit racing, some of which probably don't need stating if you're reading this article with that goal in mind. To share my own reasoning, it relates to having watched and read about racing for several decades, coupled with the desire not to live my whole life without finding out how it feels to actually do it.

My first memory of a VSCC race meeting dates back to 1976, so to finally make it onto the grid some 48 years later is a pretty long gestation period. My late father Bob loved prewar cars and passed his enthusiasm on, along with the natural caution expressed in the questions at the start of this article. So I had to persuade myself to go racing despite my own inhibitions. I think having lost my father and uncle (also a prewar MG owner) in the space of a couple of years, it got to the point where I thought 'you need to get on with this or accept that it will never happen'.

In the late '90s I hillclimbed and sprinted Hillman Imps and derivatives, including dual driving in some pretty quick cars with a good friend who later went on to win the HSCC pre-'66 saloon championship three times. I would have loved to have followed the same route, but I was young and impecunious, and like a lot of racing it struck me as a bit of an 'arms race' with an eye-watering level of commitment and expenditure required to compete on anything like a level playing field. If I'd have ended up finishing fifth in a class of five very similar Imps then it would either mean that I wasn't trying hard enough, or couldn't afford the state-of-the-art dampers or 'marginal gains' engine development – or all of the above. When the cars are as diverse as in VSCC races and the emphasis is on taking part,



The Morgan as bought, with windscreen, twin spares and wheel trims



Removing spare wheels and fitting an aero screen made the Morgan race ready (Dennis Rushton)

that takes the pressure off somewhat, especially for the novice driver.

Of course, some VSCC racers do understandably seek to accumulate silverware, but the large majority seem to value the fun and sense of occasion above all else and gain huge satisfaction regardless of their finishing position. Race entry fees are reasonable compared with other clubs and a car can be used with minimal modification if you're not aiming to be a front-runner, so the VSCC probably offers one of the most cost-effective ways of getting to race – even more so if you're lucky enough to be under 30.

Obviously, you need to either own a car or have friends or family willing to lend you theirs. I won't dwell on car selection as it's quite a personal thing and many readers will already have a car and just need to be persuaded that it's good enough to race. I bought my Morgan 4/4 (FZ192) in early 2023 and honestly didn't really buy it with the intention of going racing – I was just looking for a VSCC eligible car which was reasonably sporty and had potential for use in a few different types of events, plus I'd always fancied owning a Morgan – so a prewar 4/4 seemed to tick all those boxes. Now, a series I 4/4 is never going to set the world on fire in terms of outright performance, but in the first few drives the car impressed me in two ways. One, the engine felt strong and willing. Two, the handling was clearly of the 'I can be driven hard without biting back' variety. To me, those are the two main prerequisites for any car that I'm considering taking on track, so I started to wonder whether I could actually race the Morgan. Well, there was only one way to find out for sure.

But first, here are a few facts and figures relating to the car:

- Engine – Climax overhead inlet/side exhaust, 1098cc, single 1¼″ SU, around 45bhp (informed guess based on spec and info I've read).
- Gearbox – Meadows, standard ratios, 5:1 rear axle ratio.
- Bodywork – as per original 1938 build, swept wings, all aluminium (special order in 1938).
- Weight (race trim, less fuel and driver) – approx. 660 kg.
- Tyres – 475/500 × 17 Waymaster (affordable and seem to work really well on the car).
- Max revs used through gears – around 5000rpm.
- Approx max revs seen in top – 4600 (around 76–78mph based on gearing and tyre size).

It's worth noting at this point that one of the main reasons that I decided to buy the car was that it was built with the 1098cc engine as per the Morgan Le Mans replicas, and that it had a file of receipts for an engine rebuild in 2009, including Phoenix crank and rods, even though the top end is standard apart from the carb.

Pre-Race Car Prep

Before my first race I'd driven about 500 road miles in the car and never had it on any kind of circuit – no testing or track days. In fact, I'd only had it up to 70 on the motorway a couple of times to check straight line stability at speed. Mandatory items included fitting the 2kg (hand-held) extinguisher and rear rain light, plus lock-wiring the oil drain plugs. Lock wiring seems fiddly at first but is actually simple as long as you buy the proper tool for the job. On top of this I changed the windscreen to a single aeroscreen, replaced the asthmatic Solex carb with a downdraft SU and swapped the car's ancient Avon 450 tyres for the aforementioned (slightly wider and taller) Waymasters. The only other engine tuning has involved experimenting with various SU needles and faffing with the ignition timing and different spark plugs. I run on Valvoline 20/50 and haven't had to have the engine apart – yet.

Other than that the car is pretty much as bought. I do my own maintenance and don't have the time or facilities to do anything beyond something like a head gasket change, plus the car is stored in an unlit, unheated lockup near my office so work is limited to the odd lunchtime when it's light and not too cold. I'm certainly in the 'learning by doing' camp, or to put it less politely, completely winging it. Honestly, if I can do it then you can too.



In close combat with Rachel Blake's 'Nash at Silverstone (Dennis Rushton)

Initial Costs

I think it's important to discuss costs at this point but I won't include the purchase of the car and things which would wear out anyway and need to be replaced, such as tyres. Having made the decision to race, there are of course certain 'up-front' costs which need to be met, specifically in my case:

- Purchase of 'Go Racing' pack (currently £110), includes the cost of your licence.
- ARDS Test (around £300–£350 depending on where you take this).
- Extinguisher/rain light/lock-wire (my only 'race-specific' expenditure on the car): £200
- Race suit (OMP Sport): £300
- Helmet (Hedtec Gem): £280.

Of course, more expensive suits and helmets are available but I did some research and was happy that the more affordable kit which I chose was up to the job. The old kit from my hillclimbing days in the early 2000s was well out of date, but if you currently do speed events your clothing may be suitable for circuit racing – you need to check the MSUK regulations if you're unsure about this. Hence by this point I'd spent about £1,200 to get to the point where I could consider entering a race and, as any economist will tell you, these are fixed costs and the more races you do the better in terms of your overall cost per race.

In terms of the ARDS (race licence) test, suffice to say that there is a lot of other information out there on the subject. My main thought is that it's a good experience regardless of how serious you are about going racing, as you feel a great sense of achievement in passing the ARDS test and you can of course use a race licence for sprint/hillclimb events if you so wish. The 'theory test' isn't designed to trip you up and the practical mainly involved the instructor telling me to drive more smoothly, which was a very fair comment and paid dividends. I chose Mallory, mainly as I like the atmosphere and I also thought it would be beneficial to get in some laps on a circuit used for VSCC racing.

The First Race Day

April 2024 Silverstone was to be my first event and I'd entered the 'Slow Car' race, the main aims being to get there, get some track time, hopefully finish the race and get back home with a healthy Morgan. The only other vague target which I set myself was to try to break the 1:40 per lap mark. Middle son Eddie and I arrived early to get into scrutineering as we were in the first practice session and also the first race of the day. The only comment from the scrutineer was to fit the battery live terminal with a rubber or plastic cover, which was duly acknowledged and we got our sticker.

In practice it was cold and windy but the car felt OK and I managed a 1:42 which was good enough for 14th on a grid of 20 cars, and the car felt great through the slower corners, which gave me some confidence. More significantly though, I noticed fluctuating oil pressure on a couple of laps through the Brooklands/Luffield complex and suspected oil surge, but as I pulled into the pits at the end of the session, indicated oil pressure plummeted and stayed low – enough for me cut the engine in the pit lane and push the car back to my paddock space. The race was also before lunch and I had an hour to decide what to do. James Baxter suggested that I clean the oil pressure relief valve, which is fortunately not too difficult on the Climax engine, even with the number of smiling friendly faces asking about the car while I sweated to get it ready for

my first race – all part of the VSCC vibe and I must improve my ability to multi-task.

I finished the job with about five minutes to spare and gingerly drove to the assembly area, eyes glued to the oil pressure gauge. All seemed well and I did a fairly tentative first couple of laps until I regained my confidence in the engine, then started to enjoy those famous wide open spaces. The race itself was fairly uneventful but I made it to the end. The sheer joy of taking a first chequered flag is hard to put into words, I was cheering into my helmet and punching the steering wheel like some spoiled F1 brat! Furthermore I managed my sub 1:40 lap and was also handed a pot for winning the 1100cc class, so as far as first races go, I couldn't have asked for more than that.

In terms of costs for the weekend: entry fee plus transponder hire was £300, hotel for me and Eddie (we spectated on the Saturday and stayed over) £100, fuel (tow car and race car) £70, food etc about £60 – so a grand total of around £530, although I'm blessed with simple tastes and don't crave expensive hotels or food, plus my tow car does 46mpg (while towing!), but your costs may differ in those regards.

Donington Park ODM Race

The exhilaration of the Silverstone weekend was always going to be hard to follow and while not exactly a disappointment, Donington was more of a challenge for several reasons. Firstly, I was in the ODM race which meant a larger and faster field of cars; the circuit is longer and more technical; plus I was ill for a week before the race and arrived feeling pretty jaded. Added to that we had a trailer tyre burst on the way there, not a good omen, but fortunately I had both of my older sons with me for encouragement and support.

I was fairly satisfied with my 2.04 lap in practice and lined up 24th on a grid of 28 which included some quick cars piloted by fast and experienced drivers. It's important to mention this as although there is some obvious speed differential, there was a definite feeling that the other drivers knew their craft and no sense of intimidation when being passed. In fact I feel safer on track than when I drive the car on the road. I made a much better start than at Silverstone, the little Morgan fairly leapt off the line and we passed three cars before the first bend, but didn't manage to keep them behind for long.

Donington from the driver's seat is even more flowing and exciting than it looks as a spectator, and there are several sections which I didn't feel I'd properly nailed by the end of the day. The highlight however was being in close company with a Frazer Nash which I followed for a couple of laps before passing under braking for Redgate. I managed to finish in 20th position, mainly due to others dropping out, but was delighted to finish two races from two starts. Costs were similar to Silverstone, around £500 – Donington is closer to home but the savings in fuel were offset by having two hungry sons to feed this time.



Gerry won a pot on his first outing

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The Morgan with middle son Edward in the pits at Silverstone



Edward, then 17, took the Morgan to Curborough in May and won class handicap

Mallory 'Slow Car' Race

I was excited about Mallory and it didn't disappoint. Unlike the other two circuits, I'd actually driven on this track before race day, plus I was looking forward to the simple pleasures of camping and a barbecue in the paddock on the Friday evening. This was made even better when upon arrival, Ewan Cameron called to us and said 'want to park your Morgan next to ours?' and we had a good chat with Ewan and his family. I had not met him before and it turns out that he used to own my Davrian GT back in the 1980s.

Race day dawned and due to the late arrival of the circuit doctor, we didn't practice at speed and the grid was based on, I suspect, educated guesswork on behalf of the organisers. I was placed 7th on a grid of 14, managed to get up to 6th by passing Vivian Bush's Bentley into Gerard's on lap 1, but only managed to keep him behind for a couple more laps. Mallory doesn't really suit the Morgan as it's a power circuit, apart from the hairpin where my 2nd is too low and 3rd too high, but it was huge fun and I finished my third race in succession. This was also my least expensive race weekend of the year, mainly due to free camping at the track and a cheap BBQ dinner – total costs around £400.

Conclusions

After three race finishes from three starts, I'm under no illusions that things can get a lot more difficult. The car felt better by the end of the season than at the start and I'm hoping to race it again in 2025 without needing to give the engine any kind of serious overhaul – but let's see what happens and I might need to budget for an engine check/refresh at some point in the future. If so then I'll try to keep the costs down by doing as much of the spanner work as I can myself, but at the workshop of a good friend who is a specialist engine builder.

Your experience may differ, but I can honestly say that after competing in quite a few trials, sprints and hillcimbs, I enjoy circuit racing most of all. Cost-wise, a typical race entry is about £100 more than a speed event, so even with a bit more fuel usage it's not much more costly overall per event, as the travel, hotels and food costs are essentially the same – although the likelihood of things needing to be fixed is of course a little higher. But if you factor in the time actually spent on track, it's massively cheaper per metre driven on track than speed events.

Trialling is often referred to as 'budget motorsport'. But my total expenditure the one time I did the Lands End Trial (in a postwar car in 2022) was also around £400–£500, similar to each of my race weekends in 2024. No motor sport can be truly 'cheap'; if you want to do it enough you have to accept that there are certain costs and do it anyway.

So, is it scary? Not really. There are the inevitable nerves and adrenalin, but the faster cars are in my experience very well driven, and learning to be lapped safely is as much a part of any driver's racecraft as overtaking others. Will you get in the way? Not if you enter the right race for your car's performance and drive predictably. Could you damage something? Maybe – but the chances of this are small compared with the reward of taking part. Are the other drivers friendly, welcoming and encouraging? Yes, they certainly are in my experience. Should you give it a go? Absolutely.



A favourite photo of Ben Maeers (GN) watching Gerry chase him at Silverstone

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DAVID HOLLAND

A Miscellany of Motoring Memories

The decade leading up to the Second World War formed the backdrop to **DAVID HOLLAND***'s childhood in Devon, Kent, and later at prep school in Winchester. What follows are his musings prompted by that time, discovered in his papers by his son James after David's death in 2022. For more about David, who first joined the VSCC in 1948, see his obituary on pp. 88–9 of* Bulletin *319*



David Holland as a young soldier in number one kit

'Where shall I begin, please, your Majesty?' he humbly asked. 'Begin at the beginning,' said the King, gravely, 'and go on until you came to the end. Then stop.' Lewis Carroll's advice came with admonition implied for any aspiring writer, but it does make it imperative that I should start to recount my motoring memories over three quarters of a century with my very earliest recollections even if they were neither glamorous nor exciting. Perhaps I shall be allowed to bring in some of the more impressive machines and incidents in later instalments whenever there is a call for more colourful tales about the incredible love affair with the automobile over the twentieth century.

At my age, therefore, and with my mechanical inclinations, my earliest motoring memory ought to be of some fine example of prestige vintage engineering, and I wish it were so. But Lewis Carroll's stricture, and truth itself, demands that despite a childhood in, on, or beneath a lot of interesting or horrifying machinery, my first and abiding memory is prosaic – though useful in perspective of the rapidly changing design spectrum of the most innovative decade in the whole history of the motor car. So, history must be served and she is a hard mistress.

What happened is that my father, an arch motoring enthusiast, annotated a faded photograph of himself as a young subaltern surrounded by attractive nurses in Colchester Military Hospital with the caption 'fell off my new Indian motorcycle', dated December 1914, and despite an adventurous honeymoon with the exciting Scripps-Booth (deserving of more acclaim than this American make ever received), a unitary constructed Lagonda 11.9, and a whole gamut of aspiring but capital-starved British aspirants such as Bayliss-Thomas, Alvis, Crouch and Hadfield-Bean, not to mention an expensive leaning towards the Sunbeam-Talbot-Darracq range, was also susceptible to the blandishments of some of the smooth-talkers in the motor trade.

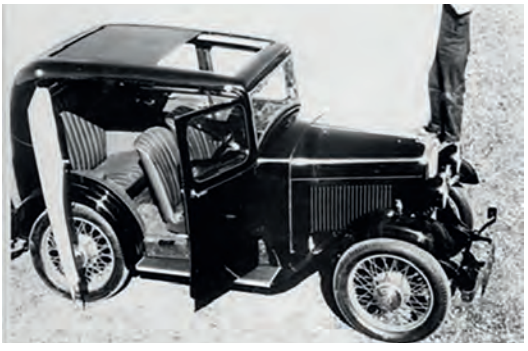
Savvy as he was in most other aspects of life, bringing up a large family in relative prosperity after years of career soldiering, he could not entirely resist the patent gadgets, specifications and the excitement that the new age of motoring came to offer, alongside his plus-fours, Kodak cameras, wireless sets and before long the earliest television, which I boasted about at my preparatory school. And so Colonel Warwick Wright offered Father a brand new Triumph Super Seven plus a 'credit note' against any problematical future purchase or trade-in, against his sturdy Darracq 12/32 sporting four-seater. Bright and modern, sprightly and well-equipped in the style of new colourful marketing techniques. Against the severe comparisons insisted upon by our founding

fathers of the Vintage Sports-Car Club who effectively wrote the bible for all later sports-car lovers, this Triumph struck most of the wrong notes – but not all, for although it had a tiny engine (832cc) and necessarily an axle ratio lower than the third gear of a respectable vintage tourer of its day, it nevertheless could boast four-wheel hydraulic brakes (the first in this country), a four-speed gearbox, pillarless body construction for the four-door version, and all this enabled to travel good distances at, by hitherto industry standards, very high crankshaft revolutions by a sturdy three main bearing design. In fact, when I came to research this gallant harbinger of the high-revving 1930s, I learnt some worthwhile history, for the Super Seven had debuted at Brooklands driven by Vic Horsman with laps at over 78mph in 1929, came 7th overall in the 1930 Monte Carlo Rally, then crossed the American continent from New York to Vancouver in a run of 12 days and nights. It also captured the Brisbane–Sydney light car record in 1930 and the Sydney–Melbourne run to crown the September 1929 record of Perth to Sydney – 2,954 miles over eight days. It was recorded that after a mere change of spark plugs, the little car and its weary conductors promptly drove back again to Perth before celebrating their achievement. The Auckland–New Plymouth marathon, non-stop, had already been captured by this time to really establish the tough reputation of Triumph's new baby. So not only have I been completely wrong to disparage from our post-war snobbish heights the small engine trend of the early '30s as being entirely the wrong way to go in motor car design (at the very least deserving some qualification rather than the damning judgement of our VSCC forefathers from their lofty 30-98 vantage) but also there has been a raft of admirable and proven world successes along the way.

This is a long preamble to telling you of my first motoring memory, but my excuse is that it provides the perspective. I was born in Bideford, Devon, on 4 April 1928, the third of five children. My father, Albert Holland, was a manager for the National Provincial Bank following notable service in The Great War from which he was invalided out of. So in early 1931, at the age of three, I came to be squashed in the back of such a little engineering marvel, with my elder brother and sister plus a terrier, somehow, plus the tiny amount of luggage carried in those modest days (unless one's lifestyle included a chauffeur driving in advance with all the paraphernalia aboard the station wagon or shooting brake, and ours didn't) on the fairly long journey from Westward Ho! in Devon to Hythe in Kent. Hardly of the Sydney to Perth category, nor the snowbound adventure of the Monte, but nevertheless a fair undertaking for a young family in what must have been a somewhat over-laden little motor car, bulging at its fabric-bodied seams and perspiring through its tiny rectangle of opening roof light, and buzzing happily enough for many hours across the width of South England.

My next conveyance was a perambulator after I had apparently lost mobility, but not it seems as a result of the cramped Triumph saga. But then Father realised that a little serenity and the comforting assurance of more solid and a shade less frenzied engineering practice would re-assert the balance in his motoring life, and it was back to the heavyweights of middle England and their more acceptable radiator badges: Crossley from Gorton in Manchester (Mother is reputed to have just diverted him from signing up for their licence-built Bugatti); Sunbeam – (he ought to have stuck with this marque even in their declining years, for their sheer engineering excellence); and back to Talbot, who were propping up the rest of their STD combine through the clever, powerful and attractive designs of Georges Roesch, soon to become the finest examples of fast, silent and reliable sports-racing cars on the international scene.

I can remember having the company of the cylinder block of a 10/23 Talbot in my bedroom because Father wanted to work on it but denied it space in his own dressing room. The Model 65



Triumph Super Seven: 'bright and modern, sprightly and well-equipped'



Talbot 65 Sportsman Saloon: 'highly efficient, amazingly quiet and supremely smooth'

Sportsman Saloon that followed was first-class and I can remember its impressive illuminated direction indicator and brake light set boxed at the rear above the luggage carrier, and at the front integral with the radiator bottom tank, exclusive to Talbot of Barlby Road, London, as was one of the first electric bulb oil pressure warning lights instead of the universal pressure gauge, shared perhaps with Delage. Highly efficient, amazingly quiet and supremely smooth with their massive crankshafts (forever the basis of a truly sound design) and lightweight valve gear, even before they earned their racing credentials, these were certainly superb motor cars.

Later, when I talked to Georges Roesch following the sad fate of the business with the Rootes brothers' plundering, he was bitter about the final neglect of his proven designs, replaced by nondescript side-valve lumps from the Humber and Hillman inventories, albeit dressed up in undeniably attractive bodywork reflecting the latest trends. Their sop to his susceptibilities had been a remit to design an eight-cylinder engine which they would have liked to offer to David, Prince of Wales who was already veering towards this number of cylinders from Buick, seductively offered to him by Captain Hartman of the Berkeley Street concessionaires, but that suffered an untimely death that could have been anticipated when installed in one of Billy Rootes's ponderous 'even keel' very independent chassis borrowed from a Super Snipe. It behaved so badly on its maiden run that with the failed attempt to gain Royal patronage in the whole package, this kit of parts was consigned to the scrap yard of Coventry and of history.

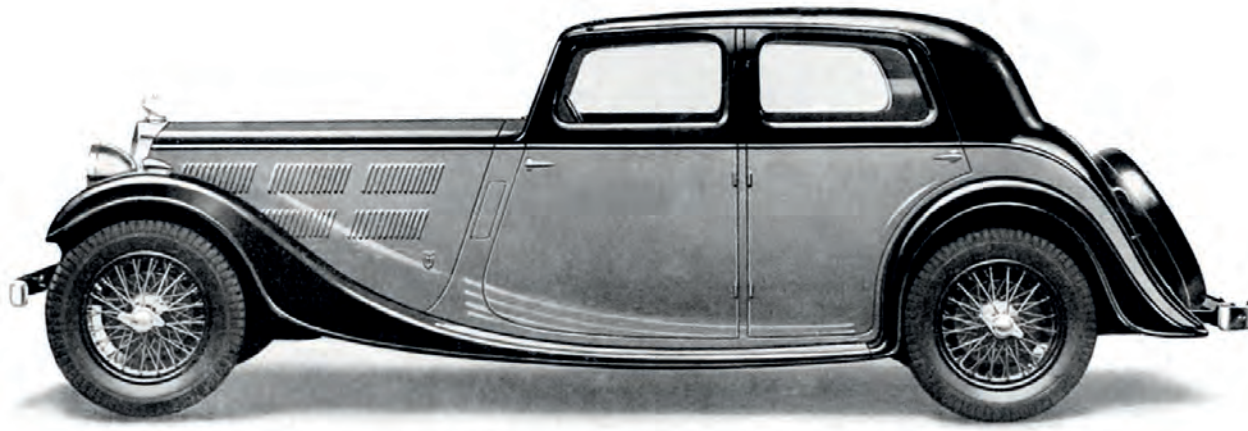
Strangely enough, the only viable item from that era emanating from Humber was a visionary, small all-synchromesh gearbox, apparently commissioned by Rootes after the failure of their flawed automatic system which was clearly decades too early for the metallurgy then available for such brave but misguided crusades to win the marketing favours of the mass of drivers who either couldn't or else just hated the whole business of having to change gear. That little all-synchro box was probably the only one in the whole sphere of motoring design apart from its upmarket Alvis equivalent (still honoured today with a cutaway display in the Chicago Museum of Automobile Technology) deemed too expensive to produce after the Second World War, alas, but by which time General Motors and Chrysler had perfected the automatic transmission, courtesy of Daimler fluid flywheel and de Normanville pioneer work.



Wolseley Nine: 'trounced several other sports saloons on trial run'

Chronologically there followed a quite small Wolseley Nine which, thanks to its lively engine inspired by that company's licence-manufacture of the Hispano-Suiza aero-engine and the inheritance – or brazen theft, depending on one's perspective – of the overhead camshaft cylinder head, led in due course to the busy, ambitious MG family tree, once William Morris had added Wolseley Motors to his prosperous portfolio. The point about this Wolseley Nine of modest appearance and suitably modest pretensions was that on a trial run against other grander contenders arranged by Father deliberately at his favourite venue, steep Dover hill, it trounced several other sports saloons in a high-revving third gear run probably at near valve-bounce levels and no doubt causing some shame among the more aristocratic opposition. So for a suitably short while, the gallant little Wolseley occupied centre stage and the warmest spot in the garage.

But not for long: Triumph again cast a strongly seductive spell, this time for some strange factor of Father's investment programme which generally disavowed logic by critical analysis. The web was wound around the blandishments of Triumph's illustrious Chairman, no less a person than Colonel Sir Claude Holbrook, who had somehow displaced the more canny but socially less acceptable founding German engineer Siegfried Bettmann. He made the strategic mistake of selling the motorcycle business after using it as a pawn in talks with Alfa Romeo for the eight-cylinder Dolomite licensing arrangement. In short, Father fell under the onslaught of the team led by the future legend Donald Healey with cars that certainly came near to justifying the company's slogan 'the smartest cars in the land'. Lavishly equipped, strikingly handsome and in most respects well-engineered, with the exception of some of the earlier Coventry Climax overhead inlet, side-valve exhaust engines which earned a less than helpful reputation for poor crankshaft balance. But those masculine Rudge wheel spinners, chrome buttons on the bonnet, a dashboard fit for an aeroplane, mechanical



Triumph Gloria: 'the smartest cars in the land'

free-wheel, remote gear gate, a good selection of Mr Lucas's top-of-the-range chrome goodies up front, twelve-volt electrics of course to light all this up, Moseley pneumatic seat cushions (they also made the best pipe-tobacco pouches), all contrived to the well-being of the equally well-informed middle-class motoring enthusiast. Except, that is, for the significant factor of power-to-weight ratio which alone makes for untiring and effortless performance as proven by the clear ascendancy of American cars. This disadvantage was not of Triumph's doing but that of successive British governments with their onerous and thoroughly misguided 'horsepower tax', based on the cylinder area but not the stroke of an engine, giving rise to some really indefensible anomalies such as in the Lagonda range, where the 4½-litre six-cylinder model was taxed at 27 horsepower, whereas its sister V12 of the same capacity rated no less than 42hp (approximately £2,000 per annum in today's money).

Starting with the Gloria, I can remember the severe embarrassment of its rather futuristic Startix control malfunctioning with expensive results, because it automatically re-engaged the starter motor whenever the device detected nil dynamo charge with the ignition switched on. Thus if the engine were to stall in traffic, this meant disastrous starter pinion engagement with the flywheel when the dynamo failed to deliver. It was certainly an impressive car in which to be driven to Winchester for the start of my first term as an eight-year-old and very homesick chorister. Lo and behold, I was fetched at the end of that unhappy term in another glamorous loss-leader in the form of the pre-production Vitesse in black livery and a slightly larger engine, albeit of still only 1½ litres, but a fair bit more powerful when pushed hard enough to bring into play its strange arrangement of a second (SU type) carburettor at the adiabatically wrong end of a complex manifold otherwise supplied by a single Solex instrument. The adjustment of the attendant linkage alone was guaranteed to keep Father busy if not amused for frequent garage sessions.

Still, school-cred, or cool-cred as it undoubtedly was, the Vitesse had to be consigned back to Coventry and hastily replaced to retain Father's financial loyalty at a time of one of Triumph's several near-administration periods brought on by all this exciting hubris, with a remarkably beautiful drop head coupé by Cross & Ellis, to be followed by the Continental 2-litre standard saloon and finally, as night follows day, by the ultimate rally-entrant's dreamboat, the Dolomite, with its controversial streamline and expensive-to-die-cast radiator grille. I recollect one balmy day in 1938 when the stunning, earth-moving Dolomite Roadster was brought down for Father to try in a forlorn attempt to harness his growing disenchantment as a minor but increasingly worried investor, engined at long last for my irresponsibly strident wailing, by the six-cylinder 2-litre powerhouse with extra bonnet louvres and a smidgeon more straight-line speed accompanied by a slightly less economic petrol consumption of the Shell No. One that Father insisted upon.

After so much unjustified expenditure, a reaction was inevitable before the next phase of connoisseurship, and with some astute bargaining somewhat to the concern of this ultra-snobbish younger son, the final Gloria Vitesse together with a pair of silk pyjamas and a Purdey shotgun, suddenly the family had to squash into a Ford Ten. Not just an ordinary Model C Ten, however, but something of a wild one, for its previous owner had managed to acquire this car immediately after the Ford Company had staged its own motor show at the Albert Hall, in typical



Triumph Dolomite: 'the ultimate rally-entrant's dreamboat'

defiance against the SMMT edicts on same rule. This little motor car had been assembled to attract the superlatives of the motoring press attending that extravaganza – which interestingly was followed by a huge jamboree at Brooklands with historically fascinating shows of strength and adaptability, especially of the ubiquitous V8 that had brought power to the masses – and featured in this one-off example a twin-carburettor intake, 12-volt electrics with disproportionately large Lucas By-Flex headlamps, leather seats and opening roof, the net result being a deficit in the otherwise sound integrity of the Ford saloon construction, and a real first stroke in the fitting of a Lissen wireless set that occupied the whole left-hand side of the dashboard. This had a 'spider' type aerial (terribly important in those days) underneath the chassis, and a performance which occupied the attention of the only qualified automotive radio engineer in a radius of some 50 miles for several months before my frustrated parent switched the set off for good.

Being fundamentally dishonest and a braggart to boot, I boasted to my generally sceptic friends that we had 'a streamlined American car with a wireless' which was dreadfully misleading if just, but only just, technically excusable with a degree of imagination.

Then the Rover period. 'Sense at last,' said Mother, but we children were not so sure until gradually the combination of elegance, tangible quality and acceptable performance rendered it possible to transfer respect if not affection from those seductive Triumphs to this noble and good-looking car. The Rover was a marque of increasing reputation in a jungle of too many worthy firms competing for a market too small to support the aspirations and rivalry desperate for the custom of the surprisingly small middle-class and professional sector that were also prepared to sacrifice sensible investment for more sensuous though less proven alternatives – a Crossley Ten instead of an Austin Goodwood, or an AC Acedes rather than a Morris Twelve.

Of course, as with all progression the extremes were gradually outvalued by the middle areas. Leaving out the exotica, Mr Average by now got reasonable degrees of reliability, easy-clean wheels, synchromesh gears, and creature comfort. The saloon was now generally steel in construction thanks to the great Budd Corporation of America, with their patented processes that spread throughout the industry from Hillman Minx to Rover to André Citroën's *traction-avant*. There were even electric wipers, other than for Henry Ford who persisted in his isolation in believing that the worse the elements, the greater the need for throttle opening as when climbing hills for example, exactly the conditions under which the miserable driver needed those wipers the most.

Performance remained proportional to purchase price, the aspirations of the buyer, the ruling national laws, and taxation. In this milieu the Wilks brothers galvanised the Rover business which was respected but suffered from a lack of direction. From the onset of this new sense of purpose, the marque steadily evolved to become envied but not equalled in the production of high-quality mid-size motor cars deserving of their reputation among discerning professional drivers. They could justifiably be proud of the handsome lines as much as the smooth and silent performance (this was the age of the brilliant designation of the Rolls-Bentley as 'the Silent Sports Car'), from the surprisingly lithe Ten, through silken six-cylinder Fourteen, to the impressive Sixteens and Twenty, these latter available in drop-head coupé form from the renowned Newport Pagnell coachbuilders Salmons Tickford.

Except, oddly, when it came to real outright speed, for Rover seemed woefully short of alternative axle ratios right through the range – this meant that by wringing the revs out of the gallant little Ten, you would in fact be less than ten miles per hour short of the largest-engined model. Well, sheer speed isn't everything, perhaps, but then you didn't buy a Rover for effortless high-speed Continental touring. I have an abiding memory of going with Father to collect the new Sixteen Sports Saloon in the early summer of 1939, just before this well-ordered existence was to be brought to an abrupt end with Germany's mobile columns crashing through Poland, and this memory is compounded of the rich smell of leather, wood trim, and wool headlining in that heady mixture unique to the crafts applied lovingly in terms of skills to wage costs in that era, probably never to be surpassed. The proprietor of that establishment, by now an ardent Rover enthusiast himself, took on our Fourteen, handsome in Royal Blue, drove her throughout the war and I saw her last at one of the earliest of the Goodwood meetings in 1949 proudly sporting a BARC badge. BKM7, a handsome car.

But in those days of my graduation to car snob – or connoisseur – I also spent a fair amount of time as a back-seat passenger in my grandfather's succession of sedate and worthy large Wolseleys, during his

frequent long business journeys, interesting for me but I believe fatal eventually to his long-suffering chauffeur who had to stand grandfather's strong pipe tobacco, smoked without pause except to recharge his Dunhill briar or to use the complete box of Swan Vestas typically to last only that day. It was quite usual then for owners to trade in their cars every year on principle, and so in the space of a few years, these Wolseleys would range from Fourteen Six, through Sixteen, to Eighteen, and only the onset of war prevented this progression to Twenty One, I expect, exemplifying the comprehensive ranges available of several brands to bracket every sales opportunity in the face of that ridiculous and restrictive horsepower tax.

Thus Wolseley alone offered Eight, Ten and Twelve models in addition to all those mentioned above. Probably only SS cars offered alternative engines – in their case the choice of 16 or 20hp – at no extra cost, at least prior to the introduction of their Jaguar range in 1936. Of course those Wolseleys were badge engineered without fear or favour by Sir Miles Thomas using the whole gamut of the Morris Motors parts inventories freely available to him as William Morris's favourite (and necessary counterweight to the unscrupulous Leonard Lord in that volatile empire that saw the ending of Cecil Kimber's independence and the closure of his exciting racing efforts). Strongly built, well-upholstered, dignified before all else, all these Wolseleys were recognised by their stately radiator shells, instantly spotted at night also by their integral electrically-lit marque badge spelling Wolseley in red on a cream background, within an oval wreath. It was fitting that Lord Nuffield drove a little Eight saloon, made in 1947, until his death in 1963.

Still a precocious schoolboy, my memories include hours of daydreaming in either of the 1924 Chenard-Walcker 3-litres of the model that won at Le Mans that had been unaccountably stored in one of our farm barns, gathering dust, spider's webs, chicken debris and a huge element of exotic mystery to this over-imaginative lad. There was also a grand Minerva, with six litres of sleeve-valve engine, coach-built in Belgium and every centimetre a worthy rival to Rolls Royce in silence, dignity and status, which ended up usefully even with a loss of decorum, as a magnificently furbished and splendidly equipped break-down vehicle; a far better fate then the usual scrapheap destiny. One of Southern Motors' 'hermaphrodite' or cross-over Rolls Royce rebuilds figured somewhere along the way; these were generally old Twenty models stripped of their previous bodies and re-fitted with, generally, drop head coupé coachwork in the 1930s idiom, resulting in good looks but absolutely no performance – thus a steady



Ford Ten: 'a streamlined American car with a wireless'

sale no doubt to retired Colonels to whom appearance and background breeding were the two essential elements in horses, people and motor cars.

Jack Compton in Norwood was also in this business of making visual 'silk purses' out of old though patrician sows' ears and I believe these are quite accepted in the 20 Ghost Club nowadays.

Before leaving Winchester as a milestone in my story, it is interesting to recall some of the other cars there which impressed me one way or another. My maths tutor was the brother of no less a hero than Goldie Gardner, Major of that ilk with a Military Cross won in the Great War as a battery commander in the Field Artillery, who was creating numerous records with incredibly small but highly specialised machines, always of MG origin and generally supercharged to extraordinary levels, latterly by Chris Shorrock.

Rudolph Uhlenhaut, the celebrated race engineer and designer at Daimler-Benz, told me after the war that his Mercedes colleagues were dumbfounded when the MG race department was closed down for they had (through very close intelligence contacts at Abingdon) come to regard the team there as the arch-wizards of supercharging, following, and often copying, their experiments continually. So we enthusiastically followed all Goldie's exploits and became MG fans.

Another master, clearly well-endowed by inheritance or marriage, bought one of the first SA 2.3-litre MG saloons which were valid rivals to the new Jaguar series and arguably a finer automobile overall. He also had a V12 Lincoln Zephyr to provide both contrast and comparison, though its roadholding and handling were just too basic as the gifted and cultured Edsel Ford has once again been overridden by his autocratic parent. One half term provided truly wonderful memories of an excursion with a pal in his parents' new Lanchester Roadrider to Southampton. There we were invited aboard Canopus, the first of Imperial Airways' new four-engined monoplane flying-boats, for the newly inaugurated Empire Service. To my disappointment, she remained tethered to her buoy throughout. Then we proceeded to RMS *Queen Mary*, just down from the Clyde, readying



The Rover P2 10hp – 'a gallant little car'

for her maiden run to New York on which she took the coveted Blue Riband for another record crossing, adding to the pride of White Star-Cunard line, and every British sailor's heart. Plans to visit the Supermarine works at Hythe had to be cancelled for lack of time, which was a blow to me in my staunch admiration of the Schneider Trophy success by that company with their Napier and then Rolls Royce engines, the cynosure of every aeroplane enthusiast and which played a strong part in keeping Britain in the forefront of design.

Back at Winchester we saw the first earth-digging of the future bypass, and returned to even more eager playing with, swapping, modifying and dreaming over our Hornby clockwork boats, Duplo railways, Bassett-Lowke icons, and Meccano. What treasures for a schoolboy, what a time to be an aspiring below-age engineer, what huge pride a boy could take in his country's achievements and its heroes. We were spoilt, there's no doubt about it, but the obverse was probably an over-reliance in material things.

One ambition eluded me: I wanted to go to Brooklands, the Mecca of it all. But my father, though keen on motor cars, withstood the temptation to mix with, as he considered, a rather fast crowd, perhaps also conditioned by his antipathy to any degree of crowding and despite Brooklands's well-known slogan, their paddock and most viewing areas did contain a lot of people. It had to suffice that when I travelled by train instead of car, either back to a new term or returning for holidays, I had to make the most of the brief moments when the train was alongside the Railway Straight on the Southampton to Victoria line of the Southern railway hoping, and on about two occasions succeeding, to see cars on the Outer Circuit. Never, alas, John Cobb's Napier-Railton, nor the car that would surely have taken its honours if war had not come, the Multi-Union, highly advanced technically and brilliantly developed by Fairey Aviation's test pilot, Chris Staniland, sadly to lose his life flying photo-reconnaissance duties. Riding high in the world stakes during that incredible decade were also the noble steam engines of Sir Nigel Gresley, Peter du Cane's Vosper-built water speed record boats for Malcolm Campbell, and later for John Cobb, Thompson & Taylor's mighty Brooklands-made contenders, and the feats of brave riders like Eric Fernihough.

I was fairly well aware in my precocity of the glamorous top-end of the American market from my voracious reading of every motoring journal I could beg or borrow and I knew that such firms as Packard, Pierce-Arrow, Peerless, Locomobile, Franklin held to high engineering standards, that Stutz had nearly won the 24 hours at Le Mans from Bentley with a swansong of their 32-valve head twin-cam Black Hawk to rival the already legendary Duesenberg (probably the finest power plant produced in the vintage period by any informed measurement) and Howard Marmon's beautiful Sixteen, pipped to the marketing post by General Motors's hurriedly contrived V16.

I was also forming a bit of a passion for the post-depression Hollywood stars of lesser engineering merit but highly attractive to the younger, and the more shallow fashion-conscious market too. Cars such as the Auburn – the ultimate example of mutton dressed up as lamb – for the promenading poseur. Since despite Gordon Buhrieg's brilliant couture, the addition of a bolt-on centrifugal supercharger



Rover Sixteen Sports Saloon: 'elegance, tangible quality and acceptable performance'



Wolseley Eighteen: 'strongly built, well-upholstered, dignified before all else'

from Schitzer-Cummins and a dashboard plaque proclaiming that no less a rentier than Ab Jenkins had driven a similar car at Bonneville at 100.457 mph – three figures of decimals to boot – the car had no mechanical merit except for the early adjunct of a Borg-Warner two-speed rear axle. It must have been a bore to drive. Then there was the Cord, originally conceived by Errett Lobban as a baby Deusey, but instead created around a quite exciting licence arrangement with the great Harry Miller's front-wheel drive system that he developed at Indianapolis for several succeeding sponsors, albeit to little or no actual profit to his needy self.

I've strayed from the scene of my boyhood experiences so to come down from the Olympian clouds of design and return to the prosaic, I should mention the SS1 that Father took to for a brief spell. Much derided by the experts, this was in fact a better car than contemporary writers allow, deemed a 'cad's car' and worse down the years, whereas a straight comparison of road tests conducted by *Autocar* show otherwise: the 20hp version gave a top speed of 83.3mph and 61 in third, with 0–60 in 24 seconds, on a weight of some 27 cwt; against these figures the much vaunted new Jaguar model with its Weslake ohv engine of the same capacity and new manifolding took its slightly heavier 30cwt to a maximum of 88.2 and to 60 in almost 18 seconds. Not much improvement to justify the later criticisms when analysed, particularly as the SS100 Jaguar 2-seater refused to attain the desired 100mph by a margin that its successor with nearly another litre only just overcame with a spot of tuning – not the first time that the Coventry boys stayed with their car until the testers could come up with the right figures.

So, while I was squashed into the nicely upholstered rear seat of the SS1 (Bill Lyons has always known how to cosset his passengers) a thoroughbred Riley Kestrel arrived after an uncle's similar but Sprite-engined example had been admired. This was soon swapped to my regret as I had become a fan of that ambitious Coventry marque after their near clean-sweep in the 1934 Le Mans 24 hours, with four cars in the first six despite relatively small capacity. By this time I was driving our first farm tractors and a spartan Austin 7 Chummy around the fields, but also occasionally on quiet roads I was allowed to drive one of the Rovers and at least once a Triumph with a large cushion at my back, tutored by a parent torn between pride and anxiety.

But war loomed: the first wooden radar masts were erected above the cliffs at St. Margaret's Bay, where Ian Fleming had his retreat, as did Nöel Coward at that time. Most people thought these masts were part of a 'magic ray' system which would kill the ignition of an aeroplane engine. But Father seemed to know better, partly because he was impressed by the Napier Company's investigation into high-speed diesel engines under Junkers licensing, needing no electric ignition, while he had evidently been given some approximate idea concerning radio detection from wireless hobby sources.



Chenard Walcker of the sort young Holland sat in, photographed at Brooklands in March 1924 (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)



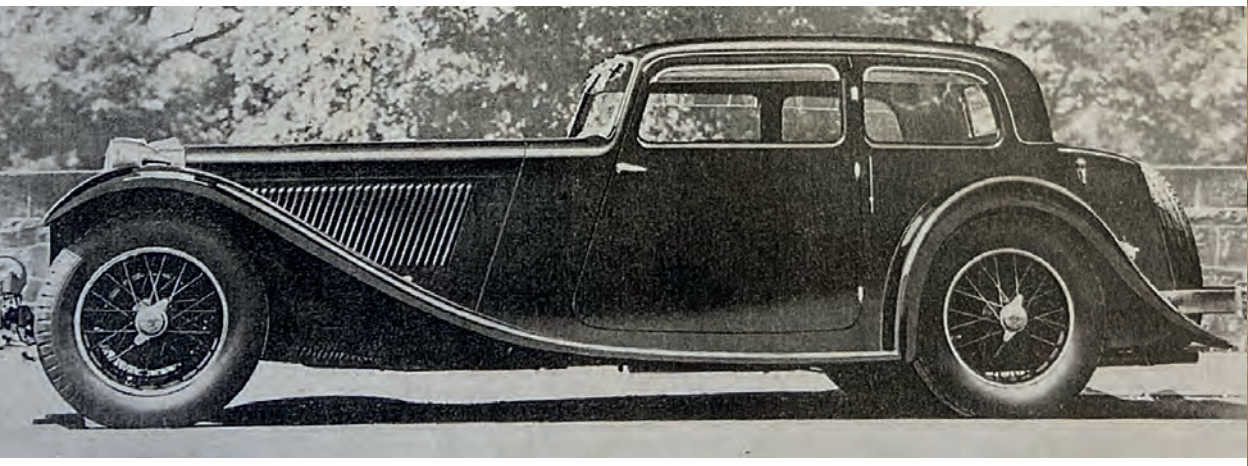
One of Holland's schoolmasters bought an MG SA saloon like this

There were huge airship hangars at Capel above those same cliffs, built for the aborted trans-world Empire network for the R101 and her superior rival R100. They then housed the coachbuilding business of Martin Walters of Folkestone with their popular convertible adaptations, but were demolished because they provided too obvious a landmark from the coast of France, at that point only 22 miles away. Allies of that country or not, we were still jealous of defending England from any Continental power, whatever treaties might otherwise suggest.

There is an intriguing story concerning General Martini, head of German Signals and Wireless (thus also radar) cruising up the Channel aboard the Graf Zeppelin airship mounted with some very sophisticated detection equipment at that crucial period, and how a well-meaning RAF duty operator had to be forcibly restrained from sending out a correction of the Graf Zeppelin's deliberately broadcast navigational error, clearly seeking evidence of our ability.

So, we had Shell No. One petrol at 1/6½d per gallon, or Benzole at about the same price for higher-compression engines, lubricating oils usefully cheap considering the frequent need for changing before the war-time strides made in carbon reduction, sparking plugs at 5/- each for good quality – shattering to think that this represents some £12.50 in today's currency value, so that the equivalent cost of the twelve plugs for the ubiquitous Ford V8 would be £100 – just think of the cost for a 32-valve Stutz! Road Tax, usurped by Chancellors since the 1920s, had reached £1 per RAC-formula horsepower, a design-inhibiting millstone for the industry, meaning increments of some £2 per annum for each step in the normal model range, say from eight to ten horsepower and so quite a move for the aspiring middle-class motorist, and some ridiculous anomalies such as the 4½-litre Lagonda being taxed at 27hp in its six-cylinder form, but a whopping 42hp for the same capacity V12 from the same manufacturer, and moreover for the owner of a Phantom III Rolls, or Hispano, the annual road tax would have been well over two thousand pounds in today's money. A really good power to weight ratio, as exemplified by most of the American ranges that were then bargains to purchase with the dollar at four to the pound sterling, entailed heavy running costs and of course this applied to the 'Anglo-American sports bastards' popular with well-heeled sportsmen, such as Railton, Brough Superior, Allard, and Atalanta.

Came the war. The spinster sisters of noble descent in the nearby estate gave their fleet of sleeve-valve Daimlers to the War Office in a typically patriotic gesture (one is glad they never knew the probable fate of most of such fine motor cars judged ill-suited to the war effort once they reached the transport pool). Our newly acquired tractors were causing the old waggoner worry about his beloved horses, and his job, but he carried on for years, as it transpired. And a big padlock was put on the farm petrol pump. An extraordinary and busy decade came to an end with a whimper with that first year of the war – the bangs came later with a vengeance.



The SS1: 'deemed a "cad's car" and worse down the years'

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LETTERS

The Wriggly Monkey Brewery kindly sponsors a 'star' letter every issue. The recipient of the six-pack case of beer this time is Allan Lloyd for his reminiscences of Benjamin Britten and his Alvis

Dear Sir,
Your article in *The Bulletin* 326 on the cars of the late, great Benjamin Britten brought back a youthful but still vivid memory from the summer of either 1966 or '67. In those days the Lloyd family holiday was always taken in August on the Suffolk coast in the village of Walberswick, from where various excursions were mounted to nearby places for the amusement of both adults and children. In this instance an early evening meal was being enjoyed at Pinney's fish restaurant in Orford, and we were sitting at a window table overlooking the square which in those days had a row of parking places marked out in the middle. My father glanced out of the window at the very moment a white drophead Alvis drew up, and being an Alvis enthusiast and the then owner of a TC21/108G (1956/25935/VDV 720), leaped to his feet and rushed out to greet the owner. Not surprisingly, No 1 son, determined not to miss anything interesting, trotted along behind happily ignoring the imprecations of his mother to remain at the table. I clearly remember the rather startled expression on the driver's face at being hailed from across the square by a stranger bearing down on him eager to talk cars, but they soon settled down to a brief discussion about a shared enthusiasm and at the end of it introduced each other with a handshake. At this point it was my father who was the startled one when he learnt that the fellow Alvis owner was none other than the great composer himself, who notwithstanding his shy and reserved nature had in those days the aura and celebrity of today's pop stars. The car was a brilliant white and with the hood down looked the most beautiful thing in the world to a boy of about eight.

My father's car was the 13th and last of the 108Gs to be bodied by Willowbrook using Graber-supplied jigs although the body was number five of the build – the body numbering appears to have been quite random. David Culshaw in *Alvis Three Litre in Detail* states that the car was plagued with unreliability and was returned to the factory for rectification; my father's diary for Monday 31 May 1965 states 'Alvis In to Coventry' which suggests that even at nine years old the company was still prepared to undertake corrective work on a goodwill basis. Dad loved the car



dearly but eventually the lack of reliability got the better of him and he sold it some years later. I believe it was written off in an accident soon after. The photograph is the only one I have of the car and its owner; the elegance of the Graber design still shines down the decades after seventy years.

ALLAN LLOYD
Colwall, Herefordshire

Dear Sir,
After reading your interesting article on Britten's cars, I had a quick look at Tom Clarke's book in the Complete Classics series on the Rolls-Royce 20/25 to see if I could find the car.

By 1929, there were not very many four-door tourers built on RR chassis, so I found chassis GGP44, with a John Buchanan of Glasgow body, quite quickly. The notes to the entry indicate that it was owned by Britten in the 1940s. It was fitted in the '50s with a Nash estate car body. It was in a Bonhams auction at Darien CA in 2005. It had been re-registered BF4175 when back in UK at the Real Car Co. in 2009.

The notes also give a reference to RREC *Bulletins* Nos. 187 and 188 of 1991. The first of these has the comment: 'Hector Woffinden of Barnsley Yorkshire produced this remarkable photograph of

Benjamin Britten taken on 7 December 1946 with his 20/25.' The photograph has more shadow detail than the one bottom left on the second page of your article, and shows S1001 on the numberplate, which is part of GS1001. It continues: 'The remarkable bit is that the picture had been torn up and thrown away and was actually retrieved in pieces from the waste-paper basket. Due to some fine work on it by Steve Stringer of Northampton, we are able to reproduce it. Obviously as an impecunious musician he ran the car, as most of us did, because they were cheaper than Ford Populars and more reliable. Can anyone cast any more light on the car and its fate? Hector used the car briefly in the early 1960s when it was wearing a well-made "woody" body presumably to enjoy "C" licence benefit.'

In RREC *Bulletin* 188 there is a note from Tom Clarke identifying the car as a Buchanan body registered GS1001 and owned in 1990 by a Mr Erikson in the USA as a Nash estate car.

Too much information, but remarkable what you can turn up. There is another picture of the car in the Complete Classics book, but I think you have it well enough covered in your article.

COLIN HUGHES
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

Dear Sir,
Always a good *Bulletin* to read. I was slightly astounded to find a family connection in your Frazer Nash Story. When it got on to Jimmie James (Oliver James, I think, Jimmie was presumably a nickname), the chap he escaped with, Bill McGrath, was a close family friend. He was Billy to me and officially W. Q. McGrath. After his escape he wasn't allowed to fly in case of recapture so he went into Air Traffic and ran Nutt's Corner (Belfast Airport) after the war and later was SATCO (Senior Air Traffic Controller) at Boscombe Down. The point I'm getting to rather slowly is that BBC Northern Ireland made an hour-long documentary about the pair of them escaping through France, which might be of interest to you and BMK102's owner. I have a DVD of the programme given to me by Billy's daughter.

GRAHAM SKILLEN
Templecombe, Somerset

Dear Sir,
Thank you for the heart-warming tribute to Judy Portway (*Bulletin* 326, p. 89). I happened to speak with her son at the 90th Anniversary and was saddened to hear of her passing. I knew that she had owned the Frazer Nash in the photo prior to my ownership but what I did not know was that she was the daughter of Kenneth Neve who had owned the car in the 1940s. Nor did I know of its contribution to her birth. That story I have recorded in the car's extensive history which details almost all its existence since it was built.

For the record, the car was built in November of 1927, and is one of 16 Boulogne models produced, rather than the 1925 Super Sports as noted. The car was first registered in March 1928, its first owner being one G. L. Chambers. In June 1928 he wrote to the works to inform them that he and his chauffeur had heard a noise when the car was idling and a gudgeon pin had subsequently broken. The works were very apologetic and promised to send a man to pick up the car and they would effect repairs and return the car as quickly as possible. There is no record that Mr. Chambers ever got the car back and by autumn 1928 it was with the works as a demonstrator. It then competed in the Double 12 Race at Brooklands in 1929 with N. Jupp as the driver, and D. A. Aldington as the co-driver. I have several photographs of the car then, both on the banking and after the race. Jupp drove the car in competition for at least a couple of years before it was acquired by Rex Johnston in 1932.

As far as the registration number, my car originally was registered PH 7962. It subsequently acquired the number DTC 374, which is the registration it had when Kenneth Neve owned it. Neve did not have it very long, but tells in his biography that his wife used it for shopping and it had a propensity to shed chains which she just left on the side of the road. After the war, the car passed through a number of hands until Freddie Giles bought it in rough shape in about 1966. He then acquired its original registration number, PH 7962. It went through several owners after Freddie's time with it, including, firstly, Peter Thurnham, an MP, the Portways, and then to Martin Nash who scored a win in the Pomeroy Cup in 2019. He decided to sell it and James Baxter bought it to sell and I acquired the car from him.

I would very much like to hear from any readers who know of N. Jupp who raced the car in its early days. I don't even know his given name and this early period in Jupp's ownership is lacking in much detail excepting some race results. I would also be interested to know if any readers might be familiar with G. L. Chambers, the first owner, who resided at Nywoods in West Southborne, or Rex Johnston, and any additional information and/or photos would be much appreciated.

ERICH VOLKSTORF
Mukilteo, Washington State, USA

Dear Sir,
A nice surprise to see the photo on p. 55 in Adrian Donovan's report on the 2024 Cheshire Tour showing Simon Thorpe in his Riley Brooklands, UY 4322. This

was the same car I owned in 1957/8 when I was a 19-year-old National Service vehicle mechanic in the REME, stationed at Bordon Garrison, photo attached. It had been sitting under a tarpaulin in a car park nearby and having recently read a book by 'Sammy' Davis which had photos of a similar car I had a look and recognised what it was. Having found the owner, a Sergeant, he was happy to let it go once I had raised the £75 by selling my Austin 7, raiding my Post Office Savings and persuading Father to sub the rest. It had been quite seriously modified for competition and the four 1¼″ SUs were never really properly balanced but what a revelation to drive after the little Austin. With the fickleness of youth the driving pleasure was overtaken by the need to have something where the rain didn't assault you from all sides (including from below) and gave a little bit more comfort (stupid boy!) so sold it at the finish of my NS service. I then knew nothing of its past history but since then it has been bought by Simon's father, Peter, and I know that he has researched its competition history and restored the car to how it must have been when new in 1928. It's so good to see it once again being used and cared for as it should be (and with its original registration number).

SIMON CAUTHERY
South Petherton, Somerset

Dear Sir,
Following the VSCC's excellent race meeting at Mallory Park (report, *Bulletin* 326, pp. 40–46), a mortifying photo emerged of the ODM race which showed me in my Alfa Monza partly on the grass while overtaking three cars abreast. The description of events in your report is not exactly what occurred. After seeing the footage, the matter was raised with the club by another driver, and I was asked by the director responsible for Driving Standards to explain what had happened. As our late Queen so eloquently put it, 'recollections may vary', but I am happy to put on the record that in the heat of the moment, over-ambitiously I went for a gap at the hairpin, wasn't seen, got squeezed and exceeded track limits. Going for gaps is what racing drivers do; but they should not if they cannot ensure they remain on track at all times. Happily all four drivers held their line and no harm came of it.

I should report too that the Clerk of the Course/Officials of the Meeting dealt with the incident at the time, by speaking with us lead drivers of the need for not surprising drivers of slower cars by passing where they did not expect. Not many drivers come 'up against the beak' at a race meeting, but my unfortunate experience at Mallory enables me to report happily and for the benefit of any doubters that all Race Officials and the VSCC are 100% behind insisting on the highest driving standards, and on racing with respect. I wholeheartedly concur with this approach. Rules are rules, and in my experience they are always applied without fear or favour, wherever you finish. Constantly we competitors need to remind ourselves that 'Motor Racing is Dangerous', never more so than during over-taking, conferring responsibilities on both, as it does. In a very long racing career, I am fortunate never to have been involved in a contact incident. I am acutely aware of the importance of safety, and of keeping 'something in hand' as was the case here.

As for John and Leslie's brilliant concept of the ODM series – the only thing I would like to see added is that there should be either extra points for cars being driven to the circuit, or penalties applied for those that are trailered. Your reporter pointed out that latterly the Monza has won several races, which for many laps I did not lead nor hope to win. Those races were never anything but extremely tight – and several times I 'got lucky' via the misfortunes of others. But after 'six from six', for 2025 we will be retiring the Monza from ODM, and switching to a vintage Alfa – so I am unlikely again to trouble the chequered-flag waver. I am a grassroots VSCC member, and I drove the Monza on the road to Mallory from Greenwich, was saved by a close competitor when a water leak looked insoluble, practised and raced and drove home. How fortunate to be able to do all that. This is the essence of having fun with the VSCC.

CHRISTOPHER MANN
Greenwich, London





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Bill Clark

1927–2024

There was a time when you could enter the premises of the Hampton Tyre Company in Christchurch, New Zealand, and pick up a 30 mm SU carburettor for £7/10/0. The proprietor was Bill Clark who ran a 4½-litre Bentley and who, in 1960, had discovered and restored the P3 Alfa Romeo which won the 1935 German Grand Prix. Bill's assistant, Jack Wilkins, used a 1911 FN (Fabrique Nationale) as daily transport. Later, in 1973, Bill founded Auto Restorations Limited, which still thrives to this day.

Bill died in December 2024, aged 97. He was born in 1927, an only child. His father had been a purser aboard ships run by the Union Steamship Company. Bill remembered his father's accounts of voyages aboard colliers traversing the Tasman Sea after braving the notorious harbour bars at Greymouth and Westport, then the stormy Bass Strait with hatches battened down, and with a freeboard of eighteen inches it was described as 'half a submarine'. During a strike in 1910, he and the watchman lived aboard for three months, anchored in Sydney Harbour, while by night they explored the backwaters of the river systems there in a dinghy.

He 'came ashore' for a salesman's role with the merchant Sargoods in territory including Christchurch, Rakaia, Ashburton and Methven; the fourteen fords to be traversed on a belt-driven motorcycle can't have been easy, before it was eventually replaced by a Model T Ford lorry. He then became agent for the Australian Barnett Glass rubber manufacturers and in a plant in Woolston with 180 staff they manufactured cycle tyres and cups for the then infant dairy industry. The business did well enough for Bill to remember the Nash Lafayette bought new in 1934. It had independent front suspension of the Dubonnet design also used on the P3 Alfa Romeo Grand Prix car which Bill owned much later, but the Nash's cable brakes were upset by suspension travel and pulled erratically.

Aged 15, Bill was given the remains of a 1929 Austin 7 van, which he attempted to turn into one of its more sporting brethren, with bits coming from various sources, including a stash of 'new old stock' wheels discovered in the loft of the Christchurch agent, David Crozier Ltd. His interests lay in engineering and woodworking rather than the academic side of his education at Medbury School and Christ's College. He took an after-school job at the respected engineering firm John Burns Ltd, and also worked in the evenings at his father's firm P. E. Clark Ltd but had 'itchy feet' and planned Overseas Experience. The Austin was sold to his friend Colin Rudd, later Commanding Officer at RNZAF Wigram, and Bill arranged to work his passage as a stoker aboard the elderly Shaw Savill ship SS *Pakeha*. This was not a highly regarded role, and three days before sailing, the ship's captain advised that he could not subject a young man to such an environment, as three of the five stokers were currently in jail for fighting. A friend in the New Zealand Shipping Company told Bill of a cancellation in a four-berth cabin aboard their one-class RMS *Rimutaka*, sailing shortly, so for £55 Bill had his voyage via Pitcairn Island, where they stood off for a few hours while building equipment was floated ashore, then Colon, through the Panama Canal to Curaçao, where the flamboyant American taxis and cars made a great impression.

Bill had written to six car manufacturers: Austin, Rootes Brothers, Morris, Jaguar, Lea-Francis and Alvis, and, having had positive responses from three of them, he travelled to the Midlands in his newly acquired 1931 Austin 7. This was 1949, and it was a very austere Britain where the 'Export Or Die' ethos allocated 90% of car-making material for export. Coventry had suffered badly from wartime bombing, and Bill vividly remembered premises built of temporary materials, foxgloves rising from the rubble, and a bronze statue of Lady Godiva which had cost the city £10,000.

While Bill waited for his interview with the Development Manager at Austin he was greatly impressed with the Murray Jamieson-designed twin-camshaft Austin 'Seven' on display and was invited to sit in it. The interview went well, and although he could 'start tomorrow' the gentleman who interviewed him, on hearing that Bill also had an interview pending at 'The Alvis', suggested that he could do better than the machine at which he would spend many months standing. He regarded Alvis as being 'second only to Rolls-Royce' and they did precision work for Austin as well as their primary work, which was for the Defence Department.

The interview with the one of the senior engineers at Alvis, Arthur Varney, also went well, and he was invited to look around with Ron Walton, who had finished his apprenticeship, so started work at £3/15/0 a week in the Service Department. There were 75 people working there, mostly on warranty work, and the wastage Bill saw there was anathema to a New Zealander. For instance, one of the revolutionary front-wheel-drive straight-eight Alvises was consigned to scrap. He remembered a Speed 25 being rebuilt for a fastidious customer at the then phenomenal cost of £950.

Bill boarded with a couple in Coventry at £3 a week for full board, which didn't leave much over.

He felt that his hosts, with a six-year-old daughter, no telephone, no car, and certainly no television, were living above their means in a rented semi-detached house, so felt he was helping the household. The husband, a Production Manager at Rootes, was nonplussed by Bill's mentioning the popular Humber 10, which didn't exist in Britain. Further research showed that it was a case of 'badge engineering' so that additional import and export licences could be obtained to supplement the almost identical Hillman 10.

Bill sold the Austin 7 for a £5 profit and bought a Wolseley Hornet Special Sports with a Eustace Watkins body but had a bad accident in it. His right foot was so badly injured that amputation seemed the only option, but the initiative and skill of a Polish surgeon who happened to be on duty saved Bill's foot. To his regret, Bill did not meet the surgeon once he regained consciousness, and he was eventually released from hospital immobilised with a plaster cast up to his waist and unable to drive, so that a task requiring less activity was found for him in the aero-engine facility, where the Alvis Leonides radial engines were tested. These were a nine-cylinder air-cooled engine of 11.8 litres, producing 550 bhp, and between 1936 and 1966, 2,300 of various marks were built.

Working conditions in the small testing area were appalling, with no soundproofing, the open end of the building facing into the prevailing wind, heat, noise and fumes. Ear protection was oiled cloth stuffed into the ears. The three men already working there suffered respectively from manic depression, alcoholism and a nervous complaint manifested by boils. Extended testing periods, with constant monitoring of engine speed and supercharger pressure for varying altitudes frequently meant working 12-hour shifts, with the overtime a welcome supplement to his meagre wages, the hour spent walking back to his digs after midnight and back for an 8am start occasionally relieved by lifts from the kind engineer Arthur Varney, who lived nearby.

Alvis were sorry when, after two years, Bill returned home as his father was in declining health, and as an only child his help at P. E. Clark Ltd was needed. Bill was offered the agency for Alvis in the Asia/Pacific region, and although this was not taken up, he had close associations with the manufacturer and its products. A return visit in 1960 brought back the aromas of the testing shop, and a 'Sorry you left' from Arthur Varney. After Bill's father died, P. E. Clark Ltd was sold to Bruce Britten, whose late son John is remembered for his innovative designs, including his motorcycles. Then came the Hampton Tyre Company of Oxford Terrace, Christchurch. Bill and Jan married in 1961. In 1973 Bill founded Auto Restorations Limited with friends Leon Witte and Gavin Bain (see obituary in *Bulletin* 324, p. 87).

Bill bought his Bentley in 1954. Chassis RN3032 was a relatively early car fitted with engine 3030 despatched to coachbuilders Flewitt of Birmingham for a fabric four-door saloon to Weymann patents in January 1928. By February 1939 that body had gone,



Bill Clark, centre, with Denis Jenkinson (left) and Doug Nye (right)

replaced by a Vanden Plas open four-seater, in which guise it was registered to F. M. McFarlane of the Anchor Shipping and Foundry Ltd at Port Nelson. Will Morrison of the Bentley Drivers Club has written of RN3032's active history, which in its first three years included three clutch repairs, a replacement cylinder block, new big end bearings and repairs after two road accidents. By the time Bill acquired the car it had a slab fuel tank, 'awful' mudguards soon removed, and Bill's friend Alec Shadbolt fashioned a 'bumble-tail' which had been worn by the Ford V8-engined Bentley which competed in the First Lady Wigram race in 1949, to dress it up a little.

RN3032 was fitted with the notoriously tricky 'C-Type' gearbox, with a wide gap between first and second, but very close ratios upwards, and Jan fondly remembered an occasion when she achieved every change perfectly. The car was used for general transport, fun, and sprints, with 93mph achieved. A connecting rod later broke, punching a hole in the crankcase, leaving smoking bits on the ground and demolishing the starter motor. Bob Densem made a new set of rods, Air New Zealand's Technical Headquarters at Harewood Airport patched the cylinder block, and a Commer starter motor was installed. An original Vanden Plas tourer body was being restored by Auto Restorations for an American client, and RN3032 was restored by them using dimensions from it, before being passed to Bill and Jan's son Robert, who after consulting his parents later sold it to a new owner in Auckland. It has since taken part in a migration to the land of its birth.

Bill's Alfa Romeo P3, chassis 50005, was the epitome of the pre-war Grand Prix car, introduced for the 750 kilograms weight limit prevailing from 1932, and fitted with a supercharged straight-eight twin overhead camshaft engine. As competition from German manufacturers grew, the engine size increased from 2.6 to just over 3 litres, and for its last competitive season in 1935 three P3s were fitted with Dubonnet independent front suspension. To the fury of the Nazi regime, the Italian driver Tazio Nuvolari won the German Grand Prix at The Nurburgring that July in chassis 50005.

In 1937 the car went to England and was driven successfully by Austin Dobson and Kenneth Evans, but by the early 1950s was 'a bag of nails' in the hands of the under-capitalised Roy Salvadori, who sold it to Christchurch resident Les Moore (1903-60). Moore crashed 50005 at the Mairehau road circuit, and the car was acquired by A. J. Roycroft, whose son Ron (1917–2000) had a happy time with what became known as 'The Glen Murray Express' before disposing of it when a 4½-litre Ferrari beckoned.

In 1960, Bill visited a house in Henderson outside which stood a Bristol 401 without wheels. To Bill's 'Do you have an old racing car here?' the woman at the door said, 'Do you want to buy it? It's too dangerous, and we don't want it.' £300 changed hands and harmony was established. During the Alfa Romeo's restoration, the Dubonnet front suspension units, marked 'D' and 'S', were found to be installed wrongly, the Italian words being 'destra' and 'sinistra' for 'right' and 'left'. Bill remembered 50005 from then on handling beautifully. On a fuel mixture of 50% methanol, 40% aviation gasoline, 9% ethanol and 1% castor oil it could be started by one pull up of the starting handle. With a daylight warrant of fitness, Bill used this monoposto Grand Prix every day to go to the shop for his milk and paper.

On a visit to Auckland, Bill and Leon visited a part of Karangahape Road where grass still grew behind a row of shops and found a single-seater Cooper Bristol, sadly missing its engine and gearbox. An engine from a touring Bristol 401 was found, and eventually it all came together and in Bill's words 'it went like a rocket'. All went well until a tragic day in 1989 when Jan and Bill's son James was racing at Wigram. The open driving wheels of the Cooper Bristol and the visiting ERA of Bill Morris touched, and James died when the car flipped. We aren't supposed to outlive our children, and the incident must have blighted the lives of the Clark family. The same year, the two racing cars were disposed of at auction, the Alfa Romeo going to a Japanese bidder before passing in 2000 to the US collection of Jon Shirley, former president of Microsoft, where it remains.

Geoff Edwards



Mike Cole

1935–2024



Mike Cole, a true VSCC gentleman

George Michael Cole – but always known as Mike – became a member of the VSCC in the 1950s. Although his everyday transport for many years was a humble Austin Seven he actually owned a CGSS Amilcar and a Type 46 Bugatti, the Baby Royale, at one time or another before his father persuaded him that the Bug was going to ruin him financially. The Austin Seven bug, on the other hand, never left him and he was re-united with one in his seventies.

Mike was a Cheshire lad and was educated at The King's School Macclesfield before doing two years' national service with the Life Guards in Egypt, 'looking after the Suez Canal', as he put it. His first job after leaving school and joining the army was making firelighters for the local ironmongers but it wasn't long before he followed in his father's footsteps and joined Esso, starting as a trainee at various garages and ending up as the Area Manager for Chesterfield and surrounding areas.

He married Beryl in 1958 and they had two children, Patrick and Vicki, who between them produced four grandchildren who in turn produced four great grandchildren. By the 1970s, Mike and Beryl were settled in Chesterfield with the family and a Riley Nine Mk IV tourer, which he used for family holidays and for VSCC rallies with Patrick navigating. Apart from cars and rugby, his other great interest was walking, usually with Beryl or a group of friends, often in the Peak District. There were also expeditions to the Alps and Corsica.

Mike marshalled on the Welsh and the Lakeland many times and also helped to organise the Northern Rally and the Derbyshire Trial, in the early days helping John Harris, often in foul weather, to clear and mark out the hills for what became 'The John Harris Trial'. But Mike would always turn up if he said he would, and he was Hill Chief at Clough Wood well into his eighties.

Eventually the Riley made way for a Rolls-Royce 20 which David Baker had built up with suitable engine mods to make it go indecently fast. This Mike used for extensive Continental trips with Beryl and many VSCC rallies with Patrick or me navigating. Finally, the Royce went, to be replaced by an Austin Chummy and then an AC Empire. Mike used both of these for a lot of LC&ES events, sometimes having grandson Tom navigating, including two trips to Hambye which entailed driving the whole way from Chesterfield and back in either the Chummy or the AC. The trip to Llandrindod Wells was a permanent fixture on the calendar for many years until 2023.

He always kept his cars in immaculate condition, did all his own maintenance and never used a trailer. He was a very loyal VSCC member and when he wasn't taking part he spectated at events such as Oulton, Mallory, Madresfield, Prescott and Curborough. Mike was a true VSCC gentleman; we shall miss him greatly.

David Barker

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The Riley Nine Brooklands Speed Model

By Adrian Smith and Keith Mountain, self-published, 449pp, hardback, £95, available from the authors at www.rileybrooklands.co.uk or by email sales@rileybrooklands.co.uk

Reviewed by **NIGEL STENNETT-COX**

Written by a pair of owner-enthusiasts and overseen and helped by Victor Riley, this book is the product of some 16 years' work, with a recent launch at the RAC club in Pall Mall, London. The book covers the family history and that of the manufacturing of engines and complete vehicles, right up to the end of the front-line competition campaigning of the Nine Brooklands.

The book is formed of two elements. The first examines the company, the origins, the family, and much of the technicalities of the Nine in particular. This part of the book abounds with fascinating detail which may reflect invaluable input from the surviving Victor Riley. Let us raise a glass to this pioneering gentleman!

The second section of the book consists of some 200 pages, listing from factory ledgers and registration documents every possible detail of every single Nine Brooklands produced. Even this potentially dry detail is interspersed with innumerable contemporary pictures of cars, drivers, and situational detail such as locations and mishaps.

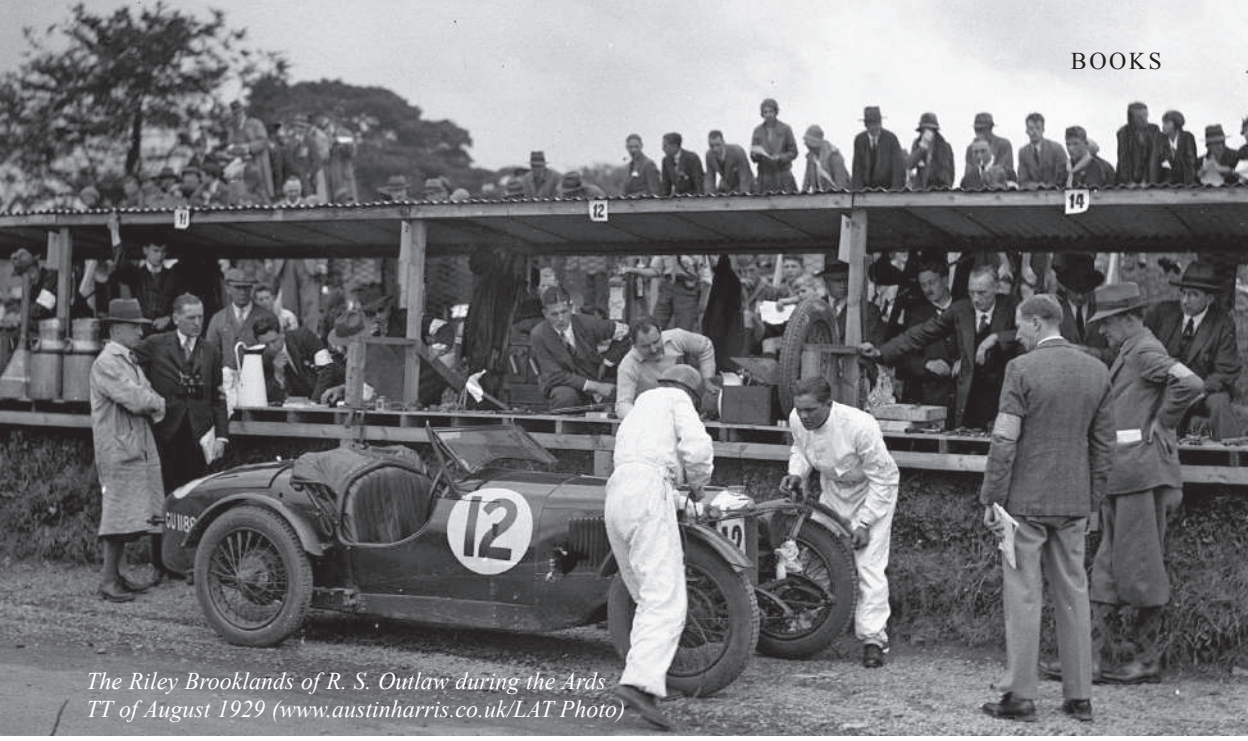
It is 130 years this year since the Riley Company of Coventry commenced making cars. This initiative was to supplement and later supplant the family's weaving, bicycle, and tri-car manufacture. There were five sons in the family at that time: Victor, Alan, Percy, Stanley and Cecil, with William being the father. It would seem that, from the start, the emphases were on quality, individuality and good performance. In the case of the latter, the authors tell us that the Riley Company patented a mechanically actuated inlet valve mechanism which went into production in 1898, and even more prophetically that Riley went ahead with pioneering the principle of valve 'overlap', and patented that feature in 1903. If the reader will pardon this reviewer's brief explanation, that is when the inlet and exhaust valves are each open at the end of the exhaust and beginning of the inlet strokes, to promote even gas flow by exploiting the use of charge inertia. This feature dramatically helps an engine to rev higher and increase its efficiency.

Riley also came back to such principles after the First World War, in 1920–21, when, to supplement their well-respected new range of side-valve engined cars, they came across an engine design executed by the proprietary motor vehicle and industrial engine makers Dorman of Stafford. From this perhaps unlikely source the Dorman designers came up with a four-cylinder engine incorporating a high-mounted camshaft in each side of the upper crankcase actuating short and light pushrods to minimise valve gear inertia. It was then possible to employ hemispherical combustion chambers with inlet and exhaust valves at an included angle of about 90 degrees in a cross-flow head, then thought to be the 'Holy Grail' of head design. This design initiative had not hitherto been thought possible without the incorporation of double overhead camshafts, as in the Henri-designed, groundbreaking and much-copied 1912 Grand Prix Peugeot.

One of these Dorman engines was campaigned successfully in competition, fitted in a Hampton car during 1921, and thereby came to the attention of Percy Riley.

Just to put this information in the context of this book, Percy and Stanley Riley showed great prescience in studying the Dorman design, putting the resultant new hemi-head engine into a new and very low frame, and eliciting the help of no less than Parry Thomas and Reid Railton to sketch out a new range-topping sports/racing car. As an aside, one wonders if the input from these two Brooklands *habitués* played any part in the adoption of the Brooklands name for the car?

One of the contributions of Thomas and Railton was to put a lowering 'step' into this new chassis's side-rails to bring the car's profile and centre of gravity down even further. Pictures of drivers sitting in Brooklands models and easily reaching down over the side to put a hand flat on the ground are shown in the book. Incidentally, and on this point, the book



The Riley Brooklands of R. S. Outlaw during the Ards TT of August 1929 (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)

comes alive throughout with so many contemporary pictures as to leave the reader in awe.

Mountain and Smith state that the use of such a small engine of only 1,087cc, did not augur well in the eyes of father William Riley for a truly high-performance unit as would seal the success of the nascent 'Brooklands' model in top-line competition. This disparaging attitude towards the new 'tiddler' of a car is also reported as having been adopted by one of the Riley Company's design staff, the influential S. Gordon Marshall. He seems to have undergone a complete *volte face* when writing with hindsight in 1942. Incidentally, here, the reviewer infers that the engine, in tuned but unblown trim, must have been turning out some 70bhp.

The radical new twin-cam engine design was to prove so successful in competition and road use that, from its inception as a production unit in the Brooklands in 1927, the design was to power all Rileys including the short-lived 'Autovia' V8 derivative, up to and beyond the Nuffield takeover by William Morris in 1938, then continuing right up to the British Motor Corporation's adoption of BMC engines in Rileys during the fifties. These would have been the 2,639cc Morris-derived C-Series 'six' in the Pathfinder's successor, the Riley '2.6', and the 1,489cc B-Series in Riley's upmarket and high-performance derivative of the Wolseley '1500'. These were both conventional pushrod units, albeit with cylinder head design input by no less than Harry Weslake. Thus production of the Dorman-inspired hemi-head twin-cam engine lay down and slid into the realms of history only in 1956–7. Here may not be the time or place to mention the widespread adoption of the Riley head and camshaft layout in innumerable motorcycle engine designs from the mid-thirties onward.

If the reviewer may be excused another small digression here, engineering diagrams in the book seem to show the original Dorman 4KNO design as having a much narrower valve included angle than the Riley derivative. That feature would have made a pent-roof combustion chamber possible, which along with four valves per cylinder could have propelled this design into the eighties/nineties and put it into contention with cars like twin-cam Ford Escorts, by such as Cosworth and Lotus. One can dream, but everything else like fuelling and electronics have moved on beyond measure, but as it was and still is, Riley Brooklands and other Rileys continue to populate the VSCC and other racing grids and tracks to this day. Long may it continue!

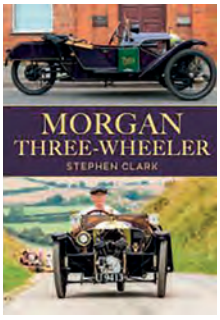
The initiative of Smith and Mountain to create a very large and comprehensive book, deriving from only one model of racing/sports car emanating from one of the smaller manufacturers, represents an admirably bold venture. The model in question was even only in production for some four or five years, 1927–1932, and in front-line competition with established star drivers like Freddie Dixon for a similar period.

The reviewer extends his congratulations and compliments to the authors, and indeed all who have contributed to this most impressive book, an asset to the library of any committed enthusiast. The reviewer's only suggestion is that an index, if only for the book's first section, may have eased the referencing process.

Morgan Three-Wheeler

By Stephen Clark, published by Amberley, 96pp, £15.99, widely available online.
Reviewed by V Twin, aka **GRAHAME JOSEPH**

Most people remember the first time they saw a Morgan three-wheeler. My twin brother and I were nine years old when we saw our first. At the time we were flying our newly built balsa wood, rubber-band powered, biplane model aircraft on the village green. As the car swung into the pub car park with its distinctive sound, we rushed over for a closer look.



On the road it was the nearest thing we had ever seen to a First World War fighter aeroplane, just like the models we had been flying. Right at the front, stuck out in the open air, was a two-cylinder 'vee-twin' engine giving off an intoxicating aroma of hot oil with its exhausts ticking away as it cooled down. Behind the engine was a polished radiator followed by a streamlined bright red body with a small, vintage aircraft-style, two-seater open cockpit, filled with interesting dials, levers and lubricators. We became fixated.

If Stephen Clark's book had been available to us back then, we would have fought over it and taken it to bed with us. It is written in a comfortable, easy style and we would have absorbed every fact-filled page and drooled over the 100 illustrations repeatedly. For 34 years I have owned a variety of Morgan three-wheelers and thought I knew a lot about them, until I read this fascinating book. Just like Stephen's meticulous restoration of his 1921 Grand Prix model Morgan, which he rescued from a scrapyard, this book is extremely well researched and written.

It starts with some history of the Morgan family around Malvern and how the engineering genius of H. F. S. Morgan was at the vanguard of cyclecar manufacture. The book explains the clever design of the cars and their development through the various models, using ten different engine manufacturers. Their design encompassed elements for minimal manufacturing cost, weight, fuel consumption and taxation, combined with a powerful high torque engine, low centre of gravity, good weight distribution and independent suspension all round, to provide exceptional performance. They also looked good, with sporty art deco styling and a sound to match. Little wonder their many sporting achievements, in various disciplines, feature in the book.

The book is right up to date with articles on the SS vee-twin engined Morgan M3W and the present Morgan Super 3. There is a chapter on buying, driving, maintenance and the Morgan Three-Wheeler Club, of which Stephen Clark is registrar and a director. This book would certainly appeal to owners of modern Morgans wishing to understand their heritage. For all of those, of any age, who dream of owning a Morgan three-wheeler, this is the perfect book to keep on the bedside table.



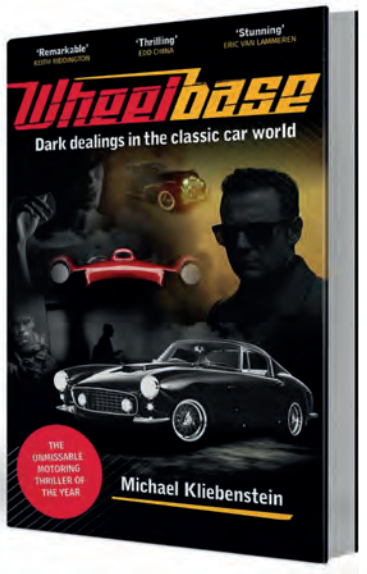
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Wheelbase

Dark dealings in the classic car world

By Michael Kliebenstein, published by Porter Press, 286pp. £13.99, available from www.porterpress.co.uk Reviewed by **VIVIAN BUSH**

This is a bit of fun, better taken not too seriously and enjoyed when there is time to pass. Some fictional characters will immediately bring to mind particular collectors, the aristocracy, dealers and baddies. Aspects of the plot will be familiar from real life, and are drawn together with a liberal brush of bright red paint, and perfectly inoffensively. This is written for entertainment, not the purist. If you'd smugly noted a later design sump, or that the 3-litre Bentley's bonnet catches in *Downton* or *Peaky Blinders* weren't the original butterfly screws, switch from stiffened suspension into relaxed reading mode.



Our fictional hero and his business partner specialise in the most coveted of Ferraris, around which the last few decades have woven fabrications, fraud and fools. For seasoned classic car traders they do come across as naïve verging on the gullible. In the 1990s I certainly knew one major London auction house whose unwritten policy was deliberately to avoid settling with vendors. Nothing appears to have changed as we accelerate into the drama and the boys are stitched up 'big time'.

As specialist high-end dealers, their reputation is built upon discretion and integrity. Yet, in strict 'intra-trade' confidence, these lads willingly share details of the dramatically rare cars they are pursuing, and their potential buyers. All of this whilst tooling around London in a modern Rolls Royce Phantom, surely an odd choice for daily wheels?

The author indulges his fantasies; and who doesn't dream about what might be slumbering behind those paint-peeled, rusty-hinged old garage doors? Sadly, the internet has largely robbed us of true barn finds – the mouldering exotica. Instead, as we see on TV, a cube of rust, once an early '60s Mini Cooper, is knocked down for daft money. Nevertheless, Michael Kliebenstein's story throws in a lovely 'what if' discovery to keep 1950s enthusiasts panting for more.

Plenty of detail is offered: we charter a Piper Cherokee PA-28, and to seal a monumental deal, fly it single-handedly from Cologne to Salzburg, battling several hours of strong headwinds and rough weather. Having been in nearby Dusseldorf the day before, time and money could have been saved on a scheduled flight. A long wet stint at the wheel of an original Blower Bentley is worrying and exhausting, although with that massive torque on tap, and presumably a D type gearbox, it is all a bit too dramatic. Talking of gearboxes, we learn that the ultra-rare Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8Bs had synchromesh on all four speeds.

Readers will have to forgive the prose for its mixture of US and UK English. Cars aren't driven, but invariably speared forwards, and be it pedal or button – both are only ever stabbed. There is the odd romantic scene for the central character, who we gradually appreciate has had a difficult time. The new girl can drive, loves old cars and is beautiful, but given the limitations of vocabulary, we are thankfully spared any detail of their entwinings.

Chapter by chapter, each headed with a different car silhouette to identify, these dealers descend towards financial meltdown. Readers with common sense and car-worldly experience will feel this could all have been avoided. But a cunning and action-packed plan provides the necessary ingredients to keep them in business – you only hope they learn a few lessons. And the bonus car, which fits nicely into the denouement, is an Alfa Monza, truly VSCC caviar on the Ferrari cake. Whilst not typical Porter Press fare, your time with this book will pass cheerfully on a long flight to Argentina if you are chasing that 1920s racing Bugatti which was lost in the mists of time.

How Did I Get Here?

Memories of six decades in motorsport, and musings on the future of Formula 1 and the planet

By Peter Wright, published by the author, 362pp, £30, available from www.howdidIgethere.co.uk Reviewed by **MATTHEW BELL**

The author of this memoir is a classic 'Baby Boomer'. Born in 1946, Peter Wright enjoyed a privileged upbringing and fortune-favoured life during which property was bought cheap before exploding in value, and thoughts about the environment were in nobody's mind as they boarded yet another long-haul flight to a far flung Grand Prix.

After prep school then Wellington he took a BSC in engineering at Cambridge, where he spent more time water-skiing and listening to Leonard Cohen than attending to his degree, which was graded Third Class. This didn't matter as not only did he have an outstanding aptitude for solving engineering problems but also managed to engineer the right encounters with influential people via some persistent letter-writing, namely to Tony Rudd at BRM, who gave him a job.



The author, right, with Elio de Angelis, one of six drivers he knew who died racing

Co-founded post-war by Raymond Mays in Bourne, Lincolnshire, where ERAs had been made, BRM was then (1967) at the start of the H-16 engine era, which Wright quickly got to grips with. Wright's description of his ensuing career at the forefront of racing car development is fascinating, and included 20 years spent working for Colin Chapman at Lotus.

He reminds us how fast-moving technological advances were at that time, and how dangerous racing still was, with circuit deaths not infrequent. By 1994, he had known and worked with six drivers who had died in accidents: Mike Spence, Pedro Rodriguez, Ronnie Peterson, Bruce McLaren, Elio de Angelis and Ayrton Senna. Having spent the best part of three decades trying to make cars go faster, he spent the next three trying to make them safer.

He joined the FIA in 1995, where Max Mosley tasked him to investigate how safety could be improved. This led him to develop an equivalent of the 'black box' for racing cars, which would record data in the run-up to an accident and help explain the causes, which in Senna's crash at Imola remained unclear. Wright oversaw a programme of crash simulation which gathered data that meant cars and circuits could be redesigned accordingly.

Mosley also asked Wright to investigate how F1 could offset its carbon emissions as early as 1995, knowing it faced an image problem. Wright's research found that of a total of 55,500 tonnes of carbon for an F1 season, 65% was generated by air travel, 23% by road travel, 3% from manufacturing the 70 cars for the season, 5% for the actual racing and 4% for testing. Wright has an abiding interest in tackling problems and writes about the solutions he devised with admirable clear-sightedness.

Chapters about his work are spliced with more personal material. After the failure of his second marriage, he admits that 'Motor racing had taken its second scalp in my personal life'. Certainly, Wright comes across as single-minded at times, and with so many interests it's hard to see how there was time left for his wives or children. Of old cars, he has no interest in patina or history, but in engineering alone. This has led him to own replicas of both a Type 51 Bugatti and a C-Type Jaguar, and then oversee the rebuild of a GN Akela. Now 78 and living off-grid near Presteigne, Wright has entered a period of self-reflection leading to him writing this memoir. Whether the decisions he made were right or wrong, the journey has been remarkable, and he is to be applauded for logging it with candour and clarity.

Jake's Bikes and Trikes

By John Bradshaw, 125pp, £20 + £5 p&p, published by the author and available from him via email at jrbpub.sales@gmail.com
Reviewed by **NIGEL STENNETT-COX**

This book is about the Specials of Jake Challenger and its cover shows a heavily modified Mazda MX5. This prompted your reviewer to wonder whether this comes within the remit of the VSCC, but while none of the cars in the book are VSCC eligible, there is enough of interest here given our history of embracing the concept of the one-off, as evidenced by Basil Davenport's GN 'Spider', and John Bolster's 'Bloody Mary'. The latter at one stage had as many as four engines, owing their origins to the then contemporary Ariel 'Square Four' motorcycle. When ingenious back-street mechanics explore parameters like power, traction, speed, and power to weight ratio, they can surprise and the results can be fun.

The book is formed of six sections, each covering a vehicle, or several in the case of the motorbikes, which have either been heavily modified or created by the author's long-time friend, Jake Challenger of Stafford. Colour pictures abound, and the first section is centred around Jake's motorbikes. These started with his putting a Villiers 2T two-stroke twin into a Zundapp, going through to a Triumph Tiger 100 engine finding its way into a Honda CB72. These bikes were built up in the style prevalent in the sixties and early seventies, of crude and cheaply built 'Café Racers'. Several are depicted in black and white pictures in situations redolent of the 1960s: back lanes and tatty old wooden sheds. Invariably the bikes are leaning on the nearest



Jake Challenger on his Vincent Black Lightning at Donington,1977

convenient wall or shed, never a proper stand to be seen. A Vincent Series D Black Shadow draws the bike phase to a close, after the bike had undergone modification and improvements, particularly to the brakes.

Three-wheelers, the central theme in the book, appear next with a Berkeley of the single rear wheel design beloved of Jake and the author, and a layout shared with the highly successful Morgan known to all. Berkeleys, however, all used front wheel drive, which was radical for the time. The Berkeley modified by Jake had its original Excelsior two-stroke taken out and a British Leyland Mini engine and integral transmission unit fitted.

The next of Jake's three-wheelers, more original in concept, was the first of a series of six Specials to be endowed with the name of Tarkus. With these models, Jake really took on major creative challenges in all aspects of the cars design, from radical engine modifications to new chassis designs. The first one used a JAP vee-twin engine, and the second a three-cylinder DKW liquid-cooled triple. This was ingeniously mounted at least 30cm to the rear of the front tyre contact patches for good balance fore and aft in cornering, with good traction. After some radical tuning work, which included making a new three-cylinder block incorporating Jake's own porting design, there was also a new head, machined from solid. It is appropriate to mention here that the majority of this work was performed in an ordinary domestic garage on a modern housing estate. Furthermore, costs were kept down to a minimum, with the frame being measured and constructed on Jake's garage floor. With this vehicle Jake was able to achieve a win at Loton Park in June 1978, coming within 0.3 of a second of the fastest time on that hill. Later that same year, Jake also beat the legendary Bill and Maggie Tuer's Super Sports 1932 Morgan at the Cadwell Park vintage motorcycle and three-wheeler race.

It is of note that the Morgan Three-Wheeler Club have persistently welcomed the presence of people such as Jake with their powerful home-made oddball cars in club races. Furthermore, that club seems to allow the much more recent S&S 2-litre vee-twin engined Morgan three-wheelers in Morgan Club races, alongside the Morgan company's earlier tri-cars which ceased production in 1952.

The chapter pertaining to each subsequent Tarkus Special is headed by a picture of the donor bike or car, followed by a detailed look at the vehicle itself. Tarkus II used a Citroen GS 1,220cc air-cooled flat-four engine and fascinating technical drawings of that unit appear in the book. When Jake had it hitting 9,000 rpm, it was an added convenience if the circuit had a breakers' yard within easy reach, for the procurement of engine and gearbox parts. Paradoxically, this became less of a problem when Jake added a supercharger, thereby allowing greater power to be developed at lower rpm. Tarkus III used two four-valve cylinders and heads from a Westlake 500cc motorcycle speedway engine, highly potent in its day, with these mounted on a common crankcase designed and made up by Jake. This car became road-legal upon completion.

Tarkus IV used a 200bhp Suzuki unit, while Tarkus V used a home-made crankcase to take three BMW R100 cylinders disposed in radial form. As if that wasn't enough, and skipping the relatively conventional 'Big Bros' Honda-engined two-wheeler, Jake went on to build his Mazda MX5-based 'MX3', as featured on the cover. This is a three-wheeler retaining some of the Mazda power train but employing the single wheel rear end from a Honda Gold Wing Touring Motorcycle. This is used for track purposes but is fully road registered.

We end the Tarkus line with the W3 which was still not completed at the time of writing, but comprises three 1,340cc Harley-Davidson cylinders and heads mounted in 'broad arrow' configuration on yet another home-built crankcase. In the pictures, this engine looks stunning. For £25, the broad-minded enthusiast can buy a book that will make them smile. My only slight carp would be that the proofreader could have done a better job in spotting typos and spelling mistakes, particularly in the latter sections, but the pictures and diagrams are excellent.



Tarkus I at Loton Park Hill Climb, 1978



Tarkus V at Curborough, 1995: note the homemade crankcase



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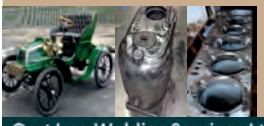


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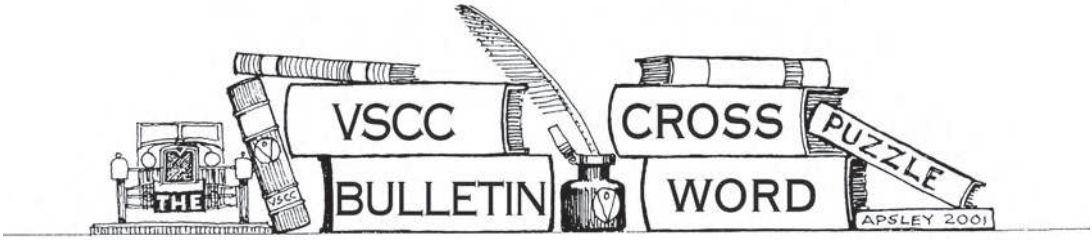
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A solution has been found to our lack of sponsor. The winner will win a beautiful VSCC mug, supplied by The Editor via the regalia shop on the club website. What better way to recall your triumph every time you have a cup of tea, while also supporting the club? The prize applies retrospectively so any past winners who have yet to receive a reward, please get in touch. Meanwhile congratulations to those who correctly completed 95, including Adrian Chettle who wins the mug. He said it 'took a few days to get 16 down and 25 across, but he got there in the end'. Ed Swain admitted he didn't 'knock it off in a few minutes' and Chris Baughan said it was 'most enjoyable as it took ages to complete'. Richard Derrick was so stuck on 16 down and 20 across he was thinking of seeking editorial guidance. Alas, impartiality forbids! Good luck with 96, and please send answers by email if possible to vscc.editor@gmail.com as The Editor has yet to complete on his house purchase. Thanks to all wishing luck in that regard.

Name .....

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Answers and winner in the next *Bulletin*.

Answers to Crossword No. 95

Across

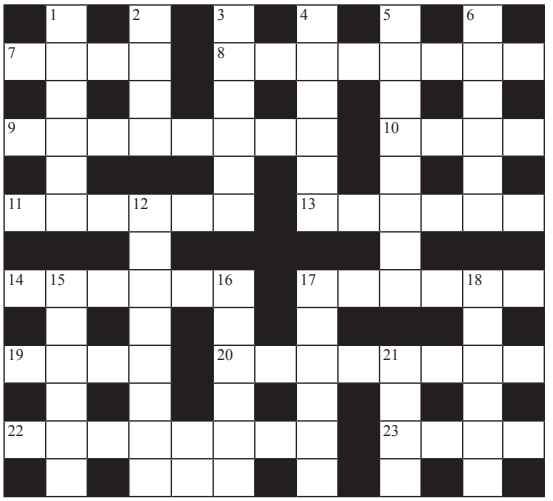
1 Kent 3 Karslake 9 Alvis 10 Bugatti 11 Incisor 12 Aorta 13 Bushes 15 Aspish 18 Radio 20 Calcott 23 Ill wind 24 Reams 25 Guinness 26 Meta

Down

1 Khaki 2 Novices 4 Auburn 5 Signals 6 Aster 7 Epitaph 8 Isis 13 Burning 14 Erosion 16 Isolate 17 Acedes 19 Delhi 21 Lord 22 Tesla

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Crossword number 96



Across

7. Saints and Formula 1 drivers have this in common (4)
8. Vintage car built in Michigan, not France (8)
9. The vintage car 'made by ladies for others of their sex' (8)
10. Small car one could reverse in one's sleep (4)
11. See 20 across
13. Ogled and reeled around (6)
14 and 17 across. Nit swallower involved in the design of gearboxes (6,6)
17. See 14 across
19. Citrus fruit that doesn't sound attractive (4)
20 and 11 across. Rare car made from beers venerably shaken up (8,6)
22. Relatively clever scientist from the nineties? (8)
23. Type of clutch found around roadworks? (4)

Down

1. Birthplace of Gilles Villeneuve (6)
2. It can make sparks from lubricant after the 2nd of October (4)
3. One hundred and fifty sown around in the Big Top (6)
4. Car constructed largely without energy in Scotland (6)
5. Father and son both set records quickly (8)
6. Princess Royal captures her former spouse in an extra room (6)
12. Tourist Trophy is neat, maybe smartest (8)
15. Ford turns left again (6)
16. Austins celebrating their fortieth anniversary? (6)
17. Hand signal that sounds like one is giving up a right (6)
18. Canoes tossed on the open seas (6)
21. Some steering systems have a bit of a crack in them (4)

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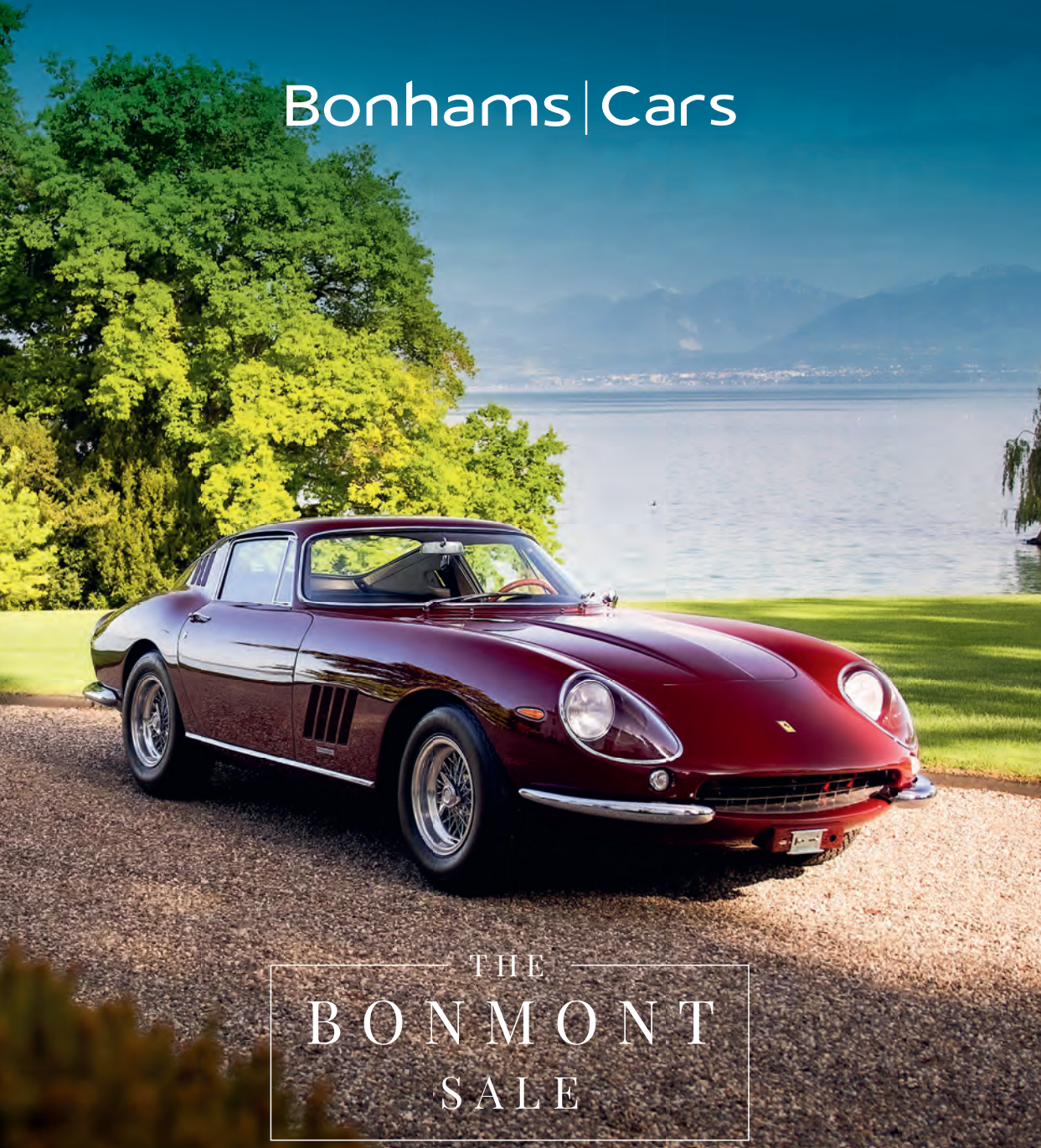
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NO. 328 SUMMER 2025



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Thanks to those who race

The Editor has lately been spending an unhealthy amount of time watching the 1968 film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, on account of it being the current obsession of the Editorial two-year-old. The child likes the main body of the film, of course, but what he really clamours for is 'other Bang Bang', by which he means the seven-minute opening sequence. For those who have not seen it recently, this is an unnecessarily long and (presumably) expensive preamble which sets the scene of Chitty's glory days by galloping through four seasons of Grand Prix races, starting in 1906 and ending in 1909, when the car crashes and burns after swerving to avoid a little girl and her dog. It bodes well that this is the tot's favourite bit. But as an adult VSCC member, a couple of thoughts strike you.

One is how familiar many of the cars are, or at least they will be if you have been a member of the VSCC for the last couple of decades or more. There's the ex-Steady Barker Napier, the ex-Douglas Fitzpatric Métallurgique, the ex-John Brydon Renault. What fun their owners must have had making the film, though one might have been nervous to agree to partake in the crash scenes, no matter how deep producer Albert Broccoli's pockets were.

The next thing that strikes you is that we never see any of these cars racing any more. One by one they have gradually drifted out of the VSCC and into the hands of owners who do what with them? Put them in museums? Polish them on weekends? Hold them in bank vaults as collateral? It is always a moment of anxiety when great cars belonging to active members pass into the hands of another. In recent years we have been lucky that exceptional one-offs like the GN Spider and Norris Special have passed from one active VSCC member to another, so that we spectators can continue to see them in action. But it is a pity that all the cars used in making those race scenes are now out of sight, even though they presumably are all extant somewhere.

This year's opening race meeting at Silverstone lived up to its usual high standards, not only for the quality of the racing but the rarity of the cars. Fred Harper brought his fascinating 1926 Miller 91 race car, which is new on the scene, and Chris Mann's stable of racing Alfa Romeos was on this occasion represented by his 1924 RL Targa Florio car. These in addition to all the usual specials and standard sports cars which we are used to seeing campaigned and are so lucky to have in the club.

And so as we look forward to three more club race meetings this season, Cadwell, Oulton and Mallory, let us be even more grateful to those who continue to campaign their cars, in particular the Edwardians. It takes a lot of time, money and effort to keep a prewar car race-ready. How lucky that Mark Walker walked away unhurt from his recent scrape with the Darracq at Goodwood, and that he is already putting Humpty back together again. For those of us who for whatever reason do not or cannot race, but enjoy the thrill of seeing these cars perform at speed, members such as Mark and the Darracq are among the greatest heroes of the VSCC.

THE BULLETIN OF THE VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB

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Cover: *Well, this is issue number 328 so of course we had to have a BMW 328 on the cover. This one is GMC1, chassis 85046, one of the first batch of six RHD 328s delivered to Frazer Nash in July 1937. Originally off white ('Elfenbien'), it then belonged to A.F.P. Fane, Sales Manager and Works Driver, who had it painted maroon with silver wheels. He campaigned it extensively from mid-1937 until the end of 1938. This picture was taken at Test Hill Corner at Brooklands in April 1938. The car is now white again and in active service (Thanks to the Frazer Nash Archives, especially to Matt Vincent and Peter Livesey)*

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Greg Wrapson writes

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Just three this time

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Richard Baxter at Wetherspoons

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Says Baumpflanzer, who has one

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Report from the Karslake Hispano

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Greg Wrapson goes back to 1928

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False modesty from Paula Marsh



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Mike Hallowes tots them up



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Annie Peake in clover

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Eva Hasell's adventures by Ford

While researching pictures for Greg Wrapson's article about the 1928 Ards TT, published on p. 28, we came across this image of an Amilcar C6, reg YW91, which has the merit of featuring three kittens. There's also a jaunty looking fellow in a cricket jumper with a fag in his mouth. The car appears to have been one of two works entries and was raced by Beris Harcourt-Wood, the man in the cap, who is accompanied by London Amilcar dealer Vernon Balls. Does anyone know what became of the car or, more importantly, the cats? (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)



54 LIGHT CAR TOUR
Ian Grace's first outing since the 90s

58 LIGHT CAR TRIAL
Evie Mason dusts down the Swift

60 HEREFORD SPEED TRIAL
Dick Wilkinson goes touring

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All the action with Mark Ballard

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David Pryke goes cone dodging



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Spring fun with Steve Welsh

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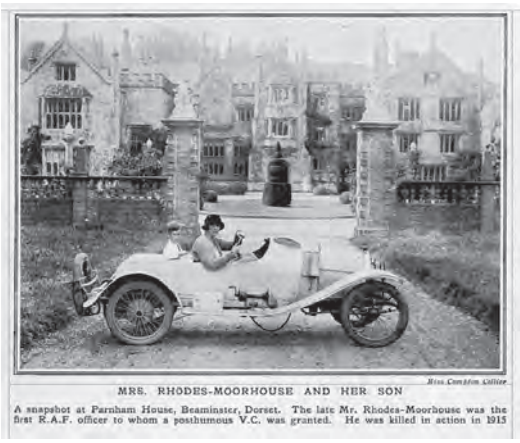
94 BOOKS

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Sidelights

An enthusiast at Parnham

The atmospheric photograph of Parnham House near Beaminster on p. 54 of the Spring *Bulletin* and the poignant story of its association with William Rhodes-Moorhouse stirred my memory. A while ago I did some research into this beautiful house and its sad loss in connection with a piece about the cars of Eric Bullivant, another motoring enthusiast whose home this was. The Bullivant family business was British Wire Ropes, and in 1927 he married as her second husband a lady named Kate Shipwright, who had previously been married to the colourful Capt. Denis E. B. K. Shipwright, one-time RFC pilot, MP, adventurer and Brooklands habitué (see *Bulletin* 312, pp. 48–49). Her father, Sir Edward Hain, was a ship owner with extensive land holdings and mining interests in Cornwall, who had also served as MP for St Ives. The Bullivants maintained a fine London home, Mortimer House in Egerton Gardens, South Kensington, and as connoisseurs of the arts their noted collections of portraits and *objets d'art* found a perfect setting at Parnham, which was their country home between 1931 and Kate Bullivant's death in 1954.



MRS. RHODES-MOORHOUSE AND HER SON

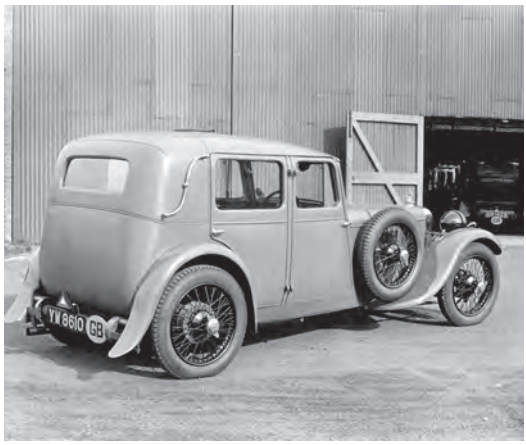
A snapshot at Parnham House, Beaminster, Dorset. The late Mr. Rhodes-Moorhouse was the first R.A.F. officer to whom a posthumous V.C. was granted. He was killed in action in 1915

After his marriage, Mr Bullivant mainly looked to Cricklewood, Derby and Crewe to provide his motor cars, but he clearly also had an affection for Alvis. His first recorded example, a 1925 12-50 four-seater sports, took second place in the Condition Competition at the Henlys Alvis Day at Brooklands in September 1926. 1927 saw the purchase of a Rolls-Royce 20hp Hooper cabriolet, and also a 6½-litre Bentley with striking VdP tourer body. A rare example of the technically innovative FWD Alvis followed in July 1928, being only the second of the forty saloon-bodied cars produced. The low build and sleek lines of this car must have seemed very advanced for the time.

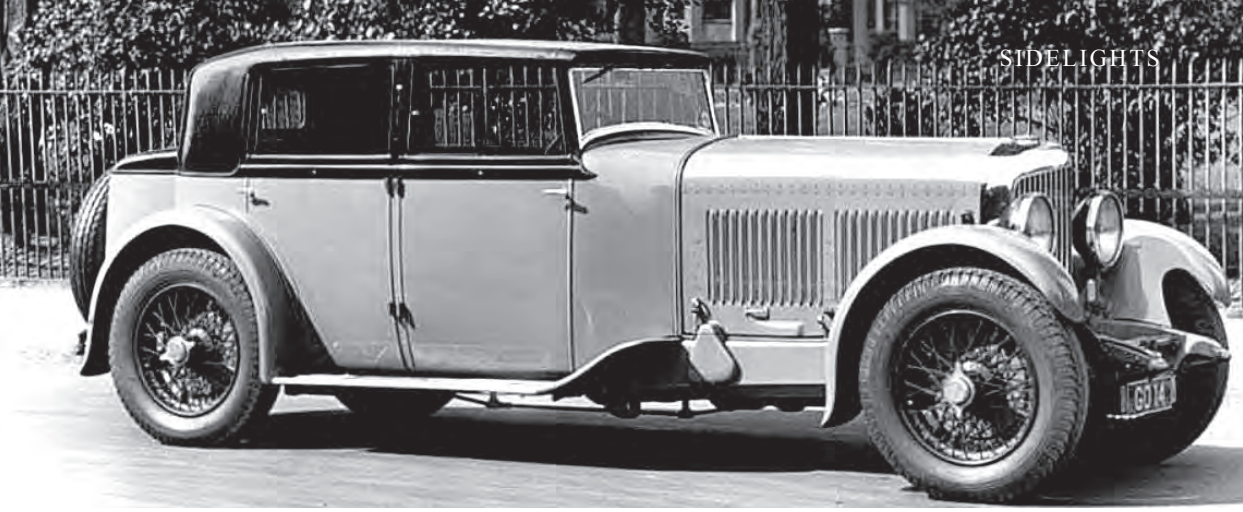
August 1929 saw the earlier Bentley replaced by a second 6½-litre, this one fitted with a drophead coupé body by Freestone & Webb, but the owner clearly hankered after another Alvis, and early in January 1930 a (short-chassis triple-carb) SA 16.95 Silver Eagle Sports Atlantic saloon arrived in the garage. A very striking 8-litre Bentley with lightweight H. J. Mulliner sports saloon body followed in April 1931, succeeded in May 1933 by a scaled-down version of the same body design on a 20-25hp R-R chassis to which the 8-litre's registration GO 14 was transferred.

This was succeeded by two more 20-25s, a Hooper landaulette in February 1934 and a brougham de ville by the same coachbuilder in January 1935. A change of radiator shape was provided by a 4¼-litre Bentley H. J. Mulliner sports saloon in May 1936, and then things appear to have quietened down until after the war. 1949 saw the first of two Mk VI Bentleys, followed by an S1, then two R-R Silver Cloud 3s, and from 1966 on a new Silver Shadow most years until Eric Bullivant's death in April 1974. Most of the earlier cars are recorded as having been finished in the Bullivant 'house colour' of light grey, whilst the registrations of the post-war cars all contained either a single no 7, or in two cases triple 7s.

Greg Wrapson



The Alvis FWD saloon delivered to Eric Bullivant in July 1928



The Bullivant 8-litre Bentley H. J. Mulliner lightweight sports saloon

Annual aggregate trophies

David Rolfe has been doing some useful work over the last couple of years to keep on top of aggregate points by emailing all competitors and adding monthly updates to the website. For anyone new to the club or who has simply forgotten, there are a lot of annual aggregate trophies up for grabs, many of them with long and intriguing histories. They range from the most hardly fought, like the Lycett cups, to the more esoteric, such as the Leinster Trophy for the best performing competitor who happens to live in Ireland. It is worth visiting the pages on the club website dedicated to aggregate trophies as they are being constantly updated. There is even a prize for the best piece written in *The Bulletin* each year – what further incentive could there be to submit an article to The Editor?

Darracq drama

Mark Walker has already made great progress in patching the 1906 Darracq back together again after its heated exchange with the barrier during the Goodwood Members' Meeting. After getting home Mark stripped the car down and has already straightened the chassis, front axle and steering column. The radiator is being repaired by the same man who, it turns out, had built it 18 years ago. *The Daily Telegraph* ran a report which appeared to lament the fact Mark wasn't wearing a seatbelt, though quite why anyone would want to be strapped into a 200hp behemoth remains unclear.

Invitation to Twickenham

There will be an event to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of Twickenham's first car on 5 July 2025 as part of St Margaret's Fair at Moor Mead in Twickenham. I am trying to contact as many owners of Twickenham-built vehicles as I can, so that they may attend the event. If any member owns a car that was built in Twickenham and might be interested in attending, please email me at robin.hunter@sky.com

Robin Hunter

Tour of Scotland

For those unable to attend the VSCC Prescott weekend, Strathendrick Classic & Sports Car Club invite all pre-1940 cars, light commercials and motorcycles to join their tour on Sunday 3 August 2025, which will start at the Wallace Monument car park by Stirling at 10.30am. Lunch will be at The Green Hotel, Kinross, where afterwards those interested can cross the road to visit the Loch Leven Brewery to view the brewing and visit their shop. The finish will be at the Stirling County Rugby Football Club, where prizes will be awarded over tea and coffee. The tour will be about 70 miles long over quiet scenic roads. For full information and entry form e-mail VSCC member Roger Martin on roger.martin04@outlook.com or phone 0141 776 4430.

Cooper event, Prescott 2026

July 2026 will mark the 80th anniversary of the first competitive outing of a racing car manufactured by the Cooper Car Company, when John Cooper and his friend Eric Brandon took part in a Speed Hillclimb at Prescott. The Bugatti Owners Club will be celebrating this anniversary with a meeting at Prescott during August 2026, date to be confirmed. It is planned that there will be competition classes for Cooper cars and static displays. A date for the diary.

Peter Jackson – President, Cooper Car Club

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Kerbside Encounters

More photographs of prewar cars when still in everyday use, supplied by **MATT SHEPHERD**

Right: ADU 28 is a Riley 14/6 Gamecock, one of three cars of this type used by the works for the 1934 Coupe Internationale des Alpes. It was driven by Arnold Farrar in the event, but suffered a blown head gasket. It's pictured in 1952 on the Isle of Wight looking much as it did in 1934. A note on the reverse shows the car was 'cellulosed red with chrome fittings'. The car survives having been owned by the late Barrie Gillies since 1961, and is now with his son Mark. I spotted it in the paddock at April Silverstone this year.



Below: Pictured opposite the Bentalls department store in Kingston-upon-Thames in the early 1950s is this Invicta S Type. Chassis S 137 left the factory as a Mayfair two-door saloon in 1933 and was later given the name 'Seamew'. The low-chassis car was a casualty of transport requisitioning during the war and then left unloved in parts. Laurie Mayhead rescued the remains, and this picture shows the car back on the road but with rather crude bodywork and non-matching head-lamps. Mayhead later fitted the Carbodies tourer body from chassis S 139 that it wears to this day.



Below: A Marendaz Special coupé parked on a Solihull drive in 1954. A 13/70 model registered in 1935, this was one of the later types built by the firm when they had moved to Maidenhead from Brixton. The 13/70 was fitted with a six-cylinder side-valve Continental engine of 1,869cc. A handsome car that was sadly scrapped in Edinburgh in 1961.



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A clean pair of Ford Model A Specials – it must be the start (Steve Welsh)

Down Zomerset Way

Gambling, drinking, and mud like gravy – I needed a lie down after this year's Exmoor Trial, says **RICHARD BAXTER**

'OW MUCH?!' The (in)famous Yorkshireman's cry rang out in the saloon bar of Wetherspoons in Minehead, when we arrived this year to be met by the news that the price of a pint had gone up from £1.57 to £1.79. Yorkshiremen are of course known for being tighter than a verruca sock but I picked myself up off the floor, pulled myself together and reminded myself of the words of the great Windsor Davies in *It Ain't Half Hot, Mum* – 'It's the weekend boys. Yes, you is allowed beer.'

Apparently in 'Spoons you can order your beverage on something called an app, but being an



Robert Brown in the Amilcar CGSS – he only completed six hills (Steve Welsh)



Sam Stephens's crew heave his Model A out of the mire (Steve Welsh)



Scarlett Blakeney-Edwards in the family Ulster (Phil Johnson)



The Alvis Silver Eagle of Robin Harcourt-Smith completed three hills before retiring (Phil Johnson)

analogue man living in a digital world I prefer a bit of face-to-face contact so I wandered over to the bar, ordered a cleansing ale and got chatting to the barman. He was surprised to find someone in there that was not a) a student, b) unemployed or c) a pensioner. I tried, unsuccessfully of course, to explain to him what we were all doing there before conversation turned to his girlfriend being preggers. As the father of three I had much wisdom to impart, the most important of which was, tempting though it may be, do NOT go down the business end to watch the little blighter pop out. Things will never be the same again. It's a bit like witnessing a violent murder at your favourite picnic spot.

As other like-minded loonies gathered there was much excitement. Trips down to the Exmoor are always entertaining. The highlight last year was in the curry house on Saturday night when, in an advanced state of refreshment, Jonathan Miller chose that exact moment to inform son Archie that he had a grandad who had fought in the Burmese war and that Archie is in fact a quarter Burmese. I know! The room fell silent. Archie was quite surprised. Jonathan had to ask him to stop swearing.

This year middle spawn was piloting the mighty Chrysler with Richard and Paula Marsh providing the pies. We didn't need a weigh-in to establish who the two heaviest crew members were. Marshy and I knew we were destined for back seat duties. We could probably form a decent second row in the scrum but possibly the heaviest bouncing combo in the history of bouncing combos. I will freely admit to tipping the scales at 16 and a half stone, naked, first thing in the morning after my ablutions and balancing on one leg. When I asked Richard what he was weighing in at these days he mumbled something incomprehensible into his beret. It had felt a bit rude to ask once and doubly so to ask twice, so I didn't. Anyway, if we could get over 30 stone shifting up and down in unison it might just be effective. Either that or break a spring. Our practice bounce caused much hilarity as we both got about half a cheek down. We had to put Richard in the recovery position. I've done a fair bit of bouncing around in the back of cars when I was younger but not (that I'm going to own up to) with anyone that shape.

Now as anyone who knows me will tell you I am a bit of a go-to man for any car troubles, cough, cough, and I proved that yet again by finding some tape for Kate Glover to mark her towing point so she could pass scrutineering. Of course, neither seeking nor accepting any glory. Having been scrutinised



Hats off to Freddie Owen, 14, who came second in the competitive Class 1b (Phil Johnson)



Emilia Buck urges the Morris on under the tutelage of father Duncan (Steve Welsh)



The Baxter Chrysler with Marsh ballast (Phil Jones)



Hannah Mycock in team colours (Phil Jones)

ourselves we headed off through the mist and rain. Proper hairy chested trials weather it was. The good news being we had a new tonneau on the Chrysler. The bad news being we don't have a hood. Not easy navigating in fog so thick it feels like you have got a plastic bag on your head but our heroic navigator got the job done. I'm not saying I took us the most direct route like, but, you know. We eventually arrived at our start hill, Ringcombe Heights, to find two Tebbetts which could surely mean only one thing, a stop–restart and tricky little bit somewhere to catch you out, but thankfully there was none of that. Like a girl I once knew it was rough but passable and we gave it max thrunge and dinged the bell at the top of the fairground test-your-strength machine with a rortymungous 25.

Ringcombe Shorty had a tricky-looking stop–restart but that was all talk and no trousers and we made light work of it with some superb cheek half-in, half-out, half-down bouncing. You are very welcome Mary! Ringcombe Sting stung us and a few more. Mary followed my advice and we didn't get round the tree stump at the top. Which just goes to show … er, something. Anyway, we blundered on regardless.

Now I'm not an optimist when stood at the bottom of a trials hill. More of a shipwrecked, holed-hull, half-mast kind of guy. My pessimism was founded at the bottom of Broford Clump where we tiptoed up to the start like a butterfly with sore feet to score a mighty nowt. Zero, nada, zilch. Four was a good score and even the winner of the best class, 2B of course, John Fack had a big fat zero. Somehow Richard White and Robin Hardcore-Spliff had 7s! After a good start Robin's day came to a spectacular end at Long Broford, when a ten-inch section of his half-shaft made a bid for freedom via his hub cap and embedded itself in the banking five feet away. Motor sport can be dangerous. Some of the weirdos in 1c had 11s at Broford Clump but it's different gravy for that lot. Speaking of gravy, if you chuck in some mash potatoes that was about the consistency of the mud at Beechwood 1, a skiddy right-hander, and Beechwood 2, a skiddy left-hander. The top of both hills was a lonely place to be, with more passing squirrels than trials cars.

Hollam is always a cracker. A tricky looking right-hander that is all gong and no dinner, followed by a straight rooster-tailing blast up to a tight left



Winner of Class 1a, George Daniell in the standard Chummy (Phil Johnson)



Sam Garland and crew in the family 30-98 (Steve Welsh)





Left: *Derek Chatto slides into the markers on Beechwood 1 in his MG M-Type (Phil Jones)* ***Right:*** *'There is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in cars' (Steve Welsh)*

hander, then point and squirt into the woods and roots. Memories of Dudwood Dragon on the Derbyshire. Organisers Duncan Ricketts and Stuart Rope a Marshal had got carried away and set it out up to 30, although they needn't have bothered as 27 was as good as it got for anyone. And that was as good as it got for us as our gearbox conked out. Papa Baxter says he wasn't surprised with all that weight on board but, as I hammer away at the steaming keyboard of my mighty Amstrad, a new one from the stores is already in situ ready for the Derbs. Turns out we had lost a tooth and the old one will at the very least need a filling. John Denton drove all the way from West Yorkshire in an old Land Rover so he could pull cars out of Redcleevage – and was kindly on hand to drag us out of the forest to what passes for civilisation in deepest darkest Devon/Zomerset/Gerrowf moi land ee woz worryin moi sheep land. Another of our unsung VSCC heroes. Anyway we got back to the pub, albeit I think for the first time ever with a poorly car on a trailer although all was much better with the world after a couple of pints.

No revelations this year in the Taj Mahal, although young Will Marsh was delighted to have sixthled his stake on the 'Spoons slots, turning 50p into £3! Will is already locked in battle with his good mate Wilf for lots of annual trophies. He has started entering his dad's Ulster in an effort to stay out of 1b but was third in his class so that might be futile. Maybe he needs to start entering the Bédélia. Go on Will, do it, do it!

Speaking of the 'Spoons slots, sadly it is incumbent upon me to inform the readership of an incident of unlicensed gambling on the outcome of a trial. Yes, dear reader, certain members of this august club, and august members of this august club at that, who should know better but who shall remain nameless but you know who you are Geraint Owen, Patrick B-E, Craig McWilliam, gambled – yes, dear reader, gambled, on which of their yoof yoofs (i.e. below driving test age) would do best. Stepping forward to take the spoils was 14-year-old Freddie Owen, who came second in Class 1b – waytogoFreddieo.

So that's about that, sports fans, it just remains for me to inform the night shift workers amongst you that 'Spoons opens for business at 7am. And it's only £1.49 a pint on Mondays.



Will Marsh used his father's Ulster to win a 1st Class award in Class 1b (Phil Johnson)



A Chummy at lightning speed (Phil Johnson)

The Adventures of 'SLoB'

Despite the inelegant nickname and battle scars picked up from racing in the 70s, the BMW 328 of Bulletin *correspondent* **'BAUMPFLANZER'** *is quite the all-rounder, performing equally well as a wedding car as at Le Mams*

'Just come and sit in it,' said Peter Bradfield, then of Hall and Bradfield, not quite able to disguise his exasperation over my dithering about trying out the 328 which he was advertising. The test drive from Bradfield's South Kensington showroom up to Kensington Gardens on a warmish day and in heavy traffic was exciting, largely because the engine would stall if it were allowed to drop below two thousand revs, calling for some fancy footwork to keep it spinning.

SLoB had a somewhat scarred appearance, the result of his being rolled twice by Simon Phillips, running at the sharp end of historic motor sport in the early seventies. It was clear that both of Phillips's inversions had been to the offside, as SLoB's shape resembled a parallelogram when viewed from in front or behind. (It occurred to me that, if only the second inversion had been to the nearside, Phillips might have evened up SLoB's contours.)

Despite the non-standard bodywork, the tired appearance of the mechanicals and some unfortunate departures from Fritz Fiedler's original conception, carried out with the aim of staying competitive, SLoB was a captivating machine. The installation of a Moss gearbox, which had required some crude re-working of the chassis, and the jettisoning of some of his period accessories, in some cases replaced by some horrible modern components, failed to dent SLoB's appeal. At a further visit to South Kensington, with Katharina, the future Frau Baumpflanzerin, the overwhelming wish to own a 328, however scruffy, could not be resisted and the deal was done.

SLoB (chassis 85 255) was delivered to BMW Automag, Munich, the oldest BMW dealer in Germany, on 15 June 1938. Nothing is known of SLoB's history until he was bought in 1955 by Captain Robert Cecil, serving with the British Army of the Rhine. Cecil imported SLoB in early 1957, keeping him until the early sixties. He was briefly owned jointly by Richard Russell and Peter Still, after which he passed through the hands of Tony Rippon, who is more associated with his exploits with Bugattis, and Ian Hall, father of Andrew, who's well known in current vintage circles.



The 1938 BMW 328 known as 'SLoB' at VSCC Silverstone, 1972

Simon Phillips bought SLoB in late 1971 and it is at this point that SLoB's racing career began. The file which accompanied SLoB shows that Phillips promiscuously employed all the well-known BMW fettlers of the day, most notably TT Workshops. A review of the bills which Phillips received indicate that he was prepared to spend freely in his largely successful attempts to make SLoB pretty much the fastest 328 of the day. Phillips was clearly a quick driver; he participated in Le Mans proper with Dorset Racing in the late seventies. The wince-inducing size, in real terms, of some of the invoices clearly rattled Phillips on occasion and there are some entertaining exchanges between owner and various garages, which may account for Phillips's frequent change of service provider.

At some point, Phillips stopped racing SLoB in favour of a Formula Two Cooper Bristol and SLoB was relegated to the back of his garage. In 2007, Phillips decided to sell both cars, insisting that whoever bought the Cooper must also take SLoB. The new owner of the Cooper swiftly decided that SLoB was not for him, which is why he appeared at Bradfield's high-class establishment.

Katharina and I were to be married in March, 2008. Quite why we chose SLoB as transport to and from our wedding in Berlin now eludes me. To judge by the dates of the last bills in his history file, SLoB had not been driven regularly for at least twenty years and needed what dealers and auctioneers euphemistically refer to as 'light recommissioning'. This work was entrusted to a supposed specialist in the field, but the result was disappointing. Given the season, we ordered a new hood, which turned out to be a prescient move, given the weather which we encountered later. It was only after we'd taken delivery that it occurred to me that the hood would probably no longer fit once SLoB's body had been straightened. We were, at

least, sensible enough to drive out a month before our wedding, in case of mechanical failure.

Despite the allegedly comprehensive nature of the recommissioning work, test runs revealed that the engine had an astronomical appetite for oil. The contents of SLoB's rump was, therefore, an unusual combination of Katharina's wedding dress and five five-litre cans of GP50. (Mercifully, at no stage did these items commingle.) As Katharina had to attend a conference in Bremen, I set off alone from North London one Friday evening in late February. My plan was to take the overnight ferry from Harwich to Hook of Holland and deviate via Bremen on the way to Berlin, a distance of approximately 750 miles. It was at a roundabout on the outskirts of Harwich, seventy-five miles from London, that the non-standard oil warning light came on for the first time; it was to become a familiar sight.

On arrival in Holland, the sump was refilled and, armed with a newly purchased Tom-Tom, a route was confidently set for Bremen. After motoring for a couple of hours, I saw my first road signs in Flemish, indicating a degree of incompetence in my use of 'satnav'; it appeared that I'd typed 'Belgium', not 'Bremen'. The detour had used up a significant quantity of my precious reserves of GP50, and the warning light came on again as the Dutch border was re-crossed. I finally arrived in Bremen in the mid-afternoon.

After extracting SLoB from his role (I think that slobs are generally, but not exclusively, male) as a photographic backdrop for a wedding party in Bremen, we headed for Berlin. Katharina drove the last hundred miles or so to her father's flat in Charlottenburg. It was quite something to be driven by the future Frau Baumpflanzerin at high speed late at night past the ghostly grandstands of the long discarded AVUS circuit, with shades of Caracciola and Rosemeyer, in an attempt to make up for lost time, although my enjoyment was tempered by the nagging fear that we were at the limit of both the available revs and our oil reserves. I kept a torch shining on the oil pressure gauge, as the instrument panel lighting had chosen this moment to fail.

The weekend was spent washing and polishing SLoB and, in the intervening time before our wedding, my future father-in-law scoured Berlin for fresh supplies of GP50, purchasing the required lubricant from various motorcycle shops in industrial quantities. (As SLoB didn't smoke or appear to drop oil, I have no idea where it all went.)

We were married at St Peter and St Paul in the Berlin Forest overlooking the Wannsee and had our first reception immediately after at an ancient hunting lodge. Staying sufficiently sober, I drove Frau Baumpflanzerin away up the winding hill through the woods and back to Berlin for further festivities. According to some motoring minded guests, the crisp exhaust note could be heard for quite some time before stillness returned to the forest.

We'd planned a two-day return journey to the UK. Katharina is a maritime lawyer by profession, but becomes easily seasick and so our route took in the town of Nienburg, of mediaeval origin and great beauty, traversing Belgium – deliberately, this time – and the Channel Tunnel. This proved to be a blessing, as the weather conditions in France were atrocious and no ferries were running. The combination of the new hood, strategically placed towels and motorcycle wet weather gear resulted in our being merely wet, not soaked through, by the time we reached the Tunnel. It might be thought that driving an underprepared car for fifteen hundred miles or so on the Continent and getting away with it would slake our thirst for motoring adventure for a while, but early July saw us setting off for the Classic Le Mans weekend with a couple of vintage Bentleys, Katharina now being pregnant with twins. In addition to SLoB's addiction to GP50, he'd now become picky about sparking plugs, depending on his engine temperature. Despite my mechanical ineptitude, we became pretty slick at changing plugs and managed to avoid dropping a plug into the deep recesses of the engine.

We stayed at a delightful coaching inn in Saint Symphorien, fifteen miles west of Le Mans. When Katharina and the Bentley contingent decided on an



SLoB in the paddock at Curborough



Cosy: sporting full weather equipment

early night, I stole back to Le Mans after supper to watch the successive eras of racing taking their turns during the night at various vantage points round the circuit. The gendarmerie took a benevolent view of my manoeuvres and not once was I challenged. Driving back to St Symphorien in the small hours, switching off and coasting down the *rue principale* into the hotel courtyard, a germ of an idea was forming.

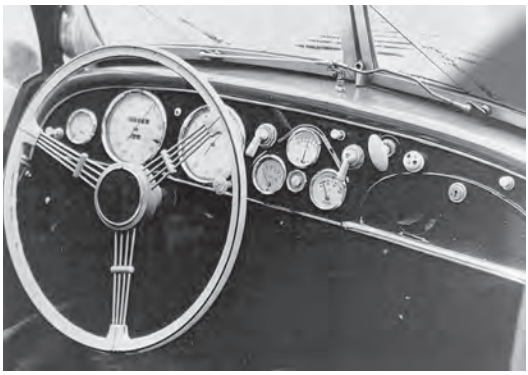
The last outing of the year was a drive to Herefordshire, so that Mark Garfitt, the pre-eminent authority in the UK on pre-war BMWs, could run his expert eye over SLoB. Mark brought Andrew Mitchell, a renowned restorer of bodywork, with him. It rapidly became clear that SLoB needed a complete rebuild. It was agreed that Garfitt would strip and rebuild the chassis, whilst Tony Byford would rebuild the engine and replace the Moss 'box with 326 casing and suitable gears. Garfitt and the endlessly resourceful Rhoddy Macpherson would find the rare original components, which were required to replace those jettisoned in the pursuit of seventies' competitiveness. Mitchell would handle the bodywork, with a joiner and carpenter subcontractor, Former Glory, replacing the woodwork which had suffered from Phillips's over-exuberant racing style. SCA's leatherwork and trim helped to belie SLoB's soubriquet.

Garfitt's chassis work was of such high quality that it seemed almost a pity to clothe him. He certainly drew admiring attention when appearing in chassis form at the 2011 Silverstone Classic, where the seventy-fifth anniversary of the introduction of the 328 was celebrated. Progress over the next few years was glacial. First, Byford completed the gearbox and was about to start on the engine when he suffered a stroke from which he took a while to recover. Mitchell offered to step in and Byford sportingly agreed to allow him to tackle the rest of the mechanical rebuild. Secondly, past serial domestic disharmony followed by the arrival of yet more offspring was causing a considerable strain on finances. From time to time, a small quantity of cash could be diverted to Mitchell Motors, but only for a limited amount of work. It must be said that Andrew bore this stuttering approach with great patience. Mitchell's restoration of the body matched the quality of the chassis restoration. In a nod to SLoB's racing past, the nearside radiator kidney was finished a couple of millimetres higher than the offside, the only remaining aspect of his former asymmetrical appearance.

The prospect of taking part in the Classic Le Mans had been vaguely mooted by me to Andrew, but the 2012 and 2014 events came and went and it seemed a very remote ambition. Shortly after the 2014 running, though, came a modest change in personal circumstances, which brought forward the completion of SLoB's rebuild by roughly a decade, judged on the rate of progress up to that point – no doubt to Mitchell's (beautifully disguised) relief. Over a beer at the Lamb at Hindon, following a visit to Mitchell Motors in early 2015, the plan was conceived to share SLoB at Le Mans. Mitchell was confident that he could have SLoB ready for the 2016 event. There might even be time for some testing. We were agreed that, if we were favoured with an entry, we would take the event seriously, but not ourselves.

The cost of an entry in the Classic Le Mans is on the high side, although the entrant gets a lot for his money, and, as was pointed out by an old racing ally, there is much pleasure to be had in the planning and anticipation of the weekend. If justification were sought for such extravagant expenditure, it could be found in my travel arrangements to work in the City. At the time, the difference in fares between first class and steerage for an annual season ticket for unpunctual travel from Lower East Anglia to London was a whacking £3,000 plus. The five years already suffered in uncomfortable, overcrowded railway carriages had instantly provided a budget of £15,000, although the supposed 'saving' had probably, in truth, already been allocated in any number of different ways.

My old friend, Jean-Michel Paris, whose name betrays his country, if not the city, of his birth, the author of a book on Jean-Pierre Wimille and the owner of a 1,500-book motoring library, was enlisted



The interior, with non-standard steering wheel



Owned by Richard Russell and Peter Still in the fifties

as Chef D'Equipe. His presentation to the A.C. de L'Ouest on behalf of the newly formed *Die Mühlhausrennsportgruppe* (Frau Baumpflanzerin and I live in an old mill house) resembled a tender to win a major commercial contract.

SLoB had some Le Mans history: Phillips had driven him to third place in the Cinquantième anniversary race held in 1973, beating Stirling Moss in Rob Walker's Delahaye. In June, Katharina and I were invited to a small gathering of classic cars at Stourhead. I'd arranged for Mitchell to present the car unannounced, as his premises are in nearby Chicklade. Frau Baumpflanzerin was quite emotional on seeing SLoB after so long, but not so happy that he was now painted green, as an entry in BMW's factory records, made in a spidery hand, showed that he had been when delivered to Automag in 1938, the tone being matched to the unfaded hue on the reverse side of his dashboard.

A shakedown outing at a Lloyd's Motor Club track day revealed a few minor snags, but SLoB ran so well that the prospect of Le Mans became ever more tantalising. At Christmas, Jean-Michel wrote to say that our entry had been accepted. Not having raced since 2002, I set about applying for a licence. The MSA, as it then was, quite reasonably sought evidence of my racing experience, which was hard to find. With the honourable, but rather limited, exception of the VSCC, no organising clubs appeared to have kept any records from the twentieth century. (The BRDC asked me to send their new archives team any results from events at Silverstone which might come my way.) Thankfully, an old chum, Roger Lucas, had meticulously filed his results sheets (some annotated with his trenchant views on certain fellow competitors) including races in which I'd also taken part. Armed with these records and a successful medical, the MSA issued me with an International C.

An eleventh-hour decision was made to buy an enclosed trailer. The marketing of these trailers demonstrates a deep understanding of human psychology. The basic trailer is soothingly cheap and the pricing of additional equipment is cleverly broken down into the smallest component parts. This approach encourages the buyer to order the fullest specification available, as the price rises almost imperceptibly. The cost when totalled, though, takes the buyer completely by surprise, being more or less double that of the basic trailer. However, at this point, it is impossible for the purchaser to bring himself to delete any of the options, all of which have now become 'essential'.

The *Rennsportgruppetechnischeabteilungsanhanger* was adorned with the team's name in the colours of the German flag on the nearside. In deference to the host nation, 'Ecurie Maison Du Moulin' was decorated in the colours of the tricoleur – the word Moulin being painted in red, as in *Moulin Rouge*, on the nearside. In honour of Chapman and Clark, the rear simply said 'Team Mill House' in green with yellow stripes.

After a convivial dinner the night before, the English contingent, comprising Andrew Mitchell and his stepson, Adam, an old friend, Chris Havers, and his charming wife, also Chris, Katharina and I embarked at Newhaven for Dieppe on Wednesday, 1st July. At Le Mans, we were joined by Jean-Michel Paris and his friend, Eric Pinson, whose ownership of a smoky Ferrari 400 earned him the role of team chauffeur.

Although setting up a new company might seem a strange move in the middle of a world war, 2016 was BMW's centenary and, as a consequence, we found on arrival at the circuit on Thursday that we were lined up in the paddock with no fewer than nine other 328s, exhibiting varying degrees of modification. Whereas SLoB looked fabulous, our paddock presence left a great deal to be desired; we'd brought one small chest toolbox and some spare wheels. Our next-door neighbour had tiled his bay, Ron Dennis style, and had installed a wardrobe for his racing kit. (I managed to burn my one and only pair of trousers against SLoB's exhaust and the new pair bought by Katharina turned out to include an element of Lycra, which is wholly unbecoming for a man in his sixties, but which looked very good when she wore them.) It was also noticeable that most of the other 328s were fitted with a highly



Competing at VSCC Curborough, 1973



Herr and Frau Baumpflanzer celebrate their nuptials

unaesthetic, excessively tall rollover bar. It occurred to me that their owners might be contemplating the hoisting of a spinnaker to assist their run down to Mulsanne.

Dinner for the team and guests was taken at a wonderful restaurant overlooking the river at La Flèche. The evening was rounded off by watching two rather corpulent friends attempt to clear the minimal kerb outside the restaurant in their Ferrari 458 without removing its sump. This same pair had brought a tent, but forgotten their poles and pegs, to the great delight of the locals at their camping site. This served them right, as at their age they could easily have afforded to book in to a decent hotel.

Friday morning brought qualifying and night practice. The opportunity to learn the circuit is limited, owing to its length and the short time allocated for each practice session. At least two new bends appeared to have been tacked on to the Porsche Curves on each successive lap. Andrew Mitchell had raced at Le Mans before and his best lap put us in nineteenth position for the start of the first race. Night practice seemed to be pretty easy – deceptively so, as it turned out. Smelling petrol after the Dunlop Bridge on my first late evening lap, I decided to play safe and bring SLoB in at the Bugatti circuit exit, which is used at the end in each session to avoid sending competitors on an eight-mile slowing-down lap. The marshals pointed to the closed exit gate and told me to do 'un autre tour'. When I stopped and opened the bonnet and petrol was seen to be spurting in all directions, the marshals hastily backed off in alarm – especially those with a crafty Gauloise on the go.

Before the racing on Saturday, there was a Centenary parade for BMWs of all ages. Frau Baumpflanzer took the wheel for this, with Jean-Michel accompanying her. There is a cockpit video recording of Jean-Michel telling Katharina which way the circuit goes and of her replying, with some asperity: 'I know.'

There are three races for each Plateau: one on Saturday afternoon, another in the early hours of the following morning and the last in the mid-morning on Sunday. The pre-war race started the programme in 2016 and included a dummy Le Mans start. Exercising the team patron's privilege, the writer deputed Mitchell, as the younger, fitter man to take the first stint, including the muscle-pulling dash across the track.

It's always a strange experience to watch a race in which you are about to participate, but I did my best not to look nervous, chatting in an unnaturally relaxed fashion to members of *Die Rennsportgruppe*. Soon enough Mitchell came in for the changeover and the seconds ticked away until Havers indicated that it was time to go.

In reality, there isn't much wheel-to-wheel dicing at Le Mans; there is a sufficient speed differential between the cars to prevent that happening. In the second half of each race, cars you're about to lap come floating towards you like empty crisp packets. It's only on the last lap that you have to look out for the leaders coming up behind. This provides a strong incentive to reach the finish line before they can catch you, in order to squeeze in an extra racing lap.

SLoB's clutch had started to slip during my stint, but the consensus was that there was insufficient time to overcome the problem in the short time between races. I'd assumed from my one practice lap at dusk that night racing would be a doddle, but it turned out that there is all the difference in the world between a crepuscular 10pm and a pitch black 1am. When Mitchell came in to hand over, he uttered the ominous words: 'It's very dark on the other side.' I wasn't entirely sure if he was speaking about physical or spiritual matters.

SLoB's lighting arrangements are standard, which is less than BMW's drivers had available at Le Mans in the thirties, when 328s were fitted with a large addi-



With Simon Phillips at Le Mans, John Giles of TT Workshops in silly hat



In the paddock at Prescott in the 1970s

tional cyclops lamp. When the leading Lago Talbot overtook me in sight of the flag, to deny me another seven or so minutes of Stygian motoring, it didn't seem so hard to take. The result of the first two races was that we'd moved up to fourteenth.

We were both in the groove for the final race and all bar the inevitable return of clutch slip at the halfway mark, all seemed to be going well. Irritated by the loss of direct drive whenever the throttle wasn't caressed with exaggerated care, I'd rather hoped to be overtaken on the sixth lap, but the drivers of the leading car had backed off, their aggregate win being in the bag, which meant another lap nursing a dodgy clutch.

Returning to the paddock, there was a sense of achievement and *Die Rennsportgruppe* was in high spirits; there may even have been an incidence of man hugging, which is unusual amongst Englishmen of a certain age, although it passed unnoticed by the French contingent. We were quite elated when we heard that we'd finished eleventh in a field of over seventy cars, which was distinctly better than we had dared to hope.

Die Rennsportgruppe is an egalitarian organisation and so Mitchell and I had not, so far during the weekend, made use of our access to the *hospitalité des pilotes*, but as the rest of the team had cleared off, after the final race, to the chateau where we were staying, we decided to see if we could eat the price of entry at a single sitting. It was here that Mitchell outlined his plans for placing SLoB higher up the leader board ('We could win this'). I thought, and still think, that Mitchell was being rather optimistic, given the specification of the 328s running at the front of the field – and his plans sounded expensive. However, as SLoB would not have been at Le Mans in the first place without Mitchell's involvement, it seemed only fair that he should have the opportunity to see what he could achieve. The radical modification of historic cars is, in the writer's opinion, a futile exercise; almost all sporting success is transient and is of no importance at all in historical racing. (How many remember who won the Cinquantième race?)

Later in 2016, the Historic BMW Club announced that the winners of the Oscar Moore Trophy for 'the finest performance by members in a competition overseas' would be awarded to the writer and Mitchell. Discreet enquiry later revealed that we were the *only* members who had taken part in a competition overseas in that year, but it was still a great honour to receive the trophy at the Club's AGM the following year. For the next two years, SLoB remained with Mitchell in Chicklade. Mitchell consulted various tuning experts, the most beneficial of whom by far was Steve Stanton, a top-notch builder of pre-war BMW and post-war Bristol engines. As a result, SLoB's engine is silky smooth running and pleasingly untemperamental.

An entry was sought and gained to the 2018 Classic Le Mans. It was shortly after the confirmation of our entry that my eldest daughter announced the date of her graduation from an ancient seat of learning in Scotland: it coincided with the Le Mans weekend. A shameful half an hour or so was spent thinking of ways in which the outing to La Sarthe might go ahead without permanently impairing family relationships. Mitchell selected the jovial Mark Morgan, with whom he'd shared an AC Ace with SCCA history in FISCAR events, to replace me.

It was an unusual experience to hear at a remove how SLoB was faring. Chris Havers, who'd once more travelled with the team, kept me apprised of developments with regular bulletins. Whatever Mitchell had been doing in the intervening time had obviously had an impact, as SLoB went like a bullet to qualify third. Morgan was nominated for the sprint across the circuit at the start of the first race. Morgan is an amply proportioned chap and there was concern within the team that he might not be the quickest away from the line-up. The precaution was taken of telling him just before he took up his position across the track opposite SLoB that a cheese and pickle roll had been left in the cockpit. Apparently, the tactical use of this tasty comestible worked a treat.

The result was a disappointment after the comparative success in 2016. SloB continued to show good speed when he was running, but persistent fuel starvation, caused by repeated failure of the electric fuel pumps (a non-original fitting: 328s originally had a mechanical pump), blighted his performance.

SLoB's next outing was at Silverstone Classic the following year. Once again, events prevented my taking part and Andy Prill, doyen of the air-cooled Porsche world, was invited to take my place. Shortly before the race, Mitchell's father became ill and so he, too, had to drop out. Prill proposed a friend of his, who had an impressive CV in historic racing. It was quite a surprise to receive an email from the appointed teammate which sought absolution for any damage to



Die Mülhausrennsportgruppe *at Le Mans Classic 2016*

SLoB; it struck me that this was an unwanted modern development come to historic racing. (It would never have occurred to me to seek redress from an invited driver for any damage sustained whilst racing. The writer did, though, threaten to sue Prill for his selection of co-driver if anything went wrong.)

SLoB arrived at Prill's premises a week before the race. Prill is a meticulous fellow and his standard of preparation is of an extraordinarily high quality; it was once said by Anthony Reid, the racing driver, that 'Prill is not OCD [when it comes to engineering matters], as the letters are in the wrong order'.

There were a number of aspects of SLoB's specification, on delivery, which didn't appeal to him and so he devoted his week to putting SLoB into the state which satisfied him. I doubt if much work was done on his customers' Porsches that week. (Happily, Prill's staff is so well drilled that its members can function for long periods without the boss's intervention.) SLoB finished seventh and scored a class win. It must be admitted that the performance of Prill's co-driver, freed from the fear of litigation, was mightily impressive, holding fourth place at one stage of the race, and Prill, himself no slouch at the wheel, kept up the pace in gathering gloom and an ever damper track.

SLoB remained in Halstead whilst Prill continued his work, restoring suspension settings to those with which SLoB left Eisenach, stripping and carefully reassembling brakes and dampers and ringing me from time to time to eulogise about the brilliance of Fiedler's and Schleicher's designs. When the Bentley Drivers Club bravely went ahead with its 2020 Silverstone meeting 'behind closed doors' – whatever that means at an airfield circuit – Prill took in the pre-war race to try out his work, with some success.

For obvious reasons, it wasn't until 2022 that SLoB returned to La Sarthe. Prill and Mitchell shared the driving with the writer as a reserve. Once again, clutch slip hindered SLoB's performance. With the opposition becoming ever quicker, SLoB came home eighteenth, despite Prill putting in some terrific lappery in the opening half of each race before handing over to Mitchell, when clutch slip, once again, hampered SLoB's progress.

A new chapter has opened up for SLoB in that, with all his road equipment reinstalled and navigation instruments fitted, he became a rally car for the first time towards the end of last year. Peter Barnard of the mighty Belmont Motors, Wix (Historic Car Division) carried out the preparation, in the course of which he has managed to put the SLoB's clutch maladies behind him with the help of Helix Autosport.

Martin Trentham, a competitor in, and setter of, VSCC rallies, once explained to me that there were two ways for a driver to go 'endurance' historic rallying: the first is to take a seasoned navigator and do well and the second is to ask an old friend and have a good time. Having tried the second approach first, and propped up the entire field on more than one occasion, the decision was taken secondly to adopt the first. Feelers were put out with the result that Ian Canavan (inevitably 'Campervan' to his friends) was enlisted for the one-day HERO Challenge 3 event. 'Campervan' does, indeed, take his rallying very seriously, requiring his rally navigation instruments to be positioned on the dashboard to within the odd millimetre. (I responded by asking him for some (upper body) physical dimensions, which he willingly supplied.)

It turns out that you can rally with an expert and still have fun. The only problem with Canavan is that it takes about an hour to walk from the rally control centre to your car, as everybody wants to stop him for a chat. The entry varied from three pre-war cars up to rally cars from the eighties. Nevertheless, we were never in danger of being among the slowest on the tests and Canavan's unbelievably accurate timekeeping in the road sections brought us home nineteenth out of ninety-four starters and second in class.

What next for SLoB? He's booked in for the Three Castles Rally in Wales in early June and will once again, stripped for action, make his final appearance – in my hands, at least – at Le Mans in July. I am eternally grateful to Mr Bradfield for his persistence.





Left: *The* Mühlhausrennsportgruppetechischerabteilungsanhanger ***Right:*** *SLoB entering the Porsche Kurve at Le Mans Classic 2016 (David Wright)*

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'Babar' the Hispano towering over Chris Mann's Alfa RL at this year's Pom (Steve Welsh)

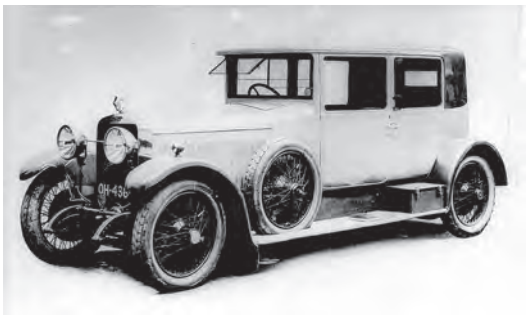
'Babar', the Pom and me

Since inheriting his 1920 Hispano-Suiza H6, **WILLIAM KARSLAKE** *has made some valiant attempts to complete The Pom in it, including this year, though not without incident*

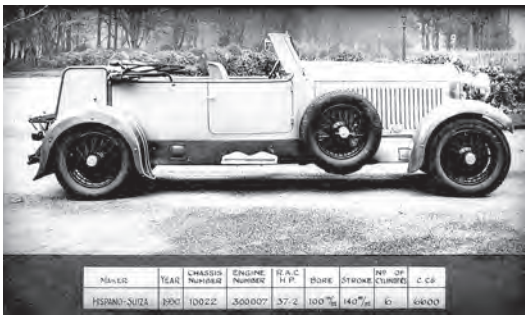
The Pom always presents a dilemma. It is the ideal event for a venerable touring car, except that almost all the other entrants are much younger and much faster and most of them are also much smaller. My grandfather, Kent Karslake, named this particular Hispano-Suiza 'Babar' because he thought it might be a white elephant. It is large and for its time, fast. However, it didn't take long for faster machines to be developed, so the field at the Pom is a little daunting.

'Babar' has been in the family since around 1951 when Kent was offered it by Tate & Lyle who had been using it as a factory ambulance at their Speke site. It was going for scrap, but their transport manager realised it was a bit more special than that, so contacted the VSCC for advice. He was directed to Kent – the Hispano man. Legend has it that £10.00 was the agreed price.

Kent was given a number of photographs of the coachwork pre-war and the trunk from that period with the car. He had the ambulance body removed and restored it to its 1932 appearance. Apart from removing the original 1920 saloon bodywork and the building of an open tourer alternative, its 1932 owner had also completed the substitution of the original Autovac system with three SU carburettors and a pair of electric fuel pumps. I believe that this is a unique modification, which was presumably intended to improve performance.



'Babar' when new in 1920



Ten years later, having been rebodied



Mary Baxter undergoes the suitcase test in her Mazda MX5 (Alan Beastall)



Kenneth Prichard Jones on the morning tests in his Turner MKIII (Alan Beastall)

When I inherited the custodianship of this machine in 2012, I set about restoring it to reliable mechanical working order. This involved stripping out the drive train, replacing bearings, the crown wheel and the disintegrated pinion gear in the differential and the bronze bushes in the universal joint to begin with. I entered my first Pom in 2019. We had a few issues with scrutineering, firstly discovering that I had left the fuel cap off after filling up that morning. It was never seen again. Fortunately Pete my pit crew begged a Starbucks cup and two jubilee clips which got us past that hurdle. No rain light was the next. After a brief discussion, I was allowed to proceed with a 'period dispensation, but on this occasion only' and the observation that if any other driver missed a huge, bright yellow monster on the track, they probably oughtn't to be out there.

We arrived late for the assembly after all of that and therefore did not take part in the initial inspection of the test arrangements. I had very little idea of what was involved and could see hardly anything through the rain, so entirely failed to see the stop line on the brake test!

Once we were into the speed handicap, we discovered that wear on the top gear dog drive caused it to pop out of gear under full acceleration and that oil had seeped onto the servo brake shoes, rendering the brakes almost useless. During the morning's preparations, we had failed to secure the seat retention clip, so on the first attempt to disengage the clutch, the seat shot backwards and I was unable to change gear for the rest of the trial. Combining those challenges with Storm Dennis was hard enough without the additional issue of some very quick Frazer Nashes in the hands of far more experienced competitors. I think we were placed last, by some margin.

Our second attempt took place in 2022. Covid had not provided an opportunity to resolve the brake servo issue or the top gear wear. We had managed to turn a new fuel cap and organise a rain light, however, and were a bit more careful with the seat position. On this occasion, it was Storm Eugene. Altogether, the event went a lot more smoothly and we managed 2nd last overall. A great improvement, and I think we felt able to congratulate ourselves on our drive home.

In 2023, we dismantled the gearbox and the brake servo alongside it. We fitted an oil seal ring on the servo drive shaft, relined the shoes and cleaned the drum. This has revolutionised the brakes. Top gear was welded up and ground back, curing the tendency to pop out and after a period of gentle running in, is now working beautifully. 2024 was a wedding year, so all track events in Hispano-Suizas were banned in case of accidents to the main star of the event (I'm sure my daughter won't read this).

I am sure many readers would agree that their cars are not just machines. They are characters that require as much or more tact as we employ in our



Lewis Fox heaves a mighty 4½-litre Bentley round the course (Alan Beastall)



Stuart Sargeant's beautiful Jaguar XK150 in the morning; he later retired (Paul Freeman)



Overall winner, club President Simon Blakeney-Edwards (Steve Welsh)



Winner of the Densham Trophy, Winston Teague in the Falcon 'Nash (Chris McEvoy)

human encounters. I find that a 104-year-old Hispano-Suiza requires much the same approach as a person of a similar age. Simply jumping in and driving off will not do. It shows a lack of respect that will result in a 'cessation of activity' at the most inopportune moment. Sadly, I failed to satisfy this basic rule on the occasion of the 2025 Pom Trophy. Certainly, I had checked the tyre pressures, the oil level, the coolant and had tested the lights, gone out for a number of test drives and generally employed reassuring language throughout these processes. We drove from Princes Risborough to Silverstone without incident to go through scrutineering. I was informed that my make-shift coolant capture system in the shape of a five-litre plastic fuel can attached to a pipe from the radiator overflow was sufficient, but the can had to be empty and should be secured rather than flapping about loose under the bonnet. Also that it was deemed poor form not to have the steering box secured to the chassis as this would probably mean that the car would not obey the instructions from the steering wheel. That seemed eminently reasonable, so I headed off to rectify those points. By luck, I managed to find some very efficient lads from a racing team who provided me with a few cable ties for the fuel can, and I had fortunately brought a large enough spanner to tighten the nuts on the steering box. We passed scrutineering with flying colours on the second attempt. So, off to the hotel for the night.

At this point I confess that I was struck by the number of large trucks with teams of support crew that were filling up the paddock as I drove off. Pete, my usual pit crew, had sent a message to say that he was fitting a complete set of new windows to his house and would not be able to make it – either because he was doing that, or because he had been summarily dispatched by his long-suffering wife. So, we were more or less on our own. There would be no last-minute Starbucks cup this time.

Babar does not have a very accurate fuel gauge. There is one on the tank, which can be seen with a torch and something to clean the dirt off, but clearly this can only be done when stationary. The cockpit 'le Nivex' has not worked for some time. We set off on the Saturday morning from Towcester with 40 litres of fuel. I did wonder whether I should refuel, but there wasn't a very convenient fuel station en route, so I decided that we probably had enough for the day. On arrival, we proceeded through the rest of the registration process, including the suitcase and 'L' tests. It was deemed unnecessary to actually place any suitcases in the car, which probably has room for six, and the 'L' test was checked carefully. Numbers were applied – always a challenge, but we untangled them in the end and got them on if not straight, then at least legible. 35 litres in the tank by this stage. A 6.6-litre straight six does consume quite a lot of fuel even when it isn't really going anywhere.



Andrew Smith shows off his hood in the Alvis Silver Eagle (Chris McEvoy)



Edwardian Trophy winner Leslie Searle in the 1913 Monarch (Steve Welsh)



Mark Daniell won the Gordon Spice Trophy in his 1958 MGA (Chris McEvoy)



Mihai Negrescu's charmingly patinated 3/4½ (Alan Beastall)

Too late to worry about fuel now in any case. We're off to the assembly point. I think I mentioned the much-improved braking having repaired the brake servo. This sort of thing can be a snare and a delusion, bringing over-confidence and encouraging the casting aside of essential experience. The Test B is a prime example. I knew that my four servo-assisted brakes would bring the car to a very satisfactory halt without a problem. However, this test is extremely difficult to judge. One must attain a respectable speed. One must not stop before the first line and one MUST stop before the second line. Some may know that the Hispano-Suiza brake servo (adopted under licence by Rolls-Royce) is a brake drum drive off the gearbox whilst the car is moving and a gear is engaged. Operation of the brake pedal forces the shoes against the drum in a miniature version of the brakes themselves. The drum is then forced to slow and the cables attached to it tighten, operating the brake shoes. Stopping the car involves disengaging the clutch, thereby also disengaging the drive to the servo drum. The drum keeps turning with the residual energy from the gearbox whilst the brakes are applied and the car stops. An absolutely cardinal error is to lift off the brakes and then reapply them. By this time, the drum has stopped turning and no amount of pressure on the pedal will transmit to the brakes shoes or apply them to the drums. So, I am heading down the track and have accelerated to a respectable speed. I apply the brakes and realise that I am going to stop too soon. I lift off and then reapply. Nothing happens, so we sail over the braking line by about 15 yards. A lesson relearnt.

We carry on to Tests C and D. All goes smoothly, but I am aware of a slight hesitation at top speed on Test D and wonder what the problem is. Have I misjudged the fuel? However, Test A goes without a problem and on the return to the paddock, we still have 20 litres of fuel, so I relax. I do wonder whether I should lift the bonnet and see whether I can pinpoint the source of the earlier hesitation, but I decide not to. After the lunch break, we are back to the assembly point for Test E. I am hopeful that the work on the gearbox and the brakes will give me a better chance of achieving my ten-lap handicap. This requires an average speed of about 56mph in a car which has a top speed of roughly 90mph, so essentially pedal to the floor except in emergencies. We have three gears, first and second are good to about 30mph, after that it's top gear. However, top gear is good from 5mph to 90, so does one change down? Probably not. We complete the two parade laps and approach the union jack flag. As we reach 50mph, I realise that the problem experienced earlier has not gone away and in fact has become a serious issue. Instead of a steady, but respectable progression to top speed, I can see flames shooting out of the air intakes on the three SUs, no acceleration from 50mph and a lot of popping and banging. After two laps I am aware that this is



Dougal Cawley favours a large saloon: this time he brought his Silver Shadow (Mark Ballard)



Finishing a very close second overall was David Wylie in the BMW 2002 (Mark Ballard)



Richard Hammond did well but was just out of the pewterware in the Ford RS2000 (Stuart Yates)



It's not often a Chummy appears to pull ahead of a Bugatti (Alan Beastall)

not going to clear and I am creating a very dangerous environment for the rest of the field because I can't get away from the exits from the corners and I can't position the car when going into them. It is all over the place. Approaching the pit lane on lap two, we retire.

My father, who has come to watch, is expecting a lift home in Babar to Buckingham, but I am very unsure whether we will make it. I check the fuel levels – still 10 litres in the tank according to the gauge. So it isn't lack of fuel. I finally lift the bonnet and check whether the pistons are lifting in the SUs. They are sticky and I realise that although I had spoken nicely and given Babar a lot of encouragement and reassurance before the event, checked tyres, oil and coolant, it would probably have been a good idea to fill the tank with fresh petrol rather than relying on the stuff that had been in there from last September. I mentioned this to a couple of others around the paddock. A £1 for every knowing look and 'Aah, yes, modern petrol doesn't last' would have made me a millionaire. Funny that – nobody mentioned it beforehand.

You will all be pleased to know that Babar drove to the nearest fuel station outside Buckingham without a stutter having had its indigestion acknowledged and hasn't missed a beat since. We did put some fresh fuel in with some Fuel Fit to keep it fresh. Obviously, I will need to consult the main participant nearer the time, but barring excessive sulks, I hope Babar and I might have another go at The Pom next year.

The Pom 2025

For a second year running, it was a double Frazer Nash victory. President Simon Blakeney-Edwards in his 1929 Super Sports won The Pomeroy Trophy for overall best performance in any car, finishing just a single point ahead of David Wylie in a 1974 BMW 2002. As nobody has the foggiest how the results are calculated, we must assume this was a closed-doors stitch-up at the highest level. Simon takes home the wonderful scale replica of a 1914 TT Vauxhall made by the late Rex Hays (see *Bulletin* 311, pp. 58–63 for more on that). The other 'Nash taking home a big pot was that of Winston Teague, whose 1931 Falcon won the Densham Trophy, which is awarded to the best-performing pre-war car not winning the main trophy.

This is also a nice thing to take home as it's a splendidly made scale replica of a blue Velox-bodied Vauxhall 30-98. Mark Daniell won the Gordon Spice Cup in his 1958 MGA, which is for the best performing non-road legal car, while Nigel Stroud took home the Pom Voiturette Cup in his 1932 MG J2, which is for the best-placed VSCC-eligible pre-war car under 1,494cc not winning the main trophy. The Edwardian Trophy went to Leslie Searle aboard the mighty 8-litre Monarch of 1913. The marshals' beer was kindly provided by the club's new ale sponsor, Kingfisher, to whom many thanks. Full results are, as ever, on the club website.



Vivian Bush's Bentley leads a mostly vintage grid in Test E (Steve Welsh)



Alan Brown won a 3rd class award in his Invicta S Type (Mark Ballard)

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Sammy Davis and Bill Urquhart Dykes at Le Mans, June 1928. Alvis mechanics Harold Irving and George Cook in overalls behind the car

Alvis and the 1928 Ards TT

By 1928, TT races were in limbo and Alvis had stopped entering 12-50s in competition. So when a new road circuit in Ireland was announced, Alvis scrambled to enter a team, this time of their new FWD model, as well as helping privateers such as Bill Urquhart Dykes – with dramatic consequences, as **GREG WRAPSON** *records*

The RAC Tourist Trophy was first held in 1905 on the Isle of Man. The objective was to foster interest in the development and improvement of touring-type cars through experience gained in racing. J. S. Napier driving an 18hp Arrol-Johnston won that first race at an average speed of 33.9mph. Further IOM events followed in 1906, 1907, 1908 (the famous Four-Inch Race, although as Peter Hull remarked, it was actually a bit longer than that, at 339½ miles), 1914 and 1922. In the later years, the original intention that the race was for cars that bore a close relationship to catalogued models was rather lost sight of, and after the very wet 1922 race, the IOM series came to an end.

In England, there had been some interest in promoting events for production-type cars, such as the JCC Production Car Race in 1926, and in 1927 the Essex MC 6-Hour Race, in both of which amateur Alvis enthusiast Bill Urquhart Dykes competed. The lack of a true road circuit and the pre-eminence of Brooklands as the major venue, however, meant that the emphasis still tended to be on outright speed. Many were attracted by the idea of a British version of the Le Mans 24-hour race, held on public roads closed for the occasion, but the necessary official permission for this was not forthcoming.

One can imagine the reaction of all those with a love of motor racing, therefore, when Harry Ferguson, the then Chairman of the Ulster Automobile Club, later well known as a tractor magnate, and Wallace McLeod, head of the motor engineering school of Belfast Technical College and Motoring Correspondent ('Verax') of the *Belfast News-Letter*, came up with the idea late in 1927 of running a road race in Ulster, where the enlightened authorities were prepared to allow public roads comprising the Ards circuit to be closed for the duration of the race. The RAC, supported by the UAC, took over responsibility for the organisation, and as first prize offered the magnificent Tourist Trophy, together with £1000 presented by the Proprietors of *The Daily Mail*. The regulations opened with 'The Royal Automobile Club has organised this race … to encourage the sport of motor car racing, to develop existing cars, and to assist in the development of future cars of the types commonly known as sports, super-sports, or speed models.'

Among the material contained in the Urquhart Dykes archive preserved by the Alvis Register is a thin folder labelled 'Ulster TT – Correspondence re Bill's Private Entry'. The story of the Tourist Trophy race held on the Ards circuit on 18 August 1928, won in a thrilling finish by Kaye Don's Lea-Francis thirteen seconds ahead of Leon Cushman's rapidly gaining front-wheel-drive Alvis after some six hours of racing, has been well told elsewhere, but it is rare to find detail of some of the advance preparations undertaken by the competitors. This is particularly of interest in the case of Bill Urquhart Dykes, who, ever anxious to protect his and his wife Ruth's amateur status, made his entry under his own name, rather than coming under the umbrella of the Alvis works team.

1927 was the last season in which Alvis entered works 12-50 models in sports car races. They had long been convinced of the publicity value of successful participation in motoring competition, and with the innovative front-wheel-drive model on the stocks for production for the 1928 season, this understandably became the focus of the racing department's plans for 1928. Time was short, however, and when the entry list for the TT opened early in the year, although Alvis entered three works cars in the name of Managing Director T. G. John, and there were private entries naming Alvis cars from Harold Purdy and Bill Urquhart Dykes, there seems to have been no certainty that the new FWD cars would be ready in time.

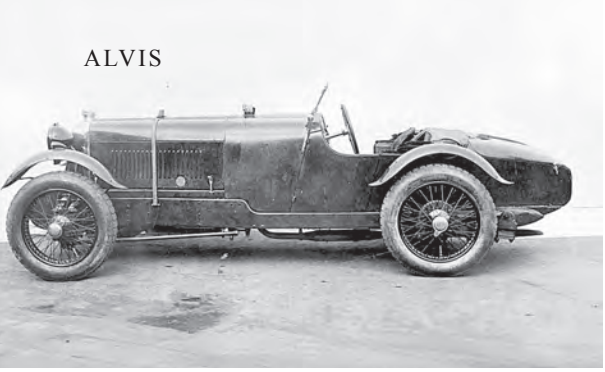
The regulations required that entries should correspond in their main essentials to standard catalogued production models, although certain modifications were permitted. To quote from the programme: 'These modifications permit of an engine being "hotted up", but they do not allow of anything in the nature of wholesale substitution, nor the addition of extra parts, such as carburettors, magnetos and so forth.' So tight was the timing that it was not until 14 May 1928 that Alvis arranged the official unveiling of the new FWD production model in conjunction with the opening of Henlys' new showrooms in Euston Road by Malcolm Campbell. (The Alvis Board Minutes for 18 April 1928 record that 'The Managing Director reported that Mr Malcolm Campbell had asked the Company to build a front wheel drive chassis to be fitted with his own Napier engine so that he might compete with it in the Grand Prix. The Board authorised this provided that Mr Campbell paid the entire cost and preferably that the work were done off the Company's works.' There was also some speculation at this time that Campbell would join the Alvis racing team for that year's Le Mans 24 Hours and for the Ards TT, but these proposals all came to nothing.)

The racing department set to with a will and two cars were ready for the Le Mans 24-Hours race held that year on 15–16 June. Despite the short timescale



The Tourist Trophy

for preparation, the cars performed extremely well, Maurice Harvey and Harold Purdy coming 6th overall, with Sammy Davis and Bill Urquhart Dykes coming 9th overall, both cars handsomely beating the 1½-litre class record. Encouraged by this success, Alvis decided to field a full team of five cars in the Tourist Trophy, so including the provision of cars for the two private entries. Once again time was short, but work proceeded apace to improve a number of aspects of the design of these cars in the light of experience gained at Le Mans. Bodywork, metal instead of fabric covered, was narrower, bringing the handbrake outside, and the spare wheel was housed under the hinged tail panel. A shallower design of radiator was employed, with the battery positioned beneath the radiator under an apron. Mechanically, the most significant changes were that the engines were supercharged, had the stroke increased from 102 to 103mm, giving a capacity of 1496cc, and





Left: *The FWD Alvis as prepared for the 1928 TT* ***Right:*** *Riley, Amilcar and Lea-Francis cars in the hold of the Heysham to Belfast ferry (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)*

were fitted with roller bearing big-ends. It was only discovered as a result of research by Hugh Torrens in later years, that the blocks had fixed heads. There were also some chassis changes to improve handling. After so many years, the extent to which these alterations fell within the regulations is perhaps best left undisturbed in the file marked 'Sleeping Dogs'.

To secure his own entry, Bill had handed over his 15 guineas fee before the initial closure date of 29 March, naming the SD 12-50 WM 47 'William' as his mount for the race. Nonetheless discussions as to the possibility of a works FWD being available

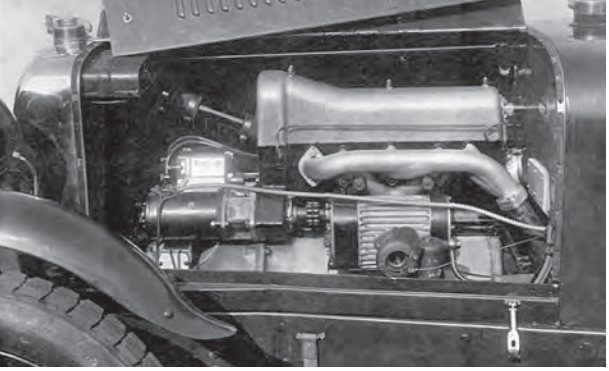


The official programme cover of the 1928 TT

were clearly going on with Alvis behind the scenes. Despite the excellent showing of the FWD cars at Le Mans, only a few days later he wrote on 21 June to the Secretary of the RAC: 'I have now decided to run the ordinary two-seater Sports Alvis, in respect of which a catalogue was sent to you accompanying my entry; that is to say the car will not be a front wheel driven model', but things clearly moved fast after that, and there followed a bit of a wrangle with the RAC over whether the option to substitute the FWD could be left open for the time being. Alvis Chief Engineer and Works Manager George Smith-Clarke sought the help of Sammy Davis who was a member of the Competitions Committee of the RAC, and he subsequently wrote to Bill: 'I told him that if the car could possibly be got through in time you would run the supercharged Front Wheel Drive model, or if this could not be managed you would run your present standard rear wheel drive model. His view was that you ought to have the faster car if it is at all possible, as the competition is certain to be very keen indeed.'

The RAC's Secretary, Cdr F. P. Armstrong, subsequently wrote to Bill to confirm that 'the Competition Committee wish to raise no objection to your running an Alvis front wheel drive car instead of a two-seater Sports model', and in reply Bill returned their Form S1 for the FWD (which he had sent to Alvis for completion), designed to 'assist the Scrutineers in verifying the details of your car'. This required considerable detail of such items as engine component dimensions, type of bearings used in engine and transmission, diameter of flywheel, capacities, spring dimensions, dimensions of brake drums and linings, gear ratios and make and type of dynamo.

This was not quite the end of the paperwork, however, as the terms under which Alvis were providing Bill with a car for the race needed to be recorded. C. M. Harvey, Alvis's Chief Racing Driver and Manager of the Repair and Service Dept, wrote to Bill on 25 July in regard to the RAC's requirement that the type of fuel to be used must be specified, saying that Alvis were using BP Mixture, 50% Aviation Spirit and 50% Benzole. He also advised that they had arranged for a supply of 20 gallons per car for filling up after





Left: *The fixed-head engine used by Alvis in the 1928 TT cars* ***Right:*** *Bill Urquhart Dykes (23) makes a good start, passing Maurice Harvey (no. 31) delayed at the pits with a dead engine*

weighing, and 20 gallons per car to be held at the pits for filling up during the race. There was rather more to the wording of this than meets the eye, as Bill had written to Harvey on 27 July explaining: 'I took care when signing the Mobiloil Contract (which terminates in December of this year) to exclude the Ulster race if I were using a car which was not wholly under my control. I suggested to Smith-Clarke that he should write me a line offering me the car for Ulster on condition that I used the fuel and accessories which the Alvis Company specify. If you would kindly jog his memory, I could then, armed with such a letter, atone for my sins and become once more a good and pious "Wakefieldite".'

On 31 July 1928, George Smith-Clarke wrote accordingly: 'We have pleasure in confirming the arrangement already made with you to the effect that we shall supply you with a Front Wheel Drive Supercharged Sports Car for use in the [Ulster TT Race]. It is clearly understood that the car will be loaned to you and will remain our property, which means that you will be running it at our risk so far as any possible mechanical failures or accident to the car is concerned. We shall, of course, expect you to take out the necessary insurance in respect of yourself as driver, and third party risk; we are arranging to provide a mechanic to ride with you and we are covering him with the rest of our men. It is, of course, understood that in this instance we shall be supplying the car and the necessary fuel and oil for the event, and the car, together with all accessories etc must be used without any alteration whatsoever. With our best wishes for your success in this event.'

Travel was the next thing to be considered, and on 6 July, the Office of the Divisional Passenger Commercial Superintendent of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway wrote (in a letter interestingly headed 'Great International Road Race for Touring Cars, Belfast, August 18th 1928'): 'I have reserved space for your car on the boat leaving Heysham for Belfast on the night of Friday, 10th August, as desired.' On 2 August Bill wrote to Harvey: 'I understand that you have booked accommodation on the boat leaving Heysham on the night of Saturday the 11th instant, for my Front Wheel Drive car. I am in communication with the LMS with the object of getting my booking for Friday, 10th instant, changed to Saturday, the 11th instant. They are somewhat doubtful if they can do this, but will let me know by telephone tomorrow, and as soon as I hear I will wire or telephone you. Either way I shall be driving my own car i.e. the rear wheel drive to Heysham by road. The car will no doubt come in useful in making myself familiar with the course, but I understand there are all sorts of pains and penalties against those indulging in practising at unofficial times!'

A number of other matters required attention. There was intense public interest in the race, and



Urquhart Dykes (23) and Leon Cushman (32) approaching Dundonald Hairpin



Another shot of Urquhart Dykes (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)



George Willday (33) suffered various problems but finished (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)

Bill received regular requests for car and biographical details, with photographs, from both the motoring press and regional and local newspapers, the latter particularly from Northern Ireland itself. Insurance had to be arranged, and Bill paid £2 to London-based brokers W. R. Ponting Ltd (who dealt with all insurance matters for Alvis themselves) for £10,000 Third Party Legal Liability cover 'for any one accident and unlimited as to the number of accidents'. More tangible were the requirements for pit equipment and lap counters for the cars. Again on 2 August Bill wrote to Harvey: 'Will you let me know what you can do with regard to "Milk-cans" for filling with petrol for use in the pits. I also note that the regulations require each pit to have four fire-extinguishers. Could you have arrangements made for me to have these on loan? I think it would be helpful if lap counters could be fitted to the cars. I hear they are rather difficult to get, but I believe Davis knows where they are obtainable.' Harvey replied on the following day: 'As regards milk cans, Captain Smith-Clarke thinks that it will be better to arrange for these in Belfast. He does not think that there should be any great difficulty. Unfortunately we have no extinguishers we could loan you, but the Pyrene Company will surely be in Belfast in force and I think if you were to get in touch with them at their London address, they would be able to loan you the necessary extinguishers at Belfast. I am going into the question of lap counters and shall arrange to have them fitted if at all possible.'

The Alvis team was based for the race at the premises of the Belfast agents, The Stanley Motor Works Ltd in Great Victoria Street. Although convenient in many ways, there did prove to be a downside in that the intense public interest in the race meant that the drivers and mechanics were rather too readily available to enthusiasts and autograph hunters which tended to disrupt their work. (For the 1929 event the team was loaned the use of a base in the grounds of a handsome private house on the outskirts of Newtownards, where a different kind of distraction was provided following a chance meeting out on the circuit during practice, by a visit from Alfa driver and opera singer Giuseppe Campari who tried out the FWD practice car, and was also persuaded to sing for the assembled company.) For 1928 Bill and Ruth decided to stay with a long-standing family friend in Bangor who hospitably wrote: 'A warm welcome awaits you both. You shall have a key to come and go as you please, and as far as oil and dirt I can put up with it all!! Stay as long as you can and do as you like!'

Official practice was sanctioned between the hours of 5.30 and 7.30 am on the Wednesday and Thursday preceding the race, 15 and 16 August, all drivers being required to cover a minimum of three laps of the 13⅔-mile circuit during the practice period. The same days were appointed for the cars to be inspected,



Ultimate winner Kaye Don in his Lea-Francis entering Conway Square (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)



Bill passes Sammy Newsome's Lea-Francis receiving attention as the Alvis approaches the famous butcher's shop corner in Comber

weighed and ballast examined. The cars had to be accompanied by drivers and mechanics, 'and must be complete and ready in all respects as required by [the] regulations. If anything required by the regulations has been left undone, the entrant of the car may be fined a sum not exceeding £1 for every hour's delay until the requirements of the regulations have been satisfied.' Final examinations took place on the 16th and 17th at Hurst's Garage, Donegal Road, Belfast. Amongst the many detailed matters to be examined were that 'the starting handle, or any orifice through which the starting handle might be placed' had been sealed, all starts having to be effected by means of the 'electric starting motor', and also that each of the six wheels (two spares, one on the car and one left at the pits) allowed for each car had 'a surface of 10 × 20 mm of bare metal on the rim edge within 20 mm of the tyre valve, which surface will be used to receive an identification stamp'.

The story of Bill's race is soon told. He made a good start as seen in the photograph, passing Alvis team leader Maurice Harvey who was still at the pits anxiously churning the starter as his car initially refused to fire. Thereafter Bill drove with his usual steady and consistent skill, and by lap 10 he was in thirteenth place. On his ninth lap he set the fastest lap in the 1½-litre class in 11m 37s for the 13.6 miles, a speed of 70.55mph. The high attrition rate meant that by lap 15 he had moved up to sixth place, and he briefly took over the lead from Vernon Balls when the latter brought his Amilcar Six into the pits to refuel. He retook the lead on lap 18, with Kaye Don's Lea-Francis close behind him, but on the following lap his car skidded and crashed into the bank at Bradshaw's Brae. The car overturned, Bill being trapped underneath, but miraculously his mechanic, Jimmy Hartshorn, although thrown clear, was not seriously injured and he was able to free Bill to await medical attention. On hearing of the accident, Ruth Urquhart Dykes was driven rapidly to the scene by the travelling marshal, Kenelm Lee Guinness, an experience she later said she would have enjoyed had she not been so worried about her husband. On examination at Newtownards Hospital, it was found that apart from severe bruising, Bill's main injury was a broken

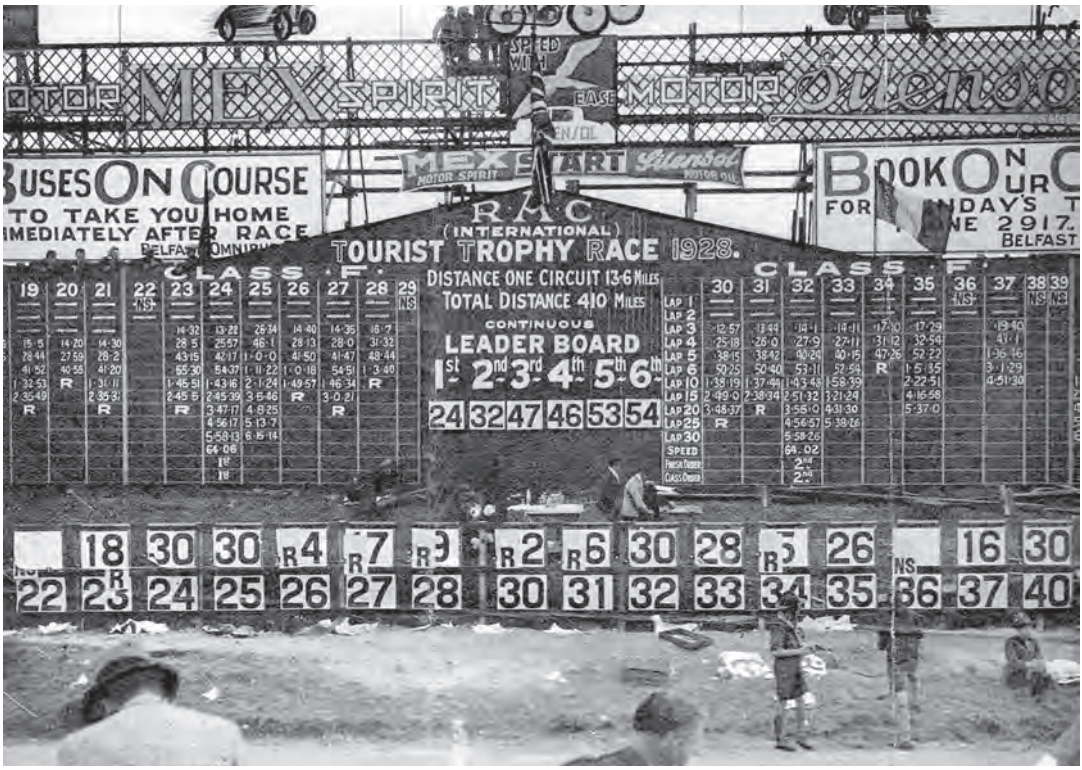


A famous image of Lord Curzon's Type 43 Bugatti on fire (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)

collarbone, a very fortunate escape in the circumstances.

The impressive scoreboard situated opposite the main grandstand by the start and finish line proved a little ambitious as it was found difficult to keep it updated speedily, but as can be seen from the photograph, fully updated at the end of the race it gives a handy guide to the fortunes of the runners in Class F (Over 1100cc and up to 1500cc), and coincidentally to the result of the race. Cars in this class (numbered 22 to 39 on the board) had to carry 132 lbs of ballast, and as can be seen, were given two credit laps. As predicted, the results proved that this system of handicapping with all the cars starting together with a different number of credit laps for each class, proved to benefit those in the 1500cc class particularly. Of these eighteen cars (a Marendaz Special (22), five FWD Alvises (23, 30–33), four Lea-Francis (24–27), two FNs (28 and 29), and six Frazer Nashes (34–39)) five did not start, six retired with mechanical maladies and three crashed.

Of the 44 cars which started the race, only twelve were still running at the finish. Apart from Bill Urquhart Dykes, the other Alvis drivers had mixed fortunes. Australian Harold Purdy driving car no. 30 was forced to retire on lap 22 with what was reported as a broken piston. After his delayed start, Maurice Harvey (car no. 31) showed the potential of the Alvis by being in seventh place at the end of the first lap. At the end of lap 14, after an epic battle with Purdy, he took the lead in the 1½-litre class and third place overall. He was over seven minutes ahead of Kaye Don's Lea-Francis (24) when on lap 17 he encountered an unexpected shower of rain near Ballystockart, skidded and crashed. Alvis employee George Willday in car no. 33 suffered tyre, plug and other troubles and although he continued to the end, he did not complete the requisite number of laps, and was not classified as a finisher. Leon Cushman in car no. 32 took time to get used to the handling of the FWD Alvis which he had not driven before, but later clearly got the hang of things. With three laps to go, he was 40 seconds behind the leader Don, and gaining, although as the car was running perilously short of oil, he could not risk using all the potential. He entered the last lap some 32 seconds behind, and completed the lap in 12m 3s, compared with Don's 12m 22s. Don therefore won at an average speed of 64.06mph, with Cushman 13 seconds behind in second place, having averaged 64.02mph. It was a result which reflected great credit on both drivers, and so close a finish after some six hours of racing on a very demanding course provided a great spectacle for the crowds of enthusiastic spectators.



The impressive scoreboard opposite the main grandstand

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HCVA



Patrick Cunningham's bouncer brought plenty of enthusiasm (Mick Herring)



Exciting to see a new 30-98 on the trials scene, this one driven by Jonathan Bailey (Mick Herring)

The John Harris Trial

Her father was not there to give advice, but **PAULA MARSH** *won her class. Are these two facts in any way related? We will never know …*

Three years ago my father gave me his very early T23 Brescia Bugatti, and as we live in Derbyshire, it seemed only right that I should enter the car in this year's Derbyshire Trial. I found myself being the poster girl for this event on the VSCC website – so no pressure. This was not my first trial in the Brescia since I inherited it, but it was the first I have completed without Dad closely watching my every move. He was on the other side of the world, in New Zealand, so was not going to be much help with prep. My husband Richard and son Will certainly put in some hours with me. It's all a huge learning curve which probably should have started 20 years ago. Thank you, boys.

The trial took place on Saturday 1 March and was based at Ashover Village Hall, which is about 20-odd miles from where we live, in Abney. We set off in the freezing cold at 7am sharp, Will having entered in Richard's Ulster. You wouldn't know it but Richard and I have lived in Derbyshire all our lives and still managed to get lost en route. My apologies to Ben Bayliss who was following behind in his Model A. Scrutineering was a breeze, so we were off to our first hill, Grange Mill. Note to self: keep checking the oil. Not as easy as it sounds, as there is no dipstick – just a tap on the side of the sump. If the oil doesn't drip out, put some in.

Because we were late, we were the last of the cars to start at this hill. The marshals took great pleasure in announcing that they thought it was already impossible to clear the section. This proved true in my case, but Will showed them it's not over until it's over by getting himself 25 points. The sun was now shining (a rarity in Derbyshire in early March) and both cars were going well. Next we were off to Chatsworth and the two new sections. Top up oil. Imperial proved tricky: I managed to pull off the exhaust and a few running repairs were needed – over to Richard. There is a God: Russian Roulette stopped both Will and me at 23, not that I should be comparing my trialling skills



Alice Mackinnon enjoying the Riley between hills (Stuart Yates)



There she goes! David Bond tilts the mighty Morris (Mick Herring)



Ben Mellors in the Peugeot / Harley Davidson slaloming towards a 1st (Stuart Yates)



What do you give the man who has everything? A clipboard and a bobblehat (Mick Herring)

with Will's. I do feel it's a lot to do with the bouncer and Evie definitely has youth, agility and enthusiasm on her side, unlike Richard.

1758 was possibly Will's only mistake – a little overexcited I feel. Most of the hills shut for lunch so we did the road miles over towards Chesterfield during this time.

This seems a good moment for an anecdote from David Cochrane. 'Loft Longhurst and I were driving through Carlton Lees woods in his repro Ulster on the way to the 1758 section, about 20 yards behind Chris Webb and his father Ian in their repro Ulster,' writes David. 'Suddenly four roe deer came dashing down the wooded slope on our right towards us. Two of them passed in front of Chris and Ian, the third jumped clean over their car and the fourth went between the cars. Ian says that he saw a deer run in front of them, then another one and he thought "that was close", then out of the corner of his eye he saw the third one coming over so he crouched down and put his hands over his head, and expected it to land on his head but it didn't. It was an amazing sight – what a pity that I didn't have a camera ready.'

And so to the afternoon's hills, having, of course, topped up with oil. We narrowly missed a tree on Stone Edge Squiggle. No dramas on Foret De Perez, and maybe could have done better on Chez Perez. It's always fun to catch up with friends at the Clough Wood sections. Clough Wood was a bit of a stopper for most. Millclose Mine was definitely a case of driver error. I can hear Dad saying 'hold it in gear as it sometimes jumps out'. Every day is a school day. I will try harder next time, although I much prefer two hands on the steering wheel at all times.

Top up oil. We finished on top of the world at Beeley Plantation. Back to Ashover for a fabulous tea and cakes, thank you Jane for finding me a large mug – much needed. Ben Wildsmith gave us all an interesting history lesson on the Derbyshire Trial with some amazing photos.

We waited for the results as Will was hoping he had done quite well. To my amazement, both Will and I were class winners, me in Class 1a, he in Class 1b. Phew! Poster girl justified, I think? Simon Price won Class 1c and the Dick Batho Trophy, Roger Garness won Class 2a in a Ford A Phaeton, and Joseph Stollery took Class 2b and the Patrick Marsh Trophy in his Riley.

There followed a very cold dark trip home. I'm not sure about the yellow headlamps for night driving but they do look cool. What a fab day. Thank you to all the organisers and marshals for their efforts. Conclusion: need to carry as much oil as fuel. Our weekend was topped off with my father-in-law's 90th birthday celebrations and, of course, an in-depth trial debrief. Happy birthday, David.



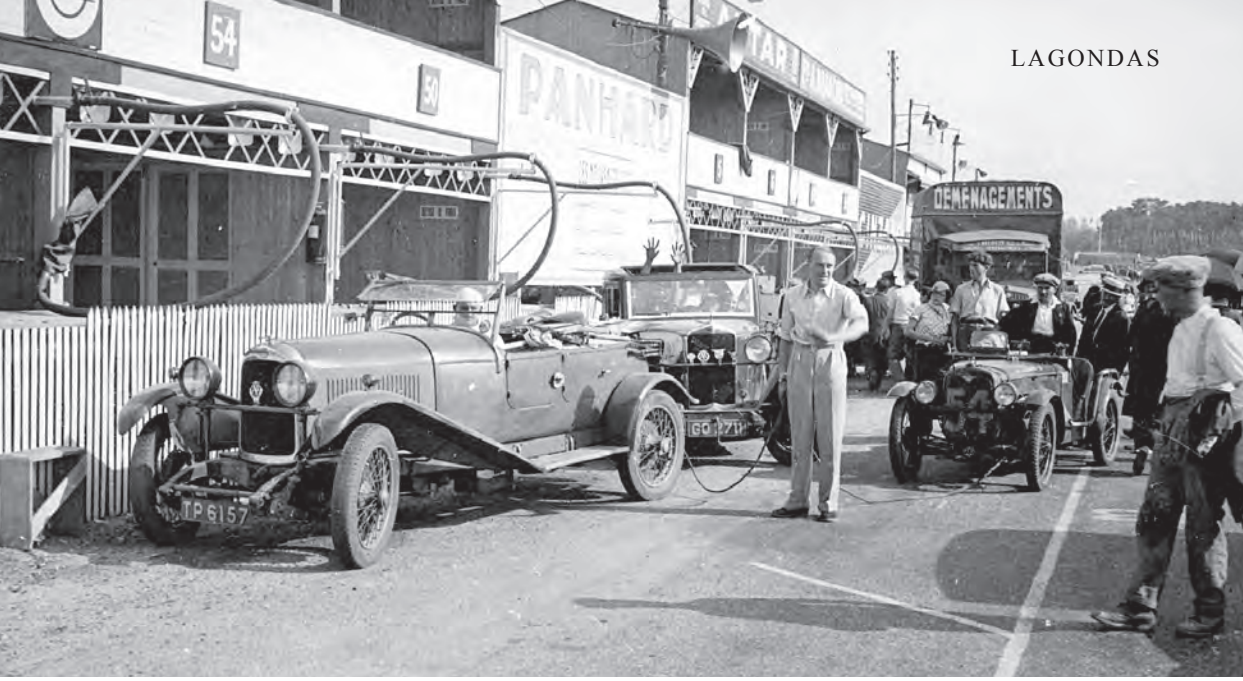
Lucy Hindle gives it some welly in the Austin (Mike Griffin)



Youth and drive propelled Archie Miller's Chrysler to a 2nd Class award (Mike Griffin)


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TP 6157 at Le Mans in 1934 as support car to Charles Metchin's Ulster

Wilbur Gunn – His Part In My Downfall

Part The Second

After owning half a dozen Lagondas, **MIKE HALLOWES** *decided to kick the habit – until the next one came along ...*

During the course of my sudden foray into the world of old car dealing it was inevitable that a Lagonda should hove into view, which soon manifested itself in the form of a high-chassis 2-litre, TP 6157. I purchased the car from the delightful Nigel Dawes who was based at the moated Birtsmorton Court in Worcestershire. His showrooms were a wonderful glazed quadrangle within the confines of the Court and there was also a restoration shop that turned out the highest quality of work. Nigel himself was a very accomplished model maker.

I always had a rule that I would only deal in vehicles that I liked, the theory being I would honestly be enthusiastic about them to potential owners. To this end I did tend to play with the stock, so to speak, and TP 6157 was no exception. However, reality was paramount and I sold it to a fellow enthusiast after a few months of enjoyable ownership. About a year later I repurchased the car as the owner was looking to finance a business venture. Recently I discovered from an article in the Lagonda Club magazine that TP 6157 attended Le Mans in 1934 as a support vehicle to Charles Metchim's competing Austin Seven Ulster.

There then followed a long period of non-Lagonda ownership for one reason or another although various other vehicles did come and go. At last AGA 162 came into my life. This was an LG45 that had started life as a saloon and was rescued in a derelict state by Paul Tebbett and his brother Michael from a bus garage in Scotland. Paul then proceeded to rebuild AGA 162 with a two-door open tourer body in the style of the Lagonda T8 design and it looked magnificent in dark blue with blue leather. It was by far the most immaculate car I had ever owned and I was in fear and dread of car park attacks during my tenure. It went like a train and I actually won a prize for best car at a rally near Tewkesbury, however I felt it was under false pretences as I had no part in its presentation.

At about this time I had been coerced into considering a Vauxhall 30-98 by the father of our Editor (more of him later!) and did in fact submit to one shortly after. I have to say I do understand why they are so well thought of and enjoyed a couple of trips to France with it. Feeling it was extravagant to have nine litres spread between two vehicles I reluctantly decided to let AGA 162 go. It is now actively campaigned in some serious inter-continental rallying, very successfully, although it recently fell over during some tricky manoeuvre and is now in recovery to



TP 6157 when belonging to Mike



AGA 162, rescued by the Tebbetts but made Mike nervous in car parks

fight another day.

Another hiatus in Lagonda ownership followed until LG6 HPA 27 was acquired in a swap for a Suffolk SS100 replica that I seemed to own. This car had started out as a saloon but had been converted into a not unattractive drophead coupé, although I did feel the hood when folded was a little uncomfortable in appearance. The story went that a previous owner who owned a manufacturing business had his employees carry out the conversion during slack times. They were obviously very able as to convert that Frank Feeley-designed body from four doors to two required a considerable amount of skill. I understand the current owner is intending to properly restore to original Lagonda DHC specification, which it certainly deserves. It was a lovely car to drive but seemed too comfortable compared to the earlier cars, what with its fancy independent front suspension and synchromesh gearbox and the gear lever was in the middle. Even worse the throttle pedal was on the right! Very confusing.

At this point I felt that, what with *anno domini* mounting up, perhaps I might hang up my driving gloves on prewar vehicles and stick with more user-friendly later models that would accommodate my elderly and large frame. That was until I saw the advertisement for Lagonda 3-litre tourer PJ 3482. A phone call later and a rattling trailer to Essex found me the next proud owner. This was a most handsome car with its wonderful helmet mudguards, long bonnet and fabric-covered body. This was another car that had been built as a saloon but time had not been kind to the original body and an earlier owner had commissioned Keith Bowley of Ashton Keynes Restorations to make a wonderfully correct tourer body. It did have a pair of postwar P100 headlamps that slightly jarred but a friend put me onto a pair of restored Marchal headlamps that looked magnificent and would not be out of place. A phone call to the seller and a quick trip down the M4 to a mutually convenient motorway services and the deal was traditionally done in the car park. I also managed to obtain the correct Bosch bull horn to replace a pair of slightly over-the-top chrome-plated Lucas units.

PJ 3482 ran well enough but had a propensity to oil up plugs, which was a bit annoying, and I was never completely at one with the oil pressure, so perhaps it was trying to tell me that it would like a bit of restorative attention. Unfortunately this was (a) not immediately financially convenient, and (b) how long would it all take? Always a consideration for those in more advanced years. So PJ 3482 was found a new home and that was *definitely* the last Lagonda until … idly looking through the classifieds in that excellent organ, *The Automobile*, I happened across an advertisement for a very pretty 1932 Lagonda 16/80 saloon at a price that then seemed quite reasonable (how times have changed for prewar cars unless they've



The replica body was not unattractive, though the hood stood a bit tall



PJ 3482 was collected from Essex and had a Keith Bowley body



AGA 162 is now a global rally champion



HPA 27 was swapped for a Suffolk Jaguar Mike inexplicably owned

won Le Mans fourteen times and won the Mille Miglia the following weekend!). Being very sensible I waited until another three issues of the magazine had been published and lo and behold AGO 295 was still for sale. A tentative phone call and an appointment to view was made. This is where The Editor's father comes into play again as I insisted he came with me to hold me back. Well, a fat lot of good that did! After a long journey to north of Blackpool (the days are definitely shorter up there) a deal was struck and my financial guardian was about as much use as an ashtray on a motorbike.

I arranged to have the car transported home as, these days, the fun of the breakdown on a long journey home in an unfamiliar elderly vehicle is not quite what it used to be or the challenge quite so alluring. Just as well, because an elderly fuel pipe had perished and the car rolled gently to a halt after only a quarter of a mile following delivery. Repairing this involved removing the seats and floor to get at the offending article. This was not a particularly difficult operation in a workshop but not something I'd wish to attempt on a busy dual carriageway with large commercial behemoths passing at speed only inches from my behind as I struggle to effect a repair.

After this hiccough the car was nothing but a delight and went really well. Previously AGO 295 had been owned by the 16/80 guru of the Lagonda Club and the file contained copious invoices and notes of work that he had carried out during his long-term ownership, including a comprehensive engine rebuild. He told me that on a trip to Le Mans one year to celebrate the win by Lagonda in 1934 he managed to achieve 90mph down the Mulsanne straight.

Again it was time to say goodbye and AGO 295 was definitely, definitely the last Lagonda until during a chat with The Editor's father once again (see where this is going?) I gleaned that he was suffering a degree of seller's remorse having parted with a wonderfully original and beautifully scruffy low-chassis 2-litre Lagonda a while previously. At this time I was aware of a 1934 Lagonda M45 saloon that had been re-awakened after fifty or sixty years of rest following the death of a restorer who had carried out all the necessary ash body frame replacement. The car had now been recommissioned mechanically with new tyres, water pump, rewired, etc into a running, driving machine, albeit currently in a fetching shade of two-tone coat of primer and the remaining trim and odds and sods packed in boxes. I suggested that this might scratch the itch that had now become apparent so off he went (alone) to view it.

I might have known what was to happen next. Although the car could be purchased for a quite sensible sum I was about to be suckered into a cunning plan to alleviate perceived potential marital disharmony in a certain area of Oxfordshire. It was suggested that we might go halves on the project and





Left: *AGO 295 was definitely going to be Mike's last Lagonda* **Right:** *AGO 295 was the cover star of this indispensable book*



AAU 474 as purchased



AAU 474 in the spectators' car park at VSCC Silverstone (Tony Turner)

share the costs of continuing the various necessary works to AAU 474 and we would then both have access to a wonderful Lagonda M45. Obviously I had sold my LAST Lagonda but that decision didn't preclude me from buying half a Lagonda! We ran the car in its delightful state of 'dishabille' for a while until we bit the bullet and started to continue the recommissioning. This began with a visit to miracle trimmer Harry Fraser at Bicester who fitted a new headlining, remounted the original leather door trims on new backings, reassembled the correct window lift mechanism on the driver's door as well as fitting the remanufactured door check mechanisms we had had made. The icing on the cake was that a friend donated a used set of M45 carpets (possibly the 1934 Motor Show carpets) as he had replaced them with new in his car. Perfect, as they were very much in keeping with the existing aged seats and door trims, albeit in a rather contrasting colour to the rest of the trim.

A full-on respray was out of the question as the cost of the necessary preparation and attention to every inconsistency in the metal work would have exceeded available funds, so a rethink was required. Old Valspar adverts in past editions of *Practical Motorist* came to mind, where you brush-painted your pride and joy in your own drive with magical results. We quickly decided that this was not the most sensible route but coach painting the car certainly was. Into the frame stepped the extremely talented Mark Raven who carried out the most sympathetic and appropriate two-tone finish in green and black in the very best coach paint money can buy (to paraphrase Withnail). Such was the result that the car won a prize at the Bugatti Owners Club Garden Party and Concours for the best old banger that wasn't a Bugatti but still retained an air of originality and charm. Praise indeed! AAU 474 has attended the last two Silverstone VSCC Spring Start race meetings fully loaded with pensioners, the total age of car and occupants on both occasions exceeding 400!

It so happens that, due to my partner-in-crime's eye being distracted by another younger shapelier vehicle, I now am the sole shareholder of this large barouche. So much for my last half of a Lagonda. It's now really my last Lagonda. Or is it? After all, I'm only 83!



A sign found by Mike's son in a flea market in Florida

Footnote I:
Wilbur Gunn came from Lagonda Creek, Ohio, in the USA, was an opera singer, so obviously came to the UK, fell in love with Staines and set up a factory to make motor vehicles and naturally called them Lagonda.

Footnote II:
Although I have managed to own only ten Lagondas (eleven if you count TP 6157 twice) since 1966, there was one that I did 'own' for about five minutes. A friend tipped me the wink that an abandoned house was being cleared and that there was an 'old car' that needed to be removed. I rushed round to be greeted by a 1920s 2-litre Lagonda saloon in a parlous but salvageable state alongside a decrepit Riley of indeterminate age. £5 changed hands with the 'council appointed' guy set the task of clearance and I came back two days later with a borrowed trailer to be met by several burly policeman wondering what I was up to and totally unimpressed by my scruffy receipt for the £5. It turned out that the so called 'house clearance' was not quite what it seemed and I was a fiver down. The car was eventually rescued legally by Peter Whenman and rebuilt as a fine looking 2-litre high-chassis tourer.



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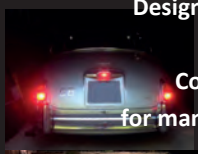
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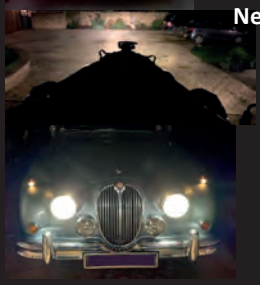
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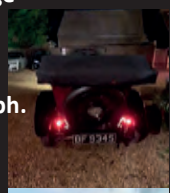
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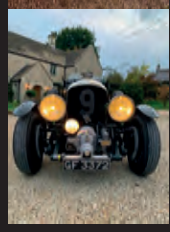
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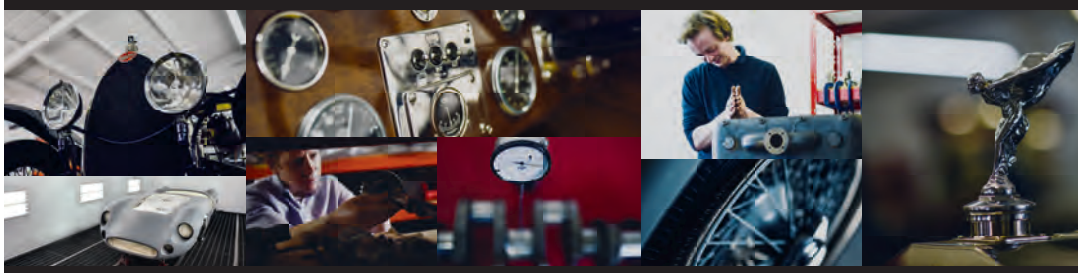


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Martyn Quilter's Singer has its tyres adjusted at Chandos (Phil Jones)

The Herefordshire Trial

Two days, thirteen hills, 115 cars – it was a bumper weekend as usual, says **ANNIE PEAKE**

The day before the trial, Matthew Bell admitted that two or three of his favourite contributors were 'unavailable' to write for *The Bulletin*, and as a last resort, would I possibly do the article? I realised there's no such thing as a free lunch, after his jolly Christmas get-together at The Spread Eagle in Thame. Love you too, Matthew. This year, then, I thought that I would call on you lot at the trial for your recollections: marshals, organisers, landowners, competitors and spectators. Criticism would be fine if I could redact some of the fruitier swear words where necessary. Technical info also fine provided I could spell the words, even if the meaning might elude me.

A bit of background: the weekend of 15 and 16 March was one of perfect driving conditions – there had been no rain for weeks. The weather was very cold but sunny. There were four new hills, thanks to Peter Clay (Lindor), Gilbert Greenall who provided two at High Wood, and Hugo Lewis at Fromes Hill. Our gathering ground, Hall Court, looked more than presentable, complete with a new paddock in the sunshine for Austins. Scrutineers worked up and down the lines of cars with barely any waiting. No elbows up this year. A full list of cars, and then some. The Herefordshire is possibly the most oversubscribed trial of them all.

Organiser

Robin Harcourt-Smith has the unenviable task of running the trial, taking over from the admirable Mark Garfitt. So, organise the trial, host it at your own house, provide the catering – no pressure, then, Robin and Dawn. And ask Mark if he'd continue to do PR for the club by dropping leaflets around the affected locations. Hall Court's large barn needed a lot of clearing out last year, but all cars will remain outside from now on. 'My main concern over the year is to find enough hills, with at least one in the wings should it be needed,' says Robin. 'Royal Bounty was off limits because the farmer unfortunately died suddenly. Foxalls is no longer in use because it is too rough, and Ancient Britain is unusable in the wet.'

Robin found four more hills, not easily done.

'Arranging the markers on each of the 13 hills is another issue, over the six or seven days it took to set up. If the going is wet, a lot of cars will struggle,



Archie Miller takes a wide line in the Chrysler at Chandos (Phil Jones)



Eddie Williams keeps his foot down in the standard Bentley 3-litre (Mike Griffin)

but if it's dry, most will clear the hill and find it a bit too easy.' Lindor, the very muddy new hill, was most difficult to set out, and drive. The organisers thought no one would manage it, but by the end of the day, it was drier and doable. It was the fruitiest of them all in my opinion.

'Vintage car driving is seen as an elitist sport but it's a great leveller. It's also unpredictable. The person who changes his tyres every month isn't necessarily going to win, nor is the person with the most money. Repeating the same course year after year might be comforting, but it's not stretching.' The different layout at Chandos served two purposes – crowd control and to keep competitors concentrating, not just on Ali White's cakes at the finish.

Landowners

A big thanks to the landowners, particularly the new ones, Hugh Lewis and Gilbert Greenall. Landowners put up with a lot, with over 115 cars rattling along their tracks. Gilbert Greenall arrived at High Wood on Sunday hoping to be able to drive up it. Why not? Perhaps that could be organised another year. Peter Clay is an old hand at the VSCC; he didn't seem unduly concerned at the mud churn at Lindor, and Hugh Lewis at Fromes Hill had no idea what to expect but let us carry on anyway. Who knows, if Gilbert Greenall has his way, there might be a landowners' category for 2026.

Marshals

Jenny Lyon, Chandos: 'We need two marshals at the gate into the orchard, not one. All fine but it set off my sciatica.'

Adrian Ducker, new Hill Chief at Hyde Halt: 'Loved being a new hill chief, despite a few concerns beforehand about running a hill I'd never seen before, with the optional stop–restart. We did have one incident of note. An enterprising competitor, who failed at the stop–start, reversed (a few feet only) to the junction, but instead of heading back down to the start, shot up the return hill and arrived at marker 25 from the wrong direction.'

Tim Milvain and Rick Mee, High Wood 1: 'The best hill I've ever had to stand about in all day, what with the sun and the daffodils. Easy work as most drivers cleared the hill. Except for one.' (See Competitors.)

Anthony Maitland: Liked seeing so much failure at Lindor, especially yours truly who ran aground at



Chandos 2 was the nemesis of many, including Gillian Carr in the Vauxhall Super G (Phil Jones)



Like the Hotel California, you can check out but never leave Chandos (Phil Jones)



Esme, 12, bouncing Gareth Graham to joint victory in Class 1b (Mike Griffin)

his feet. His trusty Land Rover, a suitable looking sight at VSCC events, was not required on either day. That was fortunate because it broke down on the way home and Anthony was saved by a beautiful girl on a tractor near Canon Pyon. Not so bad then, Anthony.

Paul Tunnicliffe, Past President: 'I now recall what happened when the (current) President and First Lady visited Dean's Place. A deviant trick was created, I believe by Paul Tebbett, whereby at marker 21 the route turned sharp left for peg 25, a ruse noted by nearly all competitors. But not by Simon who, despite having walked the entire section to the top, turned right, noted his error too late whereupon he took evading action, turning hard left and hitting the afore-mentioned peg 22. Marital friction was evident.'

Frank Sibly, Dean's Place: 'Enjoyed it! This is my second year, with less interesting driving conditions (no Chummy on its side this time), but the stop–start fooled some who didn't have enough high revs or didn't want to burn their clutch plate.'

Competitors

Patrick Blakeney-Edwards and Richard Hammond, supercharged Ulster: Patrick set his sights on a solid 2nd class award and to begin with, all went swimmingly. However, neither he nor Richard stopped laughing and joking, and at one point Patrick had to pull over to throw up (too many sherries, maybe?). A cracking hangover on Sunday meant Patrick couldn't walk the course at Lindor, and by High Wood, the pair managed 0 and 2 at both hills, despite 99% of all the competitors achieving near maximum points. The driver ignored Richard and headed up the return road. At High Wood 2 Patrick thought he would perform his own stop–restart. Was that when he hit marker 1? Patrick, you should have asked your daughter Scarlett to compete. At one point, I saw their Ulster expired by the side of the road. Patrick's account is that he had a full working box of spares with him. Richard's was that Patrick had nothing but a condenser on board, so whatever the problem, a new condenser had to fix it. Somehow it did.

Alice Locke, Austin Ulster: 'My second trial only, loved the sunshine, the sunny marshals, loved the cakes, and my mistake was not to take on the stop–restart on our first hill at Hyde Halt. 10 points lost! Driving on dry hills was a novelty for me.'

Gareth Graham and 12-year-old Esme, Austin Ulster: Esme marked up the maps, and map read as navigators should, but don't always. She got her driver up difficult Lindor, pointing out that under no circumstances was he to take his foot off the accelerator before Marker 25. She walked each hill, and other competitors remarkably didn't hop in front of them because they could see Esme couldn't move the car. Wow. 'When's lunch Gareth? I'm tired. And hungry.' They settled at the bottom of Lindor next to the river in the sunshine on the road for a picnic. Gareth pointed out what lovely countryside there was between the hills, especially the stretch from Penyard



James Baxter's Chrysler 60 in attack mode (Phil Johnson)



Exemplary weight distribution on Rob Hubbard's Vauxhall (Mike Griffin)




***Left:** Determination in Sarah Skelton's Ulster led to a 2nd class award (Phil Jones)* ***Right:** Bird's eye view of The Bulletin's favourite reporter: she is too modest to record that she won a 2nd (Paul Freeman)*

to Perrystone along the river. He usually trials large cars, but being lent the Austin was perfect for his little passenger, who not only took to waving at photographers, but could make some difference when she bounced. In a big car she would have been holding on for dear life. I'm not surprised Esme steered him to a First Class Award. VSCC, remember Esme.

Spectators

I was too busy either eating cake or watching Patrick B-E to notice many spectators, except for one, who stands out.

Vincent from Ledbury. Vincent walked an hour and a half from Ledbury, then home again, to see what Penelope Pitstop and Co. were up to at Chandos on Saturday. His interest might have had something to do with his father taking part in the TT races in the Isle of Man, or because his father also designed bulletproof windows for Mrs Thatcher's official cars. Vincent pointed out, reasonably, that Chandos was difficult to find – no signage and he didn't have a map – but he found it nevertheless because of the smell of car oil. He stayed all day, loved it, and watched each contestant keenly, from opening to close of play. 'Why not inform the Tourist Office in Ledbury? It's such a good day out, and it's for free! Loved the cakes, loved the cars. You are all mad!'

Results

In Class 1a, for standard short-wheelbase cars, young George Daniell led by a long way, winning the class with 312 points. In Class 1b, for short-wheelbase Clubmans, four competitors in various different Austins shared joint honours to win the Moffatt Mug, each having finished with 338 points. They were: Stephen Fathers, Gareth Graham, Will Marsh and Ian Webb. There was a similar four-way victory in Class 1c for short-wheelbase Experts, the Herefordshire Trophy being won by three Ford Specials and an Austin, their drivers being David Golightly, Matt and Simon Price, and Donald Skelton, all on 345 points. Class 2a for standard long-wheelbase cars was squarely won by Dominic Boulton in his Model A Ford Phaeton, on 317 points, while Class 2b for modified long-wheelbase cars went to Simon Bowyer in his Ford Model A on 336 points, who won the Andrew Blakeney-Edwards Trophy.

So, it was a cracking weekend, one of the very best, and special thanks must go to all those long-suffering marshals, especially the ones who gave me feedback, and to Robin Harcourt-Smith, with helpers Mark Garfitt, Steve Kent, Paul and Chrissie Tebbett.



Richard and Ali White's home, Chandos: always a favourite section (Annie Peake)



Sporty exhaust arrangements on Max Moses's Chummy (Mike Griffin)

On a Mission: The Adventures of Eva Hasell

Every summer for 50 years, Eva Hasell travelled across Canada in a converted Ford van to spread the gospel.
JOHN BUCKLEY *tells her story*

Eva Hasell was born at Dalemain House, near Penrith, into a wealthy religious family. Her father was Sheriff of Westmorland and her mother was the sole heiress to large estates in Ireland. Her father died in 1910. Dalemain House and its estate were entailed to the next in line male and so passed to a different branch of the family. Eva, her older sister Dorothy and her mother moved out to nearby Dacre Lodge. Sadly her mother died the following year.

Eva's education was solely from private tutors and governesses and she became proficient in the accomplishments expected of young ladies at that time: art, music, cutting and arranging flowers. Obviously a forceful and bright child, she was teaching at the local Sunday School by age 11, and at 17 was prominent in The Girls Friendly Society, which was a pioneer youth organisation supported by the Anglican Church.

She found her vocation in religion and in 1914 enrolled at St Christopher's College, Blackheath, London. This was a training college for Sunday School teachers. Qualifying with her award certificate in 1916 she became an official Sunday School Organiser for the Diocese of Carlisle.

By this time WWI was raging and she joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment. She was soon familiar with driving and maintaining motor vehicles, as she writes: 'I had been allowed to use our cars throughout the war with my Sunday School work and a VAD hospital … our chauffeur was called up and mechanics were scarce, we had to do our own repairs.'

Once the war was over, she formed a plan to travel around Canada in a converted van to spread the gospel to isolated communities, having been inspired by the tales of missionaries and the ethos of St Christopher's College. In 1920 she voyaged with a friend, Winifred Ticehurst, across the Atlantic and on arrival in Canada attended a course of lessons on how to repair Fords and how to vulcanise tyres. Perhaps not surprisingly, she was the only woman on the course. With her own money she purchased a Model T Ford and had a caravan body built on the chassis. The van had 'Sunday School Mission Anglican Church' emblazoned on the side.

The caravan was cramped; it contained two mattresses, a shelf, a wooden locker, two canvas buckets, cooking apparatus (to be used outside), folding chairs, spare parts, wheel chains for traction in mud, three extra inner tubes, necessary tools as well as the various aids to religious teaching such as hymn books, bibles, tracts and pictures etc. On the running board were supplementary fuel tanks holding a total of 17 gallons to increase the range. Her first chaotic driving experience of the Model T, with all its problems



At the start of the first mission in 1920, Eva Hasell is on the right



Eva digging out the Ford van in 1920



The 1923 mission: Eva on the right, Blanche Pitman alongside



Routine repairs during the 1924 mission

even when new, is recounted in her book *Across the Prairie*. Winifred and Eva spent the next five months living in the converted Model T, camping and travelling along unmade tracks in search of people who she deemed were in need of religious instruction.

Fortunately Fords were ubiquitous at this time and so replacement spare parts and repair facilities were available in practically every town (if they could find one). Eva and her companion were travelling to far-flung communities and so at times needed to strip down the carburettor, mend punctures, straighten steering rods, dig the vehicle out of mud, and sometimes dig it out of sand.

At the end of that first summer the Model T was put into storage to be refurbished for the following season and Eva returned to Britain to spend the winter in Cumbria drumming up donations for new caravans, volunteers to drive them, and general support for the overheads incurred in what was to become a major scheme. Her enthusiasm and forceful personality ensured the development of what would eventually be known as The Western Canada Caravan Sunday School Mission Fund and through Eva's efforts it was very successful. By 1929 she had 24 female volunteers in twelve missionary caravans travelling around Canada, each van travelling about 3,000 miles every season. The mission used Model Ts exclusively until the Model A Ford came along. Some, but not all, of the Ts were fitted with Ruckstell axles and Rocky Mountain brakes. Always Eva followed the same format: winter in Cumbria organising people and holding meetings to raise funds, in the spring travelling to Canada, in the summer on the Canadian trails proselytising to isolated communities.

Her travels were not without incident. A few months into the 1923 tour she managed to write off a van by driving onto an ungated level crossing at the same time as a freight train came along. Eva suffered only minor injuries. Her companion in the passenger seat came off much worse: head injury, broken collar bone and broken pelvis. Eva writes of the van, 'I got the full insurance money from the company, and they only took off 15 per cent for wear and tear for the five months. By adding a little money which I had in the caravan fund a new van was bought for 1924 and I replaced what was damaged of the equipment.' Her companion was not so easily fixed, she had to be hospitalised and spent months recovering.

The following year Eva completely rolled a van. She was driving down a very steep slope with hairpin bends, needing to engage reverse to get round them, when the road gave way and the van somersaulted down a 25-foot bank. Again Eva suffered only minor injuries; she was more worried about the battery acid burns to her clothes. Undaunted she took some hymn books and song sheets from the overturned van and



In 1924, after rolling over



In 1928, Eva switched to a Ford AA caravan



The AA caravan stuck in the ruts in 1928

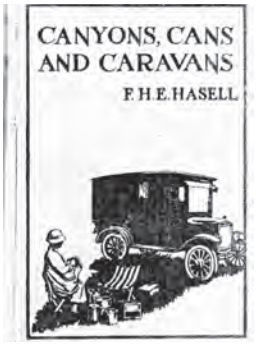


St Christopher's College, Blackheath, London, c.1909

proceeded to the Community Hall half a mile away, held the Sunday service there and gave an address. Only after all that did she explain about the predicament from which she had just extricated herself. The next morning a gang of men went and righted the van using a tripod with a block and tackle. The truck's frame and engine were sound but the wooden framework body and roof were smashed. She managed to drive the truck 70 miles to a town where a carpenter rebuilt the wrecked wooden body (now two foot shorter) in just 10 days. Again, 'All repairs were paid for by the insurance company'.

In 1928 she went over to a Model AA caravan and was 'extremely pleased with the new model truck … and felt at home with the gears, which were like the Morris Cowley. It went up the hills splendidly … never overheated … it used very little oil and water unlike the old Fords.' All very happy except when the starter motor jammed (yes, even in those days and with a brand new vehicle). In the 1930s she managed to crash yet another van, becoming trapped under it. This time injuries were more severe – a broken arm and battery acid burns to legs and arms. As a result of this accident she required surgery, but undaunted she was back driving a missionary van the following spring.





Left: *A portrait of Eva Hasell in about 1960*
Right: *Eva's third book,* Canyons Cars and Caravans*, published 1930*

Sticking with Fords, the V8s were utilised as caravans when they appeared on the market in the 1930s, and after WWII the mission used custom bodied trucks produced in Canada by the Mercury division of Ford. The number of missionary vans peaked in the 1950s when 31 caravans were on the roads of Canada, but thereafter vanning declined. However, even as late as 1970, Eva was visiting Canada each summer to actively participate in the caravan missionary work, though she no longer ventured into the more isolated and difficult areas. She continued to control the purse strings of the missions and see herself in charge of the scheme even if she was loath to change her rather dogmatic, and by this stage outdated views, on how Canadian missionary work should be run. She died in hospital at Penrith in 1974. A plaque to her memory stands in St Andrew's parish church at Dacre.

What legacies do we have relating to this pioneer motorist? She wrote three books: *Across the Prairie* (1922), *Through Western Canada in a Caravan* (1925), and *Canyons Cars and Caravans* (1930). The original publications, each with many photos, are still available through book dealers, and they can now often be found as 're-print on demand' books. An excellent biography of Eva Hasell, *Missionary on Wheels*, written by Vera Fast, was published in 1979. St Christopher's College at 22/23 Montpelier Row, Blackheath, is still standing but is now converted into private flats. It is Grade II listed. Dacre Lodge remains a private house. Dalemain House, now called Dalemain Mansion (a Grade I listed building), proudly continues its historic status and is open to visitors in the summer and hosts many events including classic car shows.

As for her life's work: the caravan mission eventually came under the custodianship of The General Synod of The Anglican Church of Canada, but following her death the caravan mission scheme as such slowly declined.

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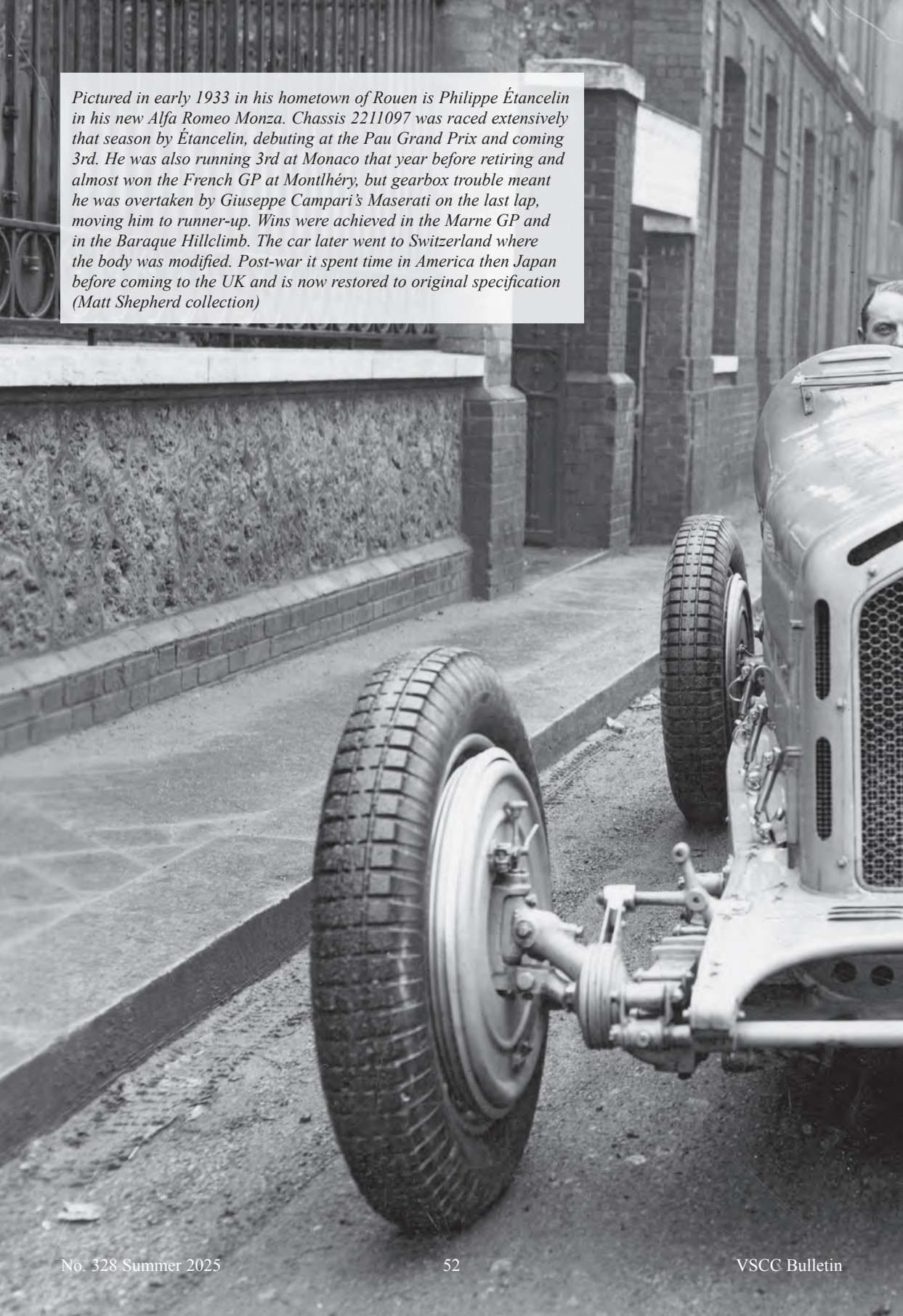
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Pictured in early 1933 in his hometown of Rouen is Philippe Étancelin in his new Alfa Romeo Monza. Chassis 2211097 was raced extensively that season by Étancelin, debuting at the Pau Grand Prix and coming 3rd. He was also running 3rd at Monaco that year before retiring and almost won the French GP at Montlhéry, but gearbox trouble meant he was overtaken by Giuseppe Campari's Maserati on the last lap, moving him to runner-up. Wins were achieved in the Marne GP and in the Baraque Hillclimb. The car later went to Switzerland where the body was modified. Post-war it spent time in America then Japan before coming to the UK and is now restored to original specification (Matt Shepherd collection)





Frank Gresham's 1912 Buick T34 going well on the tour

The Light Car Welsh

After more than 30 years of living abroad, **IAN GRACE** *was long overdue some messing around in vintage cars in a fine part of Britain. The Light Car and Edwardian Section's spring tour based at Llandrindod Wells, followed by the Sunday morning trial, proved just the ticket*

First, a bit of background. The last VSCC event I entered was the 1994 Jubilee Week when I trailered my old Morris Minor fabric saloon from southern Germany to Malvern. And then my career took my family and me to the USA from where I retired and returned last summer. Now repatriated, it was time to pick things up again, so I entered another Minor fabric saloon in the Light Car Welsh. As this was to be my first VSCC event entry for over thirty years, I felt like a complete rookie and this would also be my Minor's first VSCC event after being found in a Norfolk barn and completely rebuilt. My wife Jayne was sick so, although we now live just over an hour from Llandrindod and therefore a lot closer than Frankfurt, I planned to once again trailer the car to The Metropole and 'commute' home each night in the modern.

Friday. I load the Minor onto the trailer and head to Llandrindod. Park up in the council car park as



Ex-Desmond Peacock Amilcar outside the big green hotel



The Riley MKIV tourer is an ideal open light car



John Manders going well in Jeremy Collins's 1923 Star Scorpio

instructed around 3pm where there are several others unloading their trailers. It looks like a trailer club rally, so I don't feel quite so guilty. Drive round the corner to The Metropole where there is already a large gathering of light cars, including six other Minors, which is encouraging. First, scruntineering. Ian Patton gives the car a bit of a look over. Yes, two throttle springs. He gives me a slip of paper and tells me to take it to the office in the hotel. There, I swap it for an envelope containing tour route instructions, maps and a couple of sticky numbers – 113, which I hope isn't a bad omen. I also pick up a copy of Jim Peacop's book, *Light Car Menus 1975 to 2025*, a priceless compendium of his wonderful Section Dinner menu cartoons and puzzles which I highly recommend (see review p. 101).

Back out in the car park, there are plenty of friends to catch up with and everyone is busy with their cars under blue skies. Most are functional, some not so much – and then there are the cars… The Morris gang had booked dinner at the nearby Llanerch Inn, so I join them for a convivial evening before heading home for the night, leaving the Minor in the Metropole car park. The Llanerch is a true gem of a sixteenth-century inn, sadly now hidden behind a vast Tesco store of more recent date.

Saturday morning. Today is the tour. I head out from home at the crack of dawn to get to The Metropole in time for the start of the tour. The fabric saloon being largely untested, the nerves kick in when I see the mass of contour lines on the route map. The route heads north across the wilds of Wales to Montgomery, about a forty-mile run by the looks of it. A column of four Minors heads out, with me bringing up the rear, which was helpful because, without a navigator, I just have to keep up with the others – if I can. I watch the miles click up on the speedo, and, mile by mile, confidence grows. But then we head into the hills, several



One of two ACs entered, this one belonging to George Beckett



Archie Bullett's GN hosts a picnic in Montgomery



The streets of Montgomery filled with Light Cars at lunchtime

of which require first gear slogging. And then the potholes start as the Welsh lanes become ever more rutted and rural. We pull over at the crest of a hill to let the cars cool down and take in the views. On we go and the miles click up. Must be halfway now, surely? I still have oil pressure and we're not boiling. I find it hard in places to keep up and one long upward slog ends at a crossroads and there's no sign of the others. I decide to head straight on, when a fellow entrant comes the other way (perhaps he missed the turning?) and turns left, so I turn right to follow him and after a couple of miles driving flat out, I sight the other Minors ahead. More miles are covered and Montgomery can't be that far now. And we arrive to the fantastic sight of the ancient market square and side streets crammed with a fabulous array of vintage machinery and crowds of welcoming locals, including the Mayor, looking on. Made it!

Lunch, mostly liquid, is taken in the gorgeous seventeenth-century black and white Dragon Hotel and notes are compared. What about the afternoon run? Looks like a lot more contour lines and several drivers are talking about taking the main road back to Llandrindod. The Minor has more than proven itself and I decide not to push my luck, so I elect to do likewise. The run back was a piece of cake and I don't need to trouble bottom gear any more. The twist is that when I compare notes with others who took the tour route back, I'm told it was, in fact, easier than the morning run. But I am elated with the day and the car's performance. 75 quite challenging miles without incident. It spent 80 years in Norfolk and the rest until recently in Holland, so it probably hasn't seen hills before.

Back at The Metropole, there is more time to chat in the car park and I meet Joe Herbert and his girlfriend Charlie Barnett with their grey Chummy, whose



Scott Barrett and Palladium with the Mayor of Montgomery



Mark Hofton brought this pretty 1923 Fiat



Henry Stringer's delightful 1927 Humber 9/20 saloon

first trial this will be tomorrow. I wish them well and tell them I'll look out for them on the hills. The sun is going down and a chill and gritty wind sets in so I retreat inside and a bowl of industrial strength hot chocolate, followed by a refreshing pint, hit the spot.

Saturday evening is the grand Section Annual Dinner at The Metropole and the dining room is packed with everyone in their finery, except me. My excuse is that I had nowhere to change. A wonderful evening was had, and I was fortunate to be seated opposite Roger Collings, who I have known since my university days at Bath, when we were neighbours in Winsley and met monthly at the VSCC pub meet at The Red Lion at Woolverton. I think the meet was organised by the indefatigable Air Commodore Neville Raby Buckle MVO who had a fine Lancia and who founded the Lancia Owners Club. He entered flight training in 1926 and, together with Flt Sgt Scott, restored Sopwith Triplane N5912 for the 1936 Hendon Pageant and following further refurbishment, it was placed in the RAF Museum in 1972, where it remains today. In 1938 he bought himself a Bristol Fighter (registered G-AFHJ, ex F4587). However, it was destroyed by enemy action during the War. But you knew all this already. Anyway, at the end of the evenings at the Red Lion, Roger would light the acetylene lamps on his 60 Mercedes and head back up the A36 towards Winsley. Sometimes I would follow him home in my '63 Beetle – but could never keep up. But I have to cut the dinner short before the speeches and awards. I need to head home for the night as Jayne is suffering. Heated seat on, heated steering wheel on, Classic FM on.

Sunday is the trial, which, like most, I elect to sit out. Again, I head out early from home. The weather is much more springlike today. This is my first spring in the UK for thirty years. Everywhere there are lambs, daffodils, primroses and red kites – all of which make me smile. At the hotel, I pick up the grid references for the hills and head out in the modern. There are 27 entrants today – 15 Sevens and 12 also-rans. No Edwardians (Class 1) this year and only one in Class 3 (light cars without differentials) which was Winston Teague in his GN Légère. (Spoiler – he won his class!) Two Minors have entered the trial today, so I hope to get some good photos and maybe some drone footage. I arrive at the first hill where the first car I see is Joe and Charlie's grey Chummy. They are going well and ended the day on 130, cleaning five of the eight hills to win the Kate Hutchings Best Under-23 award. A great result.

Conditions are dry after several weeks of sunshine, but the wide spread of results reflects quite a challenging stop and restart at marker 5 on Coedmynach Wood and a particularly tight left turn on the nearby Cae Talwen, both of which caught out the majority of entrants at the respective 5 markers. The highest score on Cae Talwen was 19, scored by Richard Rowe in his Chummy. Richard came second in the SWB class on the Herefordshire Trial the previous month and was to come second again today, on 139 and just a single point behind Archie Collings (in another Chummy – what else?) who was the overall winner on 140 points, cleaning all but two of the hills.

There was an amusing incident on Coedmynach Wood when Sarah Blake in her sky-blue Gwynne 8 failed at the stop and restart, at which point her enthusiastic and gymnastic bouncer, Hughie Walker, leapt from the car and physically shoved it on its way, jumping back in as Sarah pressed on up the hill, much to the mirth and cheers of the bystanders. Nobody saw that, did they? Unfortunately the marshals did and a score of just 5 was entered on their score sheet.

As for the two Minors, Sue Woodward gained a Third on 122 points in her much-campaigned 1930 two-seater and Steve Kent scored a creditable 84 in his 1929 tourer which has seen better days. (This car was repatriated from Malta in 1954, aboard the *Ark Royal*.) The trial ends and I join others for a spot of lunch at the Triangle Inn, Rhayader – a charming sixteenth-century drover's inn, before heading back to the Llandrindod council car park to load up the Minor and head home, very happy with the Minor's performance but sad that the weekend is over. Classic FM on again. Appropriately, Bocelli sings *Time to Say Goodbye.*

Will I enter next year? Oh, most definitely, and I hereby promise to drive the Minor to Llandrindod Wells under its own power, do the whole tour and dress more appropriately for the dinner. I am deeply grateful to Adam Jones and Tania Brown for being so encouraging and to all of the marshals, scrutineers, dinner organisers, office staff, Metropole staff and all of the others I don't even know about who clearly worked so hard to put on such a super weekend that was so hugely enjoyed by so many. Having organised weekend rallies for 25 years, I know just how much work it takes to achieve such a tremendous and flawlessly-executed result and wish the Section well for 2026 when they – no, I can now say we – will be celebrating 75 years of the LCES.

All photos by Peter McFadyen

Time For a Swift Half Shaft

Or rather, prop shaft, which made a bid for freedom after an eventful trip to Llandrindod, writes **EVIE MASON**

At the end of March it was time for the Light Car Welsh weekend – again! This only meant one thing – the Swift. Having sat at the back of the garage since the Light Car last year, it needed uncovering, pushing out and the dust brushed off it. Despite the event not starting until Saturday, it seemed sensible to set off on the Thursday morning. Loaded up with luggage for the weekend, we set off from Abney, Derbyshire, followed by Richard [Marsh] in the Morris, to travel the first leg of the journey to Wilf Cawley's uni house in Newport, Shropshire. All was going smoothly until we rolled up at Wilf's and realised we'd encountered our first mechanical issues: fuel problems with the Swift and no oil pressure in the Morris. After lunch with Wilf, Richard dashed off to our overnight stop to get fixing the Morris, while we chugged along, stopping far more times than planned to fill up the autovac with fuel. However, we tactically factored in a cuppa with Becky and Louis Parkin along the way which spurred us along. Eventually, having had to stop every five miles due to the autovac, we finally made it to the Teagues' where we were spending the night.

We woke up on Friday to lovely sunny weather, ideal for a picnic! And so, we did just that. But before the other cars arrived, Will and Richard took full advantage of Winston's garage. One half was soon covered in petrol from Will frantically cleaning out the autovac and the other half with oil from Richard dropping the sump of the Morris. A handful of other cars joined us to fuel drivers and passengers up with picnic bits in preparation to convoy over to Llandrindod Wells. Despite setting off in one big convoy we soon peeled off from each other and ended up in smaller groups. However, we regrouped at the annual Welsh trial town of Presteigne for a quick drink then soon were on our way again. We wiggled over scenic moors, getting closer and closer to Llandrindod. Finally, having done around 150 miles in the Swift, the big green hotel with the swimming pool was in sight! Phew! Pulling into the car park, we flagged down the scrutineer to check us over before the real antics began in the morning.

On Saturday morning, having made the most of the hotel breakfast, we boarded the Swift with our enthusiastic passengers: Lucy Wiseman, a previous Light Car Welsh Swifty and Louis Parkin, for his debut trip in the Swift. We had a beautiful trip, in convoy, over to Montgomery where we were greeted by the cheerful Mayor, swarmed his town with vintage cars and set up picnics wherever we could. After the excitement of Montgomery, we set off back to the big green hotel in eagerness for the annual Saturday dinner, which was filled with food, wine, trophies and sometimes trophies filled with wine.

Sunday arrived and while many were heading off home, the fun wasn't over for those in the Swift: we were off to attempt some trials hills. Having changed the tyres before this weekend for some equally ineffective ones, we hoped to make an improvement on previous years of Swift performance, where a score of 3 was about our average. Having attempted a few hills with no success, up came the Aberceithion hill. Looking from the bottom of the hill, we thought we had no chance of meandering through the winding trees. Anyway, off we set, round the first tree, round



Team Swifty: Will Marsh, Evie Mason, Lucy Wiseman and Louis Parkin, plus wannabe Becky Wiseman



Willie and Dominique Sellers pick their way (Phil Jones)



Sophie Wiseman enjoys borrowing Tim Jones's Chummy (Phil Jones)



Simon Barringer in the BSA Trike (Phil Jones)

the next one, bounced in unison round a few more, up and up we went and finally, much to our, the marshals' and the spectators' amazement, we cleared the hill! This called for cheering, clapping and whooping all round, predominantly from Mr and Mrs P.

After a successful day in the Swift, not missing a beat, we trundled back to the pub in Rhayader, proudly handed in our score card and got ready for the long journey home. With about 140 miles and an extra hour of sunlight ahead of us, thanks to the clocks changing, we set off with the three cars brought from Derbyshire: the Morris on the trailer, Will and I driving the Swift, and Hester and Paula in the Chummy. All was going smoothly until two thirds into the trip when the Chummy was starting to surrender. Pulling into the next pub car park, The Swan with Two Necks, the Chummy's bonnet was soon up hoping for a quick fix. However, things were made worse and after an hour and a half of Chummy fettling it had made up its mind that it was going no further. Luckily, having the trailer meant we could get the Morris off and replace it with the Chummy. Phew!

Off we set again, little did we know we wouldn't be going much further. Just a few miles later, once we'd found ourselves slap bang in the middle of Stoke-on-Trent, with the Swift in the lead, it made an almighty bang. Turning our head back as we slowed down, I could see a big bit of metal rolling down behind us, coming to a stop once it was wedged against the curb. A few seconds later, the Morris veered around the corner, just missing the metal bit. As soon as we'd ground to a halt, Will went running up the pavement to retrieve said metal thing. Holding it up for all to see, he announced that it was in fact the prop shaft. Uh oh, this didn't look good. After a few moments of panic, Will then admitted that he'd had a feeling this was going to happen sometime soon and in preparation had some spare fabric couplings hidden down under all the luggage. So, once near enough everything had been unloaded from the Swift, we retrieved the spares and Will and Richard got right to it, rolling around on the floor. Again, us girls waited some more for our drivers to get our transport home back up and running. Fortunately, just half an hour later, the car was back together, ready to continue its journey. All fingers and toes crossed, we carried on the nerve-wracking drive.

Thank goodness for the extra hour of sunlight, we needed it. So close to home ground, the Morris was drying up – nothing a spare can of fuel couldn't fix, phew! Just five miles later we were pulling into the home driveway as the daylight disappeared. That was the Light Car Welsh 2025 done and dusted. Will the other fabric couplings now need replacing? I guess we'll find out this time next year!



Elodie Aston fails to contain her dread of the number 12 marker (Phil Jones)



Bruce Girvan picks his way in the Jowett (Phil Jones)

The Centenary of the last Hereford Speed Trial

Stephen Kay organised a tour to mark the 100-year anniversary, as **DICK WILKINSON** *reports*

Although racing on the public highway was long forbidden in Great Britain, many speed trials were held on the highway in the years following the First World War. These events were supported by some manufacturers and often attracted large crowds. All went well until the Essex MC's hill climb at Kop on 28th March 1925, when Francis Giveen, driving the ex-Raymond Mays Bugatti, *Cordon Bleu*, had a minor accident, breaking the leg of a spectator. The following week, after meetings of the RAC and ACU, such sprint events on the highway were banned.

This caused some embarrassment to the organisers of the 1925 Hereford Speed Trial due to take place on 4th April. Meetings were held between the Mayor, police chiefs of Hereford and Herefordshire, and the watch committee and all agreed that, as they had no means of giving timely advice to officials, competitors and marshals of cancellation, the meeting would go ahead. This gave Stephen Kay an excellent excuse to organise a centenary event on 4th April 2025.

There had been sprints organised in Hereford in 1923 and 1924, in both cases using the 'Straight Mile' on the Holme Lacy road through the Rotherwas estate. This had been owned by the Bodenham family for four centuries but fell on hard times and was auctioned in lots in 1912. A munitions factory was established in WWI and the staff and equipment of the Woolwich ordnance factory moved there. The course of the Speed Trials of 1923 and 1924 ran through the middle of the munitions factory by kind permission of HM Factory superintendent Digby Ovens.



Cars gather outside Hereford Town Hal for the centenary celebration (Derek Foxton)

On 4th April 2025, 43 pre-war cars and a motorbike assembled outside Hereford Town Hall in glorious weather to be sent off by the mayor. On display outside the town hall was the magnificent 1903 silver trophy bearing the image of an Edwardian car although it is not clear for what this was awarded. Six Austin Sevens included those of Ray Moses and Malcolm Lyon. Peter Holden brought his Jowett and there were six three-wheeler Morgans. Mike Christie brought his Salmson and it was good to see the Rileys of Conway Hall and Stuart Pettifer among four cars of that make. Ian Goddard brought an MG and Matthew Parkin a Frazer Nash. John Buckley brought his Model A Ford and John Godfrey an Essex. Steve Kay was driving Malcolm Hatfield's Crossley and Russell Hennessy brought his Crossley. Nick Grant came riding his Excelsior-engined Cotton bike.

We completed a loop of the Hereford inner ring road before turning into the city centre, past the cathedral and over the old bridge across the Wye to the start of the 'Straight Mile' through Rotherwas. The munitions factory of WWI was reactivated in WWII under the same superintendent, but was closed many years ago and the area now forms a successful light industrial area housing enterprises with a wide range of skills, some of which are occasionally of interest to us old car people.

In 1924, Maurice Harvey had driven that year's 200 Miles Race Alvis on the Rotherwas course to a dead heat for fastest time with Boston's Horstmann in 27 seconds. The road has since been littered with roundabouts and a 40mph limit, so rather than Harvey's 60+mph, most of us were doing 30mph. In present day competition, sprint events are customarily timed from a standing start, but pre-war competitors were given a fifty-yard start before entering the timed section of half a mile. This does help to explain the impressive speeds achieved.

Past Rotherwas the road follows the River Wye to Holme Lacy but we turned right, through the village of Dinedor and back towards Hereford and the Ross road,



Two of the six Morgan three-wheelers present



Our reporter's Alvis during the tour (Steve Kay)

taking the new bridge (opened in 1966) across the river and turning west, following the river upstream via Breinton to Swainshill on the Brecon road (A438), where we turned east, back in towards the city to join the course of the 1925 sprint. The County Surveyor and Bridgemaster, G. H. Jack, had been experimenting with different road surfaces and was particularly pleased with hot spread bitumen coated granite. The first use of this surface was apparently Whitecross Road and the pride of the council led to this choice of route for that year's Speed Trial.

The 1925 event was a great success, the fastest time for motorcycles being set by J. P. Riddoch riding a Blackburne-engined Zenith, who completed the half mile course in 19 seconds, an average speed of 94mph with his speed across the line estimated at 105–107mph. Riddoch's Zenith combination (24 seconds) was two fifths of a second faster than Goodall's Morgan. The fastest four-wheeled car was Francis Taylor's ex-Raymond Mays Brescia Bugatti *Cordon Rouge* in 25.8 seconds, an average of just under 70mph.

Two half-mile sprint courses would have made a very modest tour so Stephen had explored the venues of other speed events in the county and took us on a tour of these. Completing the course of the 1925 event, we turned north and left the city, passing through Portway towards Wellington where we took advantage of the ford on the Wellington Brook before turning north on the A49. Dinmore Hill is an east–west lying ridge of old red sandstone that rises about 100 metres above the Lugg valley. The A49 climbs over the ridge in a series of sweeping bends and attracted the interest of pioneer motorists. The ACGBI, the forerunners of the RAC, organised the 1904 Small Car Trials and Dinmore Hill was an attraction on the first day. The previous year, the Hereford Automobile Club had held an informal hill climb on Dinmore Hill in which all ten competitors rode motorcycles among which the fastest time was set by Hall's 3hp Quadrant in 2 minutes 46s. The course was apparently 1¼ miles long and your correspondent's arithmetic suggests that some may have infringed the speed limit.

The 1904 Small Car Trials were a big event lasting a week with two fifty-mile round trips from Hereford each day. Thirty-eight cars were entered by their makers or importers and arranged in classes according to price. On the morning of the first day, cars were required to drive non-stop to Ludlow and back then repeat this in the afternoon, when they were timed up both sides of Dinmore Hill. The fastest car up the south side was a 6hp De Dion, which climbed at 16.5mph. Our pre-war cars driving in 2025 were all rather faster, except Stephen Kay for he stopped to take photographs.

Several tourists stopped for coffee at Queenswood Country Park, before descending the northern side of the hill and rounding the roundabout to ascend the hill again from the northern side. Passing the summit we descended to a tight left turn on to a minor road towards Bodenham and past an area of wetland irrigated by the Lugg. From Bodenham we took the A417 to Burley Gate where we turned north-east towards Stoke Lacy. The planned route had to be abandoned because of road works but a substitute took us to Bishops Frome where we turned south to join the Worcester road at Fromes Hill.

This rises about 100 metres between the Frome and Leadon valleys. The former flows into the Lugg east of Hereford just before the Lugg flows into the Wye. The latter flows into the Severn at Gloucester, so Fromes Hill forms part of the watershed between Severn and Wye. It formed a part of the second day's run for the 1904 Small Car Trials but was so steep that a gang of pushers was engaged to help some over the steepest part. Between 1905 and 1907 the Hereford Automobile Club organised hill climbs on Fromes Hill that attracted the leading lights of British motoring.

The results were calculated under complicated formulae that may have served to obscure the highly illegal speeds probably achieved by many of the leading contenders. Our run ascended to the top of the hill and turned around the tank on the summit, returned downhill towards Bosbury and Ledbury. From there we took the Ross road to Much Marcle, where we parked at Westons Cider works and retired to the cafe. It had been a most enjoyable tour in beautiful scenery on a lovely April day.



James Baxter on a charge in the ERA E Type (Steve Welsh)

Silverstone

The club's opening race meet attracted a slew of interesting cars and gave spectators some riveting racing, as **MARK BALLARD** *reports*

April Silverstone signals the start of the VSCC racing season, with winter disappearing into the rearview mirror with the arrival of spring. However, seasoned visitors to Silverstone will know that it is not always obvious here that winter has ended. The start of the race season also brings the chance to see some cars new to the club, some more exotic than others. The most exciting, to this observer at least, was Fred Harper's Miller 91, the archetypal American racing car of the mid 20s. In period Frank Lockhart once managed to get up to 164mph in a 91, producing 285hp at 8,000 revs, an enormous figure for a 1500cc engine. Also entered, and in attendance but unfortunately not running, was Christopher Mann's glorious 1922 Targa Florio Alfa Romeo, but luckily for him he was able to substitute his 1924 model instead.

After a fairly uneventful practice, the morning ended with the first event of the day – the welcome return of the High Speed Trial after a number of years away. The aim of its return was to try to encourage





Oliver Cox's Austin shadowed by Hugh Apthorp's Bentley in Race One (Steve Welsh)



Exciting new presence was the 1926 Miller 91 of Fred Harper (Steve Welsh)



The ODM grid walk under a crisp April sky (Steve Welsh)

new competitors and some less highly developed cars to come out and play. The event was planned to be limited to cars that would lap in about 1 minute 25 seconds or longer. The success of this was reflected by the grid of 25 cars, ranging from James Blakeney-Edwards making his race debut in his father's TT Replica Nash and a 4½-litre Bentley at one end to a standard Austin Chummy and Nippy at the other. Notable other entrants included Thomas Townsend in his green Type 37A Bugatti, and Thomas Ozanne in a replica C-Type Aston Martin. The C-type was a streamline bodied version of the 2-litre Speed Model, which when painted green and yellow for the 1938 Motor Show was unkindly nicknamed 'the Flying Banana'.

The afternoon racing started with the ODM race incorporating the Fox & Nicholl Trophy. In pole position was Robert Beebee in the ex-Roy Eccles TT Replica Frazer Nash that once lapped Brooklands at 108mph. Alongside him on the front row was Adam Moody's TT Sprite Replica Riley with Mark Brett's Ballamy Ford and Sue Darbyshire's Morgan on the row behind. The first lap ended with the four of them crossing the line in grid order, but by the time they came around again the Riley had taken the lead with a three-second gap to the Morgan and Ford with the 'Nash down to 4th. The third lap ended the same way but with Jonathan Fenning's 'Nash now having joined the leading group, and he overtook the Beebee car the next time around. The next few laps saw the Riley maintaining this lead, with the Morgan just ahead of the other three who were now nose to tail. On lap seven Beebee made his move, leaping up to second and then getting past the leader across the line next time around. He maintained his lead, with Sue Darbyshire moving up to second and, despite some



Mark Chandler's Riley just ahead of Mark Groves in 'Piglet' (Phil Johnson)



Theo Hunt has a moment during the FISCAR race (Steve Welsh)

confusion with the flag and who had actually won, the 'Nash took a well-deserved victory. As the Fox and Nicholl trophy is for larger engined cars, it was Mark Brett in 4th place who took home the main award.

With such a close tussle for the lead, the focus was taken away from some close racing further down the field. There was a tight battle for Aston Martin honours between Robert Blakemore's 2-litre Speed Model and Edward Bradley's Ulster with no more than a second separating them for the first half of the race, before the extra 500cc of the later car allowed him to pull away. Also notable was the battle between the 3-litre Bentleys of Vivian Bush, Sebastian Welch and the Speed Six of Mark Manton which was certainly worth keeping an eye on.

The next race was the Silverstone Trophy for VSCC Specials. Pole man, Robin Tuluie in his Menasco Pirate-engined Riley, pulled into the pits at the end of the warm-up lap, leaving the pair of Theo Hunt in his 'Nash and Michael James in his Riley to fight for the win. A close looking race between these two seemed to be on the cards, but unfortunately the James Riley started to sound very sickly and had to retire on lap three. This meant that Theo had an untroubled win, finishing nearly 40 seconds ahead of David Wylie, with Mark Groves in 'Piglet' third (one of three drivers the car had today). Further down the field we welcomed a couple of Argentinian competitors with Torcuato Iriarte in his Amilcar Pegase, looking very aerodynamically French, and Olaf Henriksen in a very low-slung Ford Model A. Unfortunately neither managed to finish.

Then it was time for the first handicap of the day, the one designated for slower cars, and it was the slowest car in the race who was victorious. Sian Slater in her standard Singer Le Mans was first off and had a two-lap start over some of the field, but won with 10 seconds to spare. This was mainly down to producing consistent lap times, showing that it is possible to win a handicap in almost any eligible car. Behind her was the PA MG of Steve Rees with Sara Kellaway just pipping Richard Frankel's Bentley for 3rd on the line.

Next up was a scratch race for the GP Itala trophy. Once one of the club's flagship events, the number of vintage racing cars has dropped to such an extent that post-vintage cars were allowed to bolster the grid. After practice it looked like the race winner would either be Robin Tuluie or Patrick Blakeney-Edwards in his highly modified Super Sports Frazer Nash. However, by the time they entered the complex for the first time it was Robin in first, but Eddie Williams in the ex-Julian Bronson racing Blue Streak Riley (not to be confused with his sports car Blue Streak) in second and Patrick a close third. Next time around the Riley had taken the lead and the three of them were covered by only one and a half seconds.



Andrew Howe-Davies's 3-litre Lagonda chased by Richard Frankel's TT Bentley (Steve Welsh)



The spectators' car park was full of delights including this Darracq and Alfa (Steve Welsh)



Edward Bradley fettles the carburettor on the Aston Martin Ulster (Phil Johnson)



Geraint Owen and Fred Harper do battle in the Kurtis 500s (Steve Welsh)

Lap three saw them even closer together in the same order, now only 0.7s apart. Robin then took the lead on the next lap, but was down in 3rd by the end of lap five, with Patrick having overtaken both of them, but Robin was back up to 2nd the lap after. All this fun was too much for the Menasco which slowed to retire, leaving the battle for the lead between the Riley and 'Nash which was still oh-so-close, only half a second between the two of them at the flag. The extra power of the Riley was unable to counter the 'Nash's cornering prowess, with the spectators able to hear Patrick balancing the car on the throttle all around the complex.

Further down the field Wilf Cawley and Justin Maeers had a race long battle for 3rd with the Parker just edging it right on the line. Race One winner Robert Beebee valiantly managed to hold off the much larger Bentleys of Clive Morley and Oliver Llewellyn for the first seven laps before they both got through and he was unable to get back past. Unfortunately this was also the chance for us to see the Miller in action, but it had to retire before the race had really started.

Then we had the front-engined car race incorporating the Patrick Lindsay Memorial Trophy. When I first started coming to Vintage events I don't think I could have thought that we would have races like this without 250F Maseratis, Lotus 16s and Cooper Bristols, and it would be even more unbelievable to think we would have an Alfetta racing, but we were very lucky to have Peter Greenfield's car with us again. Being the Patrick Lindsay races it was also gratifying to see five ERAs entered, with Ben Fidler in R4D, Julian Wilton R7B, Tom Hardman AJM1, James Baxter E GP2 and Duncan Ricketts in the Challenger.

The battle at the front was always going to be between the Kurtis Indy cars of Geraint Owen and Fred Harper and it was Fred that made the best start, leading the first lap with the 158 Alfa in third being closely chased by Ben Fidler and Richard Bradley in his 4CL Maserati. The two out front could have been covered by a large blanket for the first few laps until a slight error from Fred at Becketts meant that Geraint could close up down the club straight, forcing the leader to have to drive defensively through the complex and giving Geraint the run on him to take the lead as they ended lap four. This was a lead he wouldn't give up despite Fred's best efforts, power sliding lap after lap on the exit of Brooklands.

Further down the field the Alfa Romeo slowly pulled away from R4D and, with the Maserati having to retire, the only other interest was to see if Tom Hardman could catch and pass Julian Wilton. He seemed to be getting closer and closer until one lap where he got alongside the white ERA, only to be out-dragged along the main straight, a possible legacy of the strict rev limit he had on his rebuilt engine.



Mark Gold steals a backwards glance (Steve Welsh)



Bo Williams puts his hand up to a sin in the Bugatti T35B (Steve Welsh)



Tristan Bradfield (Sunbeam Alpine) ahead of Marcus Gordon in the XK150 (Stuart Yates)



Pit scene: the JAP-engined 'Trice' on axle stands (Stuart Yates)



Another paddock delight was this Hotchkiss saloon (Steve Welsh)



James Baxter is always well dressed, especially when fettling an ERA (Steve Welsh)



Winner of the ODM race, Robert Beebee in his very fast 'Nash (Steve Welsh)



Torcuato Iriarte flew in from Argentina to race the Amilcar Pegase (Steve Welsh)



Winner of the handicap race, Sian Slater in the Singer Le Mans (Steve Welsh)



The Cottingham/Redding Ferrari 500 ahead of Adrian King's AC Ace Bristol (Steve Welsh)



The Fidlers preparing R4D for the Lindsay Trophy (Steve Welsh)



Jack Morley and Tim Wadsworth in a Lagonda 2-litre battle (Steve Welsh)

Then followed the Pre-66 rear-engined race where Michael O'Brien led from flag to flag from Jon Milicevic's T59 Cooper with VSCC vice-president Nick Topliss finishing in third place in a T53 Cooper.

The second of the handicap races was up next for the faster cars. Simon Parker's Bentley was off at the front and for a while it looked like he wouldn't be caught, with Graeme Whiting's smoking Railton looking like it would be the most likely to reel him in. However, it was Jeremy Flann in his Frazer Nash who overtook both of them on the penultimate lap to win by over 10 seconds from the rest of the field. The 2nd to 7th were covered by 10 seconds, headed by Stuart Morley's Bentley and David Goldspink in the Acedes 'Nash.

The last but one race was the 30-minute FISCAR race which was interrupted after the first couple of laps by a red flag. After the restart, the Chevrolet-engined Kellison led from the Frazer Nash Le Mans of Theo and Martin Hunt and Marcus Gordon's XK150 Jaguar. However, once all the mandatory pitstops had taken place the Cottingham/Redding Ferrari 500 TRC was just in the lead from the Frazer Nash, a lead it wasn't to relinquish.

Last up was what used to be called the survivors' scratch race, and this looked like being a battle between pole sitter Patrick Blakeney-Edwards's 'Nash and Julian Wilton's ERA. The ERA made the better start and despite his best efforts Patrick was unable to get back on terms, with Julian holding a consistent four-second lead from the end of the lap until the finish, with Michael James a long way back in 3rd place. Thus ended a successful opening race meeting of the year. Although Silverstone may not be the most inspiring of circuits, it always seems to produce strong grids and some very good racing.

The Silverstone Autosolo

The newest discipline offered by the club is great fun and basically free, says **DAVID PRYKE**, *so why not give it a go?*

One of the best things about the VSCC is that you can compete in one discipline or another on most weekends of the year. Whether you enjoy rallies or tours on the road, trialling up a muddy hill, the challenge of driving tests or the excitement of speed on racetracks or hillclimbs, the club caters for you. Its newest discipline is the autosolo, which basically involves tearing around bollards on a smooth tarmac surface.

Whereas driving tests will often attract sixty entries, support for autosolo is much more modest and the entry is often around twenty or less cars. This is a shame because it's great fun and fantastic value. To enter is usually around the fifty quid mark which sounds not so cheap until you consider that you get



Matthew Smethurst finished with a 3rd in his Riley Mk IV (Stuart Yates)



Austins are always good fun at an autosolo (Stuart Yates)

two free tickets to go off and watch the racing afterwards. So, basically, it's free. The VSCC runs two autosolos each year – one on the vast smooth tarmac in the paddock at Silverstone and the other on the billiard table smooth tarmac of the Melbourne loop at Donington. They form part of the Tony Jones Trophy which is the overall VSCC driving test championship. They're basically very similar to driving tests except that once you've left the starting line you won't be stopping going forward until you reach the finishing line. Unlike driving tests there's no reversing into boxes or stop-astrides. Generally I'd say they're a bit less of a memory test than driving tests and reward a smooth, accurate, flowing and rapid driving technique. The cones are laid down in a way that actually indicates to the driver which course to take.

Pretty much anyone can do an autosolo – you don't even need a driving licence – so if you're aged 14 or over and have access to an old car then you're in business. Youngsters need to be in a saloon car accompanied by an experienced passenger. For the rest, any old car will do. I've done it in my biggish Alvis Speed Twenty but prefer to use my more nimble Morgan 4/4 special. The best sort of car is something small to medium size. Austin Sevens are often very successful in autosolos. A Frazer Nash or Riley is also perfect. Model A Fords also seem to be just the ticket. If you've got enough grunt to hang the tail out round the cones you can shorten your route for a quicker time. You need a fire extinguisher, 'ignition off' sign, secured battery, a spring for each carb spindle, a buff form and a road legal car and you're good to go. There were 18 starters for the autosolo at VSCC Silverstone on Saturday 5 April. It was a clear bright day but Silverstone always seems to have its own microclimate – and not in a good way – so first thing competitors were well wrapped up against the elements. By the end of the morning most were in shirt sleeves and begging for sun cream. Clerk of the Course David Wallom had already laid out the first two tests. As a regular and highly successful driving tests participant, David understands exactly what constitutes a good challenge and his tests have just the right blend of difficulty combined with some fast, flowing sections where the drivers can really build up a head of steam. There are three different tests and each driver does each test twice or even three times if time permits. This allows a certain amount of learning so drivers are often much more confident on the second attempt. Before each test there is a set period of time where drivers can walk the test in the vague hope of committing it to memory. For the third test David Wallom had combined both the morning tests albeit with some alterations so this was a real challenge and took me about the same time as an ascent at Loton Park.

Charlotte and Emma Bowyer were sharing the family trials Model A. Their father, Simon, looked on wistfully. He should have been competing in the High Speed Trial but the scrutineers had been understandably unimpressed by the incontinence from his recently acquired Frazer Nash's water pump so he was reduced to anxious spectating. My younger brother Oliver rolled in with his lovely Aston International. Dad bought this as a total wreck and restored it over thirty years ago. It still looks good all these years later but in standard form these Astons are more of a fast 'A' road cruiser than truly chuckable and although Oli kept a clean sheet he wasn't fast enough to gain an award. Michael Patterson was competing in a 1934 Morris Minor. This looked like an extremely affordable way of getting into VSCC competition and Michael threw the little car around expertly, also keeping a clean sheet but the lack of horses under the bonnet meant he was just out of the awards. Another to keep a clean sheet was Richard Lance's Austin Nippy gaining him a well-deserved second class award. Jack Peppiatt's nimble little Austin Seven was very quick so despite hitting a bollard and getting one 'wrong' he won a third class award. I was the overall winner of the short wheelbase class in my Morgan.

In the long wheelbase class Charlotte Bowyer came out on top. She handled the big Ford Model A with just the right amount of attack and accuracy, just pipping Jonathan Garton's very rapid Riley 12/4 special. Matthew Smethurst's Riley Mark IV tourer was in the hunt until a 'wrong' in the penultimate test demoted him to a third class award. Dominic Boulton was great to watch, chucking around his Ford A all morning.

At the end of play drivers filtered off to watch the racing action. Richard Lance could be observed on start line marshalling duties. I went off to Race Control to see how well or otherwise we handicappers had done our sums. Most drove off to the vintage parking for a spot of lunch, a beer and an exciting afternoon watching the racing. Let's hope for a strong entry in the autosolo at Donington.



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The Binegar quarry scene (Steve Welsh)

The Diffey Brothers Wessex Trial

There were dinosaurs, a dystopian quarry and plenty of old cars with problems, as our West Country correspondent **STEVE WELSH** *reports*

Is it autumn or spring? A question that must have been posed as intrepid trialists embarked on the fourth running of the Diffey Brothers Wessex Trial on 27 April. Dense fog and low cloud made the Mendips seem even more Jurassic; one could easily believe it was early November and the start of mud-plugging, not the end. Arrival at the Mendip Shooting Ground for scrutineering and breakfast added to the illusion of prehistory, the unmistakable shape of a Tyrannosaurus Rex loomed backlit by sun as it made a valiant attempt to burn through the mists of time.

Checks and paperwork were running like clockwork, but not all competitors were finding such compliance from their cars. Rebecca Wiseman's GN arrived with extra clatter. A group of concerned faces gathered and peered at the motor as it gently smoked. 'Call William, tell him to bring oil' was Richard Wiseman's advice to his daughter. George Diffey arrived



Zachary Ward explores the limits of his Morris's lock (Phil Jones)



George Diffey four up in the Dogcart (Phil Jones)



Historic and prehistoric visitors at the Mendip Shooting Ground (Steve Welsh)



Alan Bee's pretty MKI Dellow was in the Heritage class (Phil Jones)

with the family Humbug, originally built by his late father Simon as a two-seat homage to the Bugatti Brescia, but with the theory that more seats mean more chums and more smiles, the capacity was increased to four. George arrived with his specially chosen crack bouncers to tackle the event named after his father and uncle for the first time. Not everything followed the Diffey script: 'We were well prepared: battery charged, nipples greased, exposed metal or bodywork thoroughly Duck-Oiled,' explained George. 'But when we began to unload the starter failed and we almost missed scrutineering and had to push start all day!'

A unique element of the Wessex Trial is the heritage class added for postwar trials cars such as Dellow and one-off trial specials. Martyn Halliday's immaculate Lotus 6 was a joy, one of the earliest Sixes from the first batch of five commissioned by Lotus from the Progress Chassis Company and specifically built up as a trials car. It is higher for good ground clearance and weight transfer, 12″ shorter and a little narrower; the seats are on frames rather than bolted to the floor, further accentuating its height. Frame modifications were required to accommodate the 1,172cc Ford engine and to allow space for the carburettors. It is the oldest Lotus in competition, with many wins including the ultra-tough MCC triple. It is worth pondering that Colin Chapman clearly had a full range of competition in mind during those early days – not just F1.

Watched by George's grandparents Phil and Jan Diffey, crews departed at minute intervals in number order; 50 cars and crews spent the day zigzagging east/west across Somerset. 15 challenges offered a mix of Motorcycling Club clean or fail and VSCC number score sections, some timed with a target speed. The event was tackled in programme order. First up were a couple of sections in Binegar Quarry, just a stone's throw from the start, which offered a rather dystopian 'after the neutron bomb' landscape – steep dusty slopes and a lake surrounded by high rock walls. First to arrive was car number one, Duncan Cartwright's Riley Monaco navigated and bounced by daughter Amelie on her first event.

A full card on Beck's Folly was not to be followed through on Faulting – the car ran out of horses on the steep initial slope that would become the re-start location for some more experienced crews or powerful cars. Some machines were born for the conditions: Ford Model As look as at home as they could be, moonshine running American back roads. With nine As in the first batch the queue for the start looked like a scene from John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. The familiar chatter of Rebecca Wiseman's GN reverberated around the quarry as she motored from Beck's to Faulting. The re-start proved a step too far; despite the crew working hard, the car became wreathed in smoke, fulfilling the Steinbeck quote 'The clouds appeared and went away, and in a while they did not



Duncan and Amelie Cartwright in the Riley 9 Monaco saloon (Steve Welsh)



A marshal gives a full score to some local participants (Steve Welsh)



Yushan Ng clears Andrew's Concertina in his Austin (Steve Welsh)



Lucy Wiseman tackles the quarry section in the Ford (Steve Welsh)

try anymore'. Sadly, it was the end of Rebecca's GN day out.

A couple of sections known as Burledge were used in the 1940s and are a bit of a West Country legend. They proved a rocky and slippery challenge; early runners made it, but one unfortunate got well and truly stopped leading to a lengthy hold and cancellation. Compensation came with Nanny Hurn's Lane that had a timed element. 7.5 mph over a set distance; with speedometers in full 'windscreen wiper mode', some found this a little challenging. Only 10 registered a score, adding six points to their ongoing tally. Over to Shipham and something less industrial: two relatively straightforward field sections and Andrew's Concertina, a 350m-plus blast with a tricky 15m uphill right-hander to finish, a power hill – think Shelsley for trials. By the time crews reached the Lillypool Café half-way control there was just a point in it for Class One short wheelbase and overall lead by two more in the Heritage Class.

Unbroken sun pushed temperatures up; some ditched the usual trials apparel for something more casual. George Diffey had rigged for normal trial conditions and was experiencing overheating in the cockpit. The solution? Convert trousers into shorts. A permanent reminder of the day. 'Next year, I'll be encouraging my bouncers to swap Barbours for bikinis — and if that doesn't increase entries, I don't know what will,' commented Diffey. On to Roger's Rumble, a clear or fail where most set a maximum. Orchard, Tower and Hill View were also eminently 'do-able' open grass tests with some great views from the top. Over towards the last three sections, all with the Launcherley prefix, was the epitome of England's green and pleasant land. Adrian Ducker was on the stopwatch and enjoying the inclusion of a bogey speed element on Launcherley Woods, which livened up the usual marshalling duties.

Phil and Jan Diffey, having watched some sections across the day, welcomed finishers at The Crossways and joined in the après-trial festivities. George loved the day; with a 2nd Class award there is room for more. Diffey elucidated on his inaugural Diffey Brothers Wessex Trial: 'I managed to convince a branch of the VSCC known as the YOOF to enter, I'd love to build on this. It's a fantastic event for those newer to trialling while offering enough quirks to challenge even the most experienced competitors. I also loved the designated start time, which adds a rally feel to the event and cuts some potential congestion waiting at sections. Two hills included timed elements — one a flat-out dash, the other a precision challenge aiming to average exactly 7.5 mph. Trickier than you think!'

The overall win from a fine day of action came from the Heritage Class, Eric Wall's Dellow by three points from Derek Chatto's Class One MG 'M' Type. The long wheelbase award was secured by Roger Tolson and his Lea Francis 'P' Type.



Rebecca Wiseman's GN was having an off day (Steve Welsh)



Agnes McWilliam enjoying her Austin Ulster (Steve Welsh)

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LETTERS

Dear Sir,
I was delighted to see the picture of the two 3-litre Bentleys (chassis 299 and 155) in Kerbside Encounters in the latest *Bulletin*, as 32HK was my father Ray Wiltshire's first Bentley. The car was responsible for kindling a lifetime passion for the 3-litre Bentley which has been passed down through subsequent generations of our family to this day.

My parents bought the car in 1959, shortly after this picture must have been taken, for the princely sum of £100. My father would have been in his very early twenties and was working as a young engineer at a works in North East London turning out mechanical equipment for the ready-mixed concrete industry. By a stroke of good fortune, his enthusiasm caught the eye of one of the company's directors, John Gooch, who owned both a 4½- and 6½-litre Bentley at the time. John Gooch subsequently lent him the £100 to make the purchase.

My mother recalls the car as being in pretty poor state and lacking floorboards, still retaining the brakeless front axle that can be seen in the picture. By all accounts the car was so bad that it was sold within a year or so and replaced by XW9349 (chassis 967) – this being the car that my sister and I grew up in. It, in turn, was sold in the mid '80s and has, for the last quarter century, resided with David Rushton and family, better known as Lakeland Trial Clerk of the Course. Alas, I cannot shed any light on the location of the picture, nor do I recognise any of the people featured in it. I have never seen a picture of 32HK as it was when my parents owned the car, so thank you.

There is a postscript to this tale; in the late Nineties my father was contacted by a dealer to say that 32HK had been found in a lock-up in North London in a parlous state, still with its brake-less front axle and with the buff logbook listing the original owners. Any pleasure in hearing the car had survived was dispelled with a smug response from the dealer along the lines of: 'very successful string of transactions: front axle has been sold to X, rear axle to Y and gearbox to Z. The chassis is away to be built into a 3/8 racer.' At which point my father put the phone down. I see that 3/8 racer is currently for sale.

DUNCAN WILTSHIRE
Thorndon, Suffolk

Dear Sir,
I was interested to see the Matt Shepherd photograph of the Southampton registered Mulliner bodied Austin 12/4 two-seater on p. 9 of *Bulletin* 327. This car was purchased by VSCC member David Price in around 1964 and retained by him until his death in January 2024. When I bought my 12/4 Tickford (see *Bulletin* 292, p. 35) from Pilning, it was reluctant to start and run. David was working for Costains, subcontractors to the Severn Bridge project, and he towed my car with his 12/4 on the approach roads and the unopened M4 to get it started. When sorted, I kept the car for 26 years and almost 100,000 fairly trouble-free miles, entering many VSCC events. It appears on the title sequence for the Hull/Edwards film of the 1984 Jubilee, climbing the hill in Malvern.

JOHN BLIZZARD
Great Baddow, Essex

Dear Sir,
Here in Beaminster the article and accompanying photographs about Lt. William Rhodes-Moorhouse in the Spring edition of the *Bulletin* have caused much interest. Inscribed on the wall around the churchyard of the parish church of St. Mary's are the names of every single local man and boy who left the town between 1914 and 1918 for the trenches. Inside, on the west wall at the end of the north aisle, are the names of those who did not come back, and in the window above is a panel In Memoriam to both father and son Rhodes-Moorhouse with their medals, VC and DFC, depicted in stained glass.

Last Wednesday I took my copy of *The Bulletin* to the weekly social meeting, 'Walk-In-Wednesday', at St. Mary's. The 92-year-old former Dean of Truro wondered why it was necessary for Lt. Moorhouse to have not one but two Rolls-Royce Silver Ghosts. I surmised that a considerate host would wish to provide his guests with transport of similar quality to his own. The Very Rev. Dean then told me that when he was vicar of Highclere one of his parishioners was Anthony Bird, at a time when the VSCC had their office in nearby Newbury.

Yesterday members of the local art group had an invitation to an open day at Parnham Park, where I was able to show the article to the wife of the present

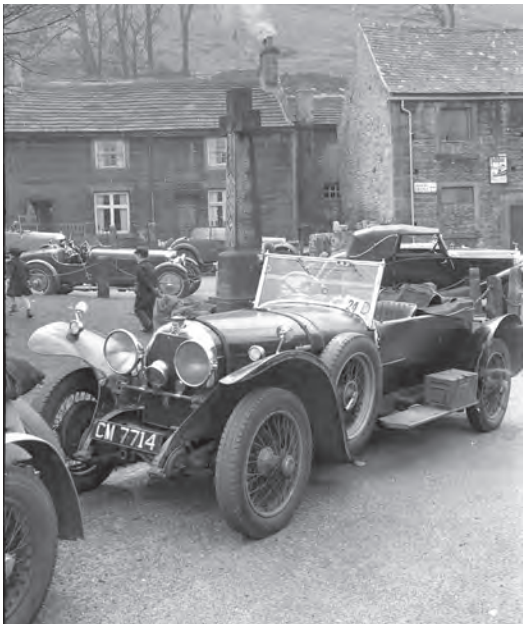
owner. I tried to find the spot where the photographs of William Rhodes-Moorhouse and his cars had been taken, but without success. The wall in the background appears to be brick; the only brick structure seems to be the wall to the kitchen garden, and some parts of the grounds are not open to the public.

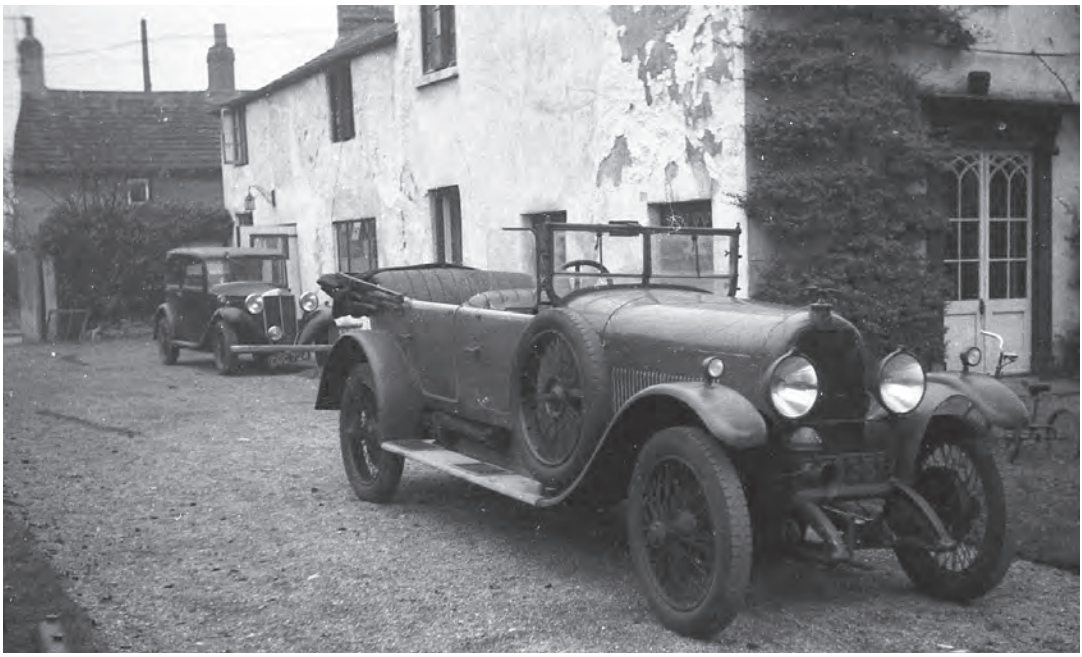
To the right of the front of the house as shown in the colour photograph is a yard, at one side of which is an early twentieth-century building which must have been the motor house. It is divided into four sections, three of which have been filled in and are now offices, but the fourth was open, and revealed that there was ample depth and height to accommodate an Edwardian R-R 40/50 with landaulet coachwork by Mulliners. The other three would have been well able to house the other 40/50, the Austro-Daimler and the Lion Peugeot. Thank you for adding another page to my knowledge of local history.

TIM HILLS
Beaminster, Dorset

Dear Sir,
The cover picture of the Austro-Daimler on the Spring *Bulletin* brought back a memory from about 1960 when John Grice, a well-known VSCC competitor and dealer in vintage cars, discovered and bought an identical car owned by an elderly gent near Leeds. Possibly hoping to sell it to me, John asked me to steer it while he towed it back to his home. It was totally original, patinated with dull paint but no rust – just as seems to be preferred today. I thought at first it was the same car but digging out my original pictures from the time shows the registration of the Grice car appears to be SH8381 rather than XX7692.

I haggled with John but couldn't match the £300 offered by another local dealer, name of Buller Sinfield, who in turn sold it to the Montagu Museum. After some time it left there, going to Germany. Searching Wikipedia for Austro-Daimler shows a similar car in the Schloss Langenburg Museum, bright





blue with well-base tyres on chrome spoked wheels. Let's just hope it's not the same one. PreWarCar.com advertised the Grice car in 2019 and I passed on this bit of history which they published, but I never heard back from the owner.

The location of your cover photo, Stake Moss, in Upper Wharfedale is also familiar to me. It is still a rough track which I have driven in my Salmson but which sadly was closed to motor vehicles 10 or 15 years ago, as was Mastiles Lane near Kettlewell, another track used by the VSCC in the Northern trial in the early '60s. We lost another Austro-Daimler from the VSCC to Germany some years ago, a rather splendid AD100 seen at an early Buxton Rally. I attach a photo. My first car, a Bullnose Oxford, is in the background.

MIKE CLARK
Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire

Dear Sir,
How wonderful to read Tim Rolt's memories of Sam Clutton. Driving with him was indeed exhilarating. Often his attention would be caught by some architecture which he would comment on while paying (it often seemed) little attention to the road. He once went off the course at Prescott as he exited Pardon, while Bunny commentating said that the trees had sprung apart to let him through.

I can assure Tim that it wasn't just in the Isle of Man that the marble table held sway; it was like that in Blackheath. 'I live in the last two houses but one,' he said, describing his address opposite the heath.

Of course, being an estate agent, he would be interested in the look of houses. I remember at one of the VSCC AGMs held at Heal's in Tottenham Court Road I overhead Kent Karslake saying to Sam that he was looking for x thousand square feet of office space. 'I shall look in the morning,' said Sam. No extended lunches or long conversations for these powerful men of business. Indeed the business of the AGM was always done at speed and if it took longer than 15 minutes it was deemed long-winded.

I think I only astonished Sam once and that was when I offered to start the Itala. Which I did. However, like the Gobron Brillié it had a half compression lever so it wasn't all that difficult. Sam was such a kind person beneath the brusque exterior. I still have a tiger's eye egg which he gave me for my 21st birthday.

PENELOPE TUBBS
Bushley Green, Worcestershire

Dear Sir,
May I complement you on another superb *Bulletin*. In particular I liked the article on EMF113, the only unusual wreck Philip kept at his house in the cul-de-sac, Freshfield Road in Heaton Moor. The drive was full of wrecks, mostly VW Beetles, if my memory serves me correctly, down the side of the house and into the back garden. There was an open carport as well with cars in it. For as long as I can remember, the Bentley was parked in the road with the remains of a tarpaulin over it. Philip was a law unto himself, riding roughshod over his wife, Ann Blackham's, wishes. Incidentally, Ann was a lovely gentle lady, the daughter of Basil Davenport. It is good to know that the Bentley has survived and prospered.

MIKE ROBINSON
Handforth, Cheshire

Dear Sir,
Your suggestions regarding an MOT for old cars in your latest editorial (327) arouse my reservations. Your opinions remind me of those expressed by the editors of at least two major classic car publications, such as Danny Hopkins of *Practical Classics*, and David Simister of *Classic Car Weekly*. My take on this subject is that the sort of light touch but compulsory checks for classic vehicles – that is, relatively ordinary and nostalgia-inducing old cars (an Orwellian antonym: classic = ordinary) – may be one thing, but the VSCC and our Veteran Car colleagues are custodians of some very esoteric by comparison, sometimes crude stuff. The ranks of this former group are being added to all the time as forty-year-old vehicles just grow in with every year. And with this leads to the great success of the general old car movement. We in the VSCC have much to gain from aligning ourselves with this dynamic group, and I'm pleased to see this happening of late. However, and this is the 'biggie', we must be mindful that lots of pre-war stuff, for instance, any pre-war Trojan, has no front-wheel brakes. We have to look closely at some of the weirdly delightful conveyances we own, love and use. With a very few exceptions, classic car owners have no idea of the composition, and soul-stirring magnetism of, say, one of the two Napier-Railtons which disport themselves to our delight. And let's include any aero-engined special such as the Curtiss OX5 examples which are presently abroad, plus the 200hp Darracq. If the writer is correct here, what is the typical lawmaker, civil servant, or MOT tester going to make of the sort of unorthodox vehicles mentioned when it comes to putting his or her name to said vehicles being used on the roads? Take oil or carbide lamps, total lack of mudguards, having the service brake on the transmission, like Ford Model Ts, minuscule tyre contact patches, spiky bits everywhere – need I go on? It might not be a fashionable view to take in this ordered world, but I say let us carry on as we are, thank you very much. Such may however

require folk to refrain from chucking blame around and reaching for a lawyer, thereby creating unnecessary friction if the odd mishap should occur. Let's just carry on driving with care and circumspection.

NIGEL STENNETT-COX
North Walsham, Norfolk

Dear Sir,
Regarding an MOT for old cars (Editorial, 327), it is not such a good idea perhaps. We drive the cars, that is the test, not to mention our day to day visual and aural assessments of brakes, lights, oil, grease, springs, tyres, rust, rattles, loose bolts and exhaust. All this is a constant routine. If not kept up, the car, any type, becomes undrivable. This brings us to the question: do we drive vintage cars enough? It almost becomes a full-time unpaid job, as in flying an aircraft. The knack is constantly practised, steering, gears, brakes, distances for cornering, braking, weather conditions, light conditions where overhanging trees suddenly blot out light, where lights hardly work. Modern lights are brighter. Many owners hardly use their cars, yet drive at higher than normal speed when they do, especially at vintage events or on motorways. We have all done it at some time or other – speeding is an addiction, an adrenalin drug. So to go on with this activity we have to drive well, not too fast, ideally with eyes in the back of the head.

RICHARD J. HULFORD
Westerham, Kent

Dear Sir,
A recent moment of levity may serve as antidote to some of the gloomy opinions one hears about aging membership, advancing technologies, EVs etc. Colin (late seventies) and I (early eighties) were doing a bit of riveting on the bodywork of the latest creation. Chatting of past projects and thinking back to the many years of bench time with hacksaws and files, we came to wondering if the advent of the angle grinder, cutting disc and plasma cutter had possibly had a detrimental effect on the upper-body fitness of the average car fettler. 'Well,' said Colin, hammering away inside the bodywork of the latest project, 'at least we don't have to bother with the current fashion for ear-defenders. We can just remove our hearing aids!' 'Nuff said.

PETER GRAHAM
Path of Condie, Perthshire

Dear Sir,
That evocative reminiscence by my late and much-missed friend David Holland (*Bulletin* 327, pp. 76–84) aroused memories of joint motoring adventures and his generosity in allowing me to drive some of the lovely cars that passed through his hands. And of visits enlivened by a glass of the excellent champagnes of his friend Comte Audoin de Dampierre. I thought you might like this image of the one-off 'wild' Model C Ford he mentioned, a 'special' created for the Ford



Motor Show in the Albert Hall. In fact, the threat to the integrity of the Ford Ten wasn't the sunshine roof, as David averred, but a rust trap in the chassis at the foot of the A pillar that could cause aged Tens to fold in the middle like the proverbial ripe banana. *Autocar* artist Gordon Horner wrote an amusing article on the subject back in the 1960s.

DAVID BURGESS-WISE
White Roding, Essex

Dear Sir,
In 1931, Alec Issigonis was drinking at the Queen and Castle in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, with George Dawson and John Bolster. John didn't like the piano music, so he poured tomato ketchup into it. They were all ejected from the premises. Approximately thirty years later, so was I. We had been playing snooker at a Coventry club and called at the Queen and Castle for a swift pint prior to going home. Still with cue in hand, I somehow managed to stab the ceiling with it. We were all ejected from the premises. However we did return the following day to carry out remedial work to the ceiling. Incidentally, Alec Issigonis lived in Rouncil Lane, Kenilworth, and designed the Mini in his garage. George Dawson helped design and race the 'Lightweight Special' which was built in that same garage. Incidentally, it's worth noting that it's 150 years since George Singer commenced manufacturing bicycles in Coventry and that our Singer car is 100 years old next year. Keep up the good work and happy motoring.

JOHN TAYLOR
Kenilworth, Warwickshire

Dear Sir,
The editorial *Yes to an old car MOT* in *The Bulletin* 327 is likely to cause several comments, both pro and con. But does is necessarily have to be 'all or nothing'? When mandatory vehicle testing ('MOT') was introduced here in Denmark, where I live, cars had to be tested every two years. However, following successful lobbying by the old car community and the local equivalent of the FBHVC, the authorities wisely decided that – in view of the very limited mileage most of these cars did – vintage and classic cars only had to be tested every eight years, provided you had a modern as a daily driver. You could of course still use your vintage or classic as your daily car, it just then had to be tested every two years. Most agreed that this was a sensible compromise.

JOHN NEEL
Hellerup, Denmark

Dear Sir,
Like taxation and inequality, death is an inescapable fact, and I have to say that I can think of quite a number of departed club members who were more than deserving of recognition and yet, no obituaries ever appeared. Of course, I realise that not every departed club member's obituary will be featured and this letter isn't intended to be a dig at you or previous *Bulletin* editors. While I'd prefer not to name names, where obits are concerned, I feel that there have in recent times, been some notable omissions.

TIM COLLEDGE
Burkham Alton, Hampshire

The Editor agrees and has invited Mr Colledge to write some obituaries. He declined.

Curborough

The opening meet of the club's speed season ran as smoothly as a well-fettled vintage car says **MAURICE GLEESON** *with additional reporting from* **HARRY BAXTER**

There were dark tales a few years ago that the sprint course at Curborough, near Lichfield, was under threat from developers and would cease to exist. Lichfield's famous son, Dr Johnson would surely have had something to say about such matters, but Mark Twain comes nearer the mark. After contemporary newspapers reported his demise he noted: 'Rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated.'

So Curborough remains in good health and for many years has been a much-loved opener to the VSCC speed season and was blessed this year with splendid weather. The shorter course of one lap, just over 900 yards, is challenging for the first bend, chicanes, and a final hairpin before a healthy blast down the finishing straight. From here spectators can get a good view of virtually the whole course. This year competitors were treated by James Baxter to a very helpful written guide with diagrams of how to drive the course.

We arrived just after the appointed hour of 8am and as usual left the tow car and trailer near the hairpin



The Edwardian paddock scene (Mick Herring)



Tom Golland going for it in the Morgan Aero (Mark Ballard)



Winner of Class 10, Richard Newton in the shared MG/Riley (Mark Ballard)



David Pryke in the Frazer Nash Shelsley (Mark Ballard)

and took just the competing car and a few necessities into the paddock. We were running in Class 10 with a Big 4 Riley Special. There is however quite good grassy space on either side of the long paddock which is ideal for perusing the competing cars. The Edwardians, as ever, were in their trackside area just before the main paddock entrance and always make an imposing impression and good indication of the treats in store. Our day was brightened by a nice chat with Andrew Howe-Davies concerning his Edwardian projects and the splendid Straker-Squire. His commitment to the use of beaded edge tyres featured in the conversation.

Our next door neighbour in the paddock, Richard Derrick with his Wolsley Hornet Special, was new to the scene. He confessed to having raced Minis, then converted to an Austin 7 which got him into vintage motoring. Straight across from us Harry Baxter was warming up the very nice HRG so was swiftly recruited as a paddock reporting spy in the absence of the Briggs *equipe* who had to scratch due to illness in the family, now fortunately recovered.

A good entry of 92 was split over 13 classes, so some were quite small. Six and fourteen had only two entrants and class one, four, but these were all Austin 7 Ulsters and closely matched, so some symmetry here and no surprises when William Marsh emerged victorious with 1st overall and 1st vintage. Fellow scribe Harry Baxter was just squeezed into second place in class two by Nigel Dowding in his very slightly larger engined Riley Brooklands, but there was only .63 seconds in it. However, William Mahany's class record in the same car still stands.

As expected, class three was a 'Nash benefit but a brave David Saxl took them on and managed a very creditable fourth in his delectable Riley TT Sprite, only .86 seconds outside third placed David Johnson. It was good to see Nigel Hall out again in his fine Lagonda. This car/driver combination has been quietly effective over many years and he left a suf-



Winner of the Edwardian class, Archie Bullett in the Pic-Pic (Mark Ballard)



Charles Pither's 'Nash just before a short excursion onto the grass (Mark Ballard)

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Roger Thorpe's was the only 30-98 competing (Mark Ballard)



The front tyre of Archie Collings's Bentley bends to his will (Mark Ballard)

ficient margin of 6.52 seconds over Roger Thorpe in his Vauxhall 30-98 to show who was boss.

The Edwardians in class seven are always a joy to behold and particularly as Archie Bullett charged to victory in the Piccard-Pictet at 42.81 seconds. The aero engine helps, which is reflected in the results by noting that the first non-aero was Ben Collings at 44.45.

Just a reminder here that there is an ordinary Edwardian world outside of the monsters and that was nicely demonstrated be John Deveuve in his charming 1,098cc 1913 Singer. Easy to mistake on casual first glance as an early Bullnose Morris but definitely not on second look. As anticipated, class eight was dominated by Austin and Riley makes so it was good to see entries from Tom Golland in his Morgan Aero and Terry McGrath in the Amilcar. Although they achieved respectable times it was tough to get near Kevin Morton in his Riley Nine Special at 45.73.

So to the ever competitive and fought-out class nine and a clean sweep by Rileys, the only non-Riley entrant being the brave Paul Compton in his Wolseley Aerees Special. Michael James cleaned up in the Riley TT Sprite Replica at 38.07 ahead of Christopher Downham at 40.32. They also both achieved handicap awards, as did the previous class winners, so beware on the next time out … More about the devastatingly quick Michael later on.



Class winner Michael James in the Riley Cotton Special (Mark Ballard)



John Deveuve's delightful 1913 Singer (Stuart Yates)



Peter Atkinson in the Austin 'Slippery Anne' (Mark Ballard)



Mike Raahauge consistently improved his times in the Type 35 Bugatti (Mark Ballard)

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Roger Collings had a joint entry with son Ben in the Mercedes (Mark Ballard)

In class ten, Richard Newton in the family's Riley-engined MG disrespectfully came first, relegating his father Roy to a still worthy fourth by just over two seconds. This is a very fine car, developed over many years by Roy. While on the subject of delectable cars, Paul Mullins was a good second in his very fine MG K Type special, and it was nice to see newcomer Richard Derrick come away with a handicap award.

Wilfred Cawley mopped up in class eleven in the GN 'Piglet' with a nearly five-second lead over Archie Collings in the Bentley, to take Fastest Young Driver and Fastest Vintage of the day. Moral of the story: if you want to make a Ford Model A engine really go, fit an OHV conversion.

It was good to see the three-wheeler fraternity well represented by Finley Hope Cameron in class 13 where he squeezed ahead of Louis McNair's GN by .26 of a second, although the latter was compensated by being 1st Vintage, while fourth placed competitor Peter Atkinson in the beautifully presented Austin 'Slippery Anne' was 1st Standard Vintage. Life can get complex.

Jon Giles was a welcome sight in the GN Salome and after chain troubles in practice was barely nudged into third place at just over half a second. Classes fourteen and fifteen were merged and Michael James was again victorious in his other entry of the Riley Cotton Special. Running in two classes makes for a busy day but Michael seems to enjoy it and excels with two splendid and well-prepared cars. The evidence is clear: FTD at 37.28 and Fastest Sports Car at 38.07.

Our paddock patrol spotted him and David Pryke relaxing on either side of David's single seater Shelsley 'Nash. We had met him at Mallory for the Bentley Drivers Club sprint a couple of weeks before where the car went well. The conversation at Curborough suggested some difficulty in holding off the threat from Mr James and so it proved. Nevertheless, a very respectable 39.41 to 37.28.

Further down the field, Bob Drewitt, that experienced and expert special builder, achieved 1st Vintage in the charming 'Austin Maggot'. Like many of Bob's creations, this has numerous purposeful chains whizzing in all directions. A previous creation of Bob's, the very nice Riley Amilcar, was also in the same class driven by new owner, neighbour and friend Ron Dowle. During our paddock chat I reflected on competing at a Brooklands Sprint a few years before when Bob did not return to the paddock after a run. I was reminded that that was in a different Anzani air-cooled special. There was initially some concern but he re-appeared after about 20 minutes. Apparently the engine seized when it got very hot, so they both rested under the shade of a tree until things cooled down.

So the day concluded with the racing cars of over 3000cc in class 16. Robin Harcourt-Smith achieved a worthy 38.55 in the Norris Special but not quite enough to hold off the invincible Michael James. This interesting and highly competitive car has frequently held off and sometimes defeated ERAs so we look forward to its future in the very appropriate hands of an Alvis family. Blessed by good weather the event ran like a good vintage car should – smoothly and sweetly.

Results remained provisional as we went to press



Ben Collings in the Mercedes 120 (Mark Ballard)

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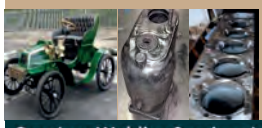
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Colin Crabbe

1942–2025

Colin Crabbe, known as Crabbie to his friends, was a one-off. He was a big man in every sense of the word, never to be forgotten by those who met him. It would take too much space to tell you all the stories about him so I can only suggest that you get hold of his book, *The Thrill of the Chase*, if you have not read it already. I know it's an amusing read because I was involved with the proofreading over many months and was somewhat surprised to find on publication that I had to buy my own copy, as did all his friends. No freebies – he was not a Scotsman for nothing!

Colin was brought up by his father Col. Archie Crabbe and his Canadian mother Yvette on the family estate in Aberdeenshire, followed by school at Ampleforth in North Yorkshire where his main claim to fame was holding the record for putting the shot. I believe it still stands today but in metric measurements.



Colin Crabbe: an unearther of rarities and Formula One privateer

In 1962 Freda and I were walking down the Mall and spotted a 30-98 Vauxhall proceeding in the direction of Buckingham Palace. The four occupants were guardsmen wearing their overcoats and bearskins. The driver was much taller than the others. A few weeks later found us in Walker's Garage in Chelsea where we were trying to purchase a 1910 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. Out of the gloomy interior emerged this huge man holding a superb pair of Grebel headlamps. His negotiations were failing to convince Mr Walker that they were only worth the same as a pair of Lucas 'King of the Roads'. This was our first meeting with Colin and the start of a friendship which was to last 62 years.

Colin was in the army at that time, and I quickly realised that he was not a happy soldier and there would be an inevitable parting of ways. This came about when the Scots Guards discovered that he had more vehicles at Pirbright than they had. It was a great disappointment to his father who had been Colonel of the regiment during the war.

The Crabbe fortune had been made by his grandfather who produced Crabbie's whisky and Crabbie's Ginger Wine at his distillery in Leith near Edinburgh. The old man had been trying unsuccessfully to get into the New Club in Edinburgh dating from 1730 which was the Scottish equivalent of White's in London. In desperation he decided to change his name from Crabbie to Crabbe. A wag in the local paper wrote 'if an eye offend thee, pluck it out'.

Colin and his older brother Jock had inherited substantial trust funds from their grandfather. Jock took the simple way out and became a tax exile in Andorra while Colin travelled a different route which was to cause his trustees sleepless nights over the next few years. Colin's great interest since a boy was Edwardian and Vintage cars so his next move was to buy a business from the Hancox family in Baston. Their workshop was a chapel in the centre of the village with a small house next door. They were automobilia and vintage car dealers. Colin shared the already cramped accommodation with the Hancox family. On their visit to Baston the trustees, who were funding the purchase of the properties and wanted to see what they were getting for their money, were somewhat surprised to find Mrs Hancox bathing the baby in the kitchen sink surrounded by the ingredients for their lunch. The whole set up was like something out of *The Darling Buds of May*. This was the start of Antique Automobiles, developed by Colin into one of the largest vintage car businesses in the world.

He travelled the globe in his pursuit of the holy grail. India eluded him as the competition had beaten him to it but South America and Cuba became his personal fiefdoms. He discovered many gems from which he made a great deal of money. Ferrari GTOs, Testa Rossas, Maserati birdcages, 300 and 450S, Alfa Romeos, Mercedes and Auto Unions all passed through his hands together with vintage cars of all descriptions. He had a great liking for Vauxhalls. He soon upgraded from his cramped quarters to a new brick bungalow in the village which he shared with Henry Hotham, a friendship started when Colin drove his Mustang through his Lordship's park wall.

Colin and I became staunch VSCC members, doing many Pomeroys, sprints, hillclimbs, vintage and prewar racing. Our house in County Durham was close to the A1 and it became his regular staging post on his frequent trips to Scotland. On one occasion he asked me to join him on a trip to Paris. The vehicle of choice was a vintage 9-litre Renault 45, a large car with a 9.2-litre engine and a bonnet like an inverted

coal scuttle, quite quick on wooden artillery wheels. I soon found my main task was to remove the floorboard under my feet and lubricate the clutch every 50 miles while still travelling. Quite dirty and exhausting. One morning in a large underground car park the wretched thing would not start and a group of helpful people gathered around to give us an unsuccessful push start. Colin stood up from the driver's seat and said 'push harder you idle little Frenchmen!' Not surprisingly our would-be helpers disappeared.

For a short time he rented a substantial garage in the Brompton Road which was not particularly successful except that he met Fiona who had worked there before he arrived and was to become his wife, resulting in their three children, Sophie, Alastair and Lucinda. He returned to his home in Baston. I made many visits which usually resulted in me buying yet another car. I always seemed to come off second best in the negotiations until I got used to it and changed my tactics. I was very envious when he arrived at Silverstone in 1985 fresh from a trip to Australia where he had purchased a 1956 Maserati 250F from racing driver Stan Jones whose son Alan was to become F1 World Champion. The VSCC had introduced a class for postwar front-engined single-seater racing cars in 1965. These cars had been front-line machines only eight years earlier when Fangio won his fifth world championship in one in 1957.

I quote from p. 9 of the Autumn 1965 *Bulletin* (87): '… and Crabbe in an alcohol-burning model imported from Australia. The last was shod with the most peculiar job lot of assorted racing tyres seen for many a year, which seems a slightly casual way of approaching so potent a beast.' The Maserati became the car of choice. My great friend Patrick Lindsay bought two followed by Charles Lucas and Nobby Spero. I eventually acquired the first of three, the last one of which we still own. Eventually my pal Willie Green arrived on the scene. We raced all over. It was competitive and great fun. The original Silverstone Grand Prix circuit in particular was a happy hunting ground, tailor-made for the 250F with lots of high-speed corners ending at the glorious Woodcote having an exit speed of 130mph. We were both proud BRDC members by this time.

I never thought some people gave Colin the credit for being such a good driver. At 6ft 5ins, he gave his competitors a tremendous weight advantage, which in my case was seven stone. Unbeknown to them he had bought a GT40 courtesy of the Trustees to do the Springbok series in South Africa and he asked me to be his co-driver. Sadly I had to refuse as my father had died and I could not take two months off from running the family business. A decision I have always regretted. Returning home, he raced it at the Nurburgring, Rheims and many of the European top circuits. It all came to a sticky end at Brands Hatch when he was lapped by Denny Hulme, a future World Champion. Colin tucked in behind Denny to try and reduce his lap times and at the next corner Denny came out first closely followed by Colin who was unfortunately travelling backwards and hit the bank very hard indeed. The car was a wreck and back at Baston all the useful bits were removed for another project. The rest was buried which was to give the GT40 brigade much concern over the ensuing years.

Colin retired from the quick stuff and his last joust with his now ageing trustees was to become an F1 entrant, first with a brand new March to be driven by Ronnie Peterson, no less, who was part of the March package, followed by a V12 Cooper Maserati for Vic Elford, and then a McLaren. I went with him to Colnbrook and I remember negotiations with Bruce McLaren himself going very well until his manager, the dreaded Teddy Mayer, arrived and screwed things up. This was the start of Antique Automobile Racing, an unusual name for an F1 team.

One day Colin phoned me to say that he was getting good money to race at the 1969 Madrid GP at a new track called Jarama. Vic Elford was recovering from injuries sustained at the Targa Florio and was unavailable. Would I like to drive the car? This was a race for Formula One and Formula 5000 cars. I had never driven a rear-engine GP car but a quick trip to Baston proved I could get in it and then we were off to Spain. Surprisingly, during practice I found the car was quite easy to drive but another 50 or 60 horsepower would have made it much more competitive. After practice the team was sitting on the grass when Denis Jenkinson turned up and said he had not expected to see me there, how was I getting on? I told him how much I was enjoying myself. It was great fun. With a twinkle in his eye Jenks replied that professional drivers had never said that to him.

We finished the race which started at midday, after which we all went to the local bullfight followed by the evening prize-giving in the town hall, where the drivers had to go on stage and collect their starting and prize money where applicable. I was handed a huge wad of pesetas before returning to my seat when a left hand went round my shoulder. 'You have done well, old boy, I am going to treat you,' while Colin's right hand was removing the cash! My 'treat' was that he paid for my motel room.

The Corner family relocated to North Yorkshire in 1979. We had purchased an estate which had a grouse moor which I discovered was something of a first, as I was the only man who ever bought a grouse moor who didn't have a gun. Guess which of my friends had one and had been shooting on the Findrack estate since he was a young boy? Before we moved in I took

him on a tour and finally asked him what he thought of it. He put his arm round my shoulder, and looking down with that Crabbie twinkle he replied 'I think we will be very comfortable here, old boy'. Indeed he was. On his subsequent many visits with his labrador Brodie, North Yorkshire society really took to him.

Fast forward to Oulton Park, 1988. I had travelled over with my brother Nigel in his Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica on the Thursday. It rained torrents all day for Friday practice and again on race day. The circuit did not drain well and there was standing water everywhere. On race day we were told beforehand by the Clerk of the Course that we had to do two warming-up laps because of the appalling conditions. I was in pole position and took the opportunity of speaking to the other drivers on the front row, asking them not to do anything silly at the first corner, Old Hall, as the chaps behind would have zero visibility. One of them paid no attention – out of the corner of my eye I say him spinning off at Old Hall. I later found out that he did not hit the bank and drove back into the middle of the pack.

Just before I completed my first lap I was given the red flag and stopped at the pits. The race was over. I walked down to Old Hall and had to go round it to see what had happened. The sight before me was one of pure carnage with seven or eight wrecked cars everywhere. There were several injured drivers, luckily without fatalities, and it took 40 minutes to get Colin out of his Lago Talbot. It was still raining. I told Nigel who was going to a party that evening to go home and tell mum I would be late as I had go with Fiona and the children to the hospital and would come home in the transporter with Richard. Colin was sitting up in bed and I realized he was not going to die when he opened his eyes and the first thing he asked was had they found his watch! I arrived back in North Yorkshire after midnight to find Nigel who had forfeited his party waiting with Freda. My overalls were still soaked through.



Colin in his Mercedes W125: he was an underrated driver

Colin was never the same after this. My great friend Patrick Lindsay had died and Christie's rang me to ask me if I could recommend someone to run their car department. I put Colin forward. He got the job having negotiated a substantial salary almost on a par with the directors. After a couple of years he left to do his own thing.

As the years went by he was in and out of hospital. New knees and hips, trouble with his kidneys. You name it, he had it. His health gradually deteriorating, he was confined to barracks with his Polish carer Janos for his last few years. The hundreds of phone calls initiated by either of us always started with the words 'It's your old friend' were cheerful and his glass was always half full. I used to tell Freda after these conversations that he always sounded the same. When our friend Mo Skailes rang me about the cancer a few weeks ago, I immediately rang Colin and he was just the same. Perhaps the voice a little softer but still never complaining.

His funeral took place on a gorgeous day at his spiritual home in Baston on April 10th where his incredible journey started and ended. The church was packed and there was a substantial turn out by BRDC members and a wreath from the club. His many friends had gathered to say goodbye and our thoughts were very much with Alistair, Lucinda and their lovely families. We shall all miss him, me more than most. You are in a better place now, Colin. Rest in peace, Old Boy.

Neil Corner

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Roger Firth

1942–2025

Roger Fred Firth was born in Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire, on 4 January 1942, to parents Margaret and Fred. His mother was a nurse, and his father served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps. Roger passed away in hospital on 2 February 2025 with a lifelong friend, Richard Morgan, at his side. Roger is survived by his beloved wife Beryl whom he met at a social event in Stalybridge in the mid-1970s. The couple married at St. Paul's Church in Stalybridge in 1977 and remained devoted to each other throughout their life, always living in Stalybridge and enjoying holidays to Madeira later in life. Roger and Beryl had no children.

Roger's early years were spent in Millbrook in the north-west of England, where he attended primary school before moving to West Hill Boys Secondary School in Stalybridge. Roger was a very gifted child, showing a particular talent for the piano, passing his first exam at the age of eight. As a teenager, Roger took up organ lessons at Ashton parish church and went on to play regularly in churches throughout the area, something which he continued to do into his seventies.

On leaving school, Roger was employed at Gorton Railway Sheds in Manchester but at the age of 19 he was running Firth Transport, a road haulage company founded by his father. Roger built this up into a successful business initially running out of a mill in Millbrook, and then a mill off Park Street, Stalybridge. Roger sold the company in the late 1980s and turned his full attention to cars, making full use of purpose-built garages at the rear of his and Beryl's home. At the time of construction, the builder took it upon himself to spell Lagonda in newly laid cobbles that led to the garages. This stands as a lasting tribute to Roger, even if he wasn't too thrilled with the surprise at the time.

The sight and sound of vintage cars being driven back and forth from the rear garages into the front workshop was very familiar to Beryl and Roger's neighbours, as were the frequent test drives down their road and up Mottram Road. Those that visited the garage would attest to the continual restoration and maintenance that took place in a workshop with shelves packed (neatly) with tools, spares, machinery and regalia. Even in retirement, Roger kept to a strict regime of working 8am to 5pm, with an hour for lunch. There was a communications method between the workshop and house whereby Roger would politely knock on the wall between the garage and house, requesting a cup of tea from Beryl. Roger was meticulous in his record keeping of his cars and it must be universally agreed that the standard to which his restoration work on cars was taken was exemplary.

Vehicle maintenance and restoration were not Roger's only passion. He was active in racing and time trialling as well as organising rallies across the UK and France including those to the Isle of Man, the Shetlands and the Orkneys. Those present will recall the organ recitals at St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, which served as an opportunity for Roger to satisfy his passion for cars, music and travel all at once.

Roger continued to find entrepreneurial opportunities throughout his retirement. He established a very successful business buying and selling organ music and monetised the dormant carpark at Ashton parish church to raise much needed funds. Roger even found himself in front of the camera, making cameo appearances in several TV programmes. One scene required Roger to stop and ask for directions in a vintage car, only for the star of the show, a very large dog, to require numerous shoots as it was required to jump up and put its paws on the driver's door of BYG 7. That Lagonda, a cream LG45 Rapide, with a 4½-litre straight six and built in 1937, was bought by Roger in 1975 and was the last remaining car in his collection when sold.

At its peak in the 1990s there were 14 cars in the collection. Cars owned by Roger included UU 7571, a 1929 Lagonda 2-litre high-chassis used on rallies to Shetland and the Orkneys; two Vauxhall 30-98s;



two Amilcars including PE 4287; YO 6757, a 1926 Bentley 3-litre Speed Model; a 1913 Sunbeam 6.1-litre 25/30hp; a 1926 Frazer Nash; and OJ 200, a 1906 Nordenfelt 5½-litre. The 1913 Theophile Schneider M5000 Grand Prix with a 5.6-litre engine was one car that Roger raced at events including Oulton Park in the early 1990s. This particular car had been put together by VSCC past president the late John Rowley.

A knee ailment began to restrict Roger's ability to work on cars in the way he was accustomed to; a pit in the workshop helped to an extent, but other health ailments came along for both and Roger and Beryl and over time Roger steadily reduced the car collection and by 2021 all cars had been sold. The reduction in workload in later years did mean Roger and Beryl could enjoy numerous holidays in the UK and Madeira.

Roger was a true gentleman: kind, generous and always ready to support those around him. He will be missed by everyone that knew him. His funeral service was held at St. Paul's in Stalybridge, the church where Roger and Beryl were married and where he spent a considerable amount of his time playing the organ. In a fitting tribute, his funeral car to St. Paul's was followed by two Lagondas, belonging to Mike Fishwick and Nigel Hall. His journey to the crematorium was followed by Mike's Lagonda and MGs belonging to Russell Squires and Alex Robinson, who was representing the Manchester Historic Vehicle Club, of which Roger had been a member since 1968.

Richard Morgan



Roger Firth in the 1913 GP Theophile-Schneider at Shelsley Walsh

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Angela Cherrett

1938–2025

Not only did the Vintage Sports-Car Club lose a long- and well-respected member in the recent passing of Angela, the worldwide following of Alfa Romeo lost an extraordinarily gifted historian and archivist. Her involvement with vintage machinery did not begin with the Alfa Romeo marque but with a Riley Treen with which she terrorised the inhabitants of Dorset and Hampshire in her youth. This car was the means of introducing her to her future husband Allan. The story is that the Treen developed a puncture and Allan was the knight in shining armour who happened to be passing by and came to the rescue. The rest, as one might say, was history. Eventually the two married and thus a long and happy life together commenced. Allan was without doubt her rock and support, his technical expertise was the perfect coupling with Angela's knowledge of historical matters.

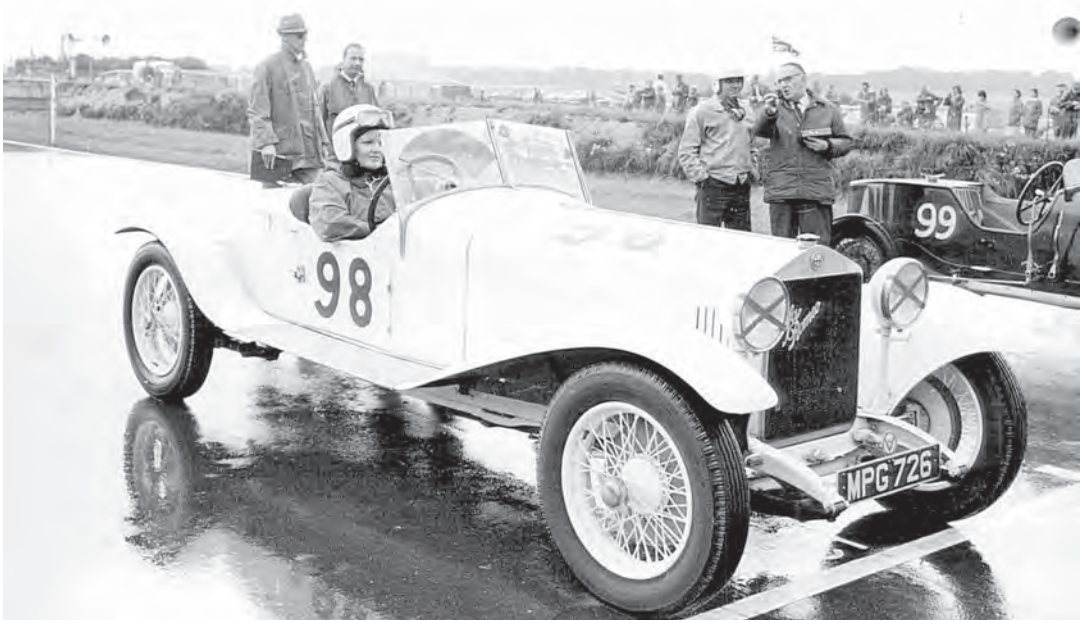
In the early 1960s, the Cherretts acquired a 1500MM Alfa and a 1750 Super Sport model. These they campaigned regularly at VSCC and other events, one of these being the first rally to be held over the Mille Miglia course in about 1965. A contingent of the Alfa Romeo Section took part and apparently a good time was had by all. Shortly after this event, Roy and Edna Slater, who had been very popular Section Secretaries, decided to move to Italy and the Cherretts were in an ideal position to take on this challenge, having no family, career or other commitments. The stable was increased in the late 1960s by a Martin Walter-bodied 1750 saloon and a long-chassis 2.3 Alfa which was later sold on.

For these many years the Section has been run by Angela, ably assisted by Allan until illness prevented his involvement. Until her declining health limited her activities, the Cherretts ran social gatherings after the major race meetings, a tradition started by the Slaters. Places like the car park of the Saracen's Head in Towcester would be packed with a mouthwatering selection of vintage Alfas. Sadly those days are in the past.

Research and archiving were Angela's great forte. She put these gifts to great use in the publication of two very authoritative books on Alfa Romeo. Her works on the 6C Alfa Romeo and the 8C Alfa Romeo are very well regarded and of historical importance. In order to further her research and knowledge she spent a lot of time at the Alfa Romeo Museum in Arese, Milan. She was given full access to their archives and used this to good effect.

Between her Alfa activities Angela served on the Committee of this Club and for many years along with Allan was a regular presence in Race Control at meetings. Personal memories will be lost as this generation leave the stage but Angela's legacy will live on in her work and be remembered for many years to come. Condolences to Angela's family and friends.

Carol Corliss



Angela Cherrett: a world authority on Alfa Romeos

Bill Barrott

1934–2025

William Edward (Bill) Barrott died on 12th March 2025, his 91st birthday. Bill had been a stalwart member of the VSCC and the Sunbeam Talbot Darracq (STD) Register for over 50 years. He built, owned and prepared many fine vintage touring and racing cars and his passing has left a significant void in the vintage community.

Bill Barrott was born in Sheffield in 1934 into a family of naturally gifted craftsmen and engineers and remained in the Sheffield area for his whole life. His father, Harold, was a largely self-taught builder and engineer who rose to become the buildings manager of a nearby steelworks. Bill was passionate about cars from a young age, first building models from scratch and progressing to working on his parents' cars from age 12. When about 10 years old he was discovered, when his parents returned unexpectedly from a village event, driving the family car up and down the lane outside their house practising three-point turns whilst perched on the edge of the driver's seat and peering over the steering wheel.

Bill attended Ecclesfield Grammar School and then night school while apprenticed to a steel works. From age 19 he supplemented his income repairing and servicing cars owned by family, friends and local villagers. The work was carried out in a somewhat ramshackle shed close to the family home and he was always busy through word-of-mouth recommendations. While his own first car was an 'indecently quick' OHC Morris Minor, he developed an early fondness for Rileys, admiring their engineering for the time and took to experimenting with tuning. He admitted to building a quite dangerous Nine Lincock for a friend of his – 'far too much power for the chassis' as he later recalled. His first ground-up restoration was an English-bodied Fiat Balilla and in the mid-fifties with his brother Bob (my father) he built an MG M-type / Wolseley Hornet special which became known locally as the 'Yellow Peril' and which was used by my father for a quarterly commute between Sheffield and Glasgow.



Bill Barrott at Cadwell in 1986

During national service, Bill served with the National Coal Board as an underground fitter while completing seven years of training leading to his becoming a qualified Colliery Mechanical Engineer and, shortly afterwards, IMechE.

After national service, Bill joined Brightside Engineering in Sheffield and, largely through an uncanny ability to solve complex mechanical problems, quickly rose to Engineering Manager. He left in 1967 and moved into the mainstream motor business, becoming firstly a partner and then the owner of a main dealership for 19 years. His was one of the first two Mazda dealerships in the country at the time of the original rotary-engined cars and Bill became an expert in Wankel engines. This included rally preparing a turbo-charged RX2 saloon utilising his own designed and fabricated wastegate. Developing some 200bhp, the car was driven with some success by Graham Denton.

Bill's passion for vintage cars was a constant throughout his life, firstly as a serious hobby, then as an adjunct to his motor dealership and finally from 1986 as a full-time business. Bill specialised in STD vehicles but also worked on anything he found interesting. Bugattis, Railtons, Delahayes, Hispano-Suizas, Rolls-Royces and other marques passed through the workshops of Bill Barrott Motor Engineers over the years. Along with his associate Noel Bagshaw and his team of skilled craftsmen, a total of 38 full restorations were completed before his retirement in 2015. The business also supported a network of skilled sub-contractors. Bill's business mantra of 'find good people and pay them straight away' paid dividends over the years in terms of quality and reputation.

Among some of the more interesting cars that Bill built, restored and prepared were racing cars for Roy Sevier (Sunbeam) and Don Fox (Delahaye 135), a precise recreation of the 1937 French GP-winning Talbot Lago built from original factory parts and a

Talbot AV105 Alpine that he prepared for William and Caroline Balfour in 2000. This vehicle completed the 'Around the World in 80 Days' Motor Challenge in 6th place with no major problems, despite being finished only a few days before the start.

Although he never raced himself, Bill enjoyed testing and toured extensively throughout the UK and Europe along with his wife Barbara in a succession of fine cars. Notable amongst these were a rare James Young-bodied Talbot AV105, a Talbot Lago Grand Sport and perhaps most famously, the 1928 Weymann-bodied Sunbeam 20 Rally Saloon which had finished 21st in the Monte Carlo rally that year driven by A. H. Pass. My wife and I were fortunate to have this as our wedding car and I also had the pleasure of driving it on a number of occasions. Factory blueprinted in all areas, in Bill's opinion it was the best driving Sunbeam 20 that he ever came across.

There can be few vintage STD cars running today which have not at some time been fettled, or had parts for them made or supplied, by Bill. In addition to all the practical aspects, Bill always made himself available to help with support and advice to club members. Having spent a full day in the workshop, he would often then spend many hours on the 'phone in the evenings dealing with enquiries and just 'talking cars' with his friends.

Bill was the same age as the VSCC and was an early member (#254); also a stalwart of the STD Register, Bill was its secretary between 1987 and 1991, technical advisor for 13 years and, as archivist and researcher, was a major contributor to Anthony Heal's definitive history of Sunbeam racing cars.

Finally retiring in 2015, Bill 'kept his hand in' and returned to his roots by restoring a 1933 Riley Nine Monaco, a car which I now own. Bill was my godfather and could always be relied on to provide useful birthday presents. I still own the toolbox he bought me when I was 12 and the Snap-On socket set which I received for my 18th. These will always remind me of him, along with the generous loan of tools and workshop facilities when required and all the help and advice that I received right up to his death.

Bill's wife Barbara pre-deceased him in 2018 and he leaves a son, Mark, and many friends within the STD and wider vintage motoring community who will greatly miss his workshop skills, practical advice, anecdotes and friendship.

John Barrott

Jim Clarke

1934–2025

James Alfred Clarke, always known as Jim, was born in Kilburn in 1934, the same year the VSCC was founded. At the outbreak of war, the family was evacuated to the Gloucestershire town of Tewkesbury from the environs of which he never really moved. His parents moved to Bishops Cleeve upon the construction of the Smiths Industries factory where his father then worked.

Jim's education was in the village schools followed by an apprenticeship as a mechanic with the local firm, Alfred Miles Garage. By this time his enthusiasm for powered transport took the form of motorcycles until funds enabled the purchase of a variety of ratty but cheap cars of dubious heritage. For National Service, Jim served with the Royal Engineers on Malta and claimed to have been a driver for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to the island in 1953. Knowing Jim as we did, she might have had an unexpectedly exciting journey in a three-ton truck.

Initially on returning home he started a small car repair business but was lured away from it by the opportunity of a 'warm job over the winter' in the Aviation Division of Smiths Industries for 12 months. That 12 months turned into 36 years, at the end of which he was the head of the division and had already received the ceremonial 25-year service Smiths pocket watch. His social life in the 1960s included many local events and dances in the area including those at Winchcombe Assembly Rooms where he and Jan, the love of his life, met. They were married in 1962 and also moved to Bishops Cleeve, where they remained ever since.

Around this time, Jim had discovered the mixed blessings of Riley ownership with a much abused and modified Mentone and was sufficiently enthused that he joined the Cheltenham Area of the Riley Register in 1963. At the time, he was without a 'proper' Riley but a number of RMs served as daily transport. Nevertheless, with help from friends he acquired the skeletal remains of the '9' Lynx that he and Jan enjoyed since its completion in 1968. Jan recalls many trips to far flung parts of this country to collect the correct parts but even more so, after its completion, their many, many adventures throughout the British Isles, France, Holland, Sweden and elsewhere in that car (US 1514) with which she and Jim became synonymous and she retains.

Once the Riley bug had bitten, there was no stopping them: Jim became Cheltenham Area Secretary in 1972, continuing until 2020 (we couldn't find

another Smiths pocket watch) but was given an appropriate send-off. The older members recalled that our monthly meetings were held at The Jolly Brewmaster pub which seems to have been entirely appropriate for us all back then. Jim was the Register President from 1991–1994 and he and Jan were National Membership Secretaries from 1977–2002. Both were awarded well-deserved honorary memberships for their works and for their really kind, efficient friendship to all. A legacy that has been handed on and observed by their successors.

And then, of course, there was the informal 'Riley Telephone Helpline' that Jim provided to support unfortunate folks who are without a Riley but looking for one or, sadly, have just bought one with no idea how it works. His responses were always 'bring it over and I will have a look' or a well-constructed analysis of the problem and the most likely resolution, always practical and often achieved. And if a bonnet was up or feet were sticking out from beneath a Riley, he would be there to help.



Riley man Jim Clarke: he once drove the Queen round Malta

His garage was well stocked with spares and tools, some that he devised himself to facilitate awkward tasks. He spent a lot of his time in there with his own and other people's cars. His generosity, expertise, knowledge and often spares were shared with many such owners usually in exchange for just a pint or two.

Jim was an enthusiast and an expert engineer, a very great friend to many, particularly to those in the Riley firmament but for all with interesting vehicles. With Jan he embarked on five adventures in New Zealand and Australia, and many others nearer to home. The Lynx was always mechanically sound and reliable but Jim's 'decorating skills' did not always match his engineering capabilities. He prepared a '9' Kestrel to lend to visiting friends from New Zealand but when it was unveiled a close chum observed that it looked like it had been 'painted with the Dulux dog's tail'. It was hurriedly repainted.

As an aside it must be recorded that one of the contributors to this obituary learnt from Jim a lot of colourful expressions of frustration during the course of a brake cable replacement on a '9' that should have been completed before tea but wasn't until supper time. Also, in the midst of much younger and less fit tourists in Brittany, not so long ago, Jim put us all to shame by changing tyres and tubes while we stood and watched in awe while offering advice with our hands in our pockets. Another recalls the failure of an oil seal on a new filter drenching the unfortunate Jim with its contents – he was never daunted.

Jim and Jan were long term members of the VSCC. Jim 'spannered' for the late Pat Keogh when Pat was racing his 12/4 special in VSCC events with some success. For many years they arranged for the Cheltenham Area team to manage the car parking and issue of tickets at VSCC Prescott which was always achieved with great efficiency, humour and warm welcomes. Sadly, that came to an end when health and safety became an issue.

Although in recent years Jim was unable to drive the Lynx, he and Jan were always welcome presences at noggins, lunches, and other events and last June we were able to celebrate his 90th birthday in style, he was on good form and the pub was only just large enough to accommodate all his many friends. An indication of the esteem in which he has been held. Jim was one of the gentlemanly *eminences grise*s of the Riley Register and VSCC. Jim died on 12 March 2025 after a short illness and is survived by Jan. He will be missed by many.

Ian Stainburn and others

Andy Butcher

1943–2024

Andy was a well-known figure in the club library where for many years he was one of several volunteers who helped out at Chipping Norton on a Wednesday. He was a Rolls-Royce enthusiast and a pilot and owned some 50 different cars over the course of his life, starting with a Mini Traveller, his first car, and ending with an electric BMW, having owned everything else in between. He owned three Rolls-Royces at various times, including a Silver Ghost, and as a professional pilot he flew Jumbo Jets long-haul. He was not fazed by big machines. The Rolls-Royces took us to some interesting places, including Whitehall in the year 2000, when Andy was asked to take part in the Queen Mother's 100th birthday parade.

Andrew was born in Surbiton, Surrey, on 27 November 1943. His early education was in Perth, Scotland, and he later went to grammar school in Whitley Bay, Tyneside, where he was made head boy. After leaving school he decided to learn how to fly, so he trained for two years at Hamble Flying School in Southampton. After completing his training he returned to Scotland, basing himself in Glasgow where he flew small planes all over the Lowlands and Highlands. He later moved to Manchester to fly small jet planes on European routes, and was sometimes based in Berlin for a few days. By the age of 29 he was made a captain.



A young Andy Butcher at the wheel of his first car

He later moved to London and flew Tridents 1, 2, and 3, and became a training captain which he loved. He was very popular in that role. I joined BEA in 1969 and met Andy at the Training Centre – I grabbed him quick! We married in 1972, as one couldn't be married when I first joined. BEA had to change the law as stewards could also stay until they were 55. I left after 10 years. We moved from Berkshire to the Cotswolds. Andy went on to fly Boeing 747s on long-haul routes, though he didn't really like being away for long. We had a large house with 15 acres, and Andy liked playing the farmer. He was able to take early retirement aged 55. We moved house again some years later, buying a lock-up-and-leave in Blockley and an apartment in Naples, Florida, where we would spend the winters. Andy got a job at the Revs Car Museum to fulfil his love of old cars. He was proud that he never had a mishap in all his years of flying or driving. The only accident he had was when he fell down Ben Nevis, which caused a broken wrist and a few bruises. He was out walking with his two first flight officers, the joke being which one pushed him … Sadly at 60 Andy was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. He handled it well and it wasn't until he was 70 that it became a problem. We decided our time was up in Naples so we sold up. We also sold the house in Blockley and moved to Cheltenham to be nearer the doctors and the hospitals. It meant Andy had to give up volunteering at the VSCC library in Chipping Norton on Wednesdays, something he had loved doing for many years. Andy continued to drive until six months before his death, on 9 July 2024. The Jet Museum at Staverton Airport in Cheltenham has dedicated a Trident 3 on display to Andy. He would have been thrilled by that.

Valerie Butcher





BOOKS

Twickenham Motorcars

A Local History of Motor Manufacturing

By Robin Hunter, 191pp, £13 including UK p&p, published by the Twickenham Local History Society, available directly from the author at robin.hunter@sky.com Reviewed by
ANDREW HOWE-DAVIES



A 1900 New Orleans 3½hp voiturette, made in Twickenham, taking part in the 1929 London to Brighton Run (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)

There are many reasons for compiling a book. Perhaps the most obvious one is a curiosity of discovery, a need to record facts. Well, this very niche book certainly falls into that category, recording a small town outside London that sits adjacent to the River Thames, Twickenham. This is a town I know well, having worked around it for 50 years, and like the author before he embarked on this project, I did not know the large part it has played in motoring from the very earliest cars right through every decade up to the 2000s.

The author enlisted as a volunteer in a new museum on Eel Pie Island, where he discovered an unknown connection to his own family history in the form of his great-grandfather, Henry Cornelius Hunter, an engineer boat-builder who was involved in the 1899 New Orleans company. The tale starts with a Dutchman, Johannes Van Toll, a name not known to me, but it seems he was an engineer who worked with Herr Daimler in Germany in the 1880s on the very first engines. These engines were not fitted initially to motor cars, as the prohibitive speed limits applied by the UK discouraged their use, but with motor launches there were no such hinderances. Frederick Simms had established a motor launch company on Eel Pie Island in 1893, where he employed Van Toll as his Chief Engineer to put the engines into his launches, with great success. Van Toll then went on to establish his own car manufacture company, pairing up with a Henry Burford in 1899 under the name of New Orleans Voiturette, which then traded as the Orleans motor company. It was to prove a winning design, being originally based on a Belgian Vivinus, a vis-à-vis car but with his own improvement modi-



fications. It seems there are four survivors of the marque, still out and about.

Thereafter the book chronicles all the motorcar and motorcycle companies discovered and then reported on by the author in sequence of date with a good if not over-long account of all known facts. This information provides fascinating snippets throughout. For instance, I own a Straker-Squire and was indeed surprised to discover that some of their models were assembled in the town.

The second half of the book documents Twickenham's racing heritage, starting with the Emeryson Cars Ltd followed by Bob Spikins, John Willment's racing teams, Bracey Price Racing, a partnership formed between John Bracey and David Price in 1975, Racing Services Partnership, all players in the motorsport scene in the second half of the twentieth century. The Twickenham story certainly reflects the whole country's tale of start-ups and failures due to market forces.

There are plenty of photographs and documents to view, but I was disappointed by the very poor quality of these. Quite why they should be so poor is a mystery in this day and age of quality cameras, scanning and printing, which is a great shame as the contents are worth viewing. It's a small book, A5 in scale, which makes it a great travelling book. There is plenty to discover and it's also good value but, oh! It would be so much better with sharper pictures. But well-researched books like these are the backbone of reference information and it's definitely worth a read.

Panel Repair and Fabrication For Vehicle Restorers

By Bruce Macleod, Crowood Press, 192pp, £24, available from www.crowood.com Reviewed by **FRANK HIGGINS**

For many of us the pleasure of historic cars is working on them. Making, repairing and improving gives us a sense of satisfaction. It is good for us, certainly mentally and often physically. Some of us don't even bother much with driving what we have created, choosing to sell the products of our labours to help fund the next derelict wreck. It is the joy of making, and the satisfaction of achievement that brings with it contentment and happiness.

Ever since it was published in 1957, Wheatley and Morgan's classic *The Restoration of Vintage and Thoroughbred Cars* has provided the inspiration and some of the knowledge of how it is done. But the implication that Wheatley and Morgan give is that, apart from the most simple of operations, panel work is best left to the professional. Since that time there have been a few attempts at panelwork restoration guides – the Osprey series of the 1980s, and a few American publications usually written by somebody called Ron. But in recent times knowledge has been received through video, DVD, or the sometimes dubious source of YouTube.



Bruce Macleod has made a bold attempt to pass on a lifetime of experience and accumulated knowledge with this book. There are ten chapters covering the following: Health and Safety; Tools and Equipment; Materials; Measuring, Marking Out and Cutting Sheet-Metal Panels; Making Patterns, Jigs and Tooling; Forming Flat and Single-Curvature Panels; Forming Double-Curvature Panels; Panel Preparation and Removal; Fitting Repair Panels; and Finishing Repairs. Each is presented in a clear and logical order. Each chapter is well illustrated with a profusion of high-quality colour photographs and illustrations.

Long gone are the days when a happy weekend could be spent with a few bits of second-hand conduit, a sheet or two of aluminium and a box of 'pop' rivets. But as the author shows, that doesn't mean that producing a complete body or repair panels for an historic car is entirely beyond the means or capability of the amateur restorer. The reader should not be put off by the number of tools that the writer describes and uses – although they might be desirable, not all are essential and sometimes a little improvisation is no bad thing.

The most interesting part for any potential panel beater is the chapter covering the art and mystery of the wheeling machine. The author describes, explains and illustrates the process in detail. He does give a couple of examples of how larger panels (a cycle type wing and the wing of a 50s/60s sports car) are created from smaller more easily formed ones. I would have liked to have seen more examples of how to produce such panels, for example a pointed tail, a beetle back, a 'D' back or a full front wing of almost any 1930s saloon. Perhaps even a complete resumé on a full sports car body such as the Riley Lynx, where almost every panel is a compound curve. But that might be another book in itself.

The frontispiece of the book shows a photograph of a nicely engineered prefabricated wheel which might just offer the rigidity those homemade-looking tubular steel affairs lack. Of course, being written by a man of many years' experience, the wheeling machine is always referred to as just that, not that awful Americanism 'the English wheel'. Well worth the cover price, the book contains a lot of accumulated knowledge that the writer is willing to share. So, if you want to give panel work a try, buy the book and have a go. It won't turn you into a Zagato or a Figoni but it will fill you with a little joy. Recommended.

Dear Family…

A true motor racing romance

By Guy Loveridge, 218pp, £40, published by Douglas Loveridge Publications, available from Chaters Motoring Books Reviewed by **EDWARD BICK**

This book breaks your heart. 24-year-old American model and actress Louise King meets English racing driver Peter Collins, gets married within a week then buries him 18 months later. For in August 1958 her husband, and Ferrari driver, takes a corner in Nürburgring too wide, flips the car and dies in hospital that night. Five months later their friend Mike Hawthorn is killed in a car crash on civilian roads. She dusts herself off, gets back to work and then returns to America to live to the age of 88, dying in 2021.

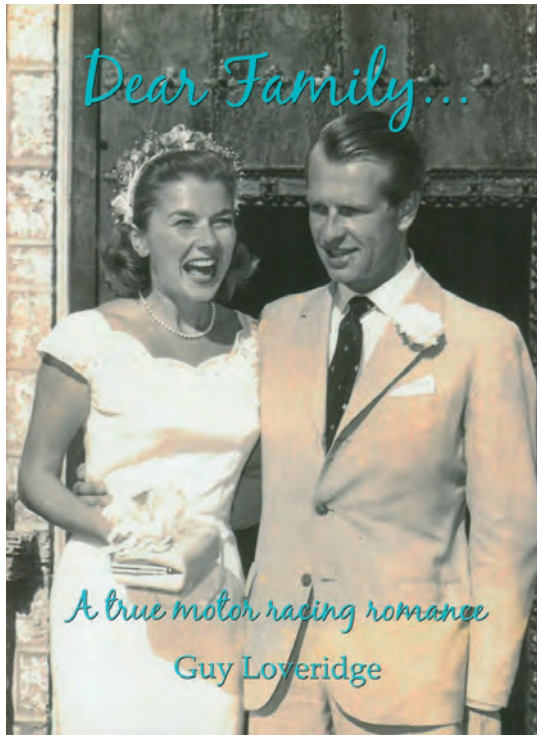
My heart is saddened again as Louise King's name is not on the book cover. For, despite the jacket claiming this book was a 'labour of love' for author Guy Loveridge, the written content comprises almost entirely facsimiles of Louise's letters to her family, both before and after her husband's death. Guy's contribution to the story of this fated romance amounts to two paragraphs plus captions for relevant photographs and newspaper cuttings. The (larger) rest constitutes the 'making of the book' and the story of his own fascination with the Ferrari drivers who suffered such a horrific attrition rate. A time when a death during the race wouldn't stop the winner celebrating.

So, to review 'The Letters of Louise Collins' compiled by Guy Loveridge. Firstly, these are kind, warm and loving letters from a happy daughter to her parents in America. They clearly illustrate that life with Peter involved a lot of travel, living on yachts in Dartmouth and the Mediterranean, and contact with fellow racing drivers and Enzo Ferrari. They meet lots of 'nice' couples and have lots of 'fun'. Peter has various business opportunities that he is exploring and is considering leaving the racetrack for good. Peter's father appreciates the cigars sent from across the Atlantic. After his death (no real direct mention of it in the letters) she reports on sorting out his affairs and making a new, independent life for herself. There are no insights into how the marriage is really going, how much she really feels for Peter, how much his death has affected her or even the nitty-gritty of motorsport.

I almost feel that this sterility adds to the tragedy of it all. For despite this tumultuous 18 months she can only write the most basic of facts such that we fail to gain any detailed knowledge of Peter's personal or professional life.

In the afterword, Guy describes the generosity of Louise who invited him and his wife for drinks and food at her home in Florida. Guy's extended family have a timeshare nearby and his previous books have sold well, we are told. He makes sure we realise that she has ended life with very little. A tiny flat funded by a friend, surrounded by a few memories of her once glamorous life. After her kindness in donating her letters and memorabilia there was no need for this postmortem humiliation.

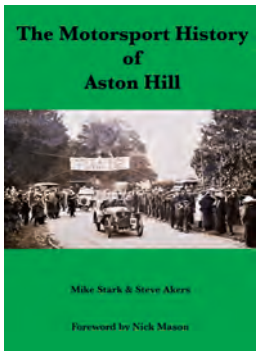
I thank this book for sending me down a rabbit hole – reading up on 1950s Grand Prix racing and watching the 2017 documentary *Ferrari: Race to Immortality*. But, I'm sorry Louise, this publication feels like another part of your life that has let you down.



The Motorsport History of Aston Hill

By Mike Stark and Steve Akers, published by JRB Publishing, 148 pp, £35, available from Chater's Motoring Booksellers, www.chaters.co.uk Reviewed by **STEPHEN KAY**

Aston was not the first hillclimb in the UK, and it is not still in active use. It is however one of the most famous, whose history is traced in this very well illustrated and thoroughly researched volume. This year marks the centenary of the end of speed events on public roads. The famous incident at Kop, just a few miles from Aston, was widely expected, after which the RAC immediately banned such events which caused the cancellation of Aston's climb planned for 16 May 1925. The hill's principal organising club was the Hertfordshire Motor Club, whose name evolved to HCAAC. A very early club, and still active, this was not one of the organising clubs who fell out with the RAC in the early twenties, and whose speed events were subsequently run under ACU regs. Thus HCAAC were not constrained to cars under 1,500cc, and later events featured larger engined cars. The earliest events also saw very large engined machines such as 60hp Napiers.



Results for the pre-1914 meetings depended not solely on the speed of ascent, but often complicated formulae. Results dependent on arcane calculations were never immediately available. Those achieving FTD might in due course find that they ended in a lower position. Cars should have full bodywork and carry a full number of passengers. It appears that Selwyn Edge with one or more Napiers, and Tom Thorneycroft on his Thorneycroft, ignored such regulations, choosing only to seek FTD. HCAAC used Thorneycroft's formula rather than the MAC formula but also G. F. Sharp's extended calculations involving the age and condition of the car and somehow calibrated 'the access of the competitor to trade help in tuning up'. While some venues benefited from local police ignoring the 20mph limit, in 1909 HCAAC introduced a 30-second timed stop and restart to keep down the average speed. This saw Genna and Bayliss on Sunbeams closely competing with Kidner and Hancock on Vauxhalls. It was not until 1912 that Cecil Bianchi and Hubert Woods came down from Manchester for Crossleys to join in.

The October 1910 event saw the Motor Cycle Section using a most unusual approach, the two runs being taken first at the slowest and then the fastest speeds possible, the difference demonstrating the greatest flexibility. Did this provide the basis for one of the Madresfield tests? There was a class in the April 1910 event for pre-1907 machines reported in the motorcycling press as for 'ancients and crocks'.

The post-WWI events did not pretend to keep below 20 mph, and competing machines were not dissimilar to those to be seen at Shelsey and Prescott this year. Lionel Martin was no longer driving the Singer, but another far more famous car of his own manufacture. Some events were Inter Varsity hillclimbs for the sons of the wealthy. The book's use of period results allows the enthusiastic historian to delve into great detail and to observe the rapid evolution of competing machines, and the great changes brought about by the engineering advances of WWI. For example in 1904, Edge's FTD 20hp Napier could rev to 1,000 rpm, and manage 1 min $27^{3}/_{5}$ secs, while in 1924 the 1,500cc Bugatti of Raymond Mays, apparently tuned to nearly 6,000 revs, ascended in 46.6 secs.

The organisers benefited from the hospitality of various members of the Rothschild family. While their kindness was much acknowledged, their name does not appear in results. Lionel Rothschild put his 60hp Mercedes up Sun Rising in 1904 then drove it to Rome and back. In 1906 he ascended Pentyrch Hill, but perhaps he feared disapproval of relatives by competing very close to home.

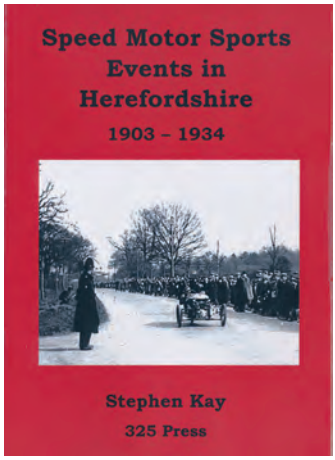
There are brief biographic notes: W. Barlow is mentioned as having been interned during WWII for being an active supporter of Mosley. If this reviewer has one reservation it is a reference to Dorothy Levitt as possibly being Selwyn Edge's mistress. Levitt was a very skilled, brave and successful competition motorist. Perhaps Levitt, who died tragically young, should be recognised for her achievements [*a short biography of Levitt was published to mark the centenary of her death in 2022 – see review in* Bulletin *318, p. 97. Ed*]. Otherwise a splendid volume, the prefect addition to the shelves for later in the year when the evenings draw in, and further comparison of times can keep us amused. Or perhaps stir up more research to unearth the score and lyrics of Gordon McMinnies's 1914 song 'Motoring Nouveau'.

A Brief History of Motor Sporting Events in Herefordshire 1903–1934

By Stephen Kay, 142pp, £15 including p&p, available from the author at stevekaytwo@btinternet.com Reviewed by **DICK WILKINSON**

For several years, Stephen Kay has been organising most agreeable tours taking in the venues of historic motor sport events in Herefordshire and adjacent counties. Each of these events has followed a period of research into the relevant historical events which has been published to their participants. The crowning glory of these tours was that organised to commemorate the centenary of the last Hereford Speed Trial, which was held on 4 April 1925, about a week after such events had been banned (see report, p. 60).

To accompany this centenary tour, 325 Press has published a softback book of 142 pages describing many motor sporting events that took place in Herefordshire in the veteran, Edwardian, vintage and early post-vintage period. While it would be misleading to suggest that the county was the national centre for such events, many of them attracted sports men and women from across the country. Stephen Kay takes us through the story of the clubs that organised events with pictures of their badges. It seems that their relationship with the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland (later the RAC) was not always harmonious and many of the events described were run under the auspices of the ACU. A preponderance of motorcycle entries was not unusual.



The two hillclimb sites in the county were Dinmore Hill on the A49 between Hereford and Leominster where reported competition started in 1903 and Fromes Hill on the A4103 Worcester road. Both hills were included in the ACGBI Small Car Trials of 1904, that was a major event based in the city. In 1911, the Prinz-Heinrich-Fahrt passed through affording the citizens the sight of the large touring cars of the day. The Hereford Automobile Club adjusted the tone in 1913 by holding a Cyclecar Reliability Trial, that despite its almost oxymoronic title, seems to have been successful, gold medals being collected by Clifton Keiller of GWK and H. F. S. Morgan, who had entered an experimental four-speed car.

The sprints of 1923 to 1925 were held along straight level roads to the east and west of the city and attracted large crowds of spectators and several works entries. Individual events are described and the story of the magnificent City of Hereford Trophy explained. It remains on display in the Mayor's Parlour in the Town Hall. Steve Kay's book is copiously illustrated with period photographs, many of which were new to this reviewer. It provides an unusual insight into early provincial motor sport that is excellent value at £15 including post and packaging.

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The Cyclecar: Volume One

Issues 1–10, 1912–13, Republished by Cally Callomon and the Antar Press, 328pp, £35, available from www.alimentation.cc Reviewed by **MATTHEW BELL**

If you ever end up in prison or lost in the jungle after a plane crash or even just broken down by the side of the road for a long period of time, this is the book you will want to have with you. Not because it will help you with any of those three predicaments in any practical way (unless you were driving a Bédélia) but because it will ease the passage of otherwise tedious hours by completely absorbing your attention. To collectors of early motoring magazines the contents may be familiar, as it is a straightforward facsimile of the first ten issues of *The Cyclecar* magazine, covering those halcyon two years before the start of the Great War, 1912 and 1913.

The project was conceived and executed by Cally Callomon, that well known Renaissance man from remote East Anglia who does other interesting things like managing the estate of the late singer Nick Drake and collecting Trabants. In the foreword he thanks Peter Card for supplying the original editions of the magazines, which Cally scanned, resisting any temptation 'to re-touch, embellish, improve or alter'. The paper stock of the originals changed from issue to issue, which is reflected in the full-colour reproductions 'in the hope that this may move the reader close to the experience of the turning the original pages without it falling apart by doing so'.

And so here is that rarest thing – a piece of ephemera dating over 112 years old but which you can chuck about and read in the bath without feeling guilty. If you have never read *The Cyclecar* before, you are in for a treat. It does what all good motoring magazines should do – take their subject matter both very but also not at all seriously. Articles with titles such as 'Rapid But Sound Progress!' and 'Three Days on a Humberette' are interspersed with copious adverts, photographs, cartoons, drawings and technical illustrations all of which have a certain swivel-eyed zaniness about them.

Sometimes you can't be entirely sure that the magazine is not parodying itself, for example when it runs yet another breathless article extolling a loony new steering or braking system comprising what appears to be a few rubber bands wrapped around some chopped up wine corks held together with paper clips. Take this description of the Condor three-wheeler cyclecar, which we learn is 'bristling with novel features': 'The machine, which is very original, has three wheels disposed in the form of an isosceles triangle, that at the apex taking the drive whilst the other two, which form the front and rear extremities of the machine, are both utilized for steering. In this way a steering action is obtained which is theoretically perfect.' One wonders if the presence of the word 'theoretically' in that sentence sounded as forceful an alarm bell in the reader's mind in period as it does to us today.

But that is precisely the joy of *The Cyclecar*, and all those other early motoring magazines – they convey the Labrador-like enthusiasm that permeated this remarkable age of invention, before Herbert Austin came along and showed us all how it should really be done, if you actually want to get anywhere on time and not covered in oil. This book is excellent for dipping into but also for getting properly stuck into for hours on end. If you pursue the latter, you may find yourself entering a trance-like state of Edwardian fervour from which it may be a wrench to emerge, especially as articles frequently veer off into delightful non-motoring territory such as the best place to stop for a cream tea in Aylesbury. Come the next war to end all wars, I can think of no better source of distraction.



Light Car Menus

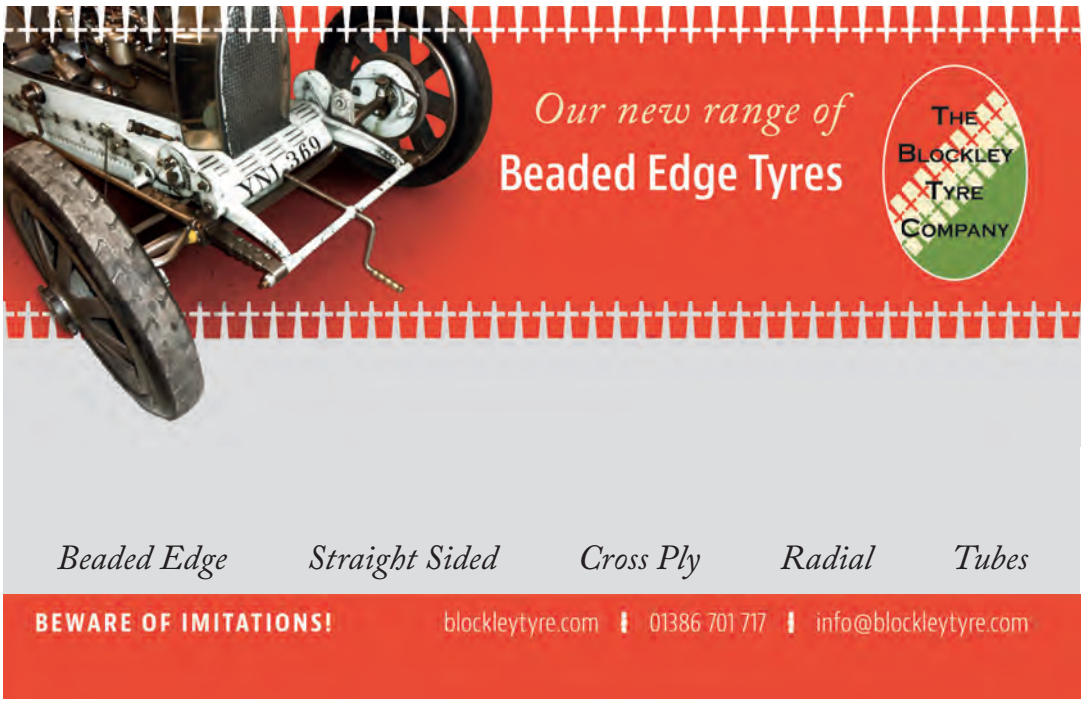
1975–2025

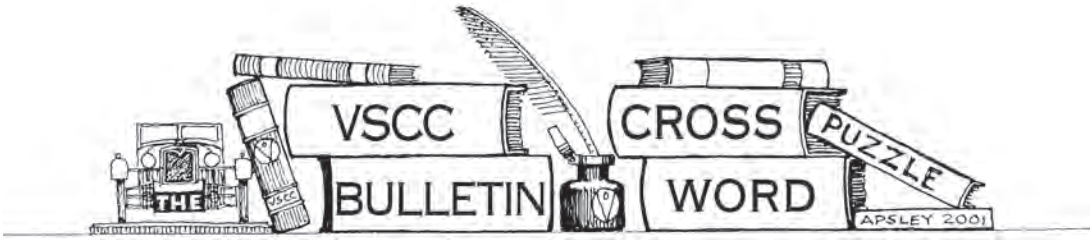
By James Peacop, published by Carfax, £12 including p&p, available by email from Annabel Jones at annabel.jones@carfaxltd.co.uk Reviewed by **MATTHEW BELL**

The Light Car and Edwardian Section of the VSCC has been going to Wales for as long as anyone can remember. It's a weekend of jollity at some point towards the end of March or beginning of April, usually when the clocks go forward, which gives everyone a jolt on the Sunday morning when they realise they have had one hour's less sleep and are now late for their first trials hill. They also, at this point, remember having spent a jolly evening in the company of other Light Car folk in the dining room of the Metropole Hotel, rounded off by some amusing speeches and a bit of an awards ceremony. Folded up in their jacket pocket or handbag will be the menu, an A5 booklet with cartoons by James Peacop on a suitably whimsical Light Car theme.

Over the years, these illustrations have evolved to feature word searches, 'spot the difference' puzzles, and even on one occasion, a build-your-own origami Austin Seven.

Someone noticed the other day that Peacop's wonderful drawings have been appearing in the dinner menus for half a century, so Tim Jones, who runs a printing press, and in fact prints the menus every year, has assembled them all into a book. This splendid volume has been enhanced with the addition of short essays by Roger Collings (Edwardians) and Ian Patton (Confessions of a LC&ES Scrutineer) as well as a bit by Peacop on how he became a cartoonist. This niche publication will be of interest primarily to those who attended the dinners, for whom it will provide much enjoyment and nostalgia (remember the Abernant Lake hotel days?). But one ventures to suggest that it would also entertain those who have never been, such is the universal appeal of Peacop's cartoons and the originality and wit with which he infuses every drawing. The book is beautifully produced and would make the perfect stocking filler, a bargain at just £12 delivered.





Lots of entries for 96, which as many pointed out contained a deliberate mistake in the form of an extra white square. As any avant garde designer will tell you, creative white space is a vital part of a magazine. Many shaded it in while John Buckley suggested two additional clues and words to fit it. Dick Preston took exception to the answer to 7A, 'halo', saying: 'I have always understood such outrageous headgear to be awarded to demonstrators of superior moral integrity, which frankly doesn't seem to entirely match the profile of at least a number of F1 drivers.' Ed Swain found his subconscious stirred by Barnes and Beverley while David Jones found himself distracted from writing a book about Clement Talbots. The winner of the VSCC mug is David Keen of Harpenden – congratulations. Entries for 97 may be sent by email to vscc.editor@gmail.com or by post to the Editor's new home, 12 Wellington Square, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 1PB. And don't read too much into 3D. Good luck!

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Answers and winner in the next *Bulletin*.

Answers to Crossword No. 96

Across

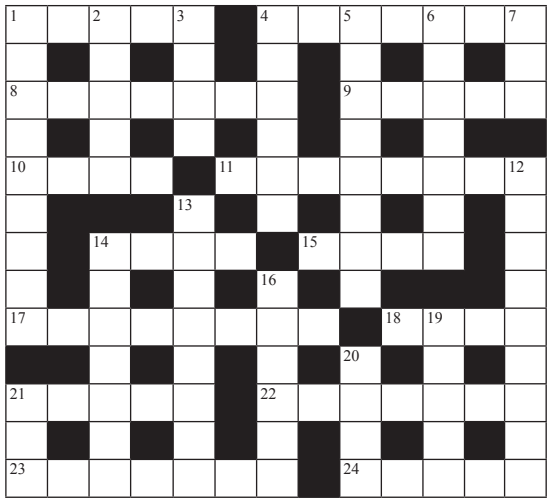
7 Halo 8 Lorraine 9 Galloway 10 Peel 11 Barnes 13 Leered 14 Walter 17 Wilson 19 Ugli 20 Beverley 22 Einstein 23 Cone

Down

1 Canada 2 Coil 3 Clowns 4 Argyll 5 Campbell 6 Annexe 12 Nattiest 15 Anglia 16 Rubies 17 Waving 18 Oceans 21 Rack

Origination and printing by Quorum: Corinium House, Barnwood Point, Corinium Avenue, Gloucester, GL4 3HX
Tel: 01242 584984.Website: www.quorumprint.co.uk

Crossword number 97



Across

1. Decrees made in Italy (5)
4. See 1 down
8. A motorcycle scramble could end life (7)
9. See 1 down
10. Fish caught in steel skiffs (4)
11. The Red Knight in motor racing (8)
14. Sports car depicted in trad art either way (4)
15. Out, right out, for a trip (4)
17. Sounds like people stealing underwear (8)
18. An oversized Austin? (4)
21. Removal vehicle contains combustion (5)
22. Chief Engineer for 14 down who went on to produce his own cars in the twenties (7)
23. Stirs up arrangement for those that like originality (7)
24. Like an ice cream receptacle (5)

Down

1, 4 across, and 9 across. Founder of the RAC (9,7,5)
2. The terrible part of an unlawful assembly (5)
3. Workshop found in our posh editor's garden (4)
4. Way out of town (6)
5. Throw a club to make a cylinder block (4,4)
6. A bit of Adam met Ernie in the dashboard (7)
7. Could be caused by a lack of alcohol (3)
12. Nice litho created in the stone age (9)
13. Those on a long hike to find Spock (8)
14. A milder form of motor car (7)
16. The President's winning cards (6)
19. Anglia left out once more (5)
20. Smooth gear changes, in short (4)
21. Worthy of six, quietly (3)

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THE BULLETIN

OF THE

VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB

NO. 329 AUTUMN 2025



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VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB LIMITED

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Hurray for top-down motoring

A curiosity of the Vintage car market is that saloons are almost always cheaper than their open-topped equivalents. A Riley Nine Monaco Saloon can be bought for a four-figure sum, half what you'd pay for a MKIV Tourer, while a late 1920s 'Alvista' can be had for even less, and a fraction of, say, a Cross & Ellis Tourer. This is the opposite of when these cars were new, as 'rag tops' were generally the cheaper option, while saloons represented comfort and luxury and were therefore more expensive.

But it makes sense that, today, an open-topped vintage car is more desirable. It comes with that priceless wind-in-the-hair feeling that you can only get when bombing along a country lane with the hood down. Of all the many thrills that vintage motoring offers, this is the greatest. It is a life-affirming experience, a joy probably only bettered by flying a Tiger Moth on a clear day. In an age when most forms of transport have lost their glamour or excitement, to feel a connection with nature *and* a machine as you get from A to B is unique.

So it's intriguing to read that sales of modern convertibles are in steep decline. According to recent figures, there has been an 83% drop in sales of new convertibles since 2004, from 94,484 to just 12,173 last year. As a consequence, manufacturers are reducing the number of open-top models they offer, with only 16 new convertible models currently on the market. Of the 30 most popular British car makers, two-thirds are not offering one at all.

One can perhaps understand the reasons for this, given the rise in popularity of the SUV, the increased volume of traffic, and prevalence of diesels with their unpleasant fumes. As an everyday commuting car, a draughty convertible is less attractive than a homogenised box with built-in sound system. The decline in sales of open cars also coincides with a fall in second car ownership post-pandemic, with more households choosing to own a single multi-purpose vehicle, especially as more people work from home.

All of which means the open-top vintage car will become an ever more desirable proposition. This summer the VSCC has put on 13 tours, with three more this autumn, all of which have proved extremely popular. But we are not just fair-weather motorists, as our busy winter schedule of trials, driving tests and pub meets attests to. This a club that champions the constant use of 100-year-old cars, whether open or closed, and enables thousands of like-minded people to do so. It is a remarkable achievement, and one for which we should all be grateful. And how lucky we are that, on any given day, we are able to hop into a vintage car and experience the real thrill of the road, one that statistically, it seems, fewer people will.

THE BULLETIN OF THE VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB

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Cover: *One of the VSCC's all-time heroes, David Marsh, died on 5 June 2025, aged 90. David served as president in the 1990s and was instrumental in moving the club's headquarters to The Old Post Office in Chipping Norton, which helped the club grow. He was best known for his enthusiasm for Vauxhall 30-98s, meticulously recording and updating the whereabouts of each car, always able to identify a 30-98 owner by their chassis number. A winner of the Lycett Trophy, he was an indefatigable competitor in every discipline, especially driving tests, vigorously campaigning his Brescia Bugatti to the last. His enthusiasm, knowledge and good humour will be missed, and our thoughts are with Mary, Richard, Paula, William and Hester. See obituary p. 86 (Club archive)*

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Tom's finest Montlhéry moment



You might not guess at first glance that this Edwardian tourer is a Model T Ford, but look more closely at the radiator and you see that that is what it is. It sports unusually attractive coachwork with an elaborate paint scheme, and has two Union Jack flags jammed into the lanterns on the scuttle. The photograph was apparently taken in France and is one of many delightful images in the vast collection of Model T Ford photographs belonging to Neil Tuckett, many of which are published in a new volume on the car, which we review on p. 98. Presumably the person taking the photograph is the mother of the five children, or six if you include the boy far right (Neil Tuckett collection)

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Sidelights

VSCC wedding bells

Hats off to Mat Roberts and Minna Peake, two enthusiastic young members who met through trialling and were married earlier this summer. Naturally there had to be a vintage car at the wedding, and the entrance of the bride and groom in their Austin Seven Chummy caused much mirth. Mother of the bride and *Bulletin* correspondent Annie Peake reports that 'There was only one casualty and that was the edge of someone's handbag.'



David Marsh's funeral

All Saint's Church Youlgreave was full with the Marsh family, local friends and Club members. The eulogy was written by Mary and delivered by Richard's brother-in-law, Mike Villiers-Stuart. Youlgreave, and the wake, was graced, of course, by manifold 30-98s and humbler vintage cars. A great deal of time and love were obviously put into all the arrangements by Richard, Paula and the family. It was especially pleasing to see Sally Marsh and Di Threlfall. David would have been very proud of everyone. I most certainly was.

Roger Collings

Beware phishing texts

Lorna Mountford writes in to warn members to be careful after she was targeted by a 'phishing' text in relation to her Wolseley Hornet. She writes: 'We've all seen them, those Phishing Texts on our phones telling us we are owed money and to click on a link. They are usually easy to spot. Well, I recently had such a text but the specificity to me was remarkable. It said: "ALERT: WOLSELEY HORNET – 1931 Reg: JW600. You could be owed up to £16K. Find out how much you could get here", and then a link. The remarkable element is that they specifically mention the make, year and reg of my car – and clearly have my phone number. To my knowledge there are very few people/companies that have that information. I have a very low internet presence and no social media presence so I can't imagine some AI tool would have joined these dots up. My insurers are my primary suspect. Has anyone else had a classic car related phishing text such as this? If you have please get in touch, perhaps we can find a common link from where our data has been leaked. My email is info@swallowregister.org. Most of all though – always be on the alert for such fraudulent texts (or emails of a similar ilk). They get ever more believable and in our busy lives it can be easy to get taken in.'

Chitty Exhibition

Following last issue's editorial in praise of the film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, Rob Rhodes spotted this

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poster for an exhibition currently running until November at Mottisfont Abbey near Romsey in Hampshire. Featuring over 80 original illustrations and John Burningham's complete set shown together for the first time, it looks nothing short of Truly Scrumptious. Thank you Rob.

Artificial Intelligence

Rupert De Salis writes in to share his experience of AI when applied to old car magazines and how their accumulated knowledge could be used to help us in future. He says: 'The Lagonda Club has scanned hundreds of magazines, dating back to the first issue in 1954, many of which contain useful technical articles, explaining how to diagnose, dismantle and repair our unique cars. However, it's not immediately obvious how to find what you need so I created what I call a "Semantic Reasoning Model", what some might call a "chatbot" and of course we called it Wilbur. It uses AI to answer technical questions by referring to the technical articles in the magazines.

'You can ask Wilbur about any Lagonda-related problem and it comes back with several possible root causes, and gives you links to each magazine, at the correct page, for each relevant source it has found. Having created the SRM, I applied it to a problem we've been chasing on our blown 2-litre for a few years – it loses power suddenly when climbing a long hill at full throttle. Ah, you say, fuel starvation; and yes, we did have air ingress before the AC fuel pump, but we fixed all that, and yet it still happened. Lots of time and trouble have gone into trying to fix it. Well, the SRM pointed us towards preignition, which we never even thought of. As it happens, it does make sense; this car has a more effective Cozette supercharger than most (one that I wrote about some years ago, see *Bulletin* 307, Spring 2020), and since a rebuild in the 1980s it also has the unblown pistons which slightly increase the CR, and lastly the blown car specifies a significantly higher spark advance than the unblown car and it's difficult to feel when you are overdoing the ignition advance, because the response to the advance lever is so flat, and it doesn't audibly pink.

'Incidentally, I never understood why supercharging would mandate *more* spark advance until Gus Gingell, of Gingell Aerospace, worked on the car and finally fixed the air ingress. From his aeroplane experience, he told me that magnetos in supercharged engines sometimes can't deliver enough spark energy close to TDC and therefore the ignition must be advanced more than otherwise indicated. Anyway, I thought preignition might be possible and I would give it a try, so I went up the "test hill" one last time and tried it with retarded ignition, to reduce the chance of preignition. Lo and behold, it sailed up with no problem, where every other attempt resulted in a sudden loss of power feeling exactly like fuel starvation.

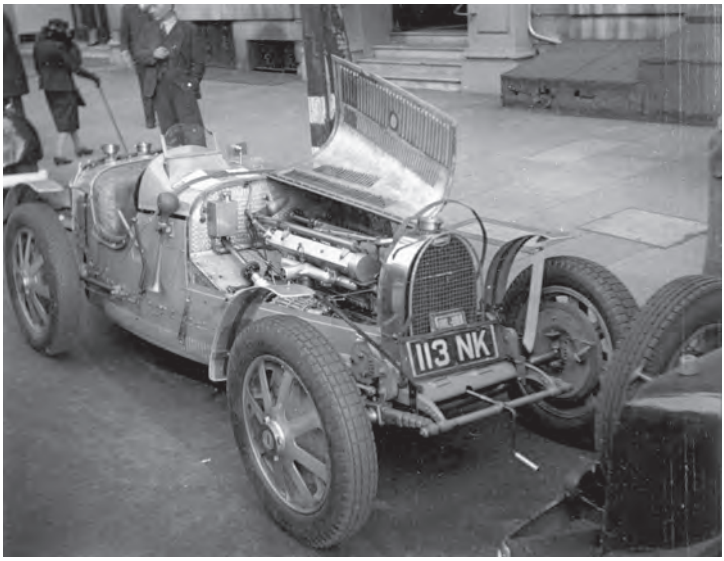
'So, long story short – AI pointed us to a problem we had never even thought about, by connecting articles from the magazines to a general knowledge of linkages between long hills, heating, superchargers, hot plugs and preignition.

'My journey into AI has been unexpected but very interesting. After some intensive training, I was amazed to find out: a) how much can be done today that was not available even two years ago, b) how much an "individual contributor" can achieve, and c) how amazingly little is yet being done in the auto industry, my natural home.

'It may sound like a slight improvement on a keyword or phrase search, but it's not. The ability to consider a complex idea, see what is available, pull together information from different sources and synthesise them all into a focused answer, is way beyond anything a keyword search can do, and when you have your own database, it can do far more than even the AI tools you can access online. The techniques behind Wilbur could be applied to other car marques, light aircraft, or any commercial organization that has a body of proprietary knowledge, not released to the web, and a group of experts who need to access it. And yet to my amazement it isn't being widely done. Or not yet.'

Kerbside Encounters

Some more photographs of prewar cars when they were still in everyday use, from the collection of **MATT SHEPHERD**



Right: A Type 51 Bugatti showing off its twin-cam engine on an unknown street and running on trade plates. The distinctive stripe and horn lead me to believe this is chassis 51155 which was a works car for the 1933 season before later being owned by King Leopold of Belgium. In 1939 it was gifted by Ettore Bugatti to the Bugatti Owners Club as a car for its members. During the war the BOC decided to sell the car and Peter Monkhouse bought it and competed with it when hostilities had finished. In Dunstable on his wedding day in June 1947, Monkhouse crashed the Bugatti in a high-speed head-on collision with a lorry. Fortunately there were no serious injuries but the car was written off and parts were later used in a rebuild.

Below: On a Bournemouth street in August 1951 is this Alvis Speed 25 SC, registered GKA 22. Chassis 14609 left the factory after war had commenced in February 1940 to its Liverpool agents William Watson & Co Ltd, who found a local buyer in Lt. Col. R. H. Gregory.

In 1946 it was owned by a Jack Taylor of Tiverton and is pictured in his ownership but by the end of the ’50s the car was in America, where it remains. As can be seen here, at some point the Charlesworth body was modified with the wings altered, spare wheel removed from the side, front bumper changed and the headlamps replaced by Marchals and put in a lower position. The car remains in this slightly modified guise.

Below: Freestone & Webb bodied this Speed Six Bentley which was sold new to Captain C. Devaynes Smyth. This four-light Weymann saloon still survives with this body and its original engine. The rear quarter lights as shown in the photo are a later modification. This car was auctioned by Gooding & Co in their 2022 London auction.







Above: This handsome Minerva Type AK was registered in London in 1930, and is a 32/34hp model which had a six-litre Knight-type six-cylinder sleeve-valve engine. I have not been able to identify the coachwork but if by a UK coachbuilder at a guess it could be Elkington's, who seemed to body a number of these, some in a similar style with an angled windscreen.



Right: Pictured in Kingston-upon-Thames in June 1953 is this Frazer Nash Interceptor, which the note on the reverse states is black with green wheels. At the time it was owned by an A. G. Coulson who bought the car in 1933 before selling it in the late '60s. This car was originally owned by Brooklands racer Miss Cynthia Sedgwick and was bodied by the little-known coachbuilder G. Wylder of Kew. It retains this body today with the car remaining in a very original condition. MV 502 was sold to America in the early 1980s and recently changed hands when sold via Bonhams in 2023.



Right: Taken in Lewisham in 1964 is this Sunbeam 20.9 saloon with coachwork by Arthur Mulliner. XV 2101 survives to this day.



Bob Dykes's Whistling Billy recreation makes silent but spectacular progress through the bluebell woods (Steve Welsh)

Wiscombe Park

Bluebells bloomed and a record was broken on yet another superb day at this favourite East Devon hill, as **ROB RHODES** *reports*

Spring is my favourite time of the year. Our natural world comes alive after its winter dormancy. The trees wake up, opening their flowers and unfurling new leaves. The daffodils of March give way to the bluebells of May, and what an abundance we had at Wiscombe Park, where as usual the club held its first hillclimb of the season, this year on Sunday 11 May.

The setting is a stunning mix of open parkland and mixed woodland with that carpet of bluebells, always in full bloom for our meeting. The event takes place on the driveway of Wiscombe House, which became a hillclimb venue thanks to the vision of Major Richard Chichester who owned the estate and held the first hillclimb in 1958. The first VSCC event followed in 1983. Still a thriving estate owned by the Chichester family, it is now renowned for its award-winning cider, as declared by the Bullnose Morris van that advertises 'Devon's Best' cider.

I have been competing at Wiscombe for over fifteen years. Well, I say competing, what I really mean is taking part. My trusty ride is an Austin 7 EA Sports (Ulster) and I am to be found in Class One usually challenging for slowest time of the day. I am competitive against my own times from previous events, but year on year I appear to be getting slower – not that the handicapper has noticed.



David Morris in R11B: he was narrowly pipped (Steve Welsh)



Harry Baxter finished second in Class Two in the HRG (Steve Welsh)



Graham White's Hyper won best standard vintage in Class Four (Mark Ballard)



David Saxl surveys the paddock from his Riley TT Sprite (Steve Welsh)

The morning of Wiscombe started bright and early as I drove over the border from Dorset into the wooded rolling hills of East Devon. The drive is always a pleasure: the roads are quiet, the sun often shines, and the local wildlife is still going about its early morning business. I arrived in plenty of time to finalise the car preparation – apply the numbers, attach the timing strut, fold the windscreen flat (must be worth an extra second) and remove the spare tyre and tools. Then the game of 'stalking the scrutineer' starts. Always a tricky sport of trying to get noticed and be ready without seeming too forceful and jumping the queue. The scrutineers are always very helpful and friendly so it doesn't take long before the checks are complete, and another sticker can be added to the car's palmares. Like a badge of honour, the interior of the car is covered in scrutineering stickers from past events going back many years. Then it's time for breakfast – a bacon roll from one of the on-site concessions before the practice runs take place. The early competitors enjoyed bright sunshine and a nice dry track until the heavens opened just as the faster machinery was taking to the track. What a time for the long spring drought to finally come to an end. The sun returned and dried out the track in some places but left it wet under the trees, providing tricky conditions for the afternoon timed runs.

Wiscombe Park continues to nurture young talent thanks to the support of the Bonham Christie family who sponsor the entry fee for all young competitors and provide a trophy for the under-30s. In memory of Richard Bonham Christie, the Bonham Christie Trophy is awarded annually to the driver under 30 who achieves fastest time on their handicap at the event. This year Wilf Cawley took the trophy after driving the GN/Ford Piglet to a new sports-car record. Wilf had a very successful day, also taking home Fastest Young Driver, Fastest Vintage and Fastest Sports Car. The much-coveted Fastest Time of the Day went to Ian Baxter in his single-seat Alta.

Will Marsh was among the first to take to the hill and he set a storming pace in Class One, dipping under the minute barrier on his first competitive run. By the time the second runs came round, the course was almost completely dry and he took the class victory with a blistering time of 57.35 – less than a second off the class record. Jonathan Layzell put up a fine performance in his first VSCC hillclimb, having visited Wiscombe as a spectator since childhood. His Gordon England Cup replica took second in Class One with a time of 67.25.

Class record holder Nigel Dowding took the Class Two crown in his Riley Brooklands with a time of 55.03, although he faced stiff opposition from Harry Baxter in the 1939 HRG 1100, which recorded a very credible time of 56.2. Frazer Nashes account for most of Class Three, with Patrick Blakeney-Edwards's winning time of 50.47 in his Super



A trio of 30-98s in Class Six, Erika Pilkington's being fastest (Steve Welsh)



John Fack's Railton: not as pretty as a 30-98, but much faster (Steve Welsh)



A great addition to any motor house (Steve Welsh)

Sports only a few tenths off the class record. Sue Darbyshire squeezed her much campaigned Morgan Super Aero into second amongst the 'Nashes. Vijay Mallya's immaculate BMW 328 arguably made the best sound of any car at the event and he took first handicap in Class Four, but overall honours fell to Mike Pallett's Lea-Francis S-Type Hyper on 58.72. A trio of Vauxhall 30-98s cut quite a dash in Class Six – particularly Erika Pilkington's car, which had been fitted with a very elegant boat tail body in period, after the original rear bodywork had succumbed to the rigours of driving back from Persia with its first owner. She finished second in class and First Vintage, but John Fack put in a storming drive to wrestle the



VE day was commemorated by a line-up of military vehicles (Steve Welsh)

big Railton Light Sports up the hill in 57.57 – nearly a second off his best practice run, but enough to take the class win by some 14 seconds.

In Class Seven a car that caught everyone's attention was Bob Dyke's 1905 White Steam Car, *Whistling Billy*. A faithful recreation of a car that was the 'fastest car in America' at the time, winning all the races it finished whilst having many an incident along the way. The original car was destroyed in an accident during practice for a race at Portland, Oregon, when the car was broken in half and subsequently left to rot. The recreation attracted much attention as it climbed up the hill in near silence with only a faint whistle to be heard followed by a long trail of steam. Bob would go on to pick up second place in the field of Edwardians, splitting John Deveuve's 1913 Singer and Tim Harrison's 1911 De Dion Bouton Type de Course. Class Eight was dominated by Tim Stamper's very rapid Riley Brooklands replica on 55.99, but there was a close fight behind, between the Rileys, Austin Sevens and Amilcars, only five seconds separating nine cars. Meanwhile, the Riley 12/4s had a fantastic battle in Class Nine, Michael James taking the victory on 51.03.

Class 10 was the first to see a sub-50 second time posted during the competitive runs, with Wilf Cawley putting in a very entertaining drive to win on 49.03, a second and a half ahead of dad Dougal. The post-war sports car class was down to one entrant,



The delightful De Dion of Tim Harrison (Mark Ballard)



Best Edwardian was John Deveuve's Singer (Steve Welsh)



Ethan Harris (Riley) was among the fastest in Class Eight (Steve Welsh)



Tom Golland cornering hard in the Morgan Aero (Mark Ballard)

Michael Scott, who posted a 58.26 in his Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica. Meanwhile, Finley Hope-Cameron took the small capacity racing car class in the Morgan Three-Wheeler on 51.33. Michael James took the under 1500cc racing car class in the ever-rapid Riley Cotton Special on 48.39 under heavy pressure from Edward Williams, who took First Vintage in his Frazer Nash Super Sports on 49.96. Ian Baxter captured FTD in the single-seat Alta whilst taking the Class 15 honours, on 47.75, but David Morris was close behind in his ERA, R11B. The large-engined prewar racing cars were led by Tom Waterfield in the GN Harlequin on 50.53, just ahead of Robin Harcourt-Smith in the Norris Special. Moving into the postwar cars, Alan Harrison took the racing car class in his Cooper T56 on 51.86. Simon Taylor was the only entrant in the pre-1961 sports-racing class, emitting a fantastic V8 roar on his way to a time of 53.5 in the ex-Stirling Moss HWM Stovebolt Special. There was also a strong turnout of 500cc Formula 3 cars – the VSCC meeting on Sunday being run back-to-back with the highly successful 500 Owners Club round on Saturday. Harry Painter came out on top, his time of 49.25 besting Hamish Cameron-Eveleigh by just over half a second.

As for me, I had a thoroughly enjoyable day, meeting with like-minded enthusiasts, admiring the cars and managing not to achieve slowest time of the day. Please, don't tell the handicapper.



Peter Loxton uses F3 balancing techniques on Sawbench (Steve Welsh)



Ian Baxter won FTD in the Alta with a run of 47.75 (Steve Welsh)



Louis McNair tends to the GN Katipo (Steve Welsh)



Rufus Flann waits his turn in the Frazer Nash Super Sports (Steve Welsh)



David McRobert at Harewood on 7 June 2025 where he won his class (Bertram Hill)

A Beginner's Guide to VSCC Speed Events

Following our popular beginner's guide to racing by Gerry Richards in the Spring Bulletin*,* **DAVID MCROBERT** *explains how to get into hill climbing and sprints*

Just thinking about writing this article for such an august body as the VSCC makes me both excited and, quite frankly, a little nervous. After all, a beginner is someone with little or no experience – and 'no experience' was me when I decided (after some careful encouragement) to enter my first competitive hill climb back in 2023. I had had a brief taster at a Covid-era VSCC Prescott track day in 2020, where I did OK and really enjoyed myself, so I foolishly let encouragement from my good friend Andrew MacDonald convince me that it was now the time to have a proper go.

So, in May 2023, I entered the 500 Owners Association event at a beautiful sun-clad Wiscombe Park, as a warm-up before my first VSCC speed event the very next day. My noble steed? A 1934 3½-litre Derby Bentley Special – an impressive machine with a lightweight aluminium body, a shortened chassis and pretty much standard mechanicals. Eddie Hall may have made Derby Bentley glory look effortless in the 1930s (and even 1950 at Le Mans), but I found my mind was too preoccupied trying to avoid any mechanical mishaps or track excursions that could result in a major financial headache and the marital strife that would likely quickly follow.

Before the end of 2023 I gave the Bentley one more outing at the Prescott Long Course, but by then I'd come to a simple conclusion: I loved hill climbing and wanted to carry on – but in a car that I felt would better suit my budget if I did break something significant. Enter stage left a Riley 12/4 Special courtesy of speed event retiree Steve Riddington, and with it, my genuine first season as a VSCC hill climber beckoned. Many thanks Steve.

Dipping a Toe In

If you're even slightly curious about hill climbs, go to one. Better still, go to a few. Wander around, talk to drivers, officials and marshals, poke your nose under bonnets. The paddock is incredibly friendly, the cars are fascinating, and in my experience you'll always be warmly welcomed – especially if you're friendly and interested and buy the coffee.

Next, consider attending a hill climb school. You don't need a performance car – in fact absolutely any car will do just fine. You don't even need a helmet – they'll lend you one. For around £250, you get classroom instruction, a detailed track walk, 10 or more runs up the hill, and expert coaching. Honestly, it's one



Taking part in a hillclimb school at Shelsley in 2022 in the Bentley



The Shelsley Hillclimb School Class of '22 – it's a great way to learn

of the best ways to figure out whether hill climbing is for you and whether you're up for the challenge.

I've now done the hill climb schools at Prescott and Shelsley multiple times, and more recently Harewood. They were all excellent and each time I've come away having learned something – mostly about how much I still don't know.

A highlight? Sitting beside Scott Moran – six-time British Hill Climb Champion – as we hurtled up Prescott in a standard(ish) Lotus Elise. Smooth, incredibly quick, precise and unlike his passenger, utterly calm. It was like watching a master class in precision driving by someone who seemed to have all the time in the world. If ever I needed a lesson on the enormity of what I still needed to learn, this was it. Thanks Scott.

So, You Want to Compete?

Excellent. Here's the admin bit. To enter a VSCC hill climb or sprint, you'll basically need:

- An MSUK RS Interclub licence (free, no test needed, but possibly a medical if you're in a more senior age bracket, like me).
- Safety kit: FIA-approved helmet, balaclava, overalls and gloves. Boots, socks and fireproof undergarments are recommended, but optional, but if worn must also be FIA compliant.
- A car with a VSCC buff form (eligibility document). Probably allow a good time to get one issued via the VSCC on-line application process.

Once that's sorted, your car and kit must satisfy future scrutineers. Requirements include:

- Marked ignition / battery cut-off switch
- Working lights (for road cars)
- Noise levels within specified limits
- Towing points clearly marked front and rear
- Timing strut of a specific size and height
- Lock-wired sump/gearbox/axle drain plugs
- 1-litre catch tanks for both oil and water (assuming water cooled)
- And no spare wheel fitted (unless you're a Class Seven Edwardian – I must ask why!).

Choosing the Right Car

You can hill climb pretty much anything eligible, from a humble Austin Seven to a Bugatti Type 35 – though the latter may cost slightly more than the former.

There are about 20 VSCC classes: standard, modified, special; saloons, sports, single seat racers; structured by engine size and whether supercharged or normally aspirated. If you don't already have a car, I suggest perhaps choose the class that excites you, fits your skills, is financially manageable and suits your confidence level.

Handicaps are set based on your previous performances and practice times, so even if you're not one of the fastest in your class, you can still come home with a trophy – and bragging rights in the pub after.

My Riley 12/4 Special was already well proven having been campaigned in many seasons of race and speed events. You might find your dream car in the club website's classifieds section or by talking to owners in the paddock – or build a special from scratch if you're sufficiently technically skilled and very committed, but it might take a while.

Budgeting for the Madness

If you already have a VSCC eligible car, your starting costs might look something like this:

- Race suit: £400–£500
- Helmet: £400–£600
- Gloves: £80
- Balaclava: £40
- Entry fee per event: £180
- Other potential considerations: Trailer, spares, travel and overnight accommodation, and snacks (to maintain morale).

It's not exactly cheap but from a motorsport perspective it's certainly not expensive, and it's a lot more accessible than many people would believe.

On the Hill

You might think that driving fast up a hill for typically only 45 to 80 seconds sounds easy. I did too. Reality? I approach the start line trying to focus on every detail I've previously learned. Red light …



Back at the Shelsley school last year, this time in the Riley 12/4



The new boy arrives in Class Nine last year

focus harder … green light … deep breath, drop the clutch and GO! Suddenly it's all a flurry of action and concentration as I desperately try to get my start right, nail my braking and turn-in points, clip those late apexes, grab my gear changes – and where the hell is the next corner?

It's literally all over in a blink, the finish line passes in a blur. I slow down, start breathing again, check the trackside digital clock for my time, and either reflect on the result in triumph (quietly, of course – in order to maintain a discreet decorum) or more likely, bang my lid in frustration, wondering and trying to piece together what the hell just happened.

Prescott Long Course, for example, is just 1,127 yards long, but it includes eight bends/curves – including what are essentially three hairpins of varying denominations – and at least three significant braking zones depending on car/speed. Add in the steep gradients, a swift downhill drop, some horrible adverse cambers (particularly if you're on the wrong part of the track), and the ever-present risk of making a mistake in front of an appreciative audience, and you've got yourself a right proper motorsport challenge.

You get just two practice runs in the morning, and just two competitive timed runs in the afternoon. Cock-up your first timed run and the pressure is well and truly on. Total time on track for the event? Maybe just about five minutes. But the concentration, adrenaline rush, and potential satisfaction – in my opinion it's worth every second, but until you try it you probably won't appreciate why.

Things I've Learned (Usually the Hard Way)

- Walk the course every time, even if you were there last week. Trust me.
- Learn the correct lines first, then try and add the special sauce – speed.
- Hill climb schools are brilliant – do as many as you can.
- Beg, steal or borrow a copy of James Baxter's excellent driver's notes for each hill [*You can find these in the following back issues of* The Bulletin*: General (303), Prescott (304), Wiscombe (307), Shelsley (312). Ed.*]
- Even a slightly misbehaving car will most likely ruin your run and your mood.
- Talk to fellow drivers. The paddock is a goldmine of wisdom (and excuses).
- Find a rival or two. Friendly competition helps motivation and confidence. Especially if they're slightly slower than you.

Final Thoughts from a Still-Learning Beginner

If you're tempted – do it. VSCC hill climbs and sprints are fun, accessible, and wonderfully social. The venues are nearly all in beautiful countryside, the cars are glorious, and everyone is as passionate about their sport as they are helpful and friendly.

I only wish I'd started 20 or more years earlier, and I'd love to be spirited back to Shelsley Walsh in the late 1920s or early '30s to stand amazed at the achievements of those pioneering guys and gels in their amazing new machines.

Thanks to the VSCC for making all this possible and thanks to my fellow Class Nine competitors for tolerating my learning curve, stupid questions and giving me great advice and encouragement.

If you're just starting out, I very much look forward to seeing you in the paddock – I'll be the one quietly reviewing the track layout while re-checking my notes and trying to visualise whether The Esses are left right left or right left right.

For all you potential beginners I hope my thoughts and experiences have been of help and I also hope they still resonate with all you 'past beginners' that now fly up each hill with consummate ease.



Competing at the Blyton Sprint last year

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Ian Polson looks for a spot for his Talbot 105 at Pakenham Mill (Chris Lambert)

The Tour of Suffolk

One of the club's most explored counties of late, it nevertheless continues to provide plenty to see, finds **NIGEL STENNETT-COX**

As one of the longest-lived regionally-based summer tours in the VSCC calendar, the Suffolk Tour has already built itself a sound reputation. In recent times it has been organised by the redoubtable Brian Aket, along with his charming wife and highly competent team. This year the tour was held the same day as Wiscombe, Sunday 11 May, and as in the south-west, the weather weighed in with all-day sunshine, justifying a respectable number of entrants at 41.

As catalogued, a Vauxhall 30-98 Velox Tourer of 1922 fielded by James Portway was the oldest car entered, but a delightful Humber two-seater and dickey surely dating from the pre-First War period was in evidence on the day. Some 31 cars of the total dated from before WWII, leaving 10 more to reflect the recent shifting of age-eligibility criteria by the club to include post-war cars up to 1956 manufacture. It was of passing interest to this writer to note that all the post-war cars happened to be of a sporting type, with the most-recent being an Austin-Healey 100/4 and an MG TF.

The route started and finished at the ideal venue of Pakenham Water Mill, this nestling at the foot of quite a large mound by local standards, atop of which sits the corresponding Pakenham Windmill. Both are justifiably regarded as tourist attractions, along with the lush meadowland adjacent to the watermill, which is ideal for old vehicle gatherings. We travelled according to the route instructions to the first designated place of interest which was Thelnetham windmill. This venue had ample parking and the mill had been set up to be actually in motion for our visit.

The next venue, The English Distillery at Roudham, just over the Norfolk border, was founded in 2006 but claims to be the oldest whisky distillery in England; it is owned by the Nelstrop family. There is a shop selling the wares and a convenient cafe on site. Next up was the lunch stop which instead of being a pub or similar commercial hostelry, made use of a village hall by a green, where volunteers supplied tea and coffee to wash down our own snacks which we had been requested to bring along.

That left two more suggested stopping venues, one being to view some of the air traffic making use of the US Air Force base at Lakenheath just by the A11. Also to see in that area were 'Grimes Graves', preserved Neolithic Flint Mines, and the Anglo-Saxon village site of West Stow, this having been inhabited from *c*.420 to 650 years AD, well before the Norman Conquest.

It was perhaps a tired group who fetched up back at the finish location, but nevertheless the whole day seemed to go without a hitch, which was commendable for the 40-odd drivers and their old cars. The only trouble noticed by this writer was some fuel evaporation issues, soon remedied, with a Sunbeam 20-60 tourer which said writer couldn't find in the written entry list.



The weather was fine all day (Chris Lambert)



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David Roscoe enjoying himself in DUU900

I bought back Dad's Alvis

Throughout his teenage years, the Alvis Special of his late father David Roscoe was a big part of his life. So when the opportunity recently arose to buy it back, **HAMISH ROSCOE** *leapt at the chance*

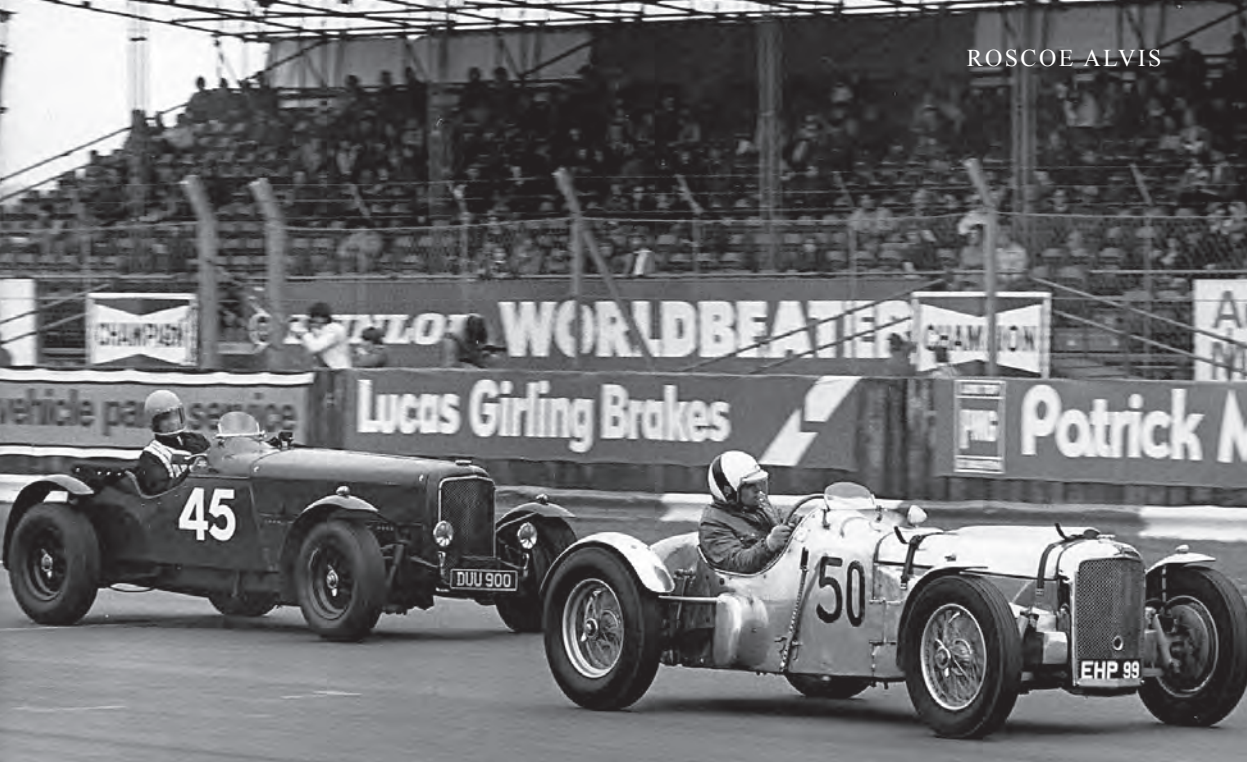
My late father, David Roscoe, was quite well known in the VSCC during the 1960s and '70s for making films of various events the club held, including the Welsh Trial, the annual hillclimb at Shelsley Walsh and race meetings at Oulton Park and Silverstone. Many of these films can be seen on YouTube and continue to prove quite popular. But as well as being an avid film-maker, Dad also had quite a few cars of his own, including one that I am sure was his favourite, and certainly was mine. This was a 1937 Alvis Special, registration DUU900, which Dad owned from 1976 until 1999, a formative period of my life, as I was about 13 when he bought it.



The Alvis was constantly developed and improved

When he acquired it, it was already quite a well-known car, having originally been associated with Rivers Fletcher in its previous guise of EGT511. But it became a sports race car during the 1960s under Ian Woolstenholme, the founder of Woolies, the trim specialist. Ian put a 4.3 Alvis engine into a shortened Speed 25 chassis, added 1960s telescopic shock absorbers and a special body. Dad bought the car from Ian via Bruce Spollon, and as I understand it, Dad buying the car helped to get the Woolies business off the ground.

When he bought it, the car was a bit tired and over the years Dad developed it with the help of various Alvis specialists, including the esteemed Rod Jolley, using Armstrong shocks and maybe even a Jolley cam. Eventually, with the help of a brilliant engineer friend, John Hadwick, who was more used to working



Larger wheels tended to be fitted for racing

on Lola T70s and the like, the power and reliability were bettered. Smaller option wheels were used for sprints and hill climbs and larger wheels for fast tracks. The power was upped and the gearbox gained straight cut gears and a 4.1 diff.

Over the decades, the car was raced successfully by Dad at all the UK's major venues including the Isle of Man. I was typically there throughout my teenage years, mixing with the owners and drivers (they used to be the same people back then) in various paddocks around the country; people whom I now know to be titans in the vintage and racing world, but at the time were just car enthusiasts.

Dad was no slouch either, having a racing pedigree himself from the 1950s in a supercharged 1220cc JAP Twin Cooper sprint car running on methanol. From the mid 1970s, he and the Alvis won many racing awards and he was very proud of winning the Pace Petroleum cup on the Isle of Man which was sponsored by his friend Victor Gauntlett, who owned Pace Petroleum and later went on to own Aston Martin. He also won two 'driver of the day' awards at 6-hour relay races for teams of all sorts of cars. One of these was for driving the most laps as, due to the Alvis team cars suffering from mechanical failure, Dad did at least half the time himself. On another occasion he was clocked through Donington's Redgate Corner going faster than the Porsche 911s in the Porsche team. He also won places on very many VSCC podiums.



At Prescott in 1965, then blue, on the cover of Autosport

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When I was younger I had the skills needed to keep the car going. I suppose for my father it must have been useful to have the hands of a child that could change the rubber/fibre drive couplings from engine to gearbox without having to strip out all the interior. And holding the wooden blocks screwed to a stick over the carbs to act as a very manual choke! Better than being sent up chimneys. At race meetings it was my job to take off the windscreen, paint on the numbers using cricket boot whitener (later we used posh sticky numbers), and tape up the lights, sometimes turning them sideways to reduce wind resistance.

To me as a youngster, the car was a big beast of a thing but as I grew up it was just part of the family and we gelled. It wasn't until 1992 that I was allowed to do a shared competition drive with my Dad. It was my first ever class win. Shared drives seemed to drop off after beating my Dad, I seem to remember. But Dad was generous with his cars and I remember him sharing it with his mate Jenks, aka Denis Jenkinson, who was famously Stirling Moss's co-driver when he won the 1955 Mille Miglia. He used the car at a Brighton speed trial and *the* Gerry Marshall had a drive in it too.

In 1999, Dad sold the Alvis. I don't exactly know why – perhaps he felt he wasn't using it in anger as much as it deserved. It moved on to Brian Maile, a chairman of the Alvis Owner Club and a racer, who used the car here and in Europe. It was later sold to a chap in Australia, under whose stewardship the car was professionally prepared for the 2016 Peking to Paris Rally. But the owner's plans changed and the car went to Oz instead. I caught up with this owner a couple of years after Dad died in 2018, and shared with him the history and documents I had from Dad's effects.



David Roscoe's friend Jenks at the wheel of DUU900

A few months ago he contacted me to say he was selling the car and offered me first refusal. After much soul-searching, family discussions and searching down the back of the sofa for spare money it became a possibility. The deal has very recently been done and the car was shipped home and I have had the honour of driving it again. Over the quarter century since Dad had the car in its rawest form it has had some gentrification, but the car is essentially the same. I am delighted that Dad's car has come home.



A young Hamish was allowed the occasional shared drive



The car today with Hamish, now back in the Roscoe stable once more

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Nicolas Rossi in his 6C Alfa Romeo during the opening race (Mark Ballard)

Donington Park

Only two races were held before the day was cancelled, as **NICK WILSON** *records*

The club's second race meet of the year was scheduled for Saturday 24 May at Donington Park in Leicestershire and as usual promised a packed day, with highlights to include the pre-1925 Mephistopheles Trophy, the Bill Phillips Trophy race for prewar sports cars and the Donington Mug and John Goddard Trophy for VSCC Specials. As usual, practice sessions would take place in the morning, with racing starting after lunch. As it turned out, the day was mired by tragedy when during the third race of the afternoon, the ever-popular Edwardians grid, the popular owner-driver-mechanic Julian Grimwade lost his life in an accident involving no other car, while driving his recently acquired Oakland Romano. The rest of the day's racing was cancelled and the atmosphere throughout the paddock was one of shock and profound sadness.

As two races were completed before the accident, we record them here for the sake of those involved. The first was the Bill Phillips Trophy for prewar sports cars, which attracted a mixed grid of 16 cars with a range of provenance and engine size, from the smaller capacity Morgan Aero of Sue Darbyshire to the V8 Ballamy Ford Special of Mark Brett. As it turned out,



Edward Bradley's Aston Martin Ulster finished fourth (Mike Griffin)



Sadly John Guyatt's Talbot Lago retired (Mike Griffin)



Jack Morley's Lagonda 2-litre was going well (Mike Griffin)

these two cars led the field, the smaller-engined car winning the ten-lap race with a comfortable 31.53 seconds lead, Nigel Dowding in his Riley Brooklands finishing third. The much-campaigned Talbot Lagos of John Guyatt and Max Sowerby both succumbed to problems during the race, only completing two and four laps respectively, while Adam Moody in his Riley TT Sprite was also a non-finisher.

Next up was the Specials race, which attracted a dozen entries of which five were based on Riley chassis. Four cars were soon way ahead of the rest, all driven by well-known VSCC figures: Wilf Cawley in the GN/Ford 'Piglet', Anthony Seber in the Wolseley Hornet Special, Ed Williams in the Riley Blue Streak, and Harry Painter in the MG Kayne. Although Seber put in his fastest lap early in the race, he could not match the winning combination of speed and boldness of Cawley and 'Piglet' who finished some 17.8 seconds ahead, Williams just over three seconds behind and Painter fourth, two seconds later. It had been an exhilarating race, the best kind of entertainment this club has to offer. Sadly, what followed was a brutal and sobering reminder of the dangers inherent in our enjoyment of vintage cars. Many people present were visibly upset, and the day will stay in the memories of many for all the wrong reasons.



Eddie Williams in the Riley Blue Streak on his way to third place (Mark Ballard)



Winner of the Specials Race, Wilf Cawley in the GN/Ford 'Piglet'(Mark Ballard)



Christian Le Gousse's Riley was one of five in the Specials race (Mike Griffin)



Andrew Shepherd's Austin is waved off the line



The Bowyer Austin is put to work

The Donington Park Autosolo

On the Melbourne loop, competitors completed the morning's challenge before learning the news from the main circuit, as **DAVID PRYKE** *reports*

On Saturday 24 May, 15 drivers gathered for the second and final VSCC Autosolo of the year. Looking at photos of prewar Donington, we see wonderful black and white images of some of the greatest drivers of the era – Nuvolari, Caracciola and Rosemeyer taking off over the hump on the Melbourne loop in the German titan Auto Unions and Mercedes GP cars, trouncing the cars from Italy, France and England. These days this historic section of the track is generally not used as part of the racing circuit except as the assembly area. This frees up an otherwise redundant piece of tarmac for the Autosolo. The track is on a gentle slope so from the start of each test, cars accelerate uphill towards the cones and approach the finish line downhill at quite a canter.

David Rushton was running the event this year. As a very experienced driving test entrant he knows how to set the tests with just the right amount of difficulty so that the route catches out a few, but not all the drivers. There were notably fewer cones this year which meant that the average speeds were rather higher than last year and thus the fast downhill finish would really test the drivers' nerves and the cars' brakes. The morning's challenge comprised three pairs of tests and then a single seventh test. This final test had the start and finish lines swapped and this caught out several competitors.

In the short-wheelbase class, Charlotte and Emma Bowyer were sharing Emma's trials Austin Seven, as Charlotte's Ford Model A had developed some new and unwelcome engine noises which their father – who has the dubious task of maintaining a growing fleet of vintage cars – hadn't yet got round to investigating. Charlotte was complaining that the Austin's brakes weren't up to much. It was unclear before the tests whether this was just the normal Austin Seven lack of



Richard Prosser in his 1937 Singer Sports



Our correspondent puts the Morgan/Riley through its paces



Rebel Eratt-Camp's Salmson AL22 was deemed prettiest car present



The shared Gwynne – a Mallory contender?

retardation or a problem with the car. At the end of the first test Charlotte answered the question by sailing over the stop-astride finish line at quite some speed. It eventually occurred to her to pull on the handbrake by which time the car was fully 20 yards beyond the finish line.

Ryan Goodyear's Singer Nine Sports surprised everyone by its fleetness of foot. It too seemed to have braking issues in that the rear brakes locked up well before the front and one rear wheel before the other – thus Ryan usually slewed up to the finish with one or two wheels locked and the car at quite an angle to the direction of travel. This seemed to alarm the marshals rather more than the driver. The pace of this car however overcame one 'wrong' and one finish-line overshoot to gain a well-deserved third-class award.

The generally very reliable David Wallom had two finish-line transgressions in his rapid and nimble Austin Seven Special but his speed and accuracy was fast enough to gain a second-class award. The fast, open course played massively into my Morgan/Riley Special's strengths and I gained a first-class award being quickest in all seven tests. Tim Noble and Robert Mills were sharing a wonderfully original looking Gwynne Eight. It looked a great fun car and its fairly glacial performance would make it the perfect car for the light car race at Mallory.

Among the long-wheelbase cars, Rebel Eratt-Camp's delightful Salmson AL22 drew many admiring glances and kept a clean sheet but wasn't quick enough for an award. In this class Matthew Smethurst's Riley Nine Mark IV tourer was quickest in every test and kept a clean sheet, thus winning the class. He was sharing the car with Alex Grounds and she also maintained a clean sheet but was a little slower in each test. She gained a third. Separating these two and completing a Riley lockdown of all the long-wheelbase awards was Jeremy Ball's Riley Lynx. His only transgression all day was to clip one bollard – easily done in one of the bigger cars and where flowing front wings obscure the driver's view of the front wheels.

There's a lovely camaraderie building up within the Autosolo drivers who enjoy this challenging and fun discipline. About an hour after we finished the Autosolo, Julian Grimwade had his tragic accident. The happy atmosphere in the paddock evaporated in an instant. It'll be difficult to pick ourselves up after this one, but Julian was passionate and committed about historic motorsport in general and the VSCC in particular. He would absolutely demand that we get back in the saddle and somehow carry on. We will miss this unique, funny, unassuming but quietly determined character for a very long time to come.

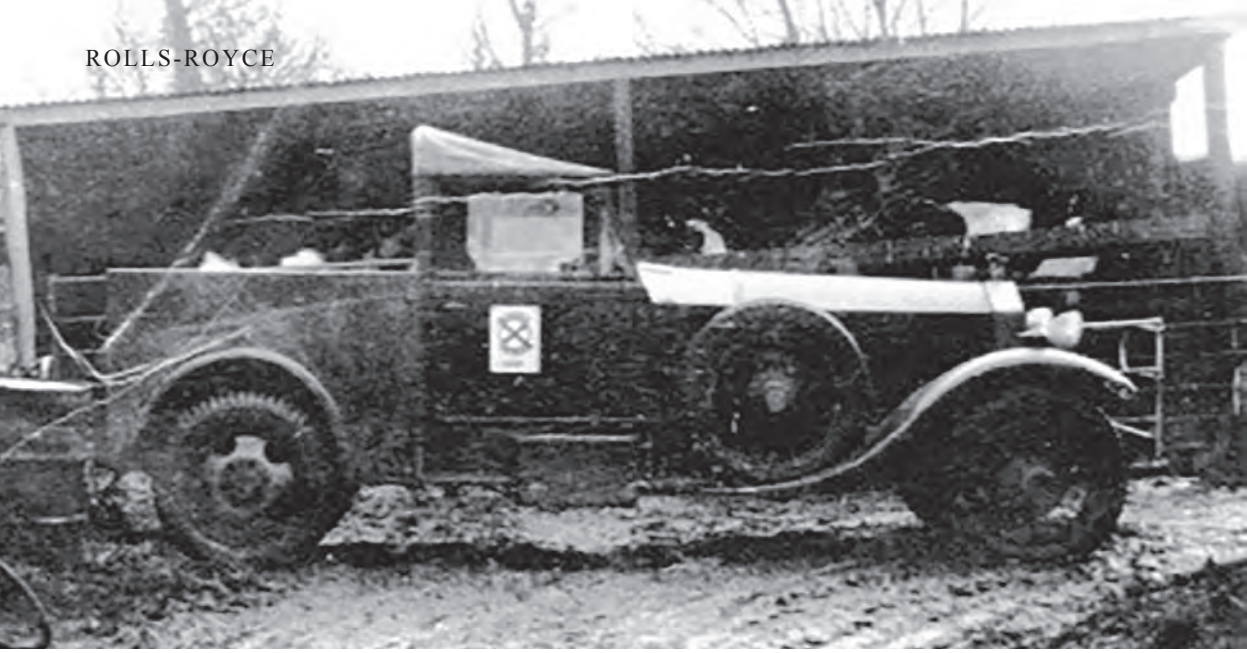
All photos by Mike Griffin



Austin was the best represented marque, this one is Simon Pollard's



Jeremy Ball's Riley Lynx won a 2nd despite clipping a cone

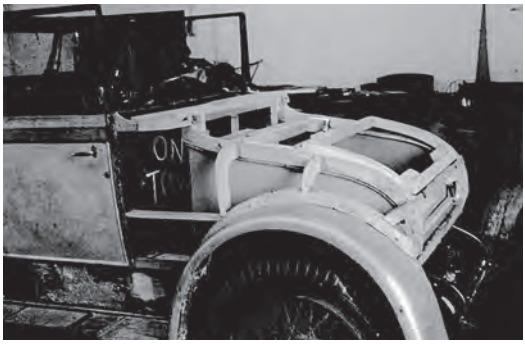


The car that started it all: a 1926 Phantom I, chassis 72 SC, seen here in the 1960s as a garage breakdown truck

Some Rolls-Royces (and Bentleys) I have known and loved

A casual glance into a village garage in the 1960s sparked a lifelong obsession for **NICK HARLEY**, *taking him from scrapyards to the Côte d'Azur, while even funerals proved fruitful*

It's always interesting to hear the different reasons people purchase a Rolls-Royce, and to tune in to their excitement and the story behind their acquisition. In my case it happened in the mid 1960s while driving through Holbeach in Lincolnshire, when I spotted a Rolls-Royce hibernating at the back of the village garage. It transpired that this venerable machine, a 1926 Phantom I, chassis 72 SC, had been delivered new to the Caudwell farming family but was eventually sold, only to become the local garage's breakdown truck. According to the garage owner, the Phantom, with its 7.6-litre engine and massive low speed torque, performed admirably for many years, pulling errant vehicles out of local dykes. After many visits and a handshake, the Phantom breakdown truck became mine.



Nick Harley rebuilt the body with a new ash frame, here ready for panelling

Having extracted her from her lair in the Holbeach garage I drove her back to Warwickshire in the dead of night (no number plates, one rear light). I then stripped her down and commenced the rebuild of the chassis and reconstruction of the two-seater Barker cabriolet body, the front of which was still intact. Surprisingly under the many layers of paint a woodgrain finish came to light. This was quite common at the time and was even bizarrely applied to the chassis frame. The job on the mechanical restoration was made much easier by the Rolls-Royce factory stores who, in the 1960s, could supply most prewar parts. Also in those days there were many fruitful scrapyards with ancient Rolls-Royce and Bentleys moulder-ing in the surrounding fields, ready for the picking.

Two years later she was ready to resume life in a more respectable guise, and most likely with a sigh of relief, she finally left behind the years of working as a garage hack and was once more reborn and ready for a more glamorous future.

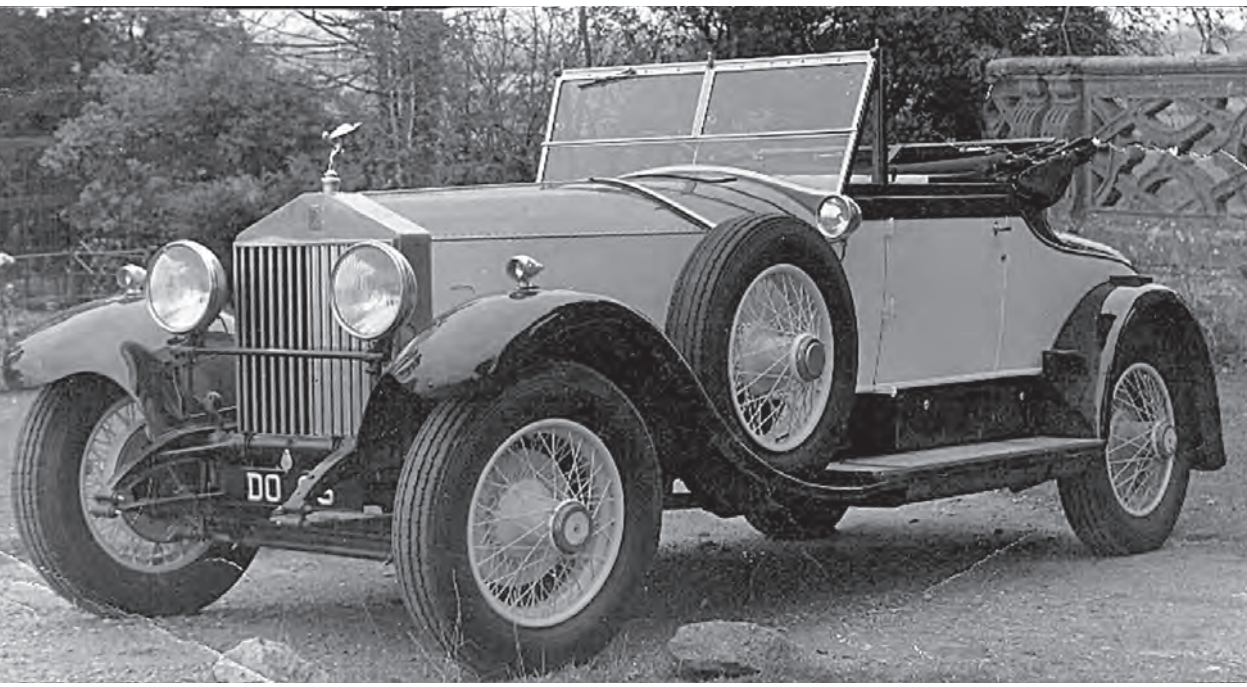
My labours were rewarded with a trouble-free test run to La Spezia in Italy via Lyon and the Mont-Cenis pass. In dense fog and with the engine switched off (saving petrol at 10mpg), we descended to the Italian border post. Emerging silently out of the mist, I had to brake violently in order to avoid running over the customs official who threw himself onto the ground and, raising his arms in the air, cried out '*Bella macchina*, *bella macchina*!' How could one not love Italy?

Without a doubt this wonderful Phantom I, and the Italian odyssey, was the catalyst for my lifelong obsession with prewar motor cars, in particular Rolls-Royces and Bentleys. This was in 1967, and on returning to England, out went the Ford Prefect, to be replaced with a 1935 Bentley Barker sports coupé (£100). Utterly reliable and more of a motoring companion than just transport. Most mornings she would start up with a flick of the advance retard switch and away we'd go.

Back then, if one was disposed to clamber around scrap yards and old barns looking for prewar cars, it was a rewarding and special period. There were many fine, unloved vehicles languishing in boneyards, in the backs of garages or even in the open. They were there to be discovered if one knew where to look, and were prepared to get very dirty or snarled at by guard dogs. There was also at that time a host of interesting traders in old Rolls Royce: Bunty Scott-Moncrieff, Cecil Bendall and Barry Price, to name but a few.

I always enjoyed visiting the late Barry Price who became a close friend over the years and who was always happy to help out with his vast knowledge and extensive stores. Barry lived in an enormous ancient house near Redditch, every room filled with a treasure trove of parts for Rolls, Bentleys, Bugattis, Mercedes and of course Lea-Francis. On my first visit I remember asking him if he had any spring shackles for a Phantom I, upon which he presented me with a sickle and instructions to go down the drive to a certain thorn bush and hack my way through the undergrowth where he was sure he'd left a Phantom I.

Another quite secretive chap I got to know was Frederick Wade Palmer who resided in the New Forest, surrounded literally by acres of Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, slowly rusting into the ground or with trees growing through their chassis. He seemed to have a liking for huge Rolls-Royce hearses and limousines built on both Phantom and Silver Ghost chassis. I seem to recall one of these hearses he used for his office. When in the mood Frederick was a fund of information as well as a mine of Silver Ghost parts as he had purchased the entire bankrupt stores of a Spanish Rolls-Royce dealership.



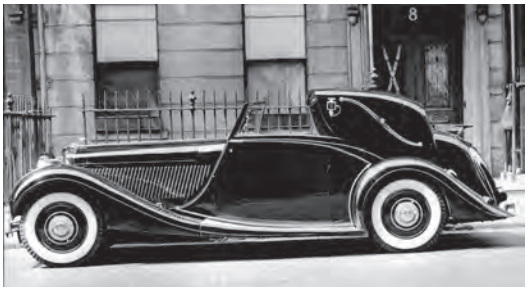
Restoration complete and ready for the road



The Phantom II with a 27-litre Merlin engine from a Spitfire MKIII

In the 1950s these big Rolls-Royce chassis were very popular in the funeral business, mainly because if properly tuned, they could travel in complete silence at three miles an hour. I winkled several of these monsters out of the forest, and almost without exception, however long they had remained derelict, a bit of petrol in the Autovac, a new battery, and she'd start and drive home – again, usually in the dead of night, as registration details were long gone. One night when driving back in an enormous hearse sporting giant silver crosses on the roof and a rotten exhaust, I was overcome by fumes; so after stopping I slept on the bier, much to the surprise of passing traffic. Incidentally Frederick converted a few of these Ghosts into armoured cars for the 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia.*

Curiously I developed a macabre penchant for these giant hearses and an interest in researching their original coachwork and ownership. On one occasion I had a stroke of luck at the funeral of a distant relative in Lancaster. Standing miserably in the rain, I noticed the hearse was a late model Phantom II, followed by four very tired-looking 20/25 and 25/30 limousines, mostly smoking and leaking water. During the service I slipped out and struck a deal with the owner of the hire company to buy the lot. Less cargo. Little did the mourners know that they travelled to the wake in my recently acquired Rolls-Royce fleet!



Nick's Bentley in 1944: it sports Sedanca Coupé coachwork by Hooper

Having re-bodied a number of Rolls-Royes and Bentleys, and given them a new lease of life, I decided in the 1970s to build myself a competition special. The donor car was a 1937 4¼-litre Bentley Park Ward saloon, the front doors of which were held closed by a rope between the two. Without the rope the doors fell off and the rest collapsed soon afterward with little resistance. I set about restoring the chassis, shortening it by 14″, and reducing the bulkhead and radiator by 2″ (a sacrilege today). Then a Brooklands-style body completed the job. She turned out to be quite successful and a lot of fun, with superb handling. I competed with her at Silverstone, Prescott and other meetings. Finally shipping her to San Francisco, I drove all the way up US1 to Canada, and then back through the Redwood forests and down to San Diego. Never missed a beat. What a beautiful piece of engineering. She was a very good-looking special and I made two more to the same specification for friends.

Without a doubt my ultimate craziness was building a 1931 Phantom II Continental with 27-litre Rolls-Royce Merlin engine from a MkIII Spitfire. This was an eight-year project started by Steven Langton, his concept being to make a rapid tow car to trailer



The Bentley more recently in Tuscany

his Lister to race meetings. Sadly it was not to be and I took over the project after his demise. My idea was different; I wanted to create a motor car that might have been ordered by Bulldog Drummond to carry out secret government or romantic assignations behind enemy lines. On completion she really looked the part and was a thunderingly good drive, with 1200 ft lbs torque at 2800rpm. Mick Walsh gave her a road test and described the acceleration being like water flowing over Niagara falls, a description that could well have applied to my disappearing bank balance during the project. In reality I will always remember driving back from Silverstone one night with the wonderful roar of the Merlin in my ears, flames from the exhausts and I could be forgiven for the imaginary Messerschmitt on my tail.

Over the years my wife Stephanie and I have enjoyed many other Rolls-Royce Phantoms, Ghosts and Derby Bentleys on tours or in concours like Villa d'Este and Pebble Beach. But if I were to select our two favourites, they would be as follows.

Firstly, the 1939 Bentley Hooper Sedanca Coupé (B187 MX) we own to this day. She is totally original with unique coachwork to the order of Lady Duff Ashton-Smith, still in unrestored black paintwork and interior. Owned from 1942 by Margaret Schulze, an American socialite living in Paris and Cap Ferrat until her demise in 1955, this wonderful Bentley then rested in a museum near Avignon for 50 years. Now having completed just 70,000 miles, as an unrestored Derby Bentley she encapsulates the essence of the prewar 'Silent Sports Car'.

Secondly, an American 1930 Springfield-built Rolls-Royce Phantom I with Regent body by Brewster. Bought from the original family owners in Philadelphia, with low mileage, and still with original paintwork and leather, we have very fond memories of this car in which we travelled all over Europe, and which was our only transport when living in Beaulieu sur Mer in the south of France. Used for shopping in Ventimiglia and often returning with bougainvillea and palm trees waving about in the dickie seat, or on one occasion returning from Cannes with an entire Irish jazz band on board.

These are but a few vignettes from 60 years of Rolls-Royce adventures, which might never have occurred had I kept my eyes on the road and not glanced into that Holbeach Garage all those years ago.



Nick's Brewster-bodied Phantom I at the Grande Hotel, Cap Ferrat



Back seat view of a typical Dorset village from Hector Bailey's Sunbeam

The Dorset Tour

Challenges and rewards were in abundance on this 70-mile south-western potter, finds young enthusiast **TRISTAN EVANS**

Back on Sunday 25 May, the VSCC returned to the south-west for the Dorset Tour. The usual spirit of competition found elsewhere was replaced by an even stronger one of community and conviviality as the entrants enjoyed a beautiful day of cruising around in the countryside. For me, it was only my second experience of a tour, and my very first on the open road in the driving seat of our Austin 7 Saloon, so needless to say, I was feeling very excited about the day and the challenge ahead.

The entrants convened bright and early for scrutineering at 9:30, ready for a 10:30 start from Compton Abbas Airfield, who very kindly hosted us for the beginning and end of the tour. I was also surprised to learn that the airfield is owned by the famous film director Guy Ritchie. Having unloaded and undergone scrutineering, all while battling some ferocious winds, we were grateful to get underway – with a 70-mile drive ahead of us, we knew it was going to be quite the journey.



A view of the Sunbeam, which is a 1921 car of 24hp

The route began by taking us towards Berwick St John, where we had a brief stop to admire a watercress field and the outstanding green of our surroundings. However, we soon realised that we were the last car, and would have to crack on in order to make the lunch stop at the Sheaf of Arrows, a local pub that had very kindly agreed to accommodate the tour as well as providing tea and cake. The main challenge for me was re-adjusting to the crash gearbox of the Austin, and ensuring that I properly matched the road and engine speed according to how the road was either rising (more frequently) or falling away (less frequently). Thankfully, by lunchtime I was managing well with my gear changes and after finding a space to stop at the Sheaf of Arrows, we promptly made our way in to treat ourselves to some tea and cake for our efforts.

After this brief but much-needed stop, we quickly moved on as we had been the last car and were deter-



Ros King's 1939 12hp Riley



Lagonda, Singer and Bugatti outside the Sheaf of Arrows

mined to finish the entire route. However, shortly after we had got going again, the power began to flutter, then fade, until it reached a point at which I was pushing the throttle pedal and nothing was happening. Worried, we pulled over to investigate the issue, but could see nothing wrong, and as we decided to try and carry on, the mysterious issue disappeared. We then eventually came to the second group stop at the Shillingstone Railway Project, where we caught up with the other entrants before moving on through Shaftesbury.

The highlight of the tour, besides the stunning Dorset scenery, was in the final part of the tour as we made our way back to Compton Abbas, as we were suddenly faced with the formidable 'Zig Zag Hill' just outside Shaftesbury. The hill boasts a rather daunting 13% incline at points, alongside many sharp hairpin bends, which demanded some rapid gear changes down to first as the road speed tumbled away. Thankfully, there was no drama, but it was quite something to tackle the hill, and then to see the view from the top, which was nothing short of breathtaking.

All in all, it was a fantastic day of driving with an amazing route, surrounded by a group of enthusiastic individuals. Many thanks to the organisers Jon Elliott and Martin Bell for ensuring the smooth running of the day, and for making us feel so welcome. Many thanks also to Compton Abbas Airfield, the Sheaf of Arrows, and the Shillingstone Railway Project for having us.

All photos by Chris Pickering



Robert Frankcom's Talbot, Peter Dewhurst's T40 and Robin Begg's Ford



Our reporter attacks the 'Zig Zag Hill'

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The tourists assemble at Fairclough Farm

The Hertfordshire Tour

The cars were as delectable and varied as the cakes, writes **STEPHEN BRADFORD-BEST**

You can understand why our club keeps gaining national awards. Yes, we all enjoy seeing sports and racing cars in action. Some members like to use their cars to compete in club events, but until fairly recently there were few alternatives for those to whom competing didn't appeal, apart from driving them to the local pub. Ever innovative to keep members happy, the club organised an additional event, the County Tour, a sort of 'pub meet' on the move, where you can exercise your cars and also take along your family and friends for the ride. What a splendid idea!

This year's Hertfordshire Tour built on the success of previous events. I entered my well-travelled 1936 Austin Nippy, with fellow member Iain Mansell as my navigator. We started from Fairclough Farm thanks to the hospitality of owner Richard Hale, who joined us in his superb Jaguar XK120, and were served bacon rolls and coffee from the on-site Lolleywood Café. Some of the other cars participating were an Edwardian Sunbeam, several Austins and Rileys, including Ian Blackborn's delectable Imp, Clive Hamilton-Gould's Delage, one of only two non-British cars, together with some speedy post-war sports cars.



This Edwardian Sunbeam was among the earliest entries

Our easy-to-follow tulip style route book took us through pretty countryside, initially with a choice of first stops, the airfields at either Nuthampstead or Fowlmere, the latter just over the border into Cambridgeshire with a slightly longer journey. We chose Fowlmere and were amazed by the wealth of history associated with the site during both world wars and later as a Polish Resettlement Camp. The original WWI buildings were cleared soon after that war, as were the hangars and other buildings when it was a satellite airfield of RAF Duxford during WWII. The small museum building was packed with finds from the airfield resulting from keen metal detectorists, as well as many items donated by service personnel and the former Polish community all explained to us by knowledgeable guides. One gentleman of Polish descent was born at the camp in 1950, and unlike many of his comrades who later moved to distant



Fine cars included this handsome Rolls-Royce and Riley Kestrel



Austin Healeys are always a welcome addition to any car park

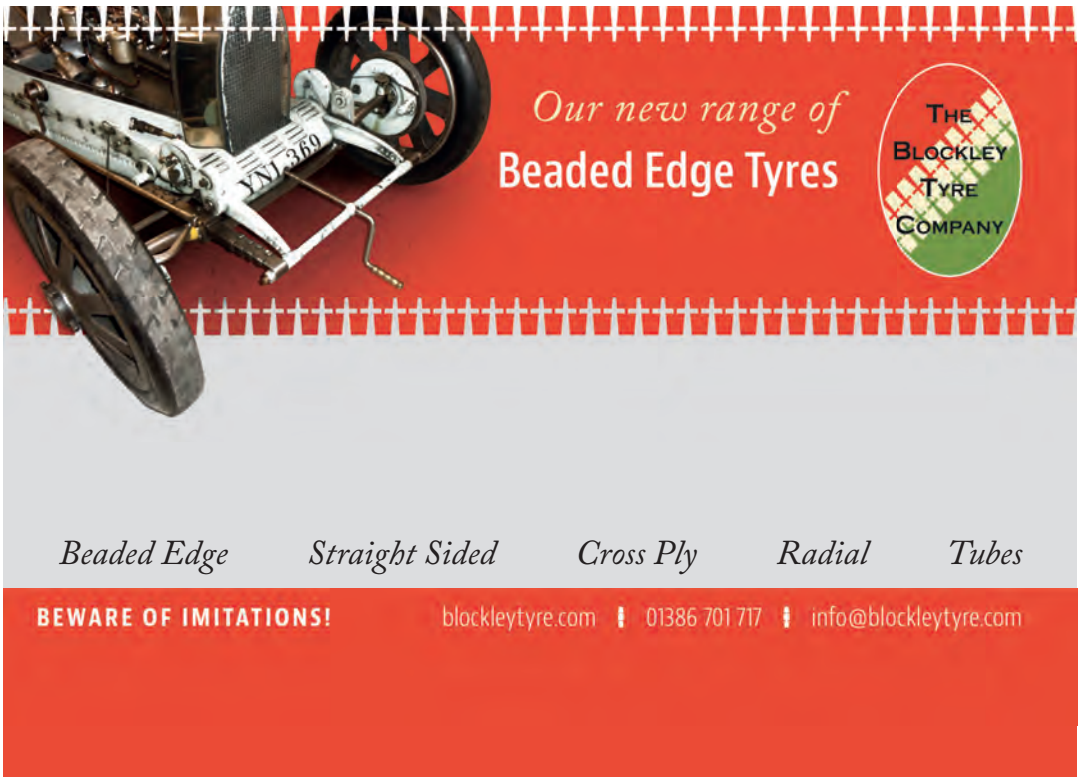
parts of the world, made his home three miles away in Melbourne village when the camp closed in 1958 and still resides there to this day.

We were well spaced apart, so we rarely saw other participants on the road until we all met up for an excellent ploughman's lunch at the Three Horseshoes, a welcoming community pub in the small village of Helions Bumpstead, just over the border into Essex. Washed down with a pint of local ale, it was an ideal feast on a warm spring day.

We headed off after lunch on the final leg of our tour which concluded at the impressive workshops of Blakeney Motorsport where we were welcomed by Pat and his team and were shown around the desirable array of cars, including an important Sunbeam racing car receiving a gearbox rebuild and two of my favourite sports cars, a BMW 328 and a Jaguar C-Type with race history, both genuine originals. Almost as impressive was the selection of cakes, a choice of about twenty different sweet treats. I hesitated to ask for a second until the lady behind the counter said, 'One of each?'

A big thank you to John Scott for organising the tour. Sadly, family commitments kept him away on the day until the very end and in his place, we were clearly briefed at the start by Craig Johnson; Guy Rackham and other members also helped. We had a trouble-free and most enjoyable day, and I am not aware of any unwelcome incidents or breakdowns. It seems that interest in regularity road rallies is declining, but there is no doubt that enthusiasm for County Tours is increasing. Well done to the club for their innovation.

Photos by the author





Vienna Jeavons (Ulster) prepares to depart the Live & Let Live (Mike Tebbett)

The Worcestershire Tour

Unexpected road closures did nothing to mar the enjoyment of this splendid day's motoring, write **RODNEY** *and* **ALYSON KETTEL**

What more could one enjoy at the beginning of June than combining the anniversary of a successful British naval battle, under the distinguished command of Lord Howe some 130 years ago, entitled The Glorious First of June, the first day of the British summer and a VSCC Tour? The introduction reference being apposite as Earl Howe, a successful racing driver, was a direct descendant of Lord Howe. 40 entrants embracing an excellent range of vintage and PVT cars mustered at The Live & Let Live pub at Whitbourne, near Bromyard. After scrutineering, registration, collecting route instructions and rally plaques, many enjoyed a bacon bap and coffee served by the pub's welcoming and friendly staff.

We were flagged off at intervals travelling the lanes between high hedges interspersed with panoramic views. Navigation skills were upon us as the Worcestershire Council had unexpectedly closed our intended route. Being compliant we followed the diversion sign before going off-piste courtesy of



Mark Garfitt and Gillian Garland (HRG) chew the fat (Mike Tebbett)



The field was varied with a strong vintage entry (Mike Tebbett)



Ian Goddard sets off in the MG F-Type (Mark Tebbett)



Watchdogs face fore and aft in Andrew Skinner's boat-like Austin 20 (Mike Tebbett)

Google maps (even vintage motoring has at times got to become modern) by which time we were joined by a Riley Kestrel. This short diversion passed through sleepy hamlets and villages, before emerging expertly back onto the 'official' route and meeting a couple of participants in a Buick and Talbot emerging from a different direction. Arriving in Tenbury Wells High Street we continued, now with bright skies and lovely countryside, passing the Talbot Inn behind a Talbot car.

Onwards, we found ourselves alone with the driver's confidence in his navigator unabated until suddenly we were confronted with several entrants in a speedy convoy coming towards us en route to Tenbury Wells which we had just left – 'ignore them!' says the navigator. Obediently, we then passed through the village of Pensax towards Abberley, clearly identified by its dominant Victorian clock tower. Now in known territory, with magnificent views and verges of cow parsley blowing in the wind, our lunch break at Shelsley Walsh beckoned, arriving in glorious sunshine.

We parked quietly in a competitors' garage 'pen' unlike the normal hectic action of the VSCC hill climb. Picnics abounded with great social interchange recounting the various routes taken because of the unexpected road closure. A bonus enjoyed by many was a visit to the watermill opened by Shelsley Walsh Water Mill Society for our charitable viewing.

With no time to linger onward departures commenced, again with suitable time separation. The Teme Valley was magnificent, soon crossing the River Teme with a hearty wave to an official photographer capturing the splendid selection of cars. Suddenly the beauty of the hedgerows and verges was taken over by heavy rain as we passed the Admiral Rodney pub – no link to this writer – before sunshine quickly returned. Bowling along at speed on the A44 we passed Elgar's birthplace with his wonderful music ringing in our ears. Shortly the splendour of the impressive Malvern Hills was sighted but only after travelling through the village of Madresfield, reminding us of wonderful annual VSCC driving tests.

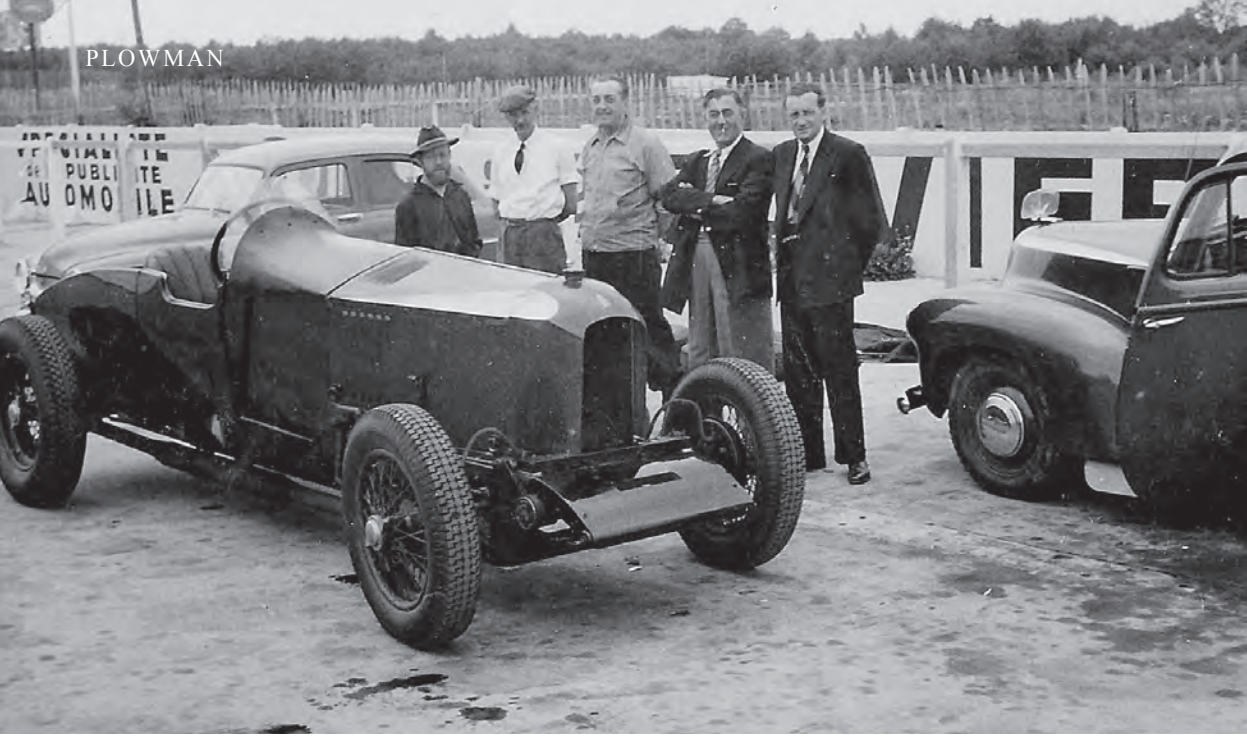
Through Great Malvern our ingenuity was tested with a further unplanned road closure, so we resorted again to Google maps. Retracing our route we spied other competitors pondering the way forward but soon we were back on track. The benefit of this diversion meant we avoided heavy showers before arriving back at Whitbourne. It was apparent, from the convivial chat, comparing experiences over a welcome drink, that another successful VSCC tour had been enjoyably accomplished. We thank John Coupland and his team for an excellent day of vintage motoring, recognising the hard work they put in for our enjoyment, and perhaps we should aptly rename the VSCC as the Very Special Car Club? We shall be back.



Bucolic scene featuring Stephen Watkins's 1930 Rolls-Royce 20/25 (Peter McFadyen)



Touring cars briefly got to experience the Shelsley paddock (Peter McFadyen)



Tom Plowman, centre, with Jenks far left, and Vauxhall before the run at Montlhéry in 1953

Tom Plowman and his record-breaking Vauxhall

On 6 August 1953, for no particular reason, VSCC member Tom Plowman drove his Vauxhall 30-98 for an hour round the banked circuit at Montlhéry at over 100mph, one of the greatest feats ever recorded in a vintage car. OE 87 later belonged to VSCC past president David Marsh, (see obituary, p. 86). But who was Plowman and what became of the car? The Editor nipped to Derbyshire to find out

A few years ago we re-ran an article by Hamish Moffatt about his solo trip from Hampstead to Cape Town in a 1923 11.9hp Lagonda in 1952. It's a wonderful piece that encapsulates a certain spirit of adventure and the possibilities afforded by the well sorted vintage car. The piece originally ran in the Autumn 1953 issue of *The Bulletin*. It just so happens that in that very same issue there is another article which gives a similarly warm fuzzy feeling. It's by Tom Plowman and relates how in August 1953 he drove his Vauxhall 30-98 from Luton to Montlhéry and drove round the track for an hour at 106.9mph.

Anyone who has wrestled with a 30-98 might want to ponder this remarkable feat. This was not a new car. OE 87 was built in 1924, so was already some 30 years old when Plowman carried out his record-breaking achievement. For the benefit of those without access to that issue of *The Bulletin*, we reproduce the piece on p. 43. It's well worth a read. But who was Plowman, and what became of the car? He was not a particularly young man when he first joined the VSCC after the war, having been born in September 1897. This means he was approaching his 56th birthday when he carried out the 100mph test in August 1953. Indeed, he retired from active competition only three years later, in 1956, and after a period of ill health, died in 1963, aged only 65.

Thomas Henry Plowman was born in Hackney, East London, on 26 September 1897, when Queen Victoria was still on the throne. He was the youngest of three children and grew up in North London. His sister Ada used to talk about aunts who were nurses

and their grandfather was a policeman. We do not know anything about his schooling but we do know that Plowman signed up as soon as war broke out. He was three weeks short of his 17th birthday when he joined the 4th City of London Royal Fusiliers on 4 September 1914, at 112 Shaftesbury Street, London E1. As Tom in adulthood was over six feet tall, he was probably able to convince the recruiting officer that he was 18.

Plowman kept a notebook at that time which traces his journey from Barnet to Maidstone, where he was billeted with a private household, and where he had 24 hours' embarkation leave before leaving from Southampton aboard HMT *Avon* on 23 December 1914, stopping off at Gibraltar and arriving at Malta on 31 December. On 20 August they left for Egypt, and the diary ends when they reached Alexandria four days later. We know Plowman was at Gallipoli as he wrote to his sister Ada from there on 28 November 1915.

There is then a postcard to Ada dated 23 December 1915 from a hospital in Cairo saying it was 12 months since he had left England. His medical card and other records state he was part of the Royal Fusiliers' Transport Division. On 19 December 1916 he was transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps, and it seems he became a driver and car mechanic on the western front. Unlike so many, Plowman survived the war relatively unscathed, and even got married before it was over, on 27 March 1918, to Dorothy Hudson, at St Peter's, Acton Green, London. He is listed on the marriage certificate as 20 years old and on active service; it is also noted that his father was dead. Dorothy is listed as a governess and 22 years old. Tom and Dorothy went on to have two children, Dorothy in 1921 and John in 1924.

Plowman's medical card indicates that he was demobbed on 24 April 1919. After he left the Army there is no record of where he went, except for a bundle of photographs taken in 1920 in the Caribbean and South America, though with no names. What we do know is that by 1924, Plowman was working for Vauxhall in Luton, when the 30-98 was in peak production. Then, in 1928, Plowman was involved in an incident for which he received the Carnegie Award for Bravery. At this time, he was living at 15 Dale Road, Luton, Bedfordshire. The citation in the Annual Report states:

Fredrick Warren, motor lorry driver, 14 Beresford Road, Luton; Joseph Hanson, motor lorry driver, Chiswick House, 26 Ascot Road, Luton; Thomas Henry Plowman, experimental tester of motors, 15 Dale Road, Luton; and Sidney Wagstaffe, motor lorry driver, 118 St Andrew's Road, Walthamstow, London, on 4th January 1928, sustained injury while unsuccessfully attempting at Hockcliffe Beds, to rescue the driver of a motor lorry which had caught fire and which was loaded with chemicals. All four men were more or less seriously injured. Each was awarded an inscribed silver watch, and in addition, Wagstaffe was granted a sum of £25.

It seems that after the incident was reported in the local papers a public subscription fund was raised. The money from this enabled Plowman to buy a plot of land at 15 Hitchen Road, Luton, upon which he built a garage.

Up until this point, Plowman had owned an Alvis and a Talbot, which he described as 'both good motor cars but not beefy enough for myself and family'. In 1934, the year the VSCC was founded, he decided to buy something more exciting, writing 'I had a desire to own a real motor car'. He purchased a Wolseley Viper, 'but this was as satisfying as holding my own hand, so scanned around for something with a more



A young Plowman in the army during the first war



First competitive outing in OE 87 at Aston Clinton, May 1936



A dramatic photo by Guy Griffiths of Plowman's press-on racing style

likeable power-weight ratio'. Plowman settled on a 30-98, chassis OE 87, a 1924 car which he found in London. The deal was completed in a pub in Hammersmith and he proceeded to drive the car back home to Luton. 'She had power but poor anchors,' he wrote, something some 30-98 owners may relate to. 'On the way back I remember, in the outskirts of London, I took the wrong turning and found myself in a cul-de-sac, and nearly in the rails of the Metropolitan railway – those brakes were dreadful …'. But the car was a hit with his two children, who were 'speed fiends and loved a real bat on a good road'.

The following year Plowman decided to rebuild the car, reminiscing in a talk he later gave that it was probably he who had done the timing on the car originally in 1924. The car would stay with him for the rest of his life and became known in the family as The Old Lady. In 1935, after the rebuild, Plowman took up competition. He was by now in his late 30s. His first event was the Howard Park Sprint at Aston Clinton in May 1936. He finished second and just 0.1 of a second behind the winner. 'Pretty reasonable,' he wrote, 'after all, she had all her glory on: four seater Velox body, spare wheel, hood, and all the touring gubbins, and the windscreen vertical.' Mechanically the car was standard and had a kidney box braking system. But it didn't take him long to start developing the car for competition. The Velox body was changed to a two-seater by simply removing the back half from behind the front door. The wings were changed and the windscreen replaced with two aero screens. The standard radiator was altered to have a separate core with extra header tank fitted into the old shell. Twin carburettors on an extended ram pipe were concealed under a large blip on the bonnet side. An air cooler was fitted and a gear type oil pump. The undershield was retained. With these modifications completed, he would test the car on Watling Street, now the A5, typically on Sunday afternoons when traffic was minimal. On one stretch of road south of Towcester he reported achieving 118mph while steering in and out of other traffic.



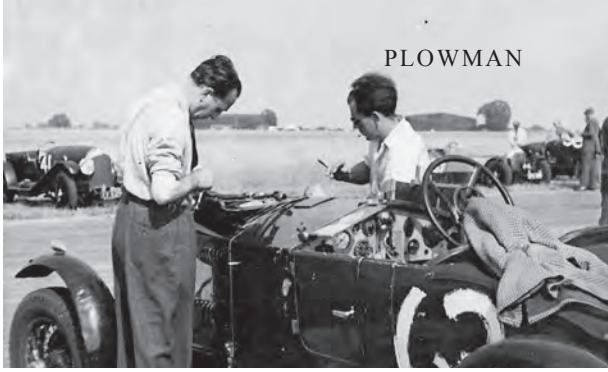
Tom Plowman

With the car thus running at peak performance, Plowman would have a very successful two years of competition. The following year he started racing at Brooklands, managing one second and two thirds, covering 90 miles in one hour in one race. He also competed at Aston Clinton, taking home the Special Award for the day. The next venue of note was Donington in May 1937 where he won, and again in June after some serious overhauling. This was his busiest period of competition: he went on to race at Brooklands in July with one first, one second and two third places.

His account of that visit to Brooklands in July 1937 begins thus: 'We went down for practice on the Friday, and somehow she felt a bit out of sorts. We passed the scrutineer and proceeded round the track to keep our hand in like … We were getting along fairly comfortably when the petrol tanks suddenly



Plowman sought to eliminate excess weight



Effecting a repair at a race meeting in the 1930s

decided that they had had enough of this hard life and broke, both together, just like that, and we found ourselves towing our petrol tank at the end of the petrol pipe way up on the banking, ever so funny.' Later that morning, 'I found the steering wheel in my lap, I had pulled he instrument board out. The Old Lady was rather annoyed about it: we were doing a nice 108, just getting warmed up you know, when all of a sudden we were tangled up with steering columns, wires, pipes, pedals and what nots, but she retained her decorum, and proceeded in the anticipated direction. Glory be …' Much midnight oil was burnt that night, and the next day Plowman and Vauxhall were on the line on time and won several races. 'Lunchtime came and I had a good one,' he wrote, 'helped down by a couple of Worthingtons. Then we spat on our hands and got ready for the afternoon.' Unfortunately the season ended with the engine blowing up and the car would remain off the road for the next 11 years. From Plowman's writing, it is clear that he loved working on the cars as much as driving them. He was able to acquire OE 201 for not much money, which had engine OE 200 and which he transposed into OE 87.

It wasn't just his own cars that Plowman was fettling before the war, as he recalled. 'We had sold a 4½-litre Lagonda, and our customer was rightly fastidious – he is a good and safe fast driver, and could not get more than 90 out of the job, he wanted the century. I played about with the car on the Saturday all day, and thought that the Watling Street on the Sunday afternoon would be the ideal venue for the test run. Anyway we went, my wife to read the speedometer and I to press the accelerator. We took her through Towcester and found the stretch of road we wanted, turned round and gave her her head. 80-85-90-95-98 called out my wife, holding onto the dashboard and peering at the speedometer, 98-99-100, and in the same calm tone, as if she were saying "Tea is ready", came the words "we're on fire" and lo and behold, we were, lots of smoke and sparks everywhere. After a time we were able to stop and get to work with the Pyrenes. This is not relevant to the Vauxhall, but a tribute to my wife.'

By 1939 the Plowmans were living at 140 Wardown Crescent, Luton. They later moved to Studley Road in Luton. At some point he also became a member of The Masons (Warden Lodge no. 4608), later becoming a Life Governor of the Royal Masonic Hospital. The second war caused a suspension of all motorsport activity, but when it was over, Plowman resumed his involvement in motorsport, joining up with another motor business owner in Luton to organise the 1948 Luton Hoo speed trials, by which time the mighty Vauxhall was back on the road. In 1949 he entered it in the VSCC Silverstone meeting in the one-hour high speed trial. He continued to race OE 87 at Silverstone, Goodwood, and Luton Hoo before attempting the famous record run at Montlhéry in August 1953.

This remarkable achievement was the crowning moment of a successful midlife amateur motoring career. Afterwards, he only attended three more speed events at Goodwood and Shelsley Walsh before retiring from motorsport in 1956. The Vauxhall then took pride of place in his garage showroom in Luton and was only taken out for the occasional run, sometimes completing the London to Brighton. Dororthy died in January 1955. The following year he met Moreen West and they were married in January 1957, their daughter Suzanne being born in October 1957,



Competing at Shelsley in 1956, one of his last outings



Plowman's garage in Luton

when Tom Plowman was 60.

By this time, Plowman suffered from chronic bronchitis, and three years later, in 1960, his doctors advised him to move to the coast as his bronchitis was getting worse every winter. The family moved to Angmering in West Sussex, but three years later he died from heart failure while in hospital with a bad bout of bronchitis. He is buried in Luton Cemetery alongside his first wife, Dorothy.

And what became of the car? Having languished unused in Plowman's garage, it was acquired upon his death in 1963 by A. E. Palmer. In 1980, Patrick and David Marsh had an entry for the Peking to Paris. The two brothers each already had a 30-98 but neither wanted to use their own car. So they decided to buy a third, OE 87. At that point it was still as Plowman had set it up for his Montlhéry run, with a Bentley front axle and full streamlining made out of balsa wood, a radiator cowl, and small aero screens. As David recalled: 'It was a rattly old thing but went very well and we proceeded to set it up for the Peking run, which was eventually cancelled so our work was in vain.' The brothers decided to return the car to its original Velox configuration because Patrick's children were getting bigger and could no longer fit in his Wensum.

The car was trialled for a couple of years, though David noted it was not as torquey as OE 230 while OE 18 had speed. Then in 1988 he and Mary took it to Australia to complete a run from Darwin via Alice, Ularu to Adelaide then on to Melbourne and Sydney. Also with them was Arthur Jeddere-Fisher in his Vauxhall, E 397, plus another four or five Australian cars. The car completed the run with very little problems despite temperatures of 45°C in the Northern Territory and a faulty magneto. Today, the car has been passed to David's son Richard who uses it in various VSCC events, including most recently the Welsh Trial. It is a delightful car, with a remarkable history, which despite being back in standard Velox form, still has the battered radiator cowl which helped it to achieve one of the most extraordinary feats ever undertaken by a vintage car.



Owner Richard Marsh with OE 87 wearing its two surviving cowls



The car is now in Velox spec (except for the cowl resting on the bonnet for this photo)



Plowman celebrating the Montlhéry record afterwards

That remarkable hour

First published in The Bulletin *of Autumn 1953, here is* **TOM PLOWMAN***'s account of how he covered 106.9 miles in one hour in a modified 30-98. Climb in and hold on tight*

It was suggested the other evening at Radlett that I should write my own story of the Vauxhall-Montlhéry trip. I am reluctant to do so – I guess I am lazy about such things, and to write about oneself has the flavour of egotism. I would prefer a debate on the training of circus animals, or the advantage of one carburettor on a 30-98 as against two.

This is Sunday 16th August, time 8 p.m. This time last week I was just coming out of the customs shed at Dover. I was following a red-painted London taxi type Austin – date about 1930. It was driven by a mild-mannered and softly-spoken chap – he had a small black beard; the car had a roof rack full of jerry cans. The man's wife was in attendance with a camera, a map of the world was painted on the back of the hood of the car, and on the nearside of the hood, in large letters, was London-Sydney-London. Those two people had driven that distance – overland as far as possible – to Singapore. I believe on the outward journey, before crossing the sea to Australia, they spent some time on that continent. I thought the big part of the story, apart from the wonderful spirit that animated the man, was when I asked him which part he enjoyed most. He thought a while and said, 'When I was three days out in the complete silence and solitude of the Australian desert in camp at night – the completeness of the thing was so satisfying.'

Mark the car a Vintage model. What trouble did he have? A sheared magneto coupling. He said he would write to me when he had an address. We must enrol him as a member of the VSCC. About this trip to France – I have already sent Sam Clutton a bit of the story and the technical details.

I had the idea for some years, and entered for three Vintage hour events at Silverstone as part of the test – but otherwise abstained from racing. My note to Sam Clutton gives the technicalities of the job; the final tests were carried out on the Watling Street, Hockliffe to Towcester, and I spent most of the time finalising on the position of the carburettor. I've got

it right now. During tests one Sunday afternoon I sheared my torque stay, broke a rear shocker bracket, and the instrument board came adrift. Well, well, I thought, it's better to have these things happen here than on the run. Last of all, on the Saturday before I went on the Monday, the radiator sprang a leak. That took us till Sunday mid-day to repair. I had intended leaving Luton about 5 o'clock Tuesday morning, but as the weather forecast was rain, I went on Monday afternoon.

I left Luton at 2.30 in a spate of Bank Holiday traffic, and reached Dover in three hours, and put up at Whitecliffs Hotel – not a bad place. Crossed next morning and drove out of Dunkirk about 4.30 p.m.

It took us a little time to sort out the route – we had met Harold Ratcliffe that morning by arrangement at Dover, and he brought his Wyvern along to act as pilot and carry my 700 × 19 wheels and the luggage. We were making for Abbeville – the road was very second-class, the weather third-class – a very cold ride, and by the time we reached Hesdin I had had enough and we put up at the Hotel du France for the night – jolly good chef – their own live trout available.



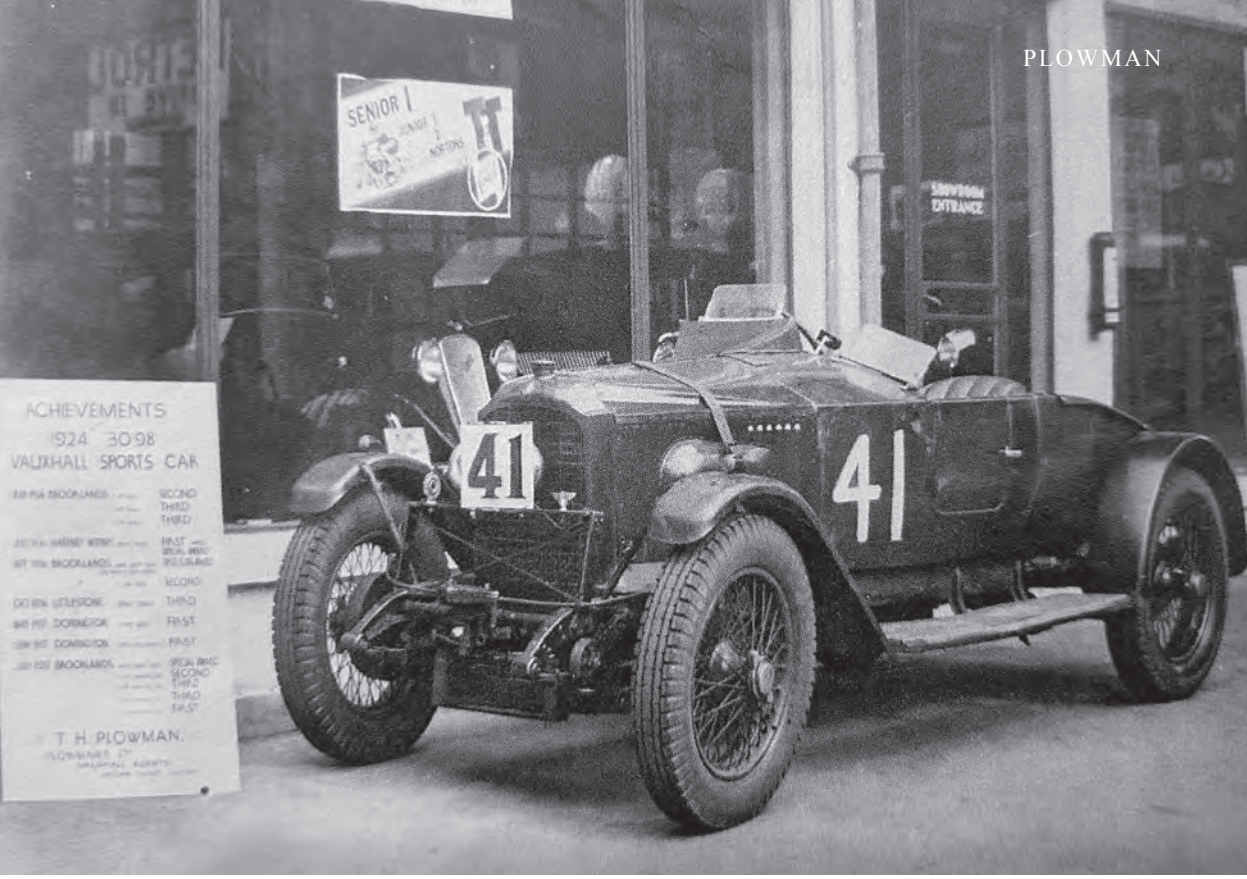
A commemorative plaque belonging to the car's present owner, Richard Marsh

We pushed on and had lunch in Pontaise – filled with petrol at a smart place – and met a mechanic (English) – Cheshire Regiment – first war. Very co-operative. Married French woman and stayed – don't think I envied him. Pontaise stands astride the Seine – fascinating to watch a diesel tug towing about six whacking loaded barges – cheap transport. Paddled on through St. Germain and Versailles to Montlhéry – where we arrived about 4 o'clock – a wee place on the main road to Orleans; rooms had been booked in advance at Hotel d- C B, a bit of a dump. We had been told to contact Garage Porcher for service, which we did. Mr. Porcher is quite a nice fellow – a Corsican, very hairy and quite a happy chap. I wondered how he got a living. I bet he does a little poaching on the side – Corsicans are like that.

Mr. Porcher insisted that we made use of the piece of concrete on his front as a workshop – this we did – we removed the wings and fitted the cover to the passenger seat and pushed the car inside and called it a day.

Next morning, 6th August, I was determined should be the day. If I could do both practice and the run I would. My chaps suggested practice today and the run tomorrow – Hell, I said, I've put this off long enough – let's get going. In a few minutes we were on the track – I had made all arrangements beforehand, and I pulled in to the paddock by the timing box and went to introduce myself to the officials. Could I practice – yes, when I was ready. A Simca was running a 15-day test and some of the mechanics came and looked at the car – a bit contemptuously. I heard one murmur 'Camion' – another 'Very old', and they went back and sat and watched the pretty Simca lapping at 65. I had been told previously I could only use the track if I was 40 per cent faster than the car on duration test. I hoped I would be. I glanced at the banking and murmured, 'That's steeper than Brooklands,' and off I went – middle course about 90 m.p.h. first lap – rough – steering kick – front axle danced – 100 next lap above the yellow line – this was rough – another lap





Another promotional shot of the car after Montlhéry

and pulled in – tightened the front shockers. My arms ached trying to grip the wheel; off again – 105 lap speed – for about four laps – thought – the banking is good – nice angle suits the weight and the speed O.K.

But goodness this car won't stand this hammering for an hour, and I doubt if I will – can hardly hold the wheel. Came in and pulled up the front shockers solid and off again 105–106 lap speeds, that's about 53 seconds a lap – fairly well up the banking. Not much else I can do to the car – no tuning was necessary. I had changed my needle one up from very weak, and put in a set of Lodge HIP plugs before practice – the trouble now was the intense grip necessary on the polished thin rim of the steering wheel to make the car go in the right direction – gloves may help – in all I did 17 practice laps – and went off for lunch having arranged for the hour at 4 o'clock that afternoon – left the car in the paddock. After lunch went into Arpajon (where the world's land speed record was once broken) and bought a pair of chamois gloves, tried them in the shop on a polished chair – just the job, I thought – back to the track at 3 o'clock – a little chat with the officials – they could time me at 3.30. M. Massonet of the A.C.F. would be along then. 3.15 I was getting ready – borrowed a golfing jacket, turned up the sleeves nice and free – yes, O.K. — just then a voice said 'Not a 30-98' and behold D. S. Jenkinson – who said he never passed Montlhéry without calling in – always something interesting going on – petrol level checked – oil and water O.K.; donned the crash hat and thought – H'm, might be some sense in it after all – had a drink of

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lemonade – goggles and gloves on – got in and confirmed the signals, left arm out at 15 minutes, both arms down in front 30 minutes, right arm out at three-quarter distance – both arms up at the hour – thought I, you are a B optimist – let's go – two laps to warm up – I will raise a hand and the timekeepers can start – right, we're off. First – second – third – top – over the yellow line, down the short straight on the far side – up the banking – along the straight past the boys – up the banking – rough ride this – hands better – sure – gloves are fine – ease the grip a bit – turned again, lifted a hand – being timed now.

Foot flat and keep it there – round again and again – phew – crash – those B front shockers are no good – that's the front shocker brackets on the axle hitting the chassis – why do people do these things? – well, a Vauxhall has never covered 100 miles in an hour before, and it's time it was done – pay attention – concentrate man – no need to go right up there – lap – lap – lap, silly devils are not timing me, oil pressure O.K. Well, this is a long quarter of an hour – lap, lap – dopey lot – just watching – ah, fifteen minutes – gosh, seems an age – if anything breaks on this car I bet it will be the sub frame.

That great engine weight – phew, that's my arm, numbed a hand – I wondered if I should have cut that body side away – wish I had – that's better – coming back into use. B silly driving this one-handed – ah, that's better – ease the grip of each hand in turn; those bumps, oil pressure O.K. How are we doing? Let's go a bit higher – seems just as rough – lap – lap – lap – smell of rubber now and again – good tyres, anyway – Dunlop racing – cost the B earth. Should have enough petrol – gee, how well she pulls – this Esso stuff really has guts – lap – lap – dopey lot gone to sleep again – surely it's halfway by now – still running the same – same revs each part of the track – how well she goes past the stand – make those French chaps sit up a bit – 'Camion' – I like that. Half way – about time too – what the hell – do they think I'm running round here for ever. She should do the other half – keep about where you are – no sense in changing now – silly B's might give me some signal O.K., or something – ah! well, you're over the ton all the time – nothing's broken – if anything was going to it would by this time; ah well, *ca ne fait rien* – less thinking, more concentration – you'll wreck the bloody thing – lap, lap, lap – wish old Pom could have come – getting the hang of this steering now – press on. Lap, lap, lap; wonder how that oil leak is – still got good pressure – revs O.K. Weird how regular this is, same revs, same place every time – wish the chap with the white shirt would stand out in front – but then they've never been on a race track before – lap, lap – that Simca looks funny right down there – it's just moving – doing 65, is it? – three-quarter distance – about time too – daft lot, why don't they watch the time? – should do it now – petrol should be O.K. – started with 12 gals.

Good stuff it is too. Never pulled like this before. Make a good mascot that tiger. Lap – lap – lap – oil pressure drops a bit just there and then comes up again – that's the leak – pressure up to 60 there – it's the level, not the oil. Glad I made up that new exhaust system. Must help a lot. Lap – lap – lap – lap – should do it now. Same revs, same places – bloody wonder car, this – 29 years old – beat a lot of moderns. Bet she would be giving 130 on the brake – lap – lap – lap, she'll do it now – be a B if something busted now – they've got their hands up, all of them – that's it then – do another couple of laps to make sure; attaboy – good – out of gear, switch off; coast in – what did she do? About 107 – what, in the hour? – yes – good – can I have a drink please – lemonade – English brand – would like a cup of tea – what a hope.

What now? – put the wings back or have a drink? – champagne please – poor stuff it was – refitted the wings and drove back by stages to Dunkirk, sailed on Sunday and had to drive back to Luton on wing lights only, no provision for night driving. Reached Luton 1.30 a.m. – and that is how a Vauxhall car, for the first time in history, covered one hundred miles in one hour – just for the hell of the thing – they go better when they get run in. Ah, well, chaps, all the best – it's good to be back.

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Harewood's entire track is visible from the paddock

Harewood Hillclimb

Yorkshire played host to another thrilling round of the speed season, says **DAVID PRYKE**, *as Will Marsh smashed a second class record this year*

Harewood Hillclimb is a real magnet for committed VSCC hillclimbers. Easily accessible from the south via the A1M, every year it attracts a wonderful selection of vintage and classic cars for its meeting on the first weekend of June, this year falling on Saturday 7 June. At just under 1600 yards, it's the longest hillclimb in the VSCC speed championship.

The hill has a fabulous variety of corners. After the short straight from the level startline the cars plunge downhill round a quick right hander. The hill then winds through a flowing series of mainly second gear corners each joined by a short straight. By the time you're back at the same level as the startline you've completed about half the hill. Towards the end you blast though a farmyard followed by a very challenging left hander that gradually opens out so that you have to progressively feed in the throttle trying not to get out of shape on the exit as speed here is vital for the following long uphill straight. Quick VSCC cars are doing well over 60mph on this straight and drivers are bracing themselves for the final corner. This double-apex right-hander tightens up and the overcommitted driver can easily run wide on to the grass, missing the rapidly approaching finish line altogether. A real sting in the tail. The entire track is visible from the paddock which has easily the best paddock view for any of our venues – looking across a vast valley with red kites soaring and swooping overhead.

Unlike Wiscombe, Shelsley and Prescott, Harewood is set in open grassland so that if you go off you generally (though not always) simply go bouncing along the grass with no harm to car or driver. This means you can really attack the hill with confidence – though a fast time still requires an accurate and committed approach. The entry generally consists of about half VSCC cars and half more modern classics. This year, for the first time I can recall, the meeting was not full – with both vintage and classic entries reduced. It seems we are all feeling the pinch.

Throughout the morning drivers had to endure a fine drizzle and a very slippery track. In a vain attempt to stay dry between runs some of the drivers in Classes Eight and Nine put up two gazebos. Between these they slung an ugly plastic waterproof car cover where they could shelter from the rain. The right crowd and no crowding? Not quite. The effect was much more 1980s Greenham Common than 1920s Brooklands.

During practice there were the usual mishaps. Wilf Cawley, driving the Ford-engined GN/Nash confection called Piglet was caught out by the final corner and missed the finish line on one of his runs. Jolyon Harrison in the exquisite E type ERA GP2 spun early in his run, mercifully without damage to car or driver. There were a few mechanical mishaps too. In the shared Riley Brooklands of Ian Muir and Tim Stamper, Tim felt something hit him in the leg during one ascent. Once back in the paddock he realised it



Roger Tushingham (MG N-Type) practising in the rain – he later shaved off 11 seconds to win his class



Adam Forster's Austin saloon has an air of the hotrod

was the handbrake button which had presumably been gradually unscrewing for years before finally making a bid for freedom. Although it was located it couldn't be reattached. VSCC President Simon Blakeney-Edwards was sharing his Frazer Nash Supersports with wife Jo. This car has two modes, very fast or very broken. This morning it was stubbornly in the latter mode. Various Frazer Nash *cognoscenti* gathered round to lend advice, sympathy and tools. It was quite impressive watching the president systematically going through the car to diagnose the problem. It put me in mind of my NHS days watching a skilful doctor unpacking a patient's symptoms – though my strong recollection is that those doctors' hands were a lot cleaner than the president's. It eventually turned out that one of the SU carb needles had snapped off. Astonishingly, the presidential toolbox contained a replacement of the correct size thus restoring the car to rude health. Kevin Morton was chasing oil pressure in his Riley Nine special and clearing some crud out of the relief valve meant that play could continue. The reduced entry meant that we were able to complete both practice runs and the first timed run before lunch on the still wet track. Perusal of the results at lunch showed that fastest prewar time of the day was likely to be between Wilf Cawley in Piglet and myself in my Frazer Nash Shelsley single seater. Game on!

At lunchtime we held a respectful minute's silence remembering two very recently fallen VSCC heroes – Julian Grimwade and past president David Marsh. It was good to see two generations of the Marsh family in attendance, son Richard and grandson Will who both continue to fly the family flag in every VSCC discipline. By the time lunch was finished the track was completely dry. Because the landscape around the track is devoid of trees the whole track dries quickly and evenly. Most drivers now agreed there was a lot of grip and perhaps records might be broken.

The aforementioned Will Marsh in his Austin Ulster proved the point, annihilating the rest of the class by almost 10 seconds and the old record by three seconds to record 81.82 seconds. Just as Will has a current stranglehold on Class One, so has Nigel Dowding in his Riley Brooklands in Class Two. Current Class Two record holder Ian Standing was watching on – sidelined by a lack of oil pressure – his class record threatened but not quite beaten by Nigel's 78.08s. Nigel's gearbox seized just as he crossed the finish line after his second timed run. Simon Thorpe, also in a Riley Brooklands, is rapidly improving and gained second.

In Class Three for sports cars up to 1,500cc, Jo Blakeney-Edwards just pipped husband Simon by 0.3 seconds with 77.78s in their Frazer Nash. In the same class Jon Mellor's Frazer Nash Boulogne had an intermittent misfire that only manifested itself at one particular point of the circuit, spoiling his timed runs in this historic 'Nash. In Class Six for standard



Sebastian Welch in one of only two Bentleys competing



Adam Moody and his 6C Alfa Romeo on a still slippery track



Will Marsh broke the Class One record which he set last year



Mike Miles in his fabulous MG Magnette

sports cars over 3,000cc, Jamie Quartermaine came out on top of a class exclusively made up of Vauxhall 30-98s. Class Eight for special sports cars up to 1,100cc is always very competitive. It was mightily close between the shared Riley Nine Brooklands of Tim Stamper and Ian Muir and the Riley special of Kevin Morton. Ian Muir just came out on top with 80.3s.

Class Nine was exclusively made up by Riley 12/4 specials – the quickest being David McRobert with 78.65s. This was David's first outright Class Nine victory since starting in VSCC competition only two years ago [*see his article on p. 14 – Ed.*] and well deserved. In Class 10 for special sports cars up to 3,000cc, Roger Tushingham's MG N-Type came out on top with 78.12s. In the same class Maurice Gleeson had a spin on his first timed run in the Riley Big Four special. In Class 11 for unlimited special sports cars, Wilf Cawley in Piglet smashed a full two seconds off his dad's previous record in the same car with a dominant 71.68s. This time was quick enough for fastest vintage car and was quicker than I'd ever been before in my 'Nash – but I still thought it was probably doable.

Moving on to the racing car classes, Louis McNair trounced the rest of Class 13 for cars up to 1,100cc in his GN Katipo. This cleverly engineered very low-slung special is really showing promise and well worth close inspection in the paddock. James Surridge's Riley 12/4 special humbled the far more sophisticated E-Type ERA in Class 14 for racing cars up to 1,500cc with 81.4s, though in a third run – which doesn't count for VSCC regulation purposes – the ERA just pipped the Riley's time. James was rightly absolutely cockahoop to have taken such a prestigious scalp. The ERA was undoubtedly the car of the meeting. It really is a gem of a car – every bit the GP voiturette and very reminiscent of the contemporary Mercedes W165. Not content with running the ERA, Jolyon was also exercising the Cognac Special in Class 15 for racing cars up to 3,000cc. He was substantially quicker in this historic special than in the ERA. But not quick enough for my Frazer Nash Shelsley which was going really well, and I was thrilled to get fastest prewar time of the day with 71.24s. Among the postwar cars was some very rapid machinery. It was good to see VSCC man James Baxter win overall fastest time of the day in the beautiful and fearsome Cooper T90 with a fine 61.59s. By the end of the day the sun was shining brightly and competitors and marshals lingered on and enjoyed a few drinks up to and during the traditional prize-giving. The organising BARC had done their usual fabulous job running the meeting with great efficiency. Despite the challenging track conditions there were very few incidents. A few drivers were staying overnight to compete on the Sunday, but most of us filtered off back home with happy memories of this fantastic hill.

All photos by Bertram Hill



Jolyon Harrison in the Cognac Special; his other car's an ERA



The GN Katipo of Louis McNair trounced all in Class 13

The Lancashire Tour

The Queen loved this part of the world and it's easy to see why, writes **DAVID MORONEY**

After seeing the Lancashire Tour advertised and knowing my diary was clear, I automatically thought 'this is a no brainer', especially as it was to take place in the late John Warburton's own country, whose Star 12/40 Pegasus I now own. Just as Wainwright has attracted thousands of walkers to the Lakes, so has the former editor of *The Bulletin* inspired many to take to the wheel or the pen. Richard Prest and Martin Jelley, organisers of this year's tour, are no exception. JW owned our Star for almost four decades so as we headed north from Cheshire and skirted round his hometown of Atherton it felt like a nod to our dear old friend.

The 90-mile route started at the golf club in the small town of Garstang, where we were greeted by chief scrutineer Jane Bickerstaff. Once signed on with Martin Jelley we were given the easy-to-follow road book of tulip diagrams and points of interest, and instructions for an optional easier route for both halves, which added up to only 75 miles. The route majored on the Forest of Bowland flanked by Ribblesdale to the east and south, Lancashire Coastal Plain to the west and Lunesdale to the north, all positioned between junctions 32 and 36 on the conveyor belt that is the M6.

It was a well-guarded secret that our late Queen, Elizabeth II, enjoyed peace and anonymity as a guest at Abbeystead House in the heart of the forest, which since 1980 has belonged to the Dukes of Westminster. Shoot beaters were often surprised to find themselves alongside a familiar figure in headscarf, Barbour and wellies, with a labrador, picking up shot birds. The twenty crews that enjoyed the scenery today were not so covert about their arrival, with the topography testing engines, gearboxes and brakes! During the morning section we enjoyed the roads across the Duchy of Lancaster's Whitewell Estate and then onto Hare Appletree Fell where there was the opportunity to park up and ascend the Queen Victoria Jubilee Tower, providing views of Morecambe Bay and as far north as the Lakeland fells. A little bit misty, it looked like rain was on the way.

Following on there was a particularly hilly gum (grass up the middle) section requiring four gates to be opened and more importantly closed, giving the opportunity to drink in the views. Lunch was a social affair in the sleepy village of Wray at the Bridge House Farm Tearooms. There was obviously a motoring theme here with a steel platform in the carpark for a one-at-a-time Mille Miglia-type start-line and a marquee large enough for car and bike rallies.

With light drizzle in the afternoon, we opted for the slightly shorter route. This took us to a scenic ridgeway affording views of the northwest edge of the forest. Then we crossed the valley into Dolphinholme where relics of wartime armament storage could be seen in the roadside woodland. A return to Trough scenery, through Ortner, where in the upland pasture curlew, oystercatcher, lapwing and skylark could be seen or heard. Climbing out of Abbeystead, the former monarch's retreat lies hidden in the well-wooded valley below as the route opens up over partly unfenced moorland. We then skirted around Harrisend Fell with the local viewpoint Nicky Nook to the west. We eventually descended through a pastoral landscape to Garstang. Back at the golf club a hearty hot pot supper was consumed before departure. A big thank you to Martin and Richard and their team. When an enjoyable day out like this leaves you so relaxed, it is only later that you realise how much effort has gone into creating it.

Photos by Mike Griffin



Don Williamson's 1926 Lancia Lambda is ready for rain



Stuart Cooke in the McEvoy Special





This Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost, 60ZG, was delivered to Windovers Ltd. in 1922 for the construction of its dual-cowl open touring body. The car is seen on safari in Kenya where it was taken in 1928 by its fourth owner, Robert Chamberlain, a Cambridge-educated journalist, and used to transport the Prince of Wales during a visit that year. According to a new book, Rolls-Royce in East Africa*, reviewed on p. 96, the original livery was amaranth red with black wings and wheels, with antique leather to match the paint pattern. The car survives, although now sports a different body having been found abandoned in the bush in Tanganyika in the 1950s (Our thanks to John Stuttard, John Wroe and Wayne Kennerley for use of this image)*

The Tour of Surrey

An idyllic summer's day was had exploring this quintessentially English county, as **NIGEL IRVING** *reports*

Buckland Park Lake is a former quarry and now a hidden 50-acre recreational gem which provides many remarkable water-related activities. It has excellent facilities including a restaurant located above the lakes and ample parking for trailers and modern cars. This was the venue for the first Surrey Tour organised last year and was so again this year on Sunday 15 June. There were no competition prizes, just instructions to be back by 5pm. Had there been a prize it would have been awarded to Robin Butler who had driven his 1934 Railton four-seat tourer all the way from Ledbury via Brooklands Revival but had to bail out of the tour due to overheating problems in our recent hot weather.

Fuelled with delicious bacon baps and tea from a mobile catering unit, included in the entrance fee, we set off on the 79.16-mile route which was superbly organised by Peter Crossley and Michael Harwood. The latter gave invaluable car advice and assistance on test drives to Peter, a relative VSCC newcomer, during cold February days while planning the route. The Tour was like a banquet which I would like to revisit all over again but in a more leisurely fashion to explore in more detail. The very comprehensive nine-page booklet included many 'Did You Know?' snippets with local facts and features which we would have explored if we had had more time on the day. It included contemporary 'vintage' photographs, annotated maps, pub suggestions, warnings of single-track roads, steep inclines, petrol stations, warnings about particular restrictions and written directions – a mammoth undertaking to prepare but very helpful for the 17 eager participants from Surrey, South London, Sussex, Kent and even further afield. It was particularly nice to see a number of fathers and sons, in some cases grandsons and granddaughters, as it happened to be Father's Day.

Key route points were Betchworth, Newdigate, Ockley, Forest Green, Abinger Common, Friday Street, Leith Hill, Coldharbour, Westcott Heath, Wotton, Holmbury St Mary, Abinger Hammer, Shere, Albury Heath, Shamley Green, Winterfold Heath, Peaslake, Ewhurst, Walliswood, Blackbrook, Reigate Heath and Buckland. The Surrey hills afforded delightful sunlit distant views, and we would suddenly plunge into cool dappled woods, the various villages, heaths and forests looking particularly beautiful on a glorious summer Sunday with England 'at leisure', the thwack of leather on willow coming from cricket pitches, cycling District Nurses or more likely in small cars, walkers, ramblers, horses with riders, ponies and traps, village ponds, tea shops, fetes and open gardens along the way.

Rural Surrey has so much to offer and may I recommend the 1924 book *Unknown Surrey*, which has beautiful watercolour illustrations by artist Donald Maxwell with his quirky informative text. Haymaking in bucolic Tooting will astonish you! We were very lucky not to encounter any of those now ubiquitous pop-up unattended road works and closed roads with no notice beforehand which frustrate navigation.

Thank you to the very professional marshals Larry Rose (no-nonsense MOT examiner in my case), Giles Day with his wife Rebecca, and Darren Pike – the event couldn't take place without them and most sincere thanks to Peter and Michael for a great deal of hard and detailed preparation resulting in a splendid vintage motoring day. I'm sure that if you attend this excellent event next year you will not be disappointed.

Photos by Peter Crossley



Our reporter sets off in his Hurlingham-bodied Vauxhall



A wave from Jonathan Papworth in his 6C Alfa Romeo

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The typically varied grid of the ODM race (Mark Ballard)

Cadwell Park

The club's midsummer race meet was hot, heated and highly entertaining, as **CHARLES PRESTWICH** *reports*

The VSCC were back at the mini-Nürburgring in the usual mid-June slot, this year on Saturday 21 June. Set in the Lincolnshire Wolds, this circuit is a hidden gem of British motorsport and brings vintage cars to life with its challenging course. As was stated in the introductory notes in the event programme, 'the timetable offers something for everyone' (eight packed grids, with every kind of pre-war machinery imaginable on display) but it is also true that Cadwell offers something for every car and driver, be it Coppice (which can often be taken flat out), the power-hungry Park Straight, the infamous Mountain section (which always catches out one or two who haven't selected the correct gear early enough!) or the sweeping Hall Bends sheltered by towering trees.

Morning practices were met with bright sunshine and, by mid-morning, the temperature was already climbing to nearly 30 degrees C. On track, hottest in first practice were the Painter duo of James and Harry among an eclectic mix of pre-war MGs, with James less than a second faster in the MG Kayne. Elsewhere, Onno Konemann in his bright orange MG D Type Special had come all the way from the Netherlands. In second practice, the four fastest cars were separated by less than a second, with Mark Brett in the Ballamy Ford topping the charts ahead of Sue Darbyshire in her Morgan three-wheeler (perfectly suited to a track like Cadwell), Max Sowerby in his Talbot and Adam Moody in his Riley TT Sprite. The 1937 Ballamy Ford has a sticker on its side reading 'Ecurie Du Fer' – its time of 2:02.43 was not too bad for a duffer!

Practice Three was listed online as for 'VSCC Pre-war Cars (Slow)' but that would be doing an injustice to many who featured: Patrick Blakeney-Edwards' notoriously fast Frazer Nash Super Sports ran in this session and whilst he was not at the wheel, Craig McWilliam – to whom the car was loaned – was becoming more and more accustomed to the circuit as each lap went by. His final lap was the fastest of any car in that practice session.

There were plenty more Frazer Nash cars featuring in Practice Four, and even on a dry track there was no shortage of opposite lock on display, whilst Robert Moore in the GN Special took to the grass coming out of the Gooseneck in an entertaining session. Wilf Cawley also featured in a Frazer Nash Super Sports but he would go much faster in Practice Seven at the wheel of the GN Ford 'Piglet', in which father Dougal was fastest in Practice Five, albeit with a lap four seconds slower than Wilf's. This left Dougal searching desperately for an excuse over the lunch-break – his conclusion was that had he crouched over



Mark Daniell (MG PB) completed six laps of the opening race but did not finish (Mark Ballard)



Cadwell has plenty of corners and hills, some at the same time (Mark Ballard)

the steering wheel on the straights, he would no doubt have gone faster than his son.

Practice Six saw three ERAs take to the track, including the event programme's 'Star Car' ERA GP2, being driven by James Baxter. Despite winning Restoration of the Year at last year's Royal Automobile Club Historic Motoring Awards, it was yet to finish a race after retiring at 2024 Mallory and 2025 Silverstone. Would Cadwell prove to be the third time is the charm? Well … with only two laps completed, the car was back in the paddock with oil trouble, as the rev counter's linkage had unscrewed itself at the bottom and was quickly filling the rev counter with oil. ('Why the bloody hell would it do that?!' exclaimed Baxter.) Thankfully, some fettling over the lunchbreak was enough to sort out the issue. Not as fortunate was Fred Harper, who didn't even get onto track in his 1926 Miller 91, the car suffering from a broken crown wheel and pinion which could not be fixed on the day. Harper also suggested that work would need to be done on the brakes ('It's fast but I need it to stop!') before he will be able to drive the car to its full potential in, one hopes, the not-too-distant future.

David Morris set the fastest time of the morning in R11B with a lap in under 1 minute 50 seconds, but Patrick Blakeney-Edwards in his Frazer Nash Super Sports was not far behind and indeed ahead of AJM1 and GP2 in the timing charts. He would be back out for the final practice of the morning in the ex-Fane Frazer Nash 'Shelsley' Monoposto, a car which he drove to a podium finish at Goodwood in 2024. His rapid lap times did not betray that the car had been 'pulling slightly to the right initially', as Patrick observed after the session, although what was more obvious to viewers enjoying the action from the Club House terrace was that the car was very twitchy as it crested the Mountain and Patrick admitted it was 'a bit scary going up there!'. Christian Pedersen in his Austin Seven Special with bright yellow and green bodywork also featured and went an impressive seven seconds quicker than Archie Waterfield in another Austin Seven single-seater, who was a potential rival to Pedersen for the overall win in the Spero and Voiturette Trophies Race later in the day.

While the lunch break presented the opportunity for many drivers to shed their racing leathers and refuel (preferably having found some shade), it also saw a minute of noise in memory of Julian Grimwade, during which spectators put their hands together and drivers revved their engines. Not long after, it was time for the MG cars to make some noise on track as the Mary Harris Trophy Race opened the afternoon's proceedings. The Painter brothers James and Harry were on the front row and very quickly found themselves in a race of their own, although behind there was a separate battle. Charles Jones in his MG L Magna was occupying third position but Steve McEvoy in the MG Bellevue Special was never far from his tail.



Harry Painter (MG PA) had a mixed day but good sun protection (Mike Griffin)



Thomas Ozanne's fabulous Aston Martin C-Type replica (Mark Ballard)



Vyvyan Bewley in his early GP Bugatti (Mike Griffin)



Nicholas Komaroff and Richard Carter in the voiturette race; neither finished (Bertram Hill)

Meanwhile, pole man James Painter was managing to stay ahead of Harry despite the near-constant pressure that was being applied and the leader picked his way through backmarkers well to ensure that Harry never had a clear-cut opportunity to overtake. In the end, James took the flag two seconds ahead after a fun 15 minutes, during which the pair had streaked clear of the rest of the field. The remaining podium place remained up for grabs. In a similar vein to the lead battle, Charles Jones had maintained his advantage over McEvoy but the Bellevue Special had presented a challenge for third place all race and on the final lap, it would pay off as Jones went off at the Mountain and despite maintaining control of the car over the grass and rejoining the track, it had opened the door just enough for McEvoy to sneak by. The Bellevue Special would hold its newly found advantage through Hall Bends and finish on the podium with a second's margin. Consolation for Jones came in the form of the handicap win, meaning that the Mary Harris Trophy was his. It was a delight to see 21 pre-war MGs finish a race together, and the MG PB driven by Ms Ellena Reece timed it to perfection, successfully crossing the line but then breaking down before getting back to the paddock.

Race Two was the Bolzano Trophy race for the 'slower' Frazer Nash cars present, and David Goldspink was on pole in the Frazer Nash Acedes. The only GN car on the grid was Louis McNair's Katipo, a car which the commentator remarked 'looks like it's made out of Meccano!'. Starting from the third row it would be a contender at the front of the field. After one lap, Goldspink was already six seconds clear in the lead, a gap he maintained for the next few laps, whilst behind him Jack Bond emerged as the nearest challenger in a Frazer Nash Super Sports. The battle for the final podium place was being fiercely fought between three cars, a Super Sports 'Nash driven by the young Archie Bullett, the Frazer Nash Ulster of Dr Charles Pither and McNair in the GN Katipo. There would be much shuffling of the order before the chequered flag came out, starting out front when, on lap five, the Frazer Nash Acedes yielded what had been a healthy lead as it stopped halfway up the Mountain. Goldspink was unable to put the car into gear and whilst he struggled – all the while parked in the middle of the track



A mouth-watering line-up of Frazer Nashes (Mike Griffin)



Tom Hardman in ERA AJM1 (Mark Ballard)



Oliver Tomlin's Morgan resembles a lit cigar (Bertram Hill)

– cars came flying past. These included Bond and the three cars which had been battling behind: they had done well to avoid the Acedes 'Nash whilst squabbling for position. Goldspink eventually got going again but there would be no way back into contention out front with just a few minutes remaining. Bond, having inherited the lead, drove smoothly to the win, but all was not settled behind him. The three-way battle became a two-way battle in the closing stages as Archie Bullett pulled clear for 2nd but, with a lap to go, Pither in 3rd and McNair in 4th were separated by 0.7 seconds. By the time they had made their way back to the start/finish straight to cross the line, the gap was 18 seconds … with McNair ahead, and Pither having been relegated to 6th. He would explain in the paddock after the race that he had suffered from fuel surge on the last lap, causing a misfire. Nonetheless, McNair made a deserved appearance on the podium after putting in his fastest lap on the final tour of the circuit. There was entertainment at the rear of the field too as Wilf Cawley waved to the crowd on his way to last place, but with the unofficial prize of 'crowd favourite' to his name.

The Specials grid saw a return of the MG Kayne, this time in the hands of Mike Painter, as well as three Morgan Three-Wheelers, Baxter's Riley/ERA and Dougal Cawley in Piglet – an exciting mix of cars. Harry Painter was also back on the grid although by the time the lights went out, he had been pushed to the side and would not play any part in the 15-minute race. Whilst Dougal drove Piglet gradually out of reach of the chasing pack, nothing could separate Jo Blakeney-Edwards ('Nash), Finley Hope-Cameron (Morgan) and Mike Painter in a fantastic tussle lasting five laps until Jo sadly retired. Another notable retirement to the paddock was Baxter, who had been running in 7th. Action at the Mountain continued, with Mark Chandler in a Riley Brooklands Replica the latest to fall foul of that infamous section of the circuit. (Even Ayrton Senna succumbed to the Mountain during his only appearance at the circuit in 1983.) Chandler was able to control the car across the grass and rejoin the track without too much lost time (unlike Senna who had ended up in the barrier). Out front, Dougal was driving an assured race and won it with a 13-second gap which he had been expertly controlling for most



Tim Parker's very attractive 2-litre Lagonda (Mark Ballard)



Mark Dolton going well in the MG PB (Mark Ballard)



Opposite lock from Louis McNair in the GN Katipo (Mark Ballard)

of the race, therefore taking away the Len Thompson Memorial Trophy. Finley Hope-Cameron had broken away from Painter to take 2nd whilst the MG Kayne was on the podium for a second time of the day after its win in the opening race of the afternoon.

Next up was the ODM contingent, with Mark Brett in the Ballamy-Ford on pole but Sue Darbyshire in her three-wheeler Morgan hoping to go one better than Finley Hope-Cameron had achieved in the previous race. A delayed start nearly thwarted her race before it had begun, as the cars were held on the line for around a minute before the lights finally went out and with the Morgan's engine being air-cooled, the risk of overheating was high. But Darbyshire got away well, lighting up the rear wheel as she pulled off the line and immediately put the pressure on Brett, whilst Max Sowerby (Talbot), Adam Moody (Riley) and Jeremy Flann ('Nash) were never far behind. It quickly appeared as though Darbyshire taking the lead was only a matter of when, not if, and on lap four she went round the outside of Brett to take the lead as the cars headed uphill through Coppice – a lead that she would keep to the flag. Unfortunately for Brett, he would be overtaken twice more before the finish, leaving him in 4th, as both Sowerby and Flann managed to get ahead. In the end, it was Sowerby who finished 2nd by just 0.2 seconds after Flann managed the fastest lap of the race on the last lap but just ran out of track to get ahead of the 1939 Talbot.

The smaller capacity cars were up next, the vast majority being Austin Sevens, for the Spero and Voiturette Trophies Race. Christian Pedersen was on pole in 'Little Miss Green', his distinctive Austin Seven single-seater. He had also competed in the Specials race in a Riley 12/4 Special but said in the paddock that he felt he had more grip in the nimble Austin (perhaps also due to being so familiar with the car). And he looked formidable indeed, sweeping through Hall Bends as he pulled away in the lead early on. Emerging as his nearest challenger was young Archie Waterfield in another Austin Seven single-seater, who was on the charge and had a comfortable gap to third, although there was no catching Pedersen out front, leaving each of the front two to enjoy lonely races. Elsewhere, Louis McNair and Katipo were back – if Frazer Nashes had been able to dwarf the 1.1-litre car, Austin Sevens certainly couldn't! But across the line came Pedersen, followed by Waterfield and 3rd place to the impressive Hugo Pickup in an Austin Ulster Special, meaning that he also won the Voiturette Trophy as the first car up to 750cc unsupercharged (the two out front being supercharged).

In the interval between the Austin Seven race and the race for the 'faster' 'Nash cars, in typical Cadwell fashion, a light drizzle began to fall – yes, even on a sweltering summer's day, it always rains at Cadwell! Drivers such as Mark Walker in the GN Thunderbug need no second invitation to expertly slide their



Steve McEvoy finishing third in the opening race in the Bellevue Special (Mark Ballard)



Birthday boy and winner of the Seaman Trophy, David Morris in R11B (Mark Ballard)



Finley Hope-Cameron finished second in the Specials race in the Morgan (Mike Griffin)



Winston Teague in his Frazer Nash Falcon (Mark Ballard)

cars round a racetrack and the rain would certainly make for a fun race full of opposite lock. Amusingly, 'Thunderbug' is so named because of the small metal figurine at the front of the car given to Mark many years ago and which, he was told, is a 'Thunderbug'. On pole was Patrick Blakeney-Edwards in the Frazer Nash Shelsley and alongside was the GN Rabelro, another interestingly-named car, this time after the man who built it, Mr. Orlebar. If the GN Thunderbug were named after the man who built it, it would be the GN Walker (or indeed, to follow the pattern, the GN Reklaw). And so to the on-track action. Blakeney-Edwards still appeared to be almost shimmying his way up the Mountain but was maintaining his advantage ahead of Waterfield, who was dancing in the rain with Dougal Cawley in 'Piglet'. Their battle was majestic and as the rain fell more heavily, so the sliding of the cars became more accentuated until, just moments after being as sideways as ever through Hall Bends, Tom Waterfield's race was no more as he slid off at the final corner, having been overtaken by Dougal on the previous lap but with nothing to separate the cars. Tom was thankfully unharmed and no doubt the minor damage to the car will be repaired in no time. The incident didn't just bring Tom's race to an end but the whole race, as the red flag came out and with only a minute left on the clock, it was decided that it would not be restarted. That left Blakeney-Edwards with a deserved win, ahead of Dougal and Jeremey Flann, who had been bumped up to 3rd after Waterfield's retirement.

And so to the only handicap race of the day. Widely known as a commentator's nightmare, these races can also be a reporter's nightmare but always come down to a tight and enthralling finish. Two cars were to run for eight laps, one car for six laps and one for five laps while the rest of the field would run for seven laps. The two cars with an extra eighth lap to complete were Pedersen's Austin Seven and Max Sowerby's Talbot. Unfortunately, only the Talbot appeared on the line. Sian Slater in a Riley Imp was the driver benefiting from two credit laps (thus only having five laps to complete) and very early on in the race – despite setting the slowest lap times – it seemed as though it would be a tough task for anyone to catch her, not least Sowerby who was the fastest on track but overtaking Sian three times would not come easily. Interestingly, Sian won the handicap race earlier on this year at Silverstone in a different car, a Singer Le Mans. We are led to believe that in the VSCC, once you win a handicap race, you can expect never to win one again but Sian put that theory to bed as she held on comfortably in the end to take the handicap win at Cadwell too; maybe the trick is never to compete in a handicap race in the same car! The gap to the nearest chaser, Tim Parker in his Lagonda, was 22 seconds with the top 10 separated by over a minute. (Okay, maybe handicap races don't always



Winner of the Handicap race, Sian Slater in her Riley Imp (Mark Ballard)



Adam Forster (Ulster) in the voiturette race (Mark Ballard)



Mark Brett started the ODM on pole but finished 4th (Mark Ballard)

come down to a tight finish.) Nonetheless, for all who competed and for those spectating from the sidelines, it was an enjoyable race which, despite the greasy track, saw all the starting cars cross the line to finish.

The final race of the day saw the fastest cars of the day take to the track, with three ERAs, Patrick Blakeney-Edwards' Frazer Nash Super Sports and Wilf Cawley in 'Piglet' set to shine at the front. As the race got underway, the commentators expressed their hope that the ERAs would all be on the podium come the end of the race and David Morris in ERA R11B was off well from pole position. However, Patrick was proving quite the handful as he looked for his second win of the day, whilst young Wilf was mixing it with the other two ERA cars driven by Baxter (GP2) and Hardman (AJM1), perhaps the slightly damp conditions helping him to keep up with the supercharged 1930s racers. Unfortunately, the fun would be ended when Wilf, sandwiched between Baxter in front and Hardman just behind, went onto the grass entering Park corner and found the wall on the side of the track, which saw the second red flag of the day appear, putting an end to the memorable three-car battle, as well as the chase for first place with Patrick glued to the tail of Morris. Watching on from the sidelines, Dougal was swiftly informed that Wilf had got out of the car and was walking around unaided but that 'Piglet might have to go to the abattoir'. Thankfully, the damage to Piglet was not, of course, too extensive; Dougal's sanguine comment on seeing the car was, 'It's only nuts and bolts.'

With 10 minutes of the race still to be run, and with plenty of time before the curfew, the race was restarted and the front battle resumed, with the ever-drying track allowing Morris to press harder and harder, clocking a sub-1 minute 50 seconds lap (as he had done in practice) to test Patrick's Frazer Nash to the limit. Behind, Baxter and Hardman were having a two-way battle which now saw Hardman ahead, where he would stay until the end of the race despite the constant pressure from Baxter. Unfortunately, before the flag had fallen, Patrick and the 'Nash had retired, leaving Morris out front to run on his own for the final couple of laps and to take the Historic Seaman Trophy – on his birthday, too! Patrick's retirement also meant that the commentators were granted their wish: a podium of ERAs. There was elation on the face of Baxter standing on the podium after the race – the ERA GP2 had finished a race and, what's more, in 3rd place. Owner Jolyon Harrison was also present during the podium presentation to celebrate. All those standing before the three drivers sang a very out-of-tune happy birthday for the race winner, including Wilf Cawley who had returned from the medical centre and still with a twinkle in his eye.

So, the cars were put back on their trailers (although one young driver couldn't resist the temptation to perform donuts on the grass in one corner of the paddock before doing so) and the VSCC said goodbye to Cadwell – the perfect theatre for vintage motor racing – after yet another hugely successful event.



Archie Waterfield had a lonely time running second in the voiturette race (Bertram Hill)

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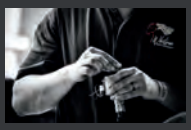
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The Light Car Section's Summer Rally and Tour

A splendid weekend was organised by the section's new Competition Secretaries, as **ROBIN BATCHELOR** *reports*

The Light Car and Edwardian Section's Summer Rally was this year based at Tom and Jules Walker's farm in Laughton, Leicestershire, and took place on Sunday 22 June, the day after the VSCC's race meeting at nearby Cadwell. Tom therefore kindly offered hospitality to all light cars from the Friday night, so that members could drop them off and head up to Cadwell for the day on Saturday if they were marshalling or spectating and be back at Pit Farm in time for the Saturday evening BBQ.

Entrants could choose between an Expert or Novice class as well as a non-competitive tour option, and of the 52 crews entered, they were split roughly equally between rally and tour. The section's new competition secretaries, Matilda Jones and India Walker, did a brilliant job of organisation and were seen scurrying about attentively at the Saturday evening barbecue as people arrived in the undulating ridge-and-furrow field. Tea and coffee were thoughtfully offered gratis by walking through a kissing gate and a hundred yards beyond was a charming diminutive village hall with just room for a kitchen, loo and space for a small assembly.

The weather was kind and it was a most congenial atmosphere as the line of vintage cars grew longer and drivers and navigators sat around on straw bales tucking into their grub whiling away the evening with a good old natter. It was while eating my second delicious chocolate brownie for pudding that I thought I heard a rumble of thunder, but no – it was Hughie Walker driving his father's tow car, an oily-rag Model A Ford with an early flathead V8 beneath the bonnet and eight plated exhaust pipes creating a deep powerful rumble which would have our founder Arthur Jeddere-Fisher turning in his grave. Mind you, he would have approved of the four klaxon trumpets serving as carburettor inlets.

Next morning the scrutineers were on parade at 08:30, after which your ticket could be exchanged for route instructions. Once you'd had your fill of tea, coffee and tinkering it was time to explore the quiet lanes and villages amongst the undulating countryside of Leicestershire. The excellent notes were written by Andrew Duerden. A veritable history lesson punctuated the route instructions and as we read of Gumley's origins dating back to the eighth century we saw the Riley Nine Monaco saloon entered by our friends at *The Automobile* magazine, who had stopped to watch a cricket match. Gumley's cricket club is rightly proud of its pitch which enjoys buzzards and red kites soaring overhead, sheep grazing around the boundary fence and the occasional cow sauntering into the outfield during play. It was this outfield through which our route passed between the square and the pavilion – all very Thomas Hardy.

A sign read 'Please wait here for signal at the end of the over.' And upon that signal we started our engines and continued on our way with my navigator Zack Stiling reading out historic snippets while the crew of the Riley ahead did the navigation. As we rounded a sharp bend, there were Foxton Locks, a flight of ten



A brace of Salmsons alongside Ian Parsons' Vauxhall at Pit Farm



Isabel Teague's Austin endures thorough scrutineering



This delightful early Morgan took part in the tour



Willie and Dominique Sellers in their Salmson

canal locks, the largest staircase locks on the English canal system and a wonderful example of 19th-century engineering, built between 1810 and 1814. Alongside is the site of the Foxton inclined plane which was designed in 1900 by Gordon Cale Thomas. Taking 12 minutes as opposed to 14 hours in the locks, it could transport two caissons up and two down, each containing two narrow boats or barges and in a 12-hour day, 6,000 tons of cargo could pass through the upper and lower canal levels. It was sadly mothballed in 1911 to save the heavy cost of maintaining a supply of steam for the engine which powered it.

As we drove through the ancient parish containing the five Langton villages and leaving Tur Langton we turned left onto a minor road – memorable for two things. The first was a delightful exchange of silly faces with an eight-year-old passenger in the rear of Elizabeth Tyler's 1928 Chummy just ahead of us, the second was the reason it was known as 'Red Flag Road' – because there used to be a sentry box and if it was manned by a soldier waving a red flag it was prudent to stop in case you caught a stray bullet from the firing range at Kibworth Harcourt.

The countryside was peppered with fine churches, chief amongst which was that in King's Norton, one of the finest parish churches in all of England and known as the Cathedral of the Shires. Alas, it no longer sports the original 1775 spire which was damaged by lightning in 1843. The damage was repaired at a cost of £191 but the mythical Norse God Thor returned in 1850 and King's Norton lost its slender spire altogether. The wonderful interior, lit by clear rather than stained glass windows, has hardly changed with the Georgian central three-decker pulpit, box pews and choir gallery remaining intact.

As we left this peaceful village scene, who should come clattering smokily around the corner but Paul Rogers and Rachel Ward in the 1924 New Carden with smiles betraying their astonishment that it was still running well. Peter McFadyen was standing on the verge to capture this historic moment, and as soon as the smoke cleared more cheerful smiles appeared as Liz and Dougal Cawley hoved into view enjoying their 1922 Peugeot Quadrilette.

More historic names and places filled our route to the lunch stop at Arnesby village where Jenny and Tony Lees welcomed us to their home for lunch. Most crews found somewhere to park on the village green before being guided to a table laden with delicious food. The courtyard contained arguably the ultimate 'His & Hers' shed containing a 30-98 and the Vauxhall Viper and languishing inside a neighbouring shed was a Scripps-Booth with a V8 engine. I enjoyed listening to Tony's enthusiasm as he described his ongoing rebuild of this rare car. The horologist Rupert Gould owned one in circa 1919, who spent from 1920 until 1933 restoring the marine chronometers of John Harrison. Gould's car is pictured on p. 78 of the book *Time Restored* written by VSCC member and Scripps-Booth collector Jonathan Betts.

I don't know what Jim Edwards said to the lunch stop timekeeper but her smile was much broader than



Our reporter leads The Automobile*'s Riley*



An Essex and a Chummy on the village green at Arnesby at the halfway halt



The obligatory roadside tinker



The Austin Seven is still a perfect family car

that offered to most other arrivals. Perhaps it was the sight of his glorious 1930 Family Morgan with the V-Twin protruding out front, or perhaps his cheerful glamorous navigators occupying the remaining seating. The same car/driver produced more laughter during lunch as many of the younger generation deserted their Austin Sevens and succumbed to the Morgan magnet.

The afternoon route took us through Peatling Magna which is believed to date from the first century, thus making it one of the oldest settlements in the county, then on to Swinford where in 1747 the parson tied a bulldog to each of his apple trees every night to prevent scrumping. His dogs loved him but such was their boisterous welcome one morning that he fell into the village pond and drowned.

We can't pass Stanford Hall without a nod to the famous pioneer aviator Percy Pilcher, who flew his glider here in 1895 and planned a flight with his powered triplane in 1899 where he would very possibly have become the first pilot to fly a powered aircraft. Alas he died in an accident with his glider named 'Hawk'. We recommend the book *Another Icarus* by Philip Jarrett, a biography of Pilcher which took twelve years' research. Propeller design has come a long way since Leonardo Da Vinci and we see them used worldwide in our daily lives. As we drove past wind generators at North Kilworth we stopped for a quick selfie and if you have never stood beneath one you should try it. Even though you know the tip of the enormous whirling blade will pass nowhere near your head, I defy you not to duck as it reaches its lowest point with a frightening loud WHOOSH.

Congratulations to the overall winners of the rally, our very own chairman Richard Marsh navigating for Paula Marsh in an Austin Seven Chummy. The Edwardian class was won by Ian Parsons and David Cochrane in Ian's Vauxhall A-Type, and the Cyclecar class winners were Mark and Sophie Walker in their belt-driven GN. Our Novice class winners, Mike and Anya Lees, were also second overall in their Chummy. We look forward to seeing more of this young couple's successes in future Light Car events. If I had to choose a favourite car amongst all the entrants it would have to be Tim and John Harrison's 1911 De Dion Bouton with Micky Hudson's oily-rag Salmson a close second.

It must have been a particularly good event because I left my mobile phone in the field at the finish and after only realising it halfway home I enjoyed the test of initiative in tracing it and retrieving it the next day. So, a huge thanks to all who helped with that and even huger thanks to all the folk who organised the event and made it so easy and enjoyable. What a wonderful brilliantly organised weekend. Many thanks to the new competition secretaries for all the planning. We are also especially grateful to Tom and Jules Walker for generously hosting us – not only did they provide a fabulous venue, but they also put on a superb BBQ on the Saturday night, bringing everyone together for a tremendous social. Long live the LCES!

Photos by Peter McFadyen



Elegant Talbot passes the church at King's Norton



Paul Rogers looks delighted that his New Carden is working

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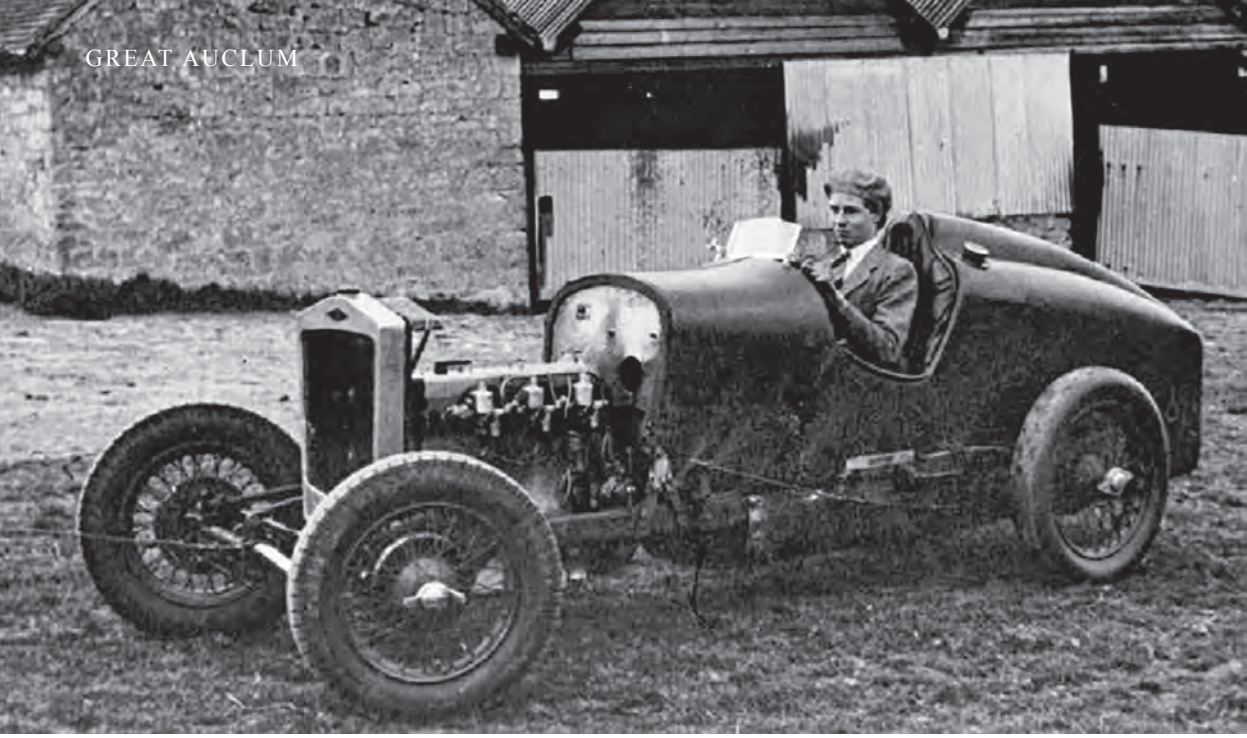
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Peter Neale and the Acedes 'Nash that took FTD, photographed in 1939 (Michael Christie)

More on The Great Auclum Hillclimb

Readers may recall an article we ran about this long-forgotten event on pp. 16–17 of the Summer 2021 Bulletin*, 312. Now* **STEPHEN LOVEGROVE** *has written a book on the subject, to be published later this year, as he explains*

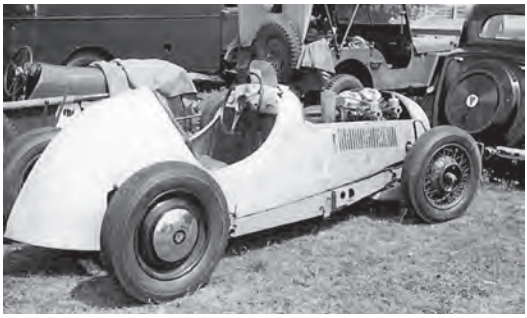
Speed hill climbing is one of the oldest types of motorsport, and the discipline is still going strong in the UK. Good crowds gather at well-known hills such as Prescott and Shelsley Walsh. The British Championship is as competitive as ever, with rounds being held in the Channel Islands, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Over the years many hill climb venues have disappeared and one such venue is Great Auclum.

Best known for its infamous steeply-banked right-hand first corner, Auclum was just a quarter of a mile long and featured a downhill sprint to the imposing first turn before snaking uphill through four (also banked, but not as steeply) bends before a short burst towards the finish.

Great Auclum was the brainchild of Neil Gardiner, a director at Huntley & Palmers biscuit company in Reading. Gardiner was a motoring enthusiast and raced at Brooklands in the early 1930s. In 1937 he acquired



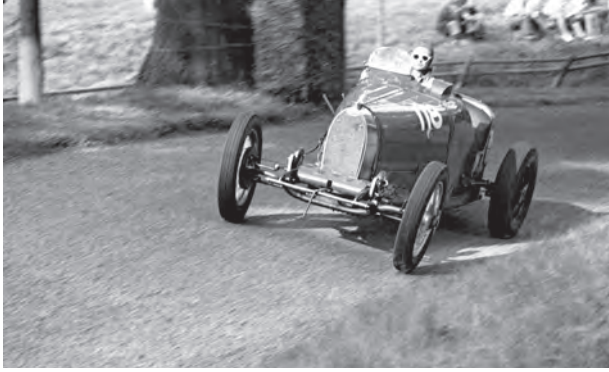
Len Gibbs competing in a Riley at Great Auclum, 26 July 1947 (Guy Griffiths)



The 1595cc Rover Special developed by Spen King and Peter Wilkes, driven at Great Auclum by King in 1948



Jim Martin, MG J2/J3 supercharged special, climbs through the esses in 1948



Joy Ching heads through the twisty section in a Bugatti on 14 August 1949 (Guy Griffiths)

land known as Wokefield Manor from a member of the Palmer family. Plans were drawn up for an impressive 14-bedroom house, Great Auclum. He wanted his driveway to be suitable for fast cars and commissioned a local contractor, Jim Fisher, to tarmac the drive, and to bank each of the five bends. The house was completed in time for Christmas 1938, but Gardiner had already invited a bunch of fellow enthusiasts to test his 'track'. This gathering took place on Saturday 24th September when a variety of cars assembled, with most of the competitors and officials coming from the surrounding area. Among the entries were a 2.3-litre supercharged Bugatti driven by Richard Shakespeare, an Alvis, a pair of MGs and a 1925 supercharged Mercedes. Gardiner himself took some unofficial runs in his Frazer Nash-BMW 328, although no times were recorded.

The first official event took place in June 1939 and was organised by the Frazer Nash-BMW Car Club. Many well-known drivers entered, including H. J. Aldington, A. F. P. Fane and David Murray. The fastest time of the day (FTD) was set by Peter Neale in his Acedes 'Nash; this car can still be seen in action on the hills. Neale's closest rival was Fane. Trophies were presented by Lord Nuffield.

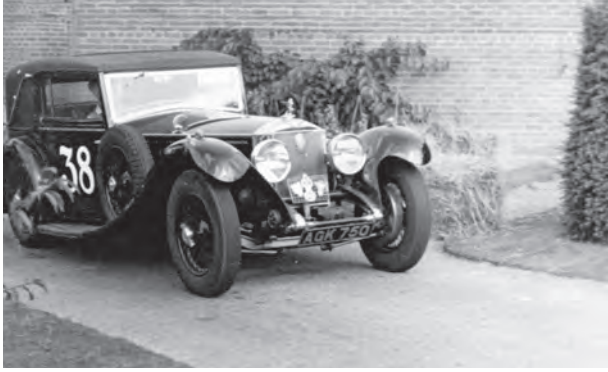
After WWII, the newly-formed Hants & Berks Motor Club (H&BMC) organised the next meeting in 1947. The club continued to run the annual hill climb until the venue closed. The H&BMC, who also established the Mobil Economy Run, were held in very high regard in motoring circles for efficient organisation.

After the meeting in 1949 it was decided that the banking was unsafe following several incidents. The original contractor, Jim Fisher, was tasked with extend-



Extraordinary photo of Mrs T. A. Ruffer in her 1488cc supercharged Alfa Romeo leaving the course in 1950 (C. H. Bulmer)





Left: *Michael Burn has an awkward moment at the first bend in 1950 in his Frazer Nash. The banking had been newly extended for the 1950 meeting (Charles Bulmer)* ***Right:*** *John Shutler heading for the finish line with his Invicta in 1951*

ing the banking by a further three feet before the 1950 event. This extension didn't solve the safety problem as the radius of curvature had been established by guesswork – not scientifically. In fact, the higher bank caused several serious incidents, and most drivers opted to clip the apex on the inside of the corner. This was in any case the quickest line. One or two brave souls steadfastly used the banking as Gardiner had intended, especially A. F. Rivers Fletcher who thrilled spectators with his 'wall of death' antics. Until the early 1950s, the main paddock was on the other side of a B-road, so a local 'Bobby' was co-opted to stop the traffic to usher batches of cars to the start line.

Great Auclum Estate was a working farm so it was only possible to hold one event per year and in 1959 it became part of the prestigious RAC British Hillclimb Championship. The short, awkward course presented a unique challenge to drivers and cars.

One of the regular competitors at Auclum was the remarkable David Good, who first competed at his local hill in 1955. David was born without his lower right arm, but that didn't stop him from claiming the RAC Hillclimb title in 1961. He drove a wide variety of cars ranging from the ex-Richard Seaman ERA R1B to 5-lire V8 monsters like the Lola T70 and McLaren M10B. Other regulars of note were Peter Boshier-Jones, Patsy Burt, Rivers Fletcher, Sir Nicholas Williamson and Roger 'Doc' Willoughby – all of whom became part of local folklore.

Naturally, as the years passed, the cars got faster and so did the times achieved by the courageous drivers. By the 1970s, a sub-20 seconds run was needed to set FTD, and on Saturday 4th August 1973 the hill record was smashed by the sensational Chris Cramer. Cramer had been unable to practise in his Grünhalle Lager-sponsored March F2 car due to a serious misfire, so he borrowed another competitor's car. The problem was cured in time for the timed runs, but he was slightly off the pace with Mike MacDowel (5-litre Brabham Repco BT36X) winning the big racing car class with a new hill record of 18.17. The top ten run-off saw a thrilling tussle between Cramer, David Good and MacDowel, with Cramer emerging victorious with an unbelievable time of 17.65. Indeed, commentator Dick Cawthorne could scarcely believe his eyes when he read Cramer's time out over the public address system – the first ever sub-eighteen second run. This amazing time would never be beaten as the curtain fell after the 1974 meeting, Roy Lane setting the fastest time of 17.97 in his mighty F5000 McRae GM1 and becoming only the second driver to break the 18-seconds barrier.

Neil Gardiner died in September 1973 and his death ultimately led to the closure of Great Auclum as a hill climb venue. And so it was that on Saturday 10th August 1974, the roar of racing cars was heard for the last time at the Great Auclum estate on Burghfield Common, near Reading, Berkshire.



A 1956 press pass



E. J. Newton at Great Auclum in an HRG, 1958 (Guy Griffiths)





Left: *Rivers Fletcher takes his typical high line at the first bend in the HWM Jaguar, 1959; few drivers dared to do the 'Brooklands stuff'* ***Right:*** *The amazing David Good in his 1,100cc Cooper Mk8 (Terence Brettell)*

During the winter of 1974/1975, discussions between the H&BMC and the remaining members of the Gardiner family took place about an event in 1975, but it was not to be. The family eventually had to sell the house and some of the Auclum estate to pay death duties. These days the old track is hemmed in by housing developments. Great Auclum House was burnt down in the 1980s and has been replaced by terraced housing in the style of the old house. The course still exists but is private property and is in surprisingly good condition. Two reunion events were staged in the 1990s due to the great affection for the old course shown by many people.

I have been researching Great Auclum for the last 30 years and am delighted to be publishing a book about this often-forgotten venue later this year with BHP Publishing. I used to live within sight of the hill climb and it was the highlight of the year for me as a youngster. I saw a racing car there for the first time in 1962 and was instantly spellbound by the sound, smell and colour of the cars as they hurtled downhill towards the first bend, and then up through the trees before passing the house, crossing the finish line and finally coming to rest in the top paddock at the end of Auclum Lane. The book is now available to pre-order at www.bhp-publishing.co.uk, and will be limited to 200 copies, 100 of which will be slipcased editions. Having been a VSCC member for many years, I am thrilled to be able to share news of the book with the club.



Ian Easedale in his 1752cc supercharged Alfa Romeo, Great Auclum, 1965 (Terence Brettell)



Bernard Harding in his Frazer Nash rushing towards the daunting first bend in 1969 (Terence Brettell)



Piers Besley aboard his 1750cc EHP in 1965 (Terence Brettell)



All-time record holder Chris Cramer in the 2-litre March in 1973 (Chris Willows)



The Norfolk Tour

There were ghosts, scandalous priors and heroic fighter pilots – plenty to keep the tourists entertained, writes **PAUL GALLIFANT**

Blakeney is Tim Birkin country, the village he visited time and again for his beloved pursuit of wildfowling, and indeed his place of burial following his death after the Tripoli Grand Prix. Opened in 1923, Blakeney Garage was therefore a most appropriate starting point for the 82-mile tour on Sunday 6 July organised so ably by Sharen and John Halfpenny.

After delicious bacon butties and a driver's briefing, the cars set off beneath lowering skies along the coast to Morston before turning inland and visiting Langham Dome, an unusual wartime edifice erected in 1942 to train anti-aircraft gunners. On then to the airfield itself, used by Coastal Command throughout WWII and finally decommissioned in 1961. Here we visited Henry Labouchere whose grandson greeted us with a delicious chocolate brownie upon our arrival. Henry maintains a number of aircraft including several de Havilland aeroplanes and a Tiger Moth parked in the workshop adjacent to his Austin 7.

It began to rain as we continued on our way past the impressive ruins of Binham Priory, our Route Book noting that 'many of its priors were unscrupulous and the history of the priory is one of almost continuous scandal'. Delicious! Walsingham and its shrines, a destination for pilgrims of many faiths, came next, then past Holkham Hall and down the hill and through the Burnhams, although the route



did manage to avoid Burnham Market, known rather unfairly as Chelsea-on-Sea.

The tour ran past a number of mainly WWII airfields. One in particular, Bircham Newton, is now used by the construction industry to train future crane operators, the cranes themselves towering over the surrounding countryside. The airfield was last used by the RAF in 1965 for evaluating Harrier jump-jets. On then, taking a delightful road through Raynham Park and past the spectacular hall where the Townshends have lived for almost 400 years. Reputedly haunted, it 'provides the scene for possibly the most famous ghost photo of all time, the famous Brown Lady descending the staircase', to quote from the route notes.

The rain had been sporadically falling in various quantities for the whole morning but by the time we reached Sennowe Hall for our picnic, it had virtually ceased. Through the gates we proceeded along the seemingly endless wooded drive which eventually led us to undulating parkland in front of and below the façade of a very impressive Edwardian mansion. Commissioned by Thomas Albert Cook, known universally as 'Bert', grandson of Thomas Cook, the Victorian era's travel entrepreneur, it was completed in 1907 and is considered one of Norfolk's most impressive country houses. Having picnicked and discussed the foibles of one another's cars we drove through the gates at the opposite side of the estate and continued on our way, crossing Foulsham aerodrome where 45 aircraft were lost during WWII, but most notably, it was the airfield where the crippled B17 *Ruthie II* eventually landed after limping home from a bombing mission to Hanover, its co-pilot, F/O John Morgan being awarded the Medal of Honour. Through a myriad of small lanes and over the North Norfolk Railway at Weybourne, we reached the coast road and turned west through Salthouse and Cley to Blakeney where the most delicious cakes and a very welcome cup of tea awaited us. Thank you, Sharen and John, for a great day, and to the team at Blakeney Garage for their hospitality.

Photos by Frederic Landes, Grace Glaister and Hanna Siebers

The Northamptonshire Tour

This overlooked county is worth closer inspection, says **STEVE ALLEN**

On Sunday 13 July, we were welcomed to the delightful 16th-century Winwick Hall. Winwick is a small village and the Historic England website contains details of a total of 16 listed buildings in the parish of Winwick, all of which are Grade II or Grade II*. One interesting little quirk to the village is that the polling station is in a private house. A very thorough scrutineering and signing-on were completed in a relaxed manner after which bacon rolls, tea and coffee were provided followed by a drivers' briefing from organiser Ian Parsons. There was the usual eclectic mix of cars including three Bentleys, two Alvis (or is it Alvi?), two Model A Fords alongside Talbot, MG, Delage, Austin, Sunbeam and Jaguar.

The route was well chosen, being an anticlockwise loop around Northampton taking in the interesting countryside of Northamptonshire. Northamptonshire is often overlooked by people as they pass through on the M1 or railway on their way to somewhere else. This is a pity because a look around the county will be well rewarded. Along the way we took in Salcey Forest and Pitsford Water, numerous nice views and gained much practice in dealing with hump-back bridges as we criss-crossed the M1 and various canals several times.

Our day did not start spectacularly well as the car decided that it was obviously going to be too hot to go out, it being the last day of another heatwave with a forecast of 28 degrees by the afternoon.

The first third of the event was dogged by rough running, eventually traced to a sticking needle valve in one carburettor. The remaining problem was diagnosed (on our return home) to a dead coil. Fortunately, W. O. thoughtfully provided two of these, so it didn't stop our tour. Any other performance issues were strictly in the realm of driver error.



An eclectic mix of cars included MG, Jaguar, Alvis and Bentley



Ian Parsons briefs the tourists

Ian provided a detailed route card with which we managed to confuse ourselves a couple of times – Nether Heyford is even prettier on the second lap – but generally the navigation was straightforward. A number of places were suggested for stops along the way including Stoke Bruerne on the Grand Union canal with its pubs and canal museum, Castle Ashby House and the Jeyes Museum and café in Earls Barton. (No, it is nothing to do with the fluid, but a delightful family-run café and shop in Earls Barton.)

We chose Sywell Aerodrome for our main stop. This has the wonderfully restored Art Deco style Aviator Hotel, a small air museum and is also home to Ultimate Warbird Flights who operate the Grace two-seater Spitfire. I have to mention this as I was able to tick off a bucket list item with a flight in this aeroplane, piloted (entirely coincidentally) on the day by VSCC member Ben Cox.

We returned to Winwick Hall mid-afternoon where there was tea and cake after a very pleasant and interesting day. Our thanks go to Ian Parsons and his helpers and Matthew and the Pavilion Tea Rooms staff, ably supervised by daughter Maud.

Photos by the author


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The Staffordshire Tour

It was a perfect day of pottering among potteries, as **JANETTE HORTON** *reports*

Michael Elsom and his small team always put together a wonderful event for the Staffordshire Tour, providing a route that incorporates interesting facts and places of historical interest, and stopping off at special locations. This year's event, held on Sunday 20 July, and starting and finishing at Gayton Village Hall near Weston on the A51, was no exception. Our family entered all three Austins: our 1928 Chummy 'KP', driven by siblings Ioan and Emma Evans; the 1926 Chummy 'PW', driven by Elizabeth and Jonathan Tyler with eight-year-old Lydia in the rear seat with toy furry friends as fellow travellers; and our 1926 'HG', our well-loved Chummy of more than 50+ years, crewed by me and my husband John.

All Austins performed beautifully, and we had a truly wonderful day. Starting with bacon and sausage butties and meeting up with others is always a good start to an event, and the catering volunteer team of Gayton Village Hall did an excellent job. We were able to observe the other entrants gathering including Robert Honey, who was new to the event, and arrived with his 1928 Austin 7 Ulster Replica. There was another Chummy belonging to John Garside, alongside a selection of other marques including Riley, Alvis, MG, and Sunbeam.

The route map was helpfully posted on the wall, so at a glance we could see the complete route. To be honest we did chip off a bit of the northern part of the route to make sure we would be back in time for meeting others and the tea and cake at the end of the day, which we know from experience is a treat not to be missed. From 9am entrants signed on, were scrutineered and were handed a Road Book by Sarah Elsom. It had easy-to-follow route instructions with mileage and points of interest along the way. The route started by heading north, paying homage to The Potteries of past and present and stopped off at Mill Meece Pumping Station which was in steam. The magnificent Ashton Frost and Hathorn Davey beam engines with gleaming polished brass work were gently moving with rhythmically soothing sounds. It was a wonderful demonstration for visitors.

The lunch stop was at the Dorothy Clive Gardens at Willoughbridge, where we had our picnic in the lovely open landscaped grounds and were able to stretch our legs walking around the Quarry Garden. This garden had a lovely waterfall surrounded with lush green plants and ferns of many varieties. In 1958 Col. Clive set up the Willoughbridge Garden Trust to preserve the garden as a lasting memorial to his wife and over the years the garden has continued to develop.

The route then passed notable places of interest including Trentham Hall, Barlaston Hall, Maer Hall and the (former) Swynnerton Water Tower and (former) Hatton Pumping Station, which is now adapted for residential use. At the end of the tour we returned to Gayton Village Hall for a cuppa and a chat and the wonderful home-made cake. There was a quiz along the way to give added interest for tour passengers. The worthy winner was Robert Lyell in the 1947 MG TC. It had been another superb and friendly Staffordshire Tour. Thank you so much to Michael and all who made it possible. It was a most enjoyable event.



The Horton Austins park up at Mill Meece



Various tourists assemble in the drizzle at Mill Meece (Stephen Gough)

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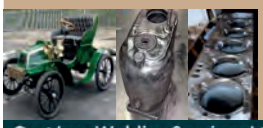
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Edward Bradley drove his Aston Martin Ulster in both races

Oulton Park Gold Cup

The VSCC's two races were a highlight of an action-packed weekend, says **NICK WILSON**

Spring and summer are always the busiest time of year for the VSCC's racing fraternity, with a meet every few weeks from April to August, starting with Silverstone and finishing with Mallory Park on the last weekend of August. The July fixture is the Gold Cup weekend at Oulton Park, this year scheduled for 26 and 27 July, which is organised by the Historic Sports Car Club (HSCC), at which the VSCC organises two races. This year one of the anniversaries being celebrated at this historic Cheshire circuit was 75 years of British Racing Motors (BRM), which meant there was a 30-minute BRM demonstration on Saturday lunchtime and also on the Friday lunchtime for those who were making a long weekend of it. There was also practice and qualifying on the Friday for the non-VSCC races, including the Historic Formula Three Sir Jackie Stewart Trophy and the Historic Formula Junior Jim Clark Cup.

Saturday morning was quite cloudy with some patchy rain forecast, but the day brightened up in the afternoon. Early morning there were three more qualifying rounds, with the first race proper starting at 10am, the 70s and Historic Roadsports Charles Barter Trophy. The VSCC's two races were not scheduled until Sunday afternoon, with qualifying on Saturday afternoon and scrutineering at noon, giving members coming from far away the chance to arrive on Saturday morning if they could not face the Friday slog.

Two years ago someone came up with the brilliant idea of creating a 'team of teams' which has been a great success for the last two years. The way this works is that each car has two drivers, one for each race, making it a team event. Each race is also combined into a 'team of teams' event by pairing the fastest combined qualifying teams with the slowest, and so on through the whole grid, giving a final spreadsheet in which each team's time is the combined total of its four drivers over two races.

Some 25 cars were entered in the VSCC's Egerton Cup, with many familiar faces in the paddock. The Frazer Nash contingency were as usual out in force, as were the Riley brigade, with examples of Alfa Romeo, Aston Martin, MG, Alvis, Delahaye, Morgan, Morris, and Talbot Lago also on the grid, not to mention the mighty Parker GN, which had been generously loaned by Justin Maeers for young Angus Frost to drive in the first race, his son Ben in the second. After qualifying for the first race, the front three runners were Robert Beebee ('Nash), Christopher Mann (Alfa 8C Monza), and young Rufus Flann, also in a Frazer Nash. At the other end of the field were the club president, Simon Blakeney-Edwards, who appeared to be having problems with his Frazer Nash, and Hamish McNinch in his MG and Sian Slater in her Riley Imp.

Saturday was a good day for the Beebee family and their extremely quick 1932 Frazer Nash TT Rep, as young Joshua Beebee also came out on top during qualifying for the second VSCC race. The 'Nash had



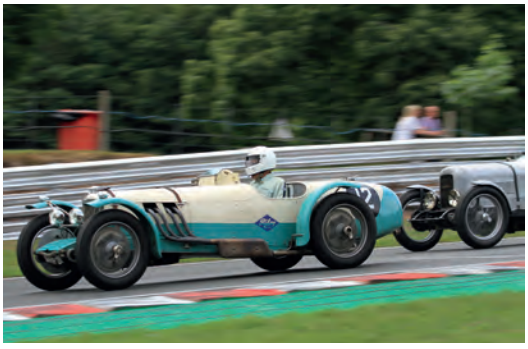
The Irving Alvis Special overcame initial setback to gain a podium place



Sian Slater and Stuart Sergeant's Riley Imp being passed by a 'Nash



Richard Iliffe kept a solid midfield position in the Riley TT Sprite



Another TT Sprite, this one belonging to David Saxl



Dogged racer Hamish McNinch's MG PA going well



Jo Blakeney-Edwards fought her way through the field in the 'Nash



The Parker GN at speed, always a joy to behold



The invincible Beebee 'Nash



Rebecca Smith and Louis Parkin shared the Morris Mord

been stripped of any excess weight such as wings or headlights and looked particularly dashing in its distinctive shade of Brazilian mid-green. Second in qualifying was another 'Nash, this one driven by Archie Waterfield, while Ben Maeers in the Parker GN took third place.

The first of the two VSCC races was the eleventh of the meeting, and started at 12:40pm on the Sunday. Conditions remained remained dry, and spectators enjoyed some exciting racing. Robert Beebee's 'Nash could not be beaten however, and he stayed at the head of the field from start to finish, finishing some 32 seconds ahead of Christopher Mann's Alfa, who had Rufus Flann nipping at his heels throughout, and who finished third, all three cars retaining their pole positions. Jo Blakeney-Edwards fought her way forwards from sixth position on the grid to finish fourth, while a good race was also fought in midfield by Hamish Cameron-Everleigh in the Morgan Super Aero who finished in 8th, some nine places forward of his start position in 17th place.

The second VSCC race was the last of the weekend, scheduled to start at 18:05, and it too provided much entertainment for the crowds. The initial grid of 25 cars had by now dwindled to 21, which by the dropping of the red flag at 18:20 had reduced to just 15. Leading the pack throughout was the Beebee 'Nash once more, Archie Waterfield close at his heels throughout and recording the fastest lap of the race on the third of the four laps, clocking an average speed of 73.74mph. But cruel fate got in the way and Waterfield was out of the running when the flag went down, giving Maeers in the Parker GN the gift of second place, with Harry Irving in the Alvis Special bagging the remaining spot on the podium. This was a particularly happy result given that the car, driven by Will Irving in the first race, had been a non-finisher, with whatever problems it had befallen being dealt with in the intervening period.

VSCC drivers took part in other races over the weekend, including in the Historic Gold Cup on Sunday afternoon. This race was won by Andy Willis, appropriately in a BRM, having finished third in the initial heat on Saturday. Mark Daniell and Nick Topliss finished sixth and seventh just under a second apart, followed close behind by Eddie Williams and Teifion Salisbury. It had been another weekend of superb racing with some first-class cars and drivers displaying their talents to the max.

Photos by Stefanie Broch



Richard Wright's delightful Delahaye 135 finished four places ahead of pole



Ewan Cameron in the Morgan Super Aero finished fourth in the second race

The Cheshire Tour

The sun beamed on this delightful August outing, writes **JOHN BUCKLEY**

Undaunted, Adrian Donovan and his better half Hilary made it a hat trick by organising this year's Cheshire Tour, but honourable mention should also be given to the full team of volunteers including Nicola Quartermaine, John Davies-Colley and chief scrutineer Bob Bunn. As well as the suggested route with mileages, point of interest snippets were also added in the detailed road book. Rural Cheshire is teeming with history which is fully reflected in some of its ancient buildings and villages.

22 cars had entered the tour and 20 made it to the start at Bickerton Village Hall. The temptation of bacon rolls, tea and coffee is usually sufficient to provide impetus for getting people to the start venue in good time, so the 'failed to proceed' status of the two non-attendees deserves commiseration, not condemnation. Of the 20 starters no less than ten were vintage cars, five were PVTs, five were pre-1960s, and all were owned by VSCC members.

Well, I thought small roads and pretty villages in Cheshire would be Range Rover land but in fact on Sunday mornings it's cyclists that take over; and mostly middle-aged men in Lycra. I counted 172 cyclists on the morning section, but post-lunch the number diminished to 63. However these cyclists present no hazard as their speed on narrow lanes is similar to a vintage car.

Adrian's route took us within a mile of Oulton Park race circuit (but one wouldn't have known that without local knowledge), within a mile of the M6 (ditto), over innumerable hump-back canal bridges, and perhaps nobody noticed but we slipped into Staffordshire for the picnic lunch stop at Betley.



Derek Plowright's 1922 4½-litre Sunbeam landaulette

Cheshire cats? None seen crossing the road, but Mike Farrall's SS tourer, and James Chapman's XK150 were both participants. Special mention must be made of Graham Mackereth steering his exceptionally wide Lagonda M45 through some of the narrower roads. But celebrity car of the event must be the 1922 Sunbeam of Derek Plowright. Derek not only piloted this historic behemoth for the full route of the tour but also drove from Lincolnshire for the event. A veritable hero of vintage motoring. It's way beyond my mathematics to calculate this car's brake efficiency as it weighs over two tonnes and has no front brakes. (Sun beams on the righteous – yuk – other puns welcome.)

It was most encouraging to see two of the cars being navigated by members of the younger generation and furthermore no cars at all were trailered to the event. Impressive, what? Start fettling for the next tour, everyone.

Photos by Richard Connolly



French Dave entered a Hotchkiss but appeared in his trusty Renault



Barry Stapleton's Hotchkiss did in fact turn up

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LETTERS

Dear Sir,
The question that must be asked, and answered, after Julian Grimwade's tragic death is: Would his life have been saved (and also that of Roger Twelvetrees last year) if he had been wearing air-bag leathers instead of a fire-proof race suit? These air-bag leathers are standard, and compulsory, wear for racing motorcyclists who regularly come off their bikes at high speed and must be protected from personal impact injury, and indeed they are protected from impact injury allowing them to walk away from the most horrific spills. For them, like us, impact injury is a far greater risk than fire injury, and consequently we are now allowed the option of wearing leathers for racing and speed events, although not all drivers may be aware of the air-bag option in racing leathers (and in vests to wear under normal leathers).

There is the added bonus that leathers have a far more appropriate appearance on drivers of our pre-war cars than 21st-century race suits, so I would respectfully suggest that the VSCC gives serious consideration to encouraging drivers to wear airbag leathers for their own protection from impact injury in any accident.

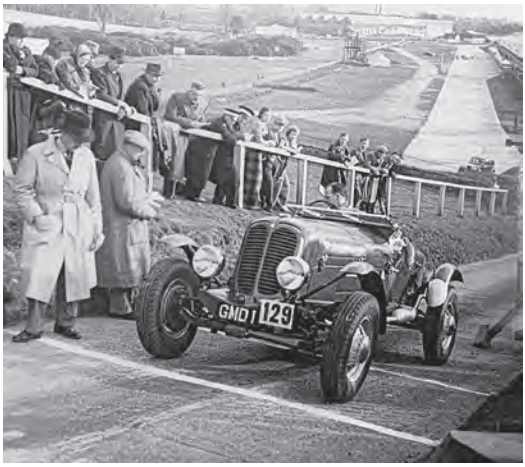
MARTIN YOUNG
Headington Hill, Oxford

To which the Secretary replied:

Dear Martin,
It is too early to comment as the inquest has not yet been held and we do not want to rush to conclusions before both Motorsport UK and the coroner's court have completed their investigations. As far as I am aware, there was no indication at Roger's inquest that this would have prevented the tragic outcome. That said, we generally carry out reviews across all our disciplines and we are currently considering making body armour mandatory or strongly recommended. I will add your suggestion of air bag leathers to this discussion.

TANIA BROWN
Club Secretary

Dear Sir,
Nice shot of the BMW 328 on the front cover of the Summer 2025 *Bulletin*, showing the registration number GMC 1. It reminds me that I have a photo-



graph of my Ballamy Ford V8, then registered GMD 1, on the Test Hill at Brooklands. I bought the photo years ago from Ferret.

On the back is scribbled 'Brooklands 1938, Guy's Hospital event, Spikins Special?'. It isn't that, but can your knowledgeable readers tell me the date and event? My car's first owner was H. G. Symmons who I assume was driving at the time. In 1947 it was re-registered, like so many other cars, and became KMB 300. Keep up the good work!

MARK BRETT
Cobham, Surrey

Dear Sir,
Just like buses, you wait for ages then three come along all at once. The automotive history of the Bullivant family at Parnham Park provides further interest. My wife took one look at the photograph of the 8-litre Bentley (Sidelights, p. 7, *Bulletin* 328) and declared that there was no way it was a lightweight sports saloon! Mr. Bullivant might have found it a bit of a handful on the narrow winding lanes around Beaminster, but he would have been able to enjoy its performance on the road across Rampisham Down to Maiden Newton, and certainly on the A37 from Yeovil to Dorchester. My thanks to Greg Wrapson for his very informative article.

It's good to know that Rolls-Royce, Bentley and Alvis were all in evidence locally both before and after WWII. The person from whom I bought my house was the owner of a Rolls-Royce and kept it in

the garage which now houses my humble Austin 12/4 Clifton. Some time ago I was tinkering in the garage with the door open when a passing motorist stopped, got out of his car and came over to ask where the Rolls-Royce was. It was apparently something of a local celebrity.

TIM HILLS
Beaminster, Dorset

Dear Sir,
Apropos *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Editorial, p. 3, *Bulletin* 328), Tom Gjertsen and I were studying medicine and were extras during the race scenes. The Film Artistes' Association Union was happy to accept medical students because two of them had saved the life of an extra in the past. Annoyingly, shop stewards kept us away from the race cars and drivers but we did negotiate extra money on top of the four guinea daily rate as we fell behind a fence when struck by a car. We tried not to be seen on screen because we were meant to be at Med School.

In 1970, Tom met Robert Elliot-Pyle, Mark Jackson, and Ian Johnstone when he worked in Hastings and I became co-driver in Bert's third Mille Miglia in 1973, years before it became a rich man/woman event. UK contingents were Angela and Allan Cherrett, the former helping with Italian instructions; Tom and Di Threlfall, Lancia Di-lemma; James Crocker, Lagonda Rapier; Peter Glover, Alvis 12/50; a J4, and an English-trained doctor (worked in Canada) driving an Austro-Daimler. I think he co-owned a Gough-engined Frazer Nash with J2 front axle (!) with Dr John Farman, a Cambridge anaesthetist/intensivist. In the 1980s my urologist friend Tony did a list with John the anaesthetist in the morning. Tony was the surgeon again that night when John was the patient having surgery. He had suffered a massive, unsurvivable brain bleed and was an organ donor. The Intensive Care Unit at Addenbrookes is named after John.

Reading your *Bulletin* stirs memories: I raced against Simon Philips's BMW, a very friendly helpful man and LHD, like my Citroen. A good read – thank you.

WILLIE SELLERS
Great Easton, Leicestershire

Dear Sir,
I'm sure you've been inundated with responses to your Amilcar question on p. 5 of the Summer *Bulletin* but I thought I'd add to the replies. YW91 still exists and was sold a couple of years ago by dealer Dylan Miles who posted a comprehensive history of the car on his website, although it now confusingly wears the registration of another Amilcar C6, YV91. (The latter was owned by Goldie Gardner who raced it at Brooklands and twice in the Irish Grand Prix and there's a great photo of him with the car, clearly showing the number plate, in his autobiography, *Magic MPH.* I noted the car in an appendix of my recent book, *Goldie.*) As for YW91, according to Miles the car passed through many hands before ending up with the late Bernard Harding, who bought it in 1962. He writes: 'Harding enjoyed a successful inaugural season and at the VSCC Silverstone in July he had three strong races: "I had a fantastic dice with Schellenberg's Barnato Hassan in the Boulogne Trophy. The Bentley would storm away on the straights, but we were snapping around him in the corners. On a methanol mix around the old club circuit the C6 was good for 70mph laps. I finished a second ahead of Mudd's quick Alfa Monza." Harding performed well at Goodwood, Oulton Park, Snetterton, Brands Hatch, Prescott and Great Auclum, keeping a log of races and running notes (all retained on file). The VSCC meeting at Silverstone in July 1963 would become the C6's final competitive outing: "Practice was thwarted by a misfire, after taking two plugs out I discovered two cylinders were filled with water, the head was cracked." Harding trailered the C6 home with his Lancia Aurelia and laid the car up in his garage where it would remain for a further 34 years. Restoration work was slow in the sixties and seventies as Harding focused on obtaining a pilot's licence and subsequently acquiring and maintaining a De Havilland Hornet Moth, as well as driving his Frazer Nash, Lotus and riding vintage Norton motorcycles.' The restoration of the Amilcar was finally completed in 1997 and Mick Walsh road-tested the car for an article in *Classic & Sports Car* in April 2022, which can be read online. Best regards, and thanks for another great magazine.

JOHN MAYHEAD
Chichester, West Sussex

Dear Sir,
A short while ago, a letter was submitted to the *SAHB Times*, journal of the Society of Automobile Historians in Britain, and carried a proposal that the term 'Classic Car' be allocated a period in British motoring history rather than used simply as a generalisation.

At the present time, any proud owner of a vintage car can be subjected to the embarrassment of having his pride and joy compared with a 1958 Morris Minor.

In following examples of the existing categories – Veteran, Edwardian, Vintage, PVT and so forth – any vehicle manufactured after 1955 would be declared a Classic Car. In considering the change of direction with regard to the design and construction methods which began to take place at that time, creating an

additional title would appear to be appropriate, especially when the desire to establish large conglomerations was to deny the continuation in business of many well established manufacturers and also an end to the traditional coachbuilding concerns due to the adoption of the monocoque body shell.

What were acknowledged as the foundations of motor manufacture in this country would soon disappear, and great pioneers such as Daimler and Armstrong-Siddeley gone forever, either by failure or by moving into other industries. The motor car after 1955 had become a different animal and worthy of a separate chapter in Britain's motoring history.

DERRY AUST
Witney, Oxfordshire

Dear Sir,
I was very pleased to see a photo of my Riley in 'Kerbside Encounters' in the Summer *Bulletin*. It wasn't looking totally like it did in 1934, since the car was actually painted black pre-war, the colour in which it is now finished. These cars are quite interesting in that they were total homologation specials, being catalogued in 1933 and 1934 only, with just four examples being built for the 1933 Alpine Rally. Riley simply took its Nine Gamecock body style and stretched it to fit on a 12/6 chassis. Since they were works cars, the bodywork was thinner gauge than production and the weight savings continued with mag-alloy parts throughout the running gear.

We're pretty sure that the 1933 cars were converted for use in 1934 with the addition of centre-lock wheels in place of six-stud items and with preselector gearboxes rather than manual transmissions. None of the 1933 cars survive, for one thing. For another, ADU 28 has an overstamped chassis number and where the manual transmission cross-member bolts would have been, the works simply plugged the holes. Of the three cars that took part in the 1934 Rally, ADU 28 and ADU 29 survive, both in active use. There is also a faithful replica of ADU 27 around, which my father copied from ADU 28. I enclose a photo of all three together.

MARK GILLIES
Stoke St Milborough, Shropshire

Dear Sir,
I was struck by the aptness of your editorial in the recent *Bulletin*. We all need to encourage proper racing in the VSCC or we will just have boring processions of old cars. Check out the forum for recent developments. Oh, and not forgetting that *The Bulletin* has turned into a 'must read' since you took over. Some may pine for 'Jaguar keyring' articles, but not me.

TONY LEES
Arnesby, Leicestershire



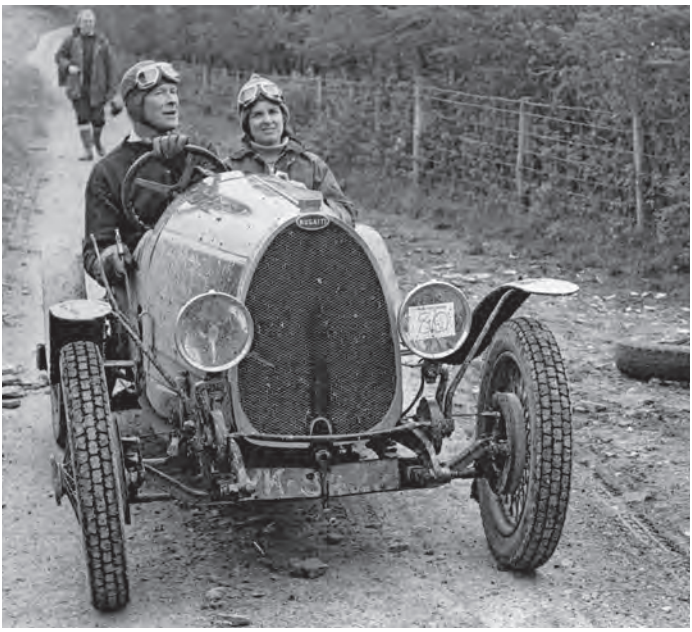
David Marsh

1933–2025

David Richard Marsh was the middle child of five, born on 3 March 1933, in Hartford, Cheshire. His father Christopher Marsh was the manager of The River Weaver Trustees Board in Northwich.

David joined his older brothers John and Michael at The Old Hall Prep School, followed on by his younger brother Patrick. The two younger boys then went on to Cheltenham College. David was not a great achiever academically but an enthusiastic pupil, who excelled in cricket and athletics and enjoyed riding the Cheltondale House Penny Farthing (complete with hose pipe tyres) and skiving off to the cinema. Holidays were spent in Rhosneigr, Anglesey, and working narrow boats for their father, for example to Canal Turn for the Grand National. The Marsh family took the first boat over the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and through the Whitehouses Tunnel after the war.

After school David served his national service in the Royal Artillery. He loved his time in the army and, as he was able to drive before he joined, was given responsibility for passing people on the driving tests and HGV tests (eight-wheelers). He also managed to swap a driving test certificate for a motorcycle test certificate with his mate just before they both passed out of the army.



David Marsh trialling his Type 13 Bugatti (Tom Threlfall)

In 1956, David was competing in the north Norfolk sailing regatta and bought his first car, a 1927 Austin 7 R type saloon, VF 1012. The car is still very much with us today. Sailing was a Marsh family hobby with the older boys and David and Patrick competed against each other in Fireflies (F1029). It was also a passion of my mother's family, and it was during this regatta that they met, Mary competing with her older sister Jane in their Firefly (F125).

David joined the family firm F. H. Lloyd, one of the leading steel foundries of Europe, making steel castings from 1lb to 80 tons, while he attended night school and day release at Wolverhampton Technical College to gain his engineering degree. Mary attended secretarial college in Cheltenham, so David bought a 14-40 MG which made the journey from Wolverhampton to take Mary out a little easier and he took great delight in showing her all the highlights of Cheltenham.

They married on 3 September 1960 ('the day war broke out') in King's Lynn and went on honeymoon in the 14-40. Having driven the car onto the aeroplane they then walked to the front of the plane where the seats were and sat next to John Stanford, the then Editor of *The Bulletin*, who was on his way to France to meet up with Tim Carson, then Secretary of the VSCC, and so began David's VSCC life in earnest.

David and Mary started married life in a canal cottage beside the Coventry canal near Lichfield and enjoyed skating on the canal and improving the house with a kitchen and inside bathroom, both sadly lacking when they moved in.

In 1962 David was chosen to be part of a team of six engineers to travel to India to build and run a steel foundry for the Indian Railways to make steam locomotives. David, Mary and one-year-old Caroline travelled to India on an Anchor Line ship, leaving the canal cottage, the Austin 7 and Sinbad the cat in the tender care of the level crossing keeper and embarked on a true adventure and a lifelong love of India. They were met in Bombay and escorted to Chittaranjan West Bengal, a railway township north of Calcutta. They fully embraced their experience in India, travelling to many parts of the country by rail, flying to Kathmandu, going on shopping trips to Calcutta, sailing most weekends and bringing up their growing family.

On returning to England in 1966 they felt they had missed the iconic 1960s and had no knowledge of rock

music, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones having passed them by. With the addition of my sister Nicola and me, both of us born in India, the canal cottage, called Brookhay, was extended and further modernised. A three-litre Bentley had joined the garage as well as a bullnose Morris, built with brother Patrick for trials. In 1969, David bought a Vauxhall 30-98, OE230, with the encouragement of John Rowley and Humphrey Milling and spent the next three years (3,000 hours) rebuilding it. This started his long passion for the marque and made him many fantastic friends. Helped by Secretary Mum, David took on the 30-98 Register in the early 1970s which he kept up until 2020, cataloguing and recording the mechanical details and tracking their owners. He was sure only Nic Portway ever read his reports/letters.

1975 David was headhunted by Osbourne Hatfield, a firm in Sheffield, and later Record Tools, and they moved to The Garden House, near Bakewell in Derbyshire. Dad was never still and, as the house name implies, he became an active gardener, very keen on his lawn, cut with an Edwardian Atco, an Icehouse to be filled with snow to see how long it would last, digging for the only vegetable worth growing, Jerusalem artichokes, weeding and, much to my mother's horror, 'hard cutting back'.

In 1980 the first talk of the Peking to Paris rally began to hit the motoring press. So David and Patrick jointly bought another 30-98, OE18, the ex-Tom Plowman car (see pp. 38–46) in which to enter the event, as neither wished to wear their own cars out. Unfortunately this event never took place, due to the Russian and Chinese vetoes, but in 1988 (after Patrick's sad and premature death) OE18 was entered in the bi-centennial rally in Australia, and along with Arthur Jeddere-Fisher in his 30-98, E307, and 25 other cars, they drove down 'the track' from Darwin to Adelaide. David and Mary met lifelong friends during this journey and witnessed the Australian Outback in its true beauty.

David's competitive nature led to increased activity with the VSCC, and he served on the committee and became president from 1996–1999, being responsible for the move of the club office from Newbury to The Old Post Office in Chipping Norton and was a great advocate of the eligibility 'Buff Form'.

With his brother Patrick, David shared a number of cars including ERA R1B (if only for a short time) and they both rebuilt Bugattis, David a Type 13 and Patrick a Type 35. David's racing results in R1B were far from impressive so Patrick lent him his T35 for racing in Sweden, the first historic Monaco and events in the VSCC. Davids's Type 13, YK 8422, has been a very successful and competitive car and opened up a new world of the Bugatti Owners Club worldwide, with trips to Australia, New Zealand, the USA and of course all over Europe, and also enabled us as a family to enjoy continental and worldwide holidays most years since the 1980s.

It was always however the VSCC where David's competitive heart lay and his legacy has now passed on to me and to a third generation, my children William and Hester. David won the Lycett Memorial Trophy in 1986 and 2001, I won it in 1996, and William has won it for the last two years and could well win it again this year. Three generations of Lycett winners, is this unique? David had five grandchildren of whom he was immensely proud: a lawyer, an engineer, a classical actor, a blacksmith and a physiotherapist/white bottomed horse rider. Three children: Caroline, Nicola and Richard and finally Mary, his ever-loyal navigator, bouncer, copilot, gardener, cook, secretary, wife of 64 years and nine months – just 89 days short of 65 years.

David and his brother Patrick formed Marsh Brothers Engineering Services Ltd in 1984 and almost exclusively employed members of the VSCC to work with them on a vast range of projects from staircases, Christie's South Kensington, road bridges in Leeds, Guildford, Cambridge, Leicester and Usk and properties in the West End of London. I have been privileged to work alongside my father for 40 years, seeing his tireless work ethic, fairness and love of the sector of architectural engineering in which we work. I have some big boots to fill – Dad remained interested in work right to the end.

David was always grateful to everyone who has been part of our business journey and of all the amazing friends and colleagues he had over 70 years of vintage motoring. His many loves included his family, canals, Cheltenham College, The Gunners regiment, India, The Garden House, Marsh Brothers Engineering, and of course, the VSCC.

Richard Marsh



Julian Grimwade

1953–2025

Julian Grimwade was born on 1 April 1953. From a young age, Julian loved tinkering with cars alongside his dad and building soapbox carts. After attending Haberdashers' Aske's, he left school to earn money for a car – starting with a Bond three-wheeler at age 15, soon amassing a colourful collection. To name a few: Rolls Royce Silver Shadow, Marcos Mantis, Porsche 928, Monteverdi and a 4.2-litre Jaguar Kougar which he built himself.

He started his working career as a roadie for New World. He was then offered a choice between touring with Supertramp or driving conference equipment to Finland. He chose the latter, launching a successful career as a freelance conference producer, working with big brands like Coca-Cola, Guinness and Sony.

He met his wife Jenny in 1979 and they married in 1983. They had two sons, William and Jonny. Between the years of 1984 and 1997, the family lived on an island in the River Thames, with no road access. Cars took a back seat in this period of his life and were replaced with boats. In 1997, the family moved to Weybridge to be on the mainland. Julian retired age 52 and, rekindling his love of cars, acquired a 4½-litre 1929 Bentley as well as a Bentley Brooklands.

He became heavily involved in the Brooklands Museum, where he was instrumental in creating the Members' Association, and was the vice-chair for a number of years. He remained passionate about Brooklands until his death.

2012 saw the beginning of Julian's racing career, when he bought a Lagonda Rapier and started racing in the VSCC. He later upgraded to a 1934 Frazer Nash Special (the Norris Special), in which he won countless trophies in hill climbs, sprints and circuit racing for over a decade. He made countless friends in the VSCC, many of whom have been in contact over the last month. The biggest social event in Julian's calendar was Prescott Hill Climb event, which the family will miss in the future.

Alongside the VSCC and Brooklands Museum he was also involved with the Benjafields Racing Club. He raced his 4½ 1929 Bentley over a number of years at Silverstone, Goodwood and the Classic Le Mans, most memorably at the 2023 Benjafields race at Le Mans, which saw 72 cars start in the biggest field of WO Bentleys ever to compete in a race.

In 2024 he sold the Norris Special, deciding to move away from what he called 'the cutting edge', and bought a 1913 Oakland Romano Special. It was in this vehicle, whilst racing at Donington, that Julian tragically lost his life on 24 May this year. We take some comfort in knowing he died doing what he loved.

Jenny, William and I have been overwhelmed with the amount of correspondence, media coverage and support received from the VSCC and wider motoring world. His sons will now carry forward his legacy with the Bentley, aiming to drive it on its 100th birthday. Julian was generous, passionate, hands-on, and unforgettable—a proud dad, devoted husband, and friend to many. He truly had a great life.

Jonny Grimwade



Julian Grimwade: he was a friend to many

Charles Dean

1966–2025

A sudden, aggressive cancer has taken Charles far too soon and left an immeasurable hole in his wonderful young family just as he, Olenka and the young children were building an idyllic life in South Wales.

Born and brought up in a Bugatti-filled community of South Wales and Gloucestershire, Charles had a natural affinity for elegant and temperamental machinery. This may explain his stoical nature; in forty years of friendship, I cannot remember him ever showing a sign of anger. Events that angered others would be dissected, analysed, put into perspective and shrugged off.

Growing up, various Bugatti cars, machine tools and a twin-cam Benelli motorbike were typical playthings, although the young Charles couldn't understand how a black car could still be a Bluegatti. We met after he'd left school which, for all its merits, didn't connect with Charles's desire to make things. But that didn't deter him, and Mechanical Engineering at Bristol University suited him well. His student transport was a Shorrock supercharged Frogeye Sprite which provided fun and freedom, and a test bed for first-year thermodynamics with a detailed analysis of the various types of compressor. Quality not quantity was his student watchword: a Thorens turntable, Quad amplifier and a Peugeot 205 1.9 GTi were unusual student luxuries.

When Charles tragically lost his father Martin in our first year, life became a little more serious as alongside his studies, he was then responsible for the Blackgatti T51, the T59/50B and a 206 Dino. He needed to learn to drive and care for them, while moving around as he built a career. The engineering recruitment milkround in the investment-starved years of the late 1980s was not inspiring, and many good engineers were lost to financial services. Charles tried a few options including oil rig wireline testing in the North Sea, Aberdeen being a short hop by Ducati from his Gloucestershire home. He kept very quiet about his quickest times on this trip. The oil industry took him to Nigeria too, and he thoroughly enjoyed the adventure of working in Africa. He was always intent on learning new skills, but oil trading in London was less attractive.

By the mid 1990s, industrial lasers were making inroads into precision engineering and Charles was intrigued. He bought his first laser and began experimenting in the corner of a printworks in Barnes, West London. Here Fimark was born, and he built a team that developed unique expertise in multi-axis laser machining and precision paint and laser processes.

His more settled existence allowed him to also focus on hobbies and adventures. He had already been to Prague to witness the Velvet Revolution; now he headed to Iceland by freighter in the footsteps of Auden, drifting in the North Sea for a few days waiting for engine parts. Road trips to ride The Cresta Run at St Moritz also proved a big draw.

A big Healey seemed a good education in race craft and preparation and luckily Kirk Rylands's well-raced car 319 AOV was looking for some action. He developed the car to a front runner in sports car racing until, in 1998, he was ready to take on the T51. He soon found its shortcomings and spent many hours on meticulous refinements: curing incontinence, on chassis geometry, corner weights, spring rates and radius arm angles. But the key to success was getting the right amount of methanol through the primitive Zenith carburettor. A chance encounter with Cecil Mitchell led to a great relationship; Cecil would spend the week with the Zenith on the flow bench, Charles would race at the weekend and report back on progress, and Cecil would make incremental improvements. Eventually they developed the most competitive two-seat GP car, with Charles winning the Williams Trophy in 2002, 03, 06, 07, 08, 09 and



Charles Dean on a Bugatti bicycle at Prescott

2010, the Monaco Historic Grand Prix, and when Laguna Seca laid on an all-Bugatti race in 2010 Charles had a clear win, lapping three seconds faster than anyone else. His Bugatti record at Prescott was an especially hard-fought triumph.

With nothing left to win, it was time to move on to the T59/50B, the car built by his father using all original Molsheim parts. Again, early experiences showed there was lots to do and a broken conrod provided the impetus. With characteristic research and attention to detail he dismantled the car from its two-seater form to rebuild it in truly dramatic single-seater form, scouring the world for the few original missing parts and machining everything else. The project was so nearly completed this year.

During the restoration, the chance came to gather the parts of the elusive T57S45 that Ray Jones had been collecting, along with the correct T50B engine and T59 chassis. This car was a T57 in name only to meet the requirements for 1937 Le Mans entry, but it didn't arrive for the event. With the lightweight engine in a full Grand Prix chassis and dramatic enclosed wheel bodywork, this will be the ultimate prewar sports car, and this project was largely complete too, save the bodywork.

The workshop also housed many of Charles's more esoteric projects, like the beautiful jewel-like Type 72, Bugatti's 10.5cc twin-cam supercharged bicycle engine. It showed little sign of practical application, but no one else has so thoroughly measured and tested this tiny machine, complete with Charles's home-built dynamometer and comprehensive array of sensors. We looked forward to monthly updates on maximum power, fuel consumption, run time and the latest breakage. Another jig was used to tension the T59 wheel spokes by resonance, using a musician's pitch measuring app. His original spokes vibrate with an A pitch when correctly tensioned, while the reproductions appear to vibrate in tune with D.

Charles had no need for an engine on his own collection of bikes, although typically he did experiment with an electric hub years before that became a thing. In recent years he cycled many classic long-distance routes across Europe, including Gibraltar to Moscow in stages, loving the independence of pedal power, two wheels and a saddle bag. Much of his cycling was on the Bugatti bicycle created by his friend Marco Bertazzoni. He also proved an excellent sculling partner; another hidden talent probably learned at school near Slough.



Dean (right) winning the Williams Trophy for the umpteenth time

He contributed a lot of time to the Bugatti Owners Club, serving on the council for a decade, then as a trustee of the Bugatti Trust, bringing a wealth of knowledge of the T59 and derivatives. In quieter moments he devoured his enormous library and the produce of Noor Jahan in SW5 (where he held the Least Adventurous Diner Award, 2011) in equal measure. He would always have a favourite latest read, typically historical novels, nineteenth-century politics and traditional crafts.

Charles took on the ancient Garn Fawr in Monmouthshire from his inspiring uncle Robin and made a few sensitive improvements: restoring the Tudor chimneys, the barns and workshops and commissioning from Adam Dant a glorious mural depicting the chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth. There were vague plans to build a live steam track in the woods below the house.

In 2017, William Cash introduced him to Olenka Hamilton, a Polish-Scottish journalist and classicist. They married in 2018, and Garn Fawr became a wonderful place of love, laughter, hospitality and flat-out trips in the Fiat 500. Charles threw himself into parenting with his usual boundless energy and joy: building dens, inventing games, telling stories, bumshuffling across the stone floors with Ophelia (6), Florence (5), and Octavian (1). He totally adored them all. It never seemed Charles was late to fatherhood, he was every bit the natural. And with so much to look forward to, cancer, as he put it, was a '******* disaster'.

Tim Jones

Jim Pike

1937–2025

Jim was born in Hall Green, Birmingham, on 28 January 1937. He attended Pitmaston school then, at the age of 14, had his first job working on the steam locomotives at Tyseley. From a very early age, he had a fascination and curiosity about everything in the world around him, but in particular fishing, collecting birds' eggs and admiring vintage cars. As a 15-year-old, he used to walk past his local garage and see Alick Pitts's blower Bentley, and he could hear the car in the distance in the evenings. This car made a tremendous impression on him, which developed into a lifelong obsession with the Bentley marque and prewar racing.

Jim served his National Service during the Suez Crisis and was stationed in Egypt. He learned to ride and drive various vehicles in the army. One of his favourites was driving the Leyland Hippo or riding a BSA as a dispatch rider, which only fuelled his passion for anything mechanical. He used to read about vintage Bentleys and motorsport in general while stationed overseas.

On leaving the army he came back to Birmingham and started work at Reeds cardboard box manufacturers, where he met his wife Elizabeth by knocking her off her bike on the way to work in his car. Jim taught Liz to drive in a Jaguar SS100 and they married in August 1959.

Liz persuaded Jim to go to night school and get some more qualifications in engineering. This led to him getting a job at Rover in Solihull in the Experimental Department. Soon after this he became a rally mechanic for the works team, first with P5s and the very successful P6 cars. He enjoyed the adventure of driving the spare cars around Africa and Europe with his work mates, but even when he was away in Monte Carlo, the Acropolis Rally or East African Safari, he would write every day to Liz and send her a postcard. He used to send his pay home which enabled them to save for a large Victorian family home that Liz had found because it had a pit in the garage. And of course to buy a vintage Bentley to restore.

It was at around this time in 1966 that Jim bought his first WO Bentley, or rather all the bits of a 1929 VdP 4½-litre tourer, which he spent about four years restoring to an immaculate condition. He loved this car and had many happy times with it. The family spent 20 years going to car meetings, including plenty of trips to BDC Silverstone. His love of the Bentley marque and their successes at Le Mans was always with him and eventually he sold the 4½ in 1990 so that he could begin his dream of building a replica of the 1926 3-litre Le Mans Team Car.

In 1979 Jim left Rover with his friend and business partner Graham King and they set up a company called Excel Engineering. They started by building two MkVI Specials for their wives. These cars were so well received that they built three more for customers and these cars are featured in the book *Bentley Specials & Special Bentleys* by Ray Roberts. But his real interest was in the Cricklewood cars. Jim had joined the Bentley Drivers Club in 1964 and so had met W. O. Bentley on a number of occasions, but even more so, he had met many of the mechanics and had got quite friendly with a few, including Wally Hassan.

Jim was able to gain a vast knowledge from them and consumed automotive books almost like an addiction. If Jim was sitting still it was only because he had a book in his hand. His expertise as well as his enthusiasm and perfectionism soon spread and they were restoring cars from around the world.

As Tim Houlding, a highly respected Bentley his-

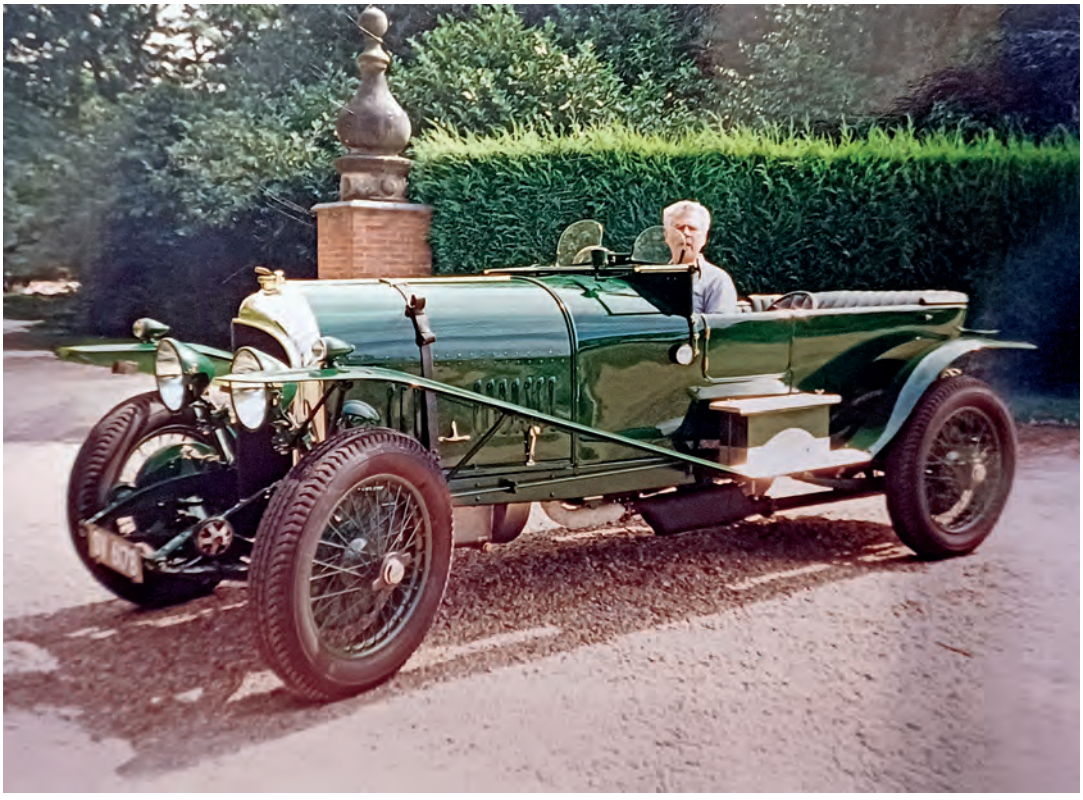
torian, said at Jim's funeral: 'In 1971, at the tender age of 15, I attended the Forward Trust Vintage Rally in Birmingham. Jim arrived in his newly restored 4.5 litre, VE 1409, accompanied by Bill Cash and Robin Shrimpton in their Bentleys. I came to realise then, and much more so as I grew older, just how superb a craftsman Jim was. Not only was he a fastidious engineer, honed in the Experimental Department of the Rover Motor Company, but he was immensely skilled in crafting timber for the coachwork. As the late Hugh Harben once said, the only straight bits on a Vanden Plas body are the floorboards. Jim scrutinised the curvaceous lines of the original handmade sports coachwork and executed those lines to perfection. His attention to detail extended to the upholstery and every fitting. Jim's motor cars stand as icons of his immense skill and integrity and they will endure for all time. I will end with a quote from the poet, Lord Byron: "There are forms which Time adorns, not wears, And to which beauty obstinately clings."'

In 1992 the workshop was full. Jim's Bentley was nearing the end of a four-year restoration, there were two South African customers' cars and also the oldest Bentley in the world, on loan to them so that they could copy some of the original details on the car. Unfortunately disaster struck. A fire at the workshop caused terrible damage to the cars, but the worst affected was Dad's. Jim and Graham rebuilt the cars for the customers and then in the evenings would come back and start work on Jim's car. This took another two years to complete.

After this, he became very ill with a lung problem and nearly died. This combined with the fact that they had lost most of the patterns in the fire, meant they decided to give up restoring cars and Jim used his vast knowledge to start dealing in vintage Bentley spares and literature, and also to start his passion for collecting automobilia, particularly if it was Bentley-related. For many years Jim enjoyed dealing in spares and rare automobilia and he would always be seen with a stall at the Bentley Concours or Bentley Silverstone.

Jim joined the Bentley Drivers Club in 1964 and the VSCC in 1966 and continued his memberships until his death. He was passionate about all vintage cars and he loved to take his friends to Silverstone in his Bentley. He enjoyed all of the club meetings and in the early 1970s he and Liz started to put on a Boxing Day gathering which became very well known, and every year the drive would be packed full of vintage cars. Jim died on 15 January 2025.

Jamie Pike



Bentley man Jim Pike: he was a superb craftsman

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Power Unleashed

Trailblazers Who Energised Engines with Supercharging and Turbocharging

By Karl Ludvigsen, published by Evro, three hardback volumes in slipcase, 1,960pp, £395 but discounted to £295 for VSCC members when ordering direct from the publisher – see reader offer at foot of page. Reviewed by **NEIL THORP**



How does one review a publication which is such a tour de force? Karl Ludvigsen's latest study covers all forms of forced induction from its early days onwards. It covers vehicles and aircraft engines in the UK, USA, and continental Europe, especially Germany, France, and Italy.

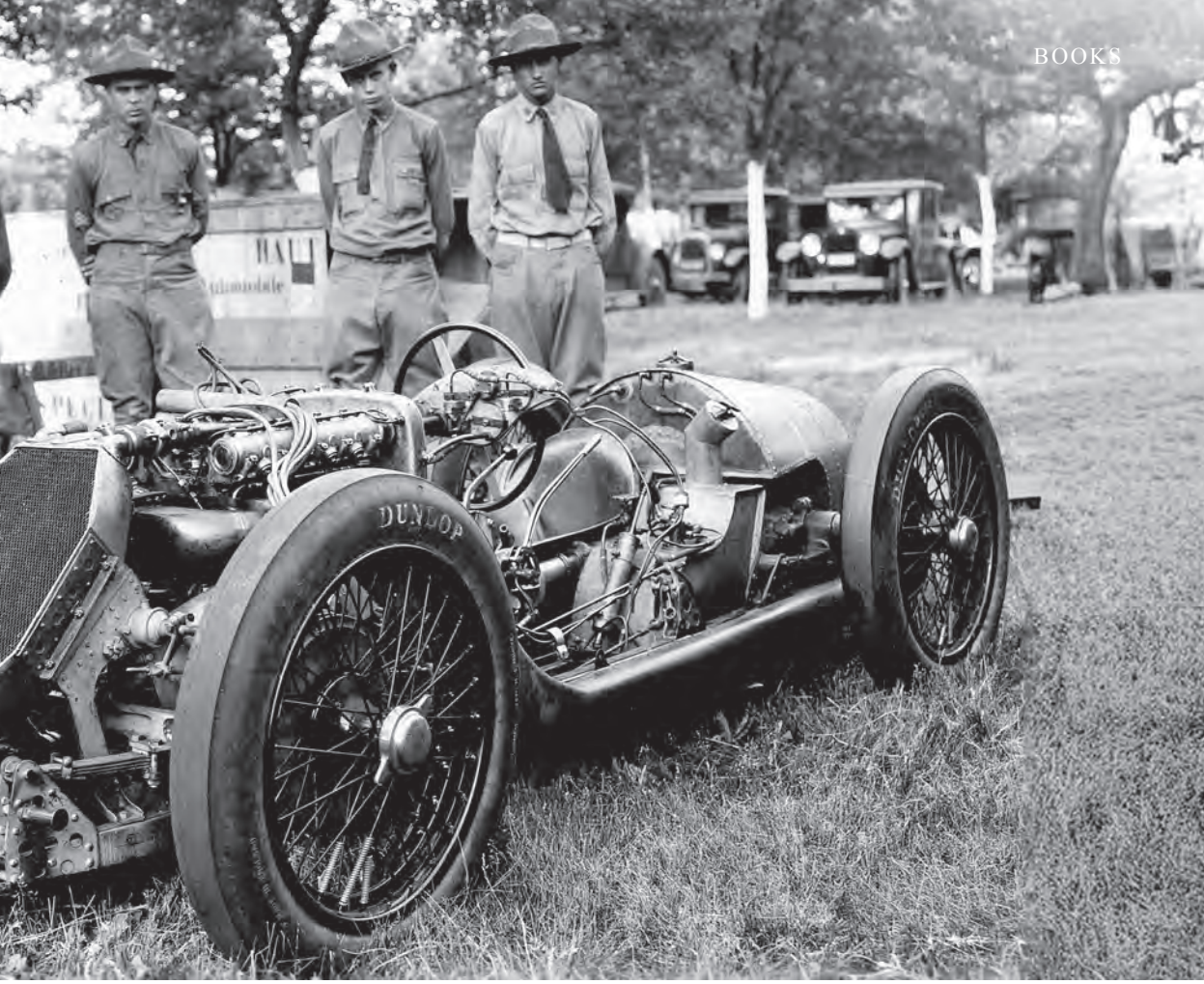
Volume One, '*Rushing toward the racing zenith, 1890s to 1950s*', begins by introducing the bold pioneers who first won races with blowers in 1910 and then took to the air to gain altitude with supercharging in the Great War. It covers inventive ideas for piston-type blowers, Roots-type, centrifugal, screw-type, vane-type, exhaust-driven turbos, and other new compressor technologies. Then how Fiat, Mercedes and Duesenberg vied to be first in racing with blowers in the early 1920s, sparking a world-wide swathe of interest in exotic supercharged road and track cars that also embraced the likes of Alfa Romeo, Bentley, MG, Miller, Sunbeam and many more.

Volume Two, '*Wartime boost to forced induction, 1930s to 1970s*', focuses on the huge strides made in supercharging and turbocharging in World War II by Allied and Axis combatants. It describes how, post-war, America powered ahead with turbocharging's proliferation in racing at Indianapolis followed by wider use from the 1970s for passenger cars and racers, most notably Formula One's 1,500-horsepower projectiles.

Volume Three, '*Turbo triumphs on road and track, 1970s to 2020s*', introduces the many and varied applications of boosting for petrol and diesel engines through to the present day and explains why and how the early 21st century saw sweeping conversion of both road and racing cars to forced induction for higher efficiency and for road-burning performance.

Volume One will be of particular interest to VSCC members, covering as it does the early days of motoring and the pre-war period. Notable automotive forced induction installations are described in detail with, inevitably, a predominance of competition vehicles. The text analyses what is important about each example and in every instance is accompanied by engineering drawings and photographs. The various great engineers involved in the invention or application of the supercharger are recognised and the dust jacket of each volume has photos of sixteen of those mentioned in its text.

To illustrate the completeness of individual sub-topics, the description of the Vauxhall Villiers,



In 1925, Ernest Eldridge added a Cozette supercharger fed by an SU carburettor to a standard Anzani engine in this Amilcar chassis, with excellent results

famously driven by Raymond Mays, takes up six full pages of Volume One, including fourteen illustrations. Dipping into Volume Two, the huge complexity of boosted aircraft engines and the bewildering number of designs that never made it into series production comes across very clearly, numerous examples illustrating the profligacy of military and political customers within both the Axis powers and the Allies. Six pages describe the problems of using a turbo designed by the Royal Aircraft Establishment for supercharging the Napier Lion engine (the engine also used in John Cobb's Napier Railton) which was built and tested in a Gloster Guan and an inverted version of the same engine (designated the Lioness) which never flew after it was all cancelled by the Air Ministry. Volume Three devotes nineteen pages to explaining how Eaton Manufacturing Company refined the Roots blower for modern engines and worked with multiple car manufacturers to incorporate supercharging until, in the year 2000, Eaton became the largest supplier of mechanically driven superchargers.

Power Unleashed has technical descriptions that are very clear and which should be comprehensible to a non-engineer; it is not a dry reference work (it is far too readable!), but it is certainly not to be devoured at one sitting, rather something to delve into. As the fruit of Karl Ludvigsen's lifetime interest in the subject, reviewing it, one really feels that another lifetime would ideally be required to do it justice.

Each volume has its own index divided into 'People', 'Machinery & Companies' and 'Events & Venues'. Despite its size, weight and cost, *Power Unleashed* is something that I would highly recommend for a serious reader, and I hope that the discount offered by the publisher to VSCC members will lead to a significant take-up.

Exclusive offer to VSCC members: *£100 off the RRP when using discount code* ***POWER25B*** *when ordering directly from Evro Publishing at www.evropublishing.com*

Rolls-Royce in East Africa

By John Stuttard and Roger Tanner, self-published April 2025, 300pp, £75 including p&p in the UK. To order a copy email johnstuttard@btinternet.com Reviewed by **MATTHEW BELL**

Publishers of best-selling books know that an effective way to grab the interest of the passing reader is to fuse two tantalising subjects in a snappy title – *Death in Venice*, say, or *Murder in Mesopotamia*. The authors of this new volume of automotive history have done something similar in a book that is as rewarding to Rolls-Royce enthusiasts as to anyone with an interest in East Africa.

Both writers are owners of prewar Rolls-Royces who have enjoyed completing long-distance journeys in them. Tanner has lived in East Africa since 1967, when he was recruited by the Overseas Development Administration to join their Kenya team to value rural estates, and later founded Vintage Restorations in Nairobi. In 1963 he drove overland from England to Cape Town, and in 1969 drove from Nairobi to Cape Town in a newly acquired 1934 Park Ward saloon 20/25. Stuttard acquired a Barker sports saloon 20/25 in 1989 and drove it from Beijing to Paris over six weeks in 1997, and has written and edited many books, some about Rolls-Royces.

This book, which is hardback and A4 in format, begins with 30 pages of background essays covering the history of East Africa in the nineteenth century and the introduction of motor cars in the early twentieth century. Approaching the subject of colonial Africa is not without its problems, and the authors have done so with a commendable degree of detachment, setting out various facts with little attempt to justify or condemn the protagonists. It is astonishing, for example, to read of the 1885 Berlin conference at which representatives from 14 countries participated (none from Africa), at which the entire continent was carved up in an Act which created borders of ownership, regardless of ethnic or tribal differences, allowing European nations to claim virtually the entire continent, including its resources and people, in the interest of 'civilisation'.



1928 Phantom I 29WR was at one point owned by the Governor of Tanganyika and in 1948 reclothed as a 'woody', as seen here (Sir Henry Royce Memorial Foundation, via John Arthy)



Chassis 8PY and 199RY awaiting attention under a Makuti roof at Dandora, 1974 (Roger Tanner)

Given that, one might wonder how welcome was the sight of an English-made Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost when these cars started to make their way, mostly second- or third-hand, to various Crown Agents and governors who used these impressive machines as everyday transport. As the authors note, before the introduction of the Land Rover in 1948, a Rolls-Royce was a good option, with its robust chassis, high ground clearance and strong springs and shock absorbers.

After the historical chapters, the rest of the book constitutes a register of the 77 cars identified by the authors as having some kind of East Africa connection, each with a detailed history and photographs, some never published before. These entries are clearly the result of a lot of digging and provide an invaluable historical record for enthusiasts, owners, and anyone involved in the buying or selling of these cars. They are also of interest to the general reader, as they provide fascinating snapshots into the lives of prosperous tradespeople such as the Moreland family, founders of The Moreland match-making company, and Ernest Carr, of the water-biscuit making company, who branched out into making jam. These were the natural customers of Rolls-Royce, as to own a Rolls-Royce in the first half of the twentieth century was a sign you had made it in life.

One of the delights of this book is that the authors allow themselves to go off at tangents – though not at excessive length – into the lives of the various people associated with the cars. So for example in the essay on GUK20, a 1926 20hp Hooper Cabriolet, we learn the history of Boosey & Hawkes, the company that all musicians will remember as the place where you used to buy your sheet music from. After Geoffrey Hawkes, the car passed to one HH Prince John de Mahé of 20c Holland Villas Road, whose mysterious French title had been inherited from his father, previously a Welsh captain in the Royal Artillery who announced his grand new status in the *London Gazette* in August 1914. After the young prince got married to a member of the Guinness family and had children, he moved to Kenya in 1947, taking the Rolls-Royce with them where it lived on their dairy farm alongside seven horses, 30 cows, six bulls, four dogs, two cats and a monkey. The car passed through various hands in the 1960s before ending up with the late Colin Crabbe in 1969, who brought it back to England and sold it to Anthony Eastwood, in whose family it remained until 2022. It was then acquired by one of the authors, Roger Tanner, from The Real Car Company in 2023, thus 'reuniting GUK20 with its Kenyan past'.

Serendipitous stories such as these are found throughout the book, often involving Tanner, who has clearly led a very active and interesting life during his time in East Africa. His co-author Sir John Stuttard has also had a full and varied career, including serving as Lord Mayor of London and nine years as Chairman of the 20-Ghost Club, the oldest Rolls-Royce club in the world. Both have clearly enjoyed the challenge of researching, compiling and writing this intriguing and detailed volume, which has already been recognised by the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club, who have awarded it the Ivan Evernden Trophy for best technical or reference publication. Sir John has already embarked on his next project, a history of Rolls-Royces in Ceylon, having now covered Russia, Finland and East Africa. As he says, 'there's no limit!' and we are very glad that that is the case.



Chassis 24UK being driven down the Nandi Escarpment by Roger Tanner (author's collection)

The English Model T Ford

By Chris Barker, Neil Tuckett, Martin Riley, Bruce Lilleker and Drew Lilleker, three volumes, published by The Model T Register of Great Britain Ltd. All three volumes for £45 including p+p available from modeltregister.co.uk Reviewed by **NICK WILSON**

Henry Ford revolutionised motoring by producing a cheap reliable car for ordinary people, first in America and then around the world. The Model T Ford had its 'World Launch' on 13 November 1908, at the London Motor Show in Olympia, when the car was exhibited by the then unknown UK Ford agents, Perry, Thornton and Schreiber, whose stand was tucked away between Gladiator and Belsize Motors. Four models of the T appeared on the stand, according to the official show catalogue, but there was very little fanfare and almost nothing appeared either before or after the event in the British motoring press. Nobody, at that point, was calling it 'The Car of the Century', as it would come to be called in the year 2000. Today it is probably the most widely recognised prewar car, along perhaps with the Austin Seven.

To mark the centenary of the car's British launch, The Model T Ford Register of Great Britain published the first of a three-volume history of the English variant in 2008. That volume covered Ford's early years in the UK, the creation of Ford's first factory outside America, at Trafford Park in Manchester, and the evolution of the model over its 19-year production span. It was written by the register's then archivist Martin Riley, together with Neil Tuckett and the late Bruce Lilleker, both lifelong T enthusiasts, owners and drivers.

A follow-up book was published in 2014, this time written by Chris Barker, who had taken over as archivist, together with Neil Tuckett and Lilleker's son, Drew, who wanted to use a fund raised in his father's memory to help create a second volume. This book moves beyond the straightforward history of the T to look at all the weird and wonderful iterations of the vehicle in period – charabancs, fire engines, agricultural conversions and oddities such as promotional tools for toothpaste, vermouth and light bulbs, each with a custom-made body in the shape of those products.

The third volume, newly published this spring, takes the story beyond Britain to all the far-flung places where Model Ts proved useful – North Africa, the Middle East, the desert – as well as throwing in some more oddities as well as some longer-form stories of particular adventures and escapades that the T enthusiast would enjoy. It also traces the company's building of factories country by country, so that one learns that Model Ts were built everywhere from Cork to Cadiz to Trieste. All three volumes are liberally illustrated, using mostly photographs from Neil Tuckett's vast archive, Neil having acquired the collection of the late Dave Fitton.



This T forms the basis of a 'Hucks Starter'; the aircraft is an Airco DH10 Amiens III, probably with Liberty V12 engines (Neil Tuckett collection)

The three volumes are handsomely produced in hardback A4 format with glossy dustjackets and high-quality paper and printing throughout. The abundance of wonderful imagery is what really makes them, each page carrying something that will make you smile or marvel or yearn for a time when Model T Fords were dressed up for village pageants or used as the basis of an open charabanc in which 45 people would pile in for a day trip to the seaside. These books are a joy to lose yourself in, whether or not you own a Model T, as well as a useful historical record. Highly recommended.

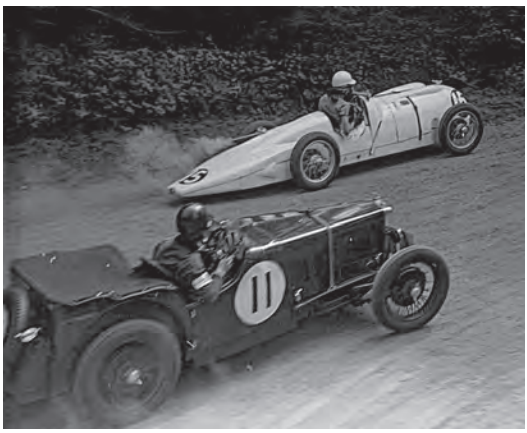
The County Down Trophy Races 1934 to 1936: Donaghadee and Bangor

By Paul Robinson, 240 pages, over 100 photos, £25 including p&p, published by and available from robinsonbooks.co.uk
Reviewed by **PETER WALBY**

When The Editor asked me to review this book I little realised that I would find mentioned, albeit in a minor capacity, a competition car that had later been owned by my family in the 1940s. The book is another in a series by Paul Robinson which covers motor racing in Northern Ireland before the Second World War. So much has been written about the Ulster Tourist Trophy races at Ards between 1928 and 1936 that some lesser-known events have not been documented well in the past.

Paul has remedied this in his latest book which covers three road races held from 1934 to 1936 in the same area of County Down on a smaller scale to the TT but centred on the towns of Donaghadee and Bangor. These three County Down Trophy Races are covered in great detail with information pulled from many sources to give a comprehensive view from the outset of the planning to the execution and results of the events.

For each race there is a detailed listing of the entered cars and a biography of their drivers. The dramas of practice and then the races are described with contemporary media reports included which give context to the events of those times. Many previously unpublished photographs from local motoring enthusiasts are included and these add to the flavour. While the quality of some photographs may be criticised, the author notes that the photograph libraries of two of the local Belfast newspapers were destroyed in the 1970s by terrorist activities, so reliance on copies of prints or scanned images has been required. The author has used these photos when they explain some aspect of the races or identify a particular car or driver.



The first County Down Trophy race at Donaghadee in 1934: 11 is local driver Alfie Finlay in an MG L-Type Magna, 15 is London driver J. R. Hodge in a Singer Le Mans



The Adrian Conan Doyle 'Golden Bugatti' entered by Princess Nina Mdivani at Bangor, 1936

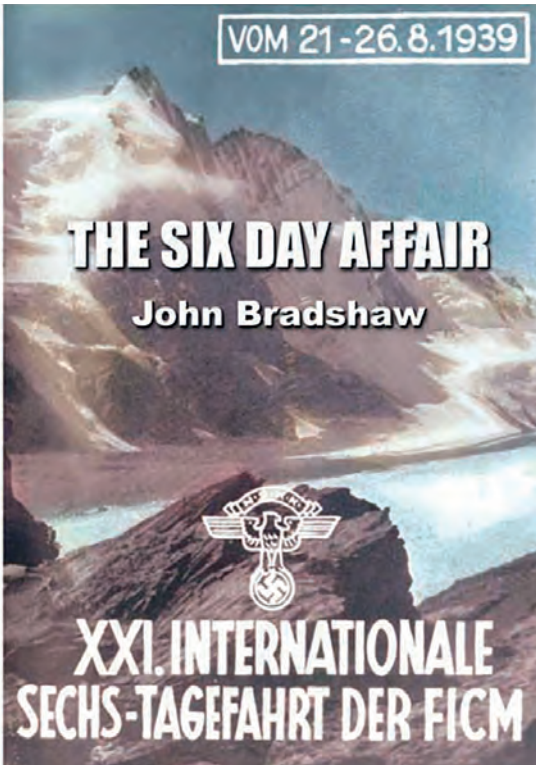
Even the officials for each race are given their mention by name and one detail which registered particularly with me was that for the 1934 race there were 12 doctors on duty, two at each of five ambulance posts, one at race control and the Chief Medical Officer. For 1935, 21 doctors, 12 ambulance stations and seven motor ambulances. This for race circuits of just under four and six miles respectively.

The 17 entrants and drivers for the 1934 Donaghadee race were nearly all from Ireland, however by 1935 the prestige of the event likely accounted for the doubled number of entries, with renowned drivers and cars from outside Ireland for the 1935 and 1936 Bangor races. The book is very readable and I heartily recommend it to those with an interest in the road races which then could still be held in this part of the UK, and for those who want to know what second-hand little sports car my mother bought for herself in 1946.

The Six Day Affair

By John Bradshaw, published by JRB Publishing, 200pp, £15 & p+p, available from www.jrbpub.net
Reviewed by **HEW LLAMBETT**

Strictly speaking, this intriguing account of the 1939 International Six Days Trial falls outside the remit of books to be reviewed in this magazine, given that it concerns motorcycles, not cars, and that it was first published in 2014. But for whatever reason it was not reviewed at the time, and as it is still available to buy from the author, who is an energetic motoring historian and self-publisher, The Editor feels it is worth bringing to the attention of a wider audience.



The book tells the story of what was known as 'The Motorcycling Olympics', a gruelling six-day endurance race held every year in a different country in the years leading up to the war. In 1939, it so happened to be Germany's turn to stage it, and Salzburg, in Nazi-occupied Austria, was chosen as the venue. This was in late August, by which time Hitler was already preparing to invade Poland. After the success of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, he saw the ISDT as another opportunity to assert Nazi supremacy. All of which caused some problems for the British team, who halfway through the event were doing very well but found themselves in political hot water. After receiving telegrams from the British Embassy instructing them to leave immediately and return home, they faced the daunting task of making their exit in what would become a kind of 'Great Escape' adventure via Switzerland.

Bradshaw is to be commended for piecing together all the facts he was able to, in particular by speaking to people connected with the event. He first heard of the story in the early 1980s, but could find little information about it. As his research continued, and he amassed further details, the task of telling the tale evolved so that he abandoned his initial idea of a fictionalised account in favour of a more fact-based one. The result is perhaps a slightly unhappy hybrid – an entirely fictional account would have been free to introduce more drama and subplots, while a straight non-fictional account would have had the authority of being historically completely accurate. The result is a piece of fiction using mostly real-life characters which doesn't always grip the reader as perhaps it might.

Each of the 16 chapters begins with a short passage of fiction set in the present day, in which a character called Andy quizzes his grandfather Eric, one of the (imagined) riders in the trial, to tell him the story. The device is intended to add a little levity to the narrative, which it does, albeit with a somewhat irritating tone, Andy calling his grandfather 'Gramps' and promising to make him another 'cuppa' if he continues to dredge up the story from his memory. Each chapter then involves Eric narrating the events as they unfold, culminating with an exciting passage in which he flees a border post with Lavinda, another fictional character, riding pillion, the pair being shot at by guards.

The book is illustrated with some charming period cartoons, maps and a few photographs. It is a quirky tome, covering an undeniably interesting and overlooked episode, and is worth a read by anyone with an interest in prewar road adventures.

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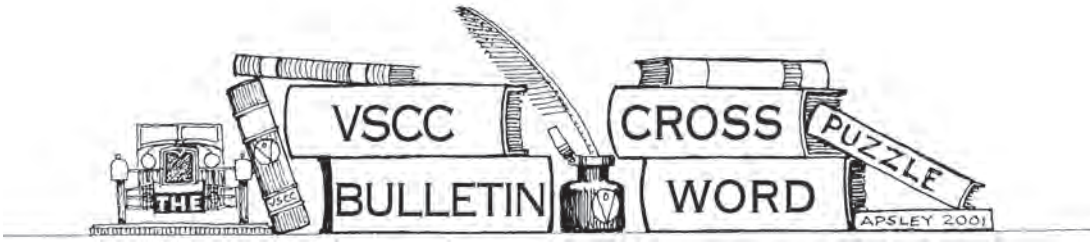


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Congratulations to Suzie Pilkington, who wins Crossword 97. The VSCC mug is on its way. She correctly put 'Radial' for 4D, which both Roger Still and Ed Swain thought could also be 'Redway'. Many employed the help of spouses, which is of course perfectly allowed, even if not encouraged by all, such as Charlie Beeden who wrote: 'Apologies for the defaced page but the current Mrs B was unable to restrain her enthusiasm for solving some of the clues that she thought were beyond my capabilities – she may have been right! It was, however, such a bonus to see her taking such an interest, maybe she didn't realise it was car related? My/our best wishes for life in your new abode. Rural Hastings was my wife's patch as a community matron (the reason I bow to her superior knowledge in all aspects of life – and she literally saved mine last year). All life is in Hastings.' Amen to that. Entries for 98 please via email to vscc.editor@gmail.com or in the analogue way to 12 Wellington Square, Hastings, TN34 1PB. Good luck!

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Answers and winner in the next *Bulletin*.

Answers to Crossword No. 97

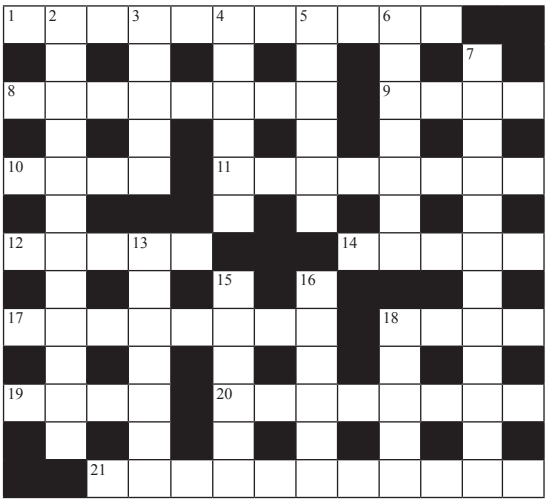
Across

1 Fiats 4 Richard 8 Enfield 9 Simms 10 Eels 11 Hamilton 14 Dart 15 Tour 17 Knickers 18 Maxi 21 Valve 22 Maybach 23 Purists 24 Conic

Down

1 Frederick 2 Awful 3 Shed 4 Radial 5 Cast iron 6 Ammeter 7 DTs 12 Neolithic 13 Trekkers 14 Daimler 16 Trumps 19 Again 20 Sync 21 VIP

Crossword number 98



Across

1. Revise legal composition of a company in Coventry (6,5)
8. Lois died to become admired (8)
9. Headless screw sometimes found in a Pub (4)
10. Italian engineer who took over the French subsidiary of STD (4)
11. On my auto I could get independence (8)
12. Napier's water nymph (5)
14. German manufacturer taken over by Borgward in 1929 (5)
17. Moves South-East in yellow car (8)
18. Packing found in a Sushi machine (4)
19. Landing stage ripe for reconstruction (4)
20. Shoe repaired – he leered (8)
21. He built cars out of army dynamos (7,4)

Down

2. A lido in Spain could be just the place for a racetrack (12)
3. You don't have to be a saint to drive one (5)
4. Teaser about to lap a valve (6)
5. Early Fords follow German car inspections (6)
6. And 10 across rebuilt a car (7)
7. Visibly muses about acting obediently (12)
13. Birthplace of Niki Lauda (7)
15. A reflected mural was a warning signal in days gone by (6)
16. Claude Johnson was said to be this in Rolls-Royce (6)
18. Stanley's driving force (5)

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OF THE

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NO. 330 WINTER 2025



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Spreading comfort and joy

A memorable survey of school-leavers some years ago found that the ambition of more than half the 16-year-olds questioned was simply ‘to be famous’. In 2010, this was considered a valid career path in its own right. Hopefully that obsession with celebrities has passed, as young people now seem more serious and focused on useful things like saving the planet.

But people who do become famous often complain about the daily grind of being stopped in the street. It’s probably fun at first, irritating the zillionth time. And yet, we in the old car world know a bit about what that feels like, as anyone who drives an old car is constantly engaged by strangers. From personal experience, it seems to happen more often, as barely a journey goes by without someone shuffling over in a petrol station forecourt to admire the car and strike up a conversation.

This can only be a good thing, and we should celebrate the ice-breaking qualities of old cars. Thirty years ago, when Morris Minors were only 30 years old, they didn’t elicit much response. Today, anything from the 1960s or earlier is guaranteed to draw attention – a smile at the least, or a cheerful wave or honk. Not that the response is always positive. When the magneto of our Alvis 12/50 packed up on a Friday evening last year, causing long tailbacks on the A34, at least one angry van driver hurled abuse. The words: ‘Why don’t you get a proper car?’ stick in the memory.

But for the most part, old cars engender a spirit of benevolence. The 1954 MKVII Jaguar we recently acquired as a daily driver (it’s so vast you can chuck everything in: baby, pushchair, dogs etc.) has befriended us to more locals than if we had planted a pampas grass on the front lawn. One neighbour, a retired illustrator who drew the visitor boards of all Welsh castles, practically wept as he stopped to admire the Jag, bringing back, as it did, a surge of memories from the days when big old ’50s saloons were a common sight.

And so it seems that far from being a private pleasure, vintage motoring is actually a selfless act, spreading happiness and joy to random people wherever we go. A recent survey by the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs found that 9.7 million people in Britain said they would like to own a historic vehicle. Those of us who have already reached this Nirvana should remember how lucky we are, and make sure to use them as much as we can. So if you want to spread comfort and joy this yuletide, all you have to do is drive a vintage car and leave the modern at home.

THE BULLETIN OF THE VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB

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Cover: *The Collings family are unique in Britain in campaigning a 1903 60hp Mercedes on VSCC events such as the Welsh Trial. On this year's event, held in Presteigne over the weekend of 11–12 October, Ben Collings cleared most hills but came unstuck on Cwmheyope, which put him out of the pewterware. His son Archie fared better in the Bentley 3/4½, winning a 1st. Roger Collings, seen here in the front passenger seat, says that an elderly Presteigne local remembers Tim Carson reading the results of the Welsh from the steps of the Radnorshire just after WWII, followed by a robust rendition of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Roger says he plans to revive this tradition (Mike Griffin)*

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A Sunbeam revived

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Featuring a single-seater

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Niamh Smith makes her debut

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A summer jolly

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Report by Steve Welsh



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Packards at the palace

48 LOTON SATURDAY
Bill Rosten gives it a go

50 LOTON SUNDAY
It was very wet

Above: *Bruce Dowell sends in this cheerful period photo of an AC Sociable, about which nothing is known. The registration, LE7626, is a London number, but unsurprisingly no longer exists on the DVLA database. AC produced the three-wheel Sociable between 1907 and 1914, and as this one seems relatively clean and unbattered, one might hazard a guess that the photo was taken not long after purchase. The clothes are certainly Edwardian and the atmosphere is one of comfortable prosperity. Our thanks to Bruce for this snapshot of a bygone era*

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Charles Prestwich at Goodwood

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Jack Peppiatt gets a soaking



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The best of all wolds

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But also Kent, if we're honest

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102 CROSSWORD

Sidelights

Northern exposure

Attention, members in northern England and Scotland. Have you ever been concerned that almost all VSCC events are held so far south of where you live? There are 137 of us in the counties of Cumbria, Durham, Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and the whole of Scotland. We are widely spread but mostly we live in the areas of general population density. There has been no Scottish Tour for some years now and the Scottish Trial could not be held this year. That means that, apart from a few pub meets, half of the UK mainland had no formal VSCC activity. I'm keen to find out how you engage with the Club, with other club members and also with non-member owners of vintage cars. What do you do with your vintage car? What type of Club events would you support if they were held nearer your home? How about a monthly pub meet? There are lots of these in the south but in our area, only four. Would you do a tour for a day or more? Have you ever done sprints or hill climbs? If you'd like to have a go, it should be possible to arrange a vintage class at venues such as Barbon, Forrestburn, Cames or Doune. If you have other ideas please let me know. Contact me by email, iain.muir@vscc.co.uk or if you'd prefer to talk just send me your number and I'll call you. I will collate the responses and, with the Club, do what is possible to implement some changes.

Iain Muir

Sunbeam reborn

It's always good to see a 'new' Edwardian car out and about, and this year's speed season was enlivened by Duncan Cartwright's 1913 Sunbeam 12/16, which has been brought back into service after a seven-year hiatus. The car was originally sent to New Zealand, presumably as a rolling chassis for fitment of local bodywork. It was found in a creek bed with no body in the 1960s and was rebuilt as a two-seat sportster with homemade body by Laurie Leyden. Wallace McNair (1908 GP Darracq fame) then had it from the late 1980s and rebuilt it, shortening the chassis and improving the bodywork. The car came to the UK via Nick Channing in 1999, with Duncan's late father Jim purchasing it in 2000. At that time it had artillery wellbase wheels, fibreglass wings, Perspex aero screens and incorrect lamps. It has been slowly improved over the years, both cosmetically and mechanically, following a crank breakage at Mallory and a couple of stub axle failures. We look forward to seeing more of it soon.



Duncan Cartwright making his Prescott debut in his late father's 1913 Sunbeam 12/16 (Peter McFadyen)



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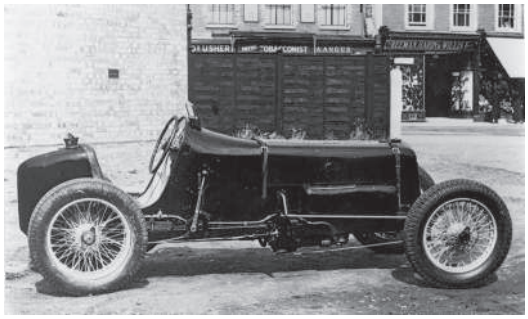
Some more photographs of prewar cars still in everyday use postwar, from the collection of **MATT SHEPHERD**



Above: A Bianchi is an unusual car in Britain, and this I think is an S18 model which had a pushrod 2-litre four-cylinder engine, made from 1922–25. Bianchi had an agency in London's West End on Warwick Street; this car was most likely supplied by them.



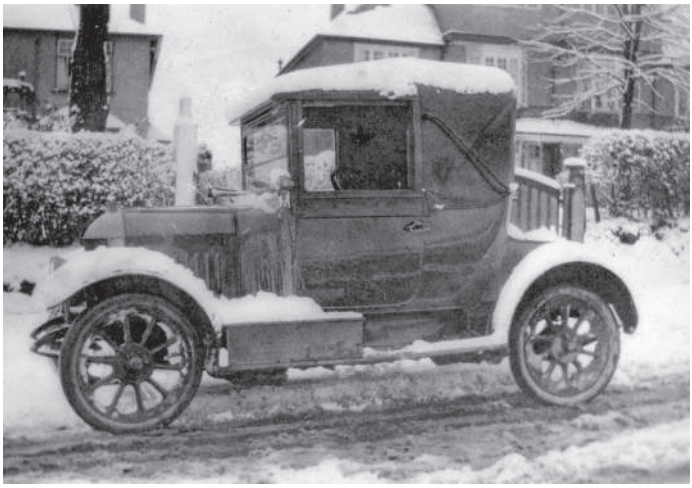
Right: A Riley Sprite pictured on the corner of Prince Consort Road, SW7. Chassis S275 6797 was owned by a C. J. Dean at this time before he sold it in 1963 via well-known dealer Dan Margulies to a woman in California. It stayed in America until 1980 when it returned to the UK before being sold to France in the early 2000s.



Right: It's unusual to see a single-seater in 'Kerbside Encounters' but this picture of 'The Spook' fits the bill. Originally Dick Nash's special (see article about the Conan Doyle brothers on p. 28 for more about him), it was fitted with an OHC Anzani engine and super-charged. It went to Guy Griffiths in 1935 and it's likely the photo was taken in his ownership. Postwar it was fitted with a Mercury V8 engine and is then thought to have gone to Australia and is now presumed lost. Does anyone know what ever happened to it?



Above: A 1924 Mercedes 28/95 pictured near Hyde Park in November 1962. The occupants are in town for the London to Brighton run in their 7.2 litre OHC six-cylinder tourer with Sindlefingen coachwork. The trade plates suggest it may be with a dealer at the time, and it was in fact sold to the Schlumpf brothers the following year for £500. It has remained in Mulhouse ever since and is on display in the museum.



Above: This Austin Seven 'R' Type Saloon or 'Top Hat' was registered in London in early 1927. There had been coachbuilt examples before, but the aluminium bodied 'R' Type introduced in 1926 was the first Austin Seven saloon that Austin themselves made. This car does not seem to have survived.

Left: I thought with Christmas approaching there was no better time to use this picture of a Bullnose Morris. It looks like a particularly early Bullnose, possibly even an Edwardian Oxford model. It would make for a nice card with a 'Seasons Greetings' message within.



YO: Tony Ryan's 1926 Alvis 12-50, which he left to his granddaughter

Our Alvis, Shelsley and Me

Three years ago, **NIAMH SMITH** *unexpectedly inherited the 1926 Alvis 12-50 her grandfather had run since the Sixties. Too busy getting married and buying a house, she had only driven it once before she took it up Shelsley Walsh this summer, then Prescott, and Loton…*

This year was one of those nice, quiet years for me: I bought a new house in March, planned a wedding then got married in July, and went drag racing at four different events. So I thought I had better start hill-climbing too, because life is too short not to take every opportunity that is thrown at you. The idea actually started a couple of years ago when I was spurred on by Kit Jackson and the Duffin family at Stonehurst Farm after we started taking my 1926 Alvis 12-50 to their charity car nights, not long after I had inherited the car from my grandfather, Tony Ryan.

YO 622 was a constant throughout my childhood, my grandfather having bought the car in 1963 when he flagged someone down at the side of the road and bought it for a nominal fee to replace the Bullnose Morris he had been driving at the time. He and my 'Nan enjoyed driving it with a group of friends who all owned vintage cars around Deptford, Lee Green and Sidcup throughout the 1960s. They were not just fair-weather drivers, braving the winter to visit pubs and just generally having fun with the cars, even taking it down to Cornwall and picking up a speeding ticket on the way.



Tony Ryan as a young man

I don't know much else about his ownership of the car; he was a man of few words, but occasion-



Tony introduces the car to Niamh's now husband, Jake



Duncan Wood in the Duck's-back in the all-Alvis race, Donington 1998

ally came out with a corker. In fact, I never even went out in the car, or heard it run until I was about 18 and Grandad started up the car for my partner, now husband, Jake. I do have fond memories of sneaking into his big double-storey garage – which he referred to as 'the motor house' – at his old cottage in Fairbourne Heath, Kent. I would clamber onto the running board and slide onto the leather seat, saw on the steering wheel and slide the ignition and timing controls up and down. I can still smell the old tools, grease and oil from his machine shop, mixed with the tobacco from his pipe – it's hugely nostalgic for me. What I do know is that he took part in at least one trial, and I think possibly some tours. He also had Duncan Wood race the car for him in an all-Alvis race at Donington to celebrate 50 years of the Alvis Register in 1998.

When my Grandad died rather suddenly in March 2022, he asked that the car be passed on to me. I was into classic cars already, my first car being a 1965 Morris Minor, and having owned numerous classics since then with Jake, who is a lifelong hot rodder. Despite this, inheriting a vintage car put us way out of our depth, not even knowing how to start the thing, let alone get to grips with driving it.

We slowly got the hang of things, and through a local VSCC pub meet and making friends with the crew down at Stonehurst, our confidence was boosted and we started putting hundreds, maybe thousands, of miles on the car. It was likely the longest it had been driven in around 10 years, and it transpired that Grandad had taken incredible care of her, as it became our most reliable car. Other than fitting some nice new Blockley tyres and a clutch after a camping trip to the Yorkshire Dales gave the old one a good send-off, we have had to do very minimal maintenance or repairs on the old girl.

It took me quite a bit longer to learn how to properly drive the car than it did Jake – I had never driven a car with a crash box before and I struggled for a while, but once I tuned my ear in it seemed to come a bit easier. In fact, the first time I ever drove the car on my own was a week before my first hill-climb event at Shelsley Walsh this summer, when I took her out to stretch her legs in the Peak District, and this seemed to embolden me.

The week running up to Shelsley was also spent doing some 'race prep' – I will admit that for me this meant a lot of polishing. And for Jake it meant ensuring that the car was compliant with the regulations. I laser-cut a timing strut at work which Jake then finished fabricating, attaching a radiator catch can, as well as making a breather for the oil catch can, and fitting the double throttle return springs.

Soon, the weekend rolled round and we headed down to Shelsley Walsh on the Saturday evening. Placing the car in the paddock made the nerves start to sink in, as I parked up next to my classmates – a



Niamh Smith competing in the Alvis for the first time, Shelsley Walsh 2025 (Mark Silvester)



Another Alvista at Shelsley, Dick Wilkinson in his Silver Eagle (Steve Welsh)



Archie Bullett in the Pic-Pic was fastest Edwardian (Steve Welsh)



James Baxter sets off to achieve FTD (Steve Welsh)

host of low-slung MGs and Frazer Nash. The Alvis stuck out like a sore thumb and looked rather ungainly compared to its sportier looking peers. Ah well – it was too late to back down now. I also did the sensible thing and walked the hill with notes in hand sent to me by Gary Clare, who had kindly offered to mentor me as a fellow Alvis enthusiast, and written by James Baxter. By the time we reached the summit, we were fairly out of breath, and by now realising that the Alvis may struggle to even get out of first gear, but I at least felt prepared for each turn and drain cover that I was aiming for.

I barely slept that night, perhaps from the nerves, excitement, being somewhere new, or a mixture of all those emotions. When Sunday morning came, I still felt unusually nervous – perhaps a new form of motorsport felt quite daunting, as did the average gradient of 1 in 9 that stretched out in front of me. I was pitted next to Rufus Flann to my left in his rather tasty Frazer Nash, who it turned out was already having a brilliant season and despite his youth was no stranger to motorsport. To my right were Sophie and Rebecca Wiseman sharing driving duties on their Frazer Nash. There was a great atmosphere in the paddock, and it turned out that I would see a lot more of these skilled drivers at the next hillclimbs I would attend. I was also pleased to meet a couple of other Alvis drivers, Dick Wilkinson with his Silver Eagle, and Anthony Norton with the Valentine Special, who were both encouraging and a pleasure to check in with after each run. Gary was there too, offering support, advice, knowledge and experience.

The support I had received already made me feel more confident as I prepared for my first run. Being in Class Three meant that I didn't have time to watch any other runs before being thrown in at the deep end. I resolved to go for a fairly spirited run, but in reality I took the first practice rather carefully while I got to grips with the hill. As I started to climb, I remembered my reference points from the notes I had read the night before, and things started to click into place. Kennel and Crossing I took with ease, but soon the intimidating sleepers and armco that lined the 'esses' loomed into view. I dabbed the brakes for both corners, and then went at what felt like full chat on the sloped straight towards the finish line. My mechanical sympathy meant I was maybe not revving it as high as I could have, something I would improve on as the day continued.

Unfortunately, the first run was not timed, so I had no idea whether it was a decent run for my first try, but the scariest part was now over. I still felt out of my depth, and I had decided that my car was rather underpowered for a hill like Shelsley, but I wasn't there to just try something new, and to have fun with the car.



Robin Tuluie exiting top S in the Menasco Pirate (Steve Welsh)



Finley Hope-Cameron scored the only sub-40 run in Class 12 with 39.90 (Steve Welsh)



Jolyon Harrison in the Cognac, one of two cars he drove at Shelsley (Steve Welsh)



Paul Compton in the Wolseley Aerees Special (Mark Silvester)

As forecast, the weather had turned for the second run, and a drizzle had descended on the historic venue. This made the second practice run a bit more exciting when the car drifted slightly around the top 'S', eliciting some unexpected giggles from inside my helmet. Following some advice from Jake, and Gary, who reminded me that this wasn't a drag race and I didn't need to cut a good reaction time on the green light, I sat and brought my revs up a bit more off the line, meaning I got away better. This resulted in a 69.19 second run, against my handicap of 60 seconds, which I felt was not bad in wet conditions.

My third run, and the first of my competitive runs, was frustrating for me; due to the oversized carburettor fitted to the Alvis, it does not like to sit idling or to be driven at low revs, preferring to be driven balls-out on the road. Due to some waiting in the queue for my run, the spark plugs had fouled, meaning that it misfired most of my way up the hill, and I desperately tried to do an 'Italian tune-up' as I ascended. Despite this, the run was fractionally quicker – 69.03 seconds – and I could feel myself getting the hang of it now, and feeling my confidence increase.

After returning to the paddock, cleaning up the spark plugs and cleaning off some corrosion between the king lead and distributor cap, we were ready for my last competitive run of the day. This time, there was still a slight misfire, but this cleared around Crossing and I felt like the run was just generally quicker. After some more advice from fellow racers, I decided to abandon all mechanical sympathy and let the little four-cylinder engine sing its way up the hill. Clearly, this worked (and the rods remained inside the engine) so a 65.48 second run was a great success for me.

The president, Simon Blakeney-Edwards, recorded the fastest run in our class with a best time of 43.63, followed by Rufus Flann in his Frazer Nash. As you would expect, there were some seriously quick runs later in the day, with Robin Tuluie achieving 36.03 in the Menasco Pirate and James Baxter recording 35.62 in the Riley TT Sprite, which was Best Time of the Day. As for me, I thought 'if only I could have had a few more goes' I could have got a bit closer to my 60 second handicap. But overall I felt really proud of myself and very pleased with the car considering Shelsley is more of a 'power hill'. I also felt like I was hungry for more, and had a bit of an idea of what to do now when taking on my next hill, which would be Prescott Short Course a few weeks later, followed by Loton Park and Prescott Long Course. So as well as those other bits of life admin I did this year, 2025 will go down as the beginning of a hopefully long and fruitful competitive career in Grandad's trusty old Alvis.



James Blakeney-Edwards gets a team push (Steve Welsh)



Rufus Flann put in the second fastest run in Class Three (Steve Welsh)



Arnold Farrar in ADU 28 on his way home after the 1934 Alpine Trial (Barrie Gillies collection)

Much Adu About Something

After their great success in the 1933 Alpine Trial, Riley entered three works Gamecocks to the 1934 event, all bearing the registration prefix ADU. But luck was not on their side, and the cars were quickly sold off afterwards, only to disappear and reappear over the years.
IAN STAINBURN, *who for a time owned ADU 27, traces their story*

The photograph of the 'Works' Alpine Gamecock, ADU 28, owned by my great friend, the late Barrie Gillies, which appeared in Kerbside Encounters in *Bulletin* 328 and the letter from his son Mark in *Bulletin* 329 have prompted me to submit this article. In 1970, Barrie was instrumental in enabling me to acquire from Maurice Smith, former Editor of *The Autocar*, one of the other 1934 works Alpine Trials cars, ADU 29, which was in a parlous state. He had owned it during WWII and an article appeared in the magazine's series 'Talking of Sports Cars' in 1941. It was shown wearing a sleek looking but definitely home-made body which, when removed, revealed a thoroughly bent chassis upon which it had been erected. I rebuilt the car but was unable to keep it so sold it in 1976.

In 2013, however, I was fortunate enough to buy ADU 27, a perfect replica of the missing car constructed by that man again, Barrie, for the late Dick Woodruff. Because of these associated events it occurred to me that I should assemble as much of the available information that I could find that describes the Riley Company's successes and failures in the Alpine Trials of 1931, '32, '33 and '34 and those of private entrants, some of whom were 'works' supported. The disappearance and reappearance of some of the cars described has caused some confusion over the years and I hope that what follows may dispel some more of those doubts and uncertainties. Please forgive me, though, because I will wander off into uncharted waters of speculation towards the end and I hope that better informed members will sail to my rescue and correct these offerings in due course.

The Alpine Trials have a long and distinguished history dating from 1910 but by the mid-1930s had become, more or less, what we understand now as the classic 'time trial' format that prevails for most historic and classic rallies held today (the World Rally Championship is something quite different). During 1931–36, all competing vehicles were required to be standard production models, fully road-equipped and without 'non-standard' specifications. Manufacturers



The 1932 works team, L–R: Victor Leverett, Jack Ridley, Capt. Cecil Riley, T. C. 'Griff' Griffiths, G. F. Dennison and W. (Bill) Greenway

could compete for the 'Coupes des Alpes' team award with three cars. Individual entrants could achieve 'Coupe des Glaciers'.

As well as racing successes, the Riley Company had already achieved excellent results in national and international rallies and trials, particularly the Monte Carlo Rally in 1929, 1930 and 1931. The publicity value of these achievements and the possibility of more to come was evidently not lost upon Victor Riley Snr. so that early in 1931 he invited Donald Healey, who had already won a number of national and international awards for Triumph and Invicta, to drive a grey Alpine Six tourer (VC 5145) entered by the Riley Company in the German 10,000km trial organised by the AC von Deutschland, accompanied by spare driver, M. J. de Halloy. Also entered were Mrs Montague-Johnstone with her husband, Major Montague-Johnstone in an Alpine Six saloon (UD 4022), possibly with works support. Both cars completed the trial during May without mishap and the crews received first class awards. In addition, Mrs Montague-Johnstone was awarded the Hungarian Club Cup which was awarded to the lady competitor driving the oldest car whilst holding the 'youngest' driving licence. As far as I am aware, neither car has survived. I think, but cannot confirm, that Mrs M-J who accompanied her husband in subsequent events was the daughter of Sir John Foster-Fraser, explorer, traveller and travel writer who rode around the world on a Rover bicycle. What a pity he didn't use a Riley one.

This arduous event and happy result would certainly have been an excellent reconnaissance and reliability expedition for the Competitions Department in preparation of the first official Riley works team to be entered in an Alpine Trial in August of that year. The team comprised three Nine tourers, described by Donald Cowbourne as 'overseas' types. A photograph of one of the cars (GT 7) appears, however, to show a normal 'Plus' series car. They were driven by Victor Leverett, Cecil Riley and George Dennison and were accompanied by the private entries of Mr and Mrs A. G. Gripper in a Plus series Monaco (GN 1117) and R. C. Porter and Jack Hobbs in Nines but of which model there are no descriptions that I have seen.

All the cars completed the event, Cecil Riley achieving a clean sheet despite a collision with a French car, the driver of which restrained him by force until rally officials intervened and cleared up the matter. The works cars were awarded a second-class gold medal award in their class and Mr and Mrs Gripper received a souvenir medal.

The success and experience gained from this first Alpine entry must have contributed immensely towards the fine results achieved in August 1932 by the Company with three Nine Gamecocks driven by Victor Leverett with Jack Ridley (GY 60); Capt. Cecil Riley with T. C. Griffiths (GY 61); and George Dennison with Bill Greenway (GY 62), who carried off the manufacturers' team 'Coupe des Alpes' in the 1100–1500cc class; and two other works supported cars (GY 63 and 64) driven by Roy Franey and Major and Mrs Montague-Johnstone, both of whom won 'Coupe des Glaciers' in the same class. After the event, Franey asked if he could buy his car but was advised by Rupert Riley in a letter dated 6 September 1932 that none of the works cars used in the Alpine Trial were for sale. Geoff Haviland, the present owner, has recorded its history in a previous *Bulletin* and confirms that the Riley company removed the Gamecock body from this car and used it as a works experimental chassis for some years before it was sold as a running chassis by the Official Receiver when the Company was wound up.

They were supported by five private entrants, all using Riley Nines and with some familiar names amongst them. All but one of these private Riley-mounted competitors were awarded 'Coupes des Glaciers'. This success in 1932 must have inspired the Riley Company directors and their loyal customers because in 1933 another nine Rileys were entered. The works team cars were three 12/6 Gamecocks: KV 5691 for T. C. Griffiths 'from the London depot'; KV 5692 for Jack Ridley; and KV 5693 for Capt. Cecil Riley (Team Manager). Separate works cars

were entered to contest the Coupe Des Glaciers and Coupe des Dames: KV 5801, a 12/6 Gamecock, for Jack Hobbs, the London Riley agent, and GY 60, a two-door Lynx, for Miss Dorothy Champney and Miss Lillian Hobbs. As a sidenote, GY 60, 61 and 62 all appeared as two-door Lynx in the March 1933 RAC Scottish Rally. It is an interesting footnote on the polite conventions of the time to note that in many of the reports of these events, even the entry lists, the 'gentlemen' have their Christian names and military ranks included, the ladies are known by their surnames and initials, but 'players', some co-drivers/navigators as we would know them today, are identified only by their surnames with or without initials and often described as 'mechanic'.

At this point I should point out that I do not know if a 6-cylinder Gamecock was ever included in the Riley catalogue, but the body style was theoretically still a production model throughout 1932/33. Furthermore, Paul Scholes reports that Eddie Maher confirmed to him that the chassis of these cars were constructed from metric rather than imperial gauge steel, obtained from Germany because it was thinner and lighter than the standard chassis steel. The works team and individual entrants achieved their goals and returned home with the manufacturers' team award of a Coupe des Alpes in the up-to-1500cc class, and each member of the team was awarded an 'Alpine Cup'; Jack Hobbs won the Coupe des Glaciers in the 1500cc class and Miss Champney and Miss Hobbs won the Coupe des Dames. Of the other private entrants, the by then celebrated Donald Healey and Roger Fuller in the Brooklands '9' KV 5392 achieved a 2nd class award in the 1100cc class; A. G. R. Alexander was forced to retire following an accident caused by a non-competing car.

As far as I am aware, no records of the sale or other subsequent fates of the four 1933 12/6 Gamecock Specials exist in the Riley works despatch books nor details of any events in which they might have competed. Nor are their chassis numbers recorded in any documents that I have seen. Their disappearance has, therefore, become something of a mystery and the source of some speculation. But Barrie Gillies noted that the KV 5691–5693 registration numbers were used subsequently on other production cars sold by the Company; also, in his book on the Riley MPH, Robin Cameron points to one later works competition use of the number KV 5691 on a saloon co-driven by Tom Sangster and Eddie Maher in the Monte Carlo Rally of January 1934. Robin believes it used one of the 1933 Alpine Gamecock chassis but carried a two-door version of the 1934 '9' Falcon saloon body fitted to the six-cylinder chassis and was equipped with 15″ composite brake drums as used on the 1933 TT Sixes and subsequently on the MPH.

1934 must have been a very busy year for the Riley Company: not only were they maintaining a very active and successful racing programme, exemplified by their performance at Le Mans which they so nearly won, and running an equally successful programme in national and international rallies, which included the introduction of the new Imp and MPH models in the Scottish Rally early in the year, but they were also developing an entirely new model range for 1935, the 12/4. Furthermore, the regulations for the 1934 event were the subject of considerable discussion amongst the organising clubs who specified that although two-seater cars were eligible, they had to be of a type of which at least 100 examples had been produced.

I wonder if it was because of the intensive activity at the works and in the Competitions Department, combined with these strict regulations that required the RAC to certify the cars as production models, and despite the success of the Imp and MPH in national



The photo of ADU 28 from Kerbside Encounters, Bulletin *328, which prompted Ian to write*



Ian's painting by Richard Wheatland of ADU 29 during the 1934 Alpine Trial

events, that the Company chose to enter three more six-cylinder Gamecocks for the 1934 Alpine Trial Manufacturer's award, this year with 14/6 engines, pre-selector 'boxes and centre-lock hubs. They were: ADU 27 for Captain Cecil Riley and Eddie Maher; ADU 28 for Arnold Farrar and Mr Campbell; and ADU 29 for T. C. Griffiths and Bill Greenway; and for the Coupe des Dames, a 14/6 two-door Lynx, ADU 30, for Miss Champney and Miss Lilian Hobbs. The only other Riley was a '9' saloon driven again by A. G. R. Alexander and, whilst I have no details of this car, I wonder if it was the one that he used in 1933?

Sadly, the successes of 1933 were not repeated. ADU 28 (Farrar/Campbell) suffered a blown cylinder head gasket on the Splugen Pass which cost the team a premier award, so that they achieved only a 2nd class award, as did Miss Champney and Mr Alexander in their respective classes. Probably because of this lack of success in an otherwise gloriously successful year for the company, the 1934 rally is not, I think, well reported, except for two articles written retrospectively, the first by the Editor of *The Autocar* in August 1941, which relied heavily upon Arnold Farrar's recollections and photographs, and the second by Farrar himself which appeared in the *Riley Record* of September 1980. It was in the former, I think, that the accompanying photographs of Farrar and ADU 28, taken by Campbell, may first have been reproduced.

The only photograph that I have seen of ADU 29 during the event shows Griffiths and Greenway in pursuit of one of the successful Opel team. There is, however, a delightful painting commissioned from Richard Wheatland during the 1980s, and which I now own.

Prior to their return to England, it is thought that all three of the works Gamecocks were sold to Hector Dobbs of Hedge End Motors, Botley, Hampshire. It is reported by Philip Young that Dobbs paid £450-00 for the three Gamecocks before they returned to England, and he paid transport costs too. This has been impossible to confirm. It is interesting to note also that in one of the last surviving Riley Company despatch books there is an entry dated 23/06/33 which reads thus: 'Used Racing Car: order no. VC 8304, chassis no. 8089. Delivered 23/06/34. £250-00'. By comparison, the average price at the time of a new house in 'Metroland' would have been in the region of £650-00.

There are no additional details of the sale of ADU 30 to Dobbs, twelve months later. Of the 1934 cars, however, some details are known. Let us start with ADU 27, chassis 44T 1733: it is not clear when Dobbs sold this car but in a letter to the Editor of *The Autocar* early in 1942, Lt. T. Athol-Frazer, RNVR, stated that he had owned it for four years and that its 14/6 engine had been replaced with a 12/4 in 1936 by a previous owner. The rather poor quality copy of the photograph that accompanied the letter shows the car with a wartime mask on its spotlight and a 12/4 radiator. In a letter to Barrie Gillies, Arnold Farrar stated that he had seen the car in Rugby circa 1951 but knew nothing of its subsequent fate. Hector Dobbs used the car for the 1934 London–Gloucester Trial organised by the NW London MC, the event being held on 8 December 1934 in weather conditions described as 'really difficult'. Although Dobbs did not gain any awards, an excellent photograph of him in the car was taken at Bismore Hill near Stroud. We were fortunate to be able to re-enact his ascent in more sublime weather conditions in June 2013 and can report that not much has changed: the gradient and surface are similar, the vegetation has flourished but house prices are well above the seasonal average!





Left: *The conclusion of the first day of the trial at Aix-les-Bains showing Cecil Riley and Eddie Maher arriving at the control in ADU 27, the only known photograph of them. The Nazi flag appears not to have been given pride of place* ***Right:*** *Hector Dobbs on Bismore Hill in ADU 27, December 1934 (Ray Duly archive / National Motor Museum)*



Ian Stainburn on Bismore Hill in ADU 27, July 2013

Fast-forward to the 1980s and ADU 27 materialised as a perfect replica of the original, thanks to the mechanical expertise of Barrie Gillies, who had the other two team cars in his workshop at the time to copy, Dick Woodruff, who commissioned it, The Riley Register and Reading Vehicle Licensing Authority, who reissued the number. For a while it was exiled to Jersey in the careful custody of Judith Greene, President of the Jersey Old Motor Club before returning to the mainland and the ownership of the late Ray Duly who raced and rallied it extensively until his untimely death in 2012. He had maintained it impeccably and I am fortunate to have benefited from his careful custody of the car.

Moving on to ADU 28, chassis 44T 1734, undoubtedly the most original and well-known of the 1934 team cars. Barrie Gillies bought it in complete and running condition in 1961 and I saw it for the first time in 1963 in his garage as he began a serious, albeit interrupted, restoration. The car is illustrated on page 229 of Dr Birmingham's book, a copy of which Barrie and Jenny gave me for my 21st birthday and which remains a treasured and sentimental possession in my motoring library. Thus was awakened my ambition to own one. Barrie gradually restored the car, its engine doing sterling service at times in a number of other Rileys that he used for commuting during the late 1960s and '70s before starting his own well-respected Riley repair and restoration business.

During the course of his work on the car, Barrie exchanged many letters with Arnold Farrar and received from him details of the event and the construction of the cars themselves. Farrar confirmed many of the details of equipment that was provided, which included stone guards for the petrol tanks, twin fuel pumps, even the unusual use of a Zeiss windscreen wiper motor which enabled Barrie to complete the restoration of ADU 28 (and subsequently ADU 27) to such a high standard of accuracy.

Both ADU 28 and ADU 29 puzzled us because on both cars there is clear evidence of the chassis numbers across the nearside dumb irons being replacements for earlier ones that have been obliterated. Furthermore on ADU 28 there is evidence on the chassis that the tubular cross member had been moved 100mm back in the chassis to accommodate the pre-selector 'box in place of the all-helical 'box. Although I had forgotten, Keith Pointing has confirmed that the same evidence remains on the chassis of ADU 29, which he maintains on behalf of its present owner. Barrie has owned, raced and maintained ADU 28 for most of its existence and the full story was told by Philip Young with some journalistic licence in an article which shows ADU 29, published in the November/December 1981 issue of *Sporting Cars* magazine.

Next, ADU 29, chassis number 44T 1735. As I mentioned at the beginning, thanks to Barrie Gillies I was able to acquire this car from Maurice Smith by which time it was in need of restoration. The car has passed through a number of hands since I owned it and has been rebodied again, by Mike Stubbings, and was last advertised for sale in 2010 with a rather inaccurate summary of its post-war history. It is now in safe custody in Switzerland.

An excellent photograph of these three cars together at a Coventry Rally appeared in *The Automobile* in May 2005.

Next, ADU 30, chassis number 44T 2325. Of this car, and why it was retained for twelve months after the others were sold to Dobbs, very little is known. While I was working on ADU 29, Arnold Farrar told me that he had seen it in Cornwall some ten or so years previously. I forget now how I managed to trace the family of the last owner, Mr Rowley, from whom I obtained a photograph and bought a pair of

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headlamps said to have been from it. I fitted them to ADU 29 and they may be on it still. After Mr Rowley died, I was told that the car was broken up but when this happened is uncertain, although it was probably during the early 1960s.

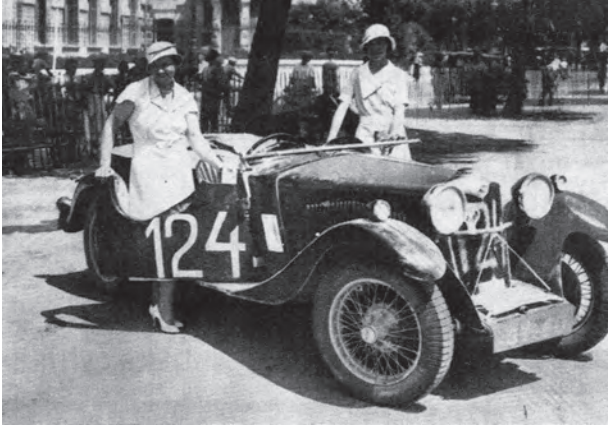
Lastly, KV 5801, chassis number not known. This fourth works entry for the 1933 event also disappeared and there is no record of it that I have been able to find. Nevertheless, like ADU 27 it has materialised as a near-perfect replica constructed by Herr Hagen Kruse in Germany on a 9′3″ 44T chassis with all-helical gearbox, 12/6 engine with triple SU carburettors but with knock-on hubs rather than the bolt-on type of 1933. This car was seen competing in the Gran Premio Nuvolari rally in Italy in 2012. I have corresponded with Herr Kruse and the photographs he has sent show an impeccable restoration that started from a scruffy chassis with most of a Gamecock body.

Those, then, are the facts as far as I have been able to determine. I am sure that more information will be revealed by readers so I will now wade into the treacherous waters of speculation.

The Coupe International des Alpes

From 1930 to 1936 this event and the Monte Carlo Rally were of great importance to motor manufacturers as international showcases for their products, particularly during troubled financial and political times in Europe and America. Thus, following their success with the '9' Gamecocks in 1932, the Riley Company's decision to enter four 6-cylinder Gamecocks in 1933 seems to be entirely logical, bearing in mind that another attempt at a manufacturer's team award would probably necessitate more powerful and competitive motor cars in order to defeat the rapidly developing competition in the 1100cc and 1500cc classes from German and French companies. It could also be demonstrated that in August 1933 the Gamecock in all its forms was (just) a current production model of which at least 100 had been constructed.

By 1934, however, the Gamecock was no longer in production, having been superseded by development of the Lynx, Imp and MPH. Nevertheless, the skimpy version of this body style was the lightest



Lilian Hobbs and Dorothy Champney, Coupe des Dames 1933

that had ever been fitted to the 9′3″ 44T chassis and, according to Arnold Farrar, complied with the FIA regulations. (It is not clear from documents that I have seen whether the MPH did or did not comply with those regulations but it was eligible for the Monte Carlo Rally in January 1935.)

Another factor that may have influenced the choice could have been the experiences of Capt. Cecil Riley (Team Manager) in 1932 and 1933 and his understandable preference to tackle 2,900 very hard kilometres over the Alps from Nice to Munich in an altogether more comfortable and commodious vehicle than the MPH. In a Gamecock it is possible to carry spare parts and even spare clothes for the crew. The team instructions are exhaustive and, as well as describing the spares to be taken, include a list of clothes including dinner jacket and trousers, dress shirt, cuff-links and studs, 'an old jacket', lounge suit, white driving overalls and helmet from the racing department, as well as toiletries, pyjamas and slippers. I think it would be difficult to accommodate all of this in the Gamecock let alone in an MPH.

At this point I will wade in deeper, because from the evidence described above it does seem certain that the four 1933 entries were cars not used in their original form after their return and three of them were given new identities as ADU 27–29. I wonder, therefore, if the decision to retain them somewhere within the Riley works was made in 1933 in anticipation of attempting the hat-trick in the1934 event? If so, it is

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ADU 27 today



ADU 28 spotted in the spectators' car park at Goodwood Revival 2024

amusing to note that in his report of the 1934 event, written in 1981, Arnold Farrar mentions that 'the cars were only completed on the afternoon when we were due to leave for Dover'. Does this mean that the Competitions Department were rather stretched by the racing programme and the cars were prepared at the last minute, or that a final decision to use them was delayed until entries had been accepted?

Either way it seems that Philip Young was correct in stating that the Riley Company succeeded in driving three black and ivory carriages, each pulled by 14 horses, through the regulations for the event and, but for a blown head gasket on ADU 28, might have got away with it. If so, it is a tradition 'as old as the industry and as modern as the hour' (to quote the Riley advertising of the time), of motorsport itself and has been continued by entrants of racing and sports cars of all colours, notably red, blue and green.

Finally, none of the three 1934 cars are thought to retain their original engines. The engine numbers are not known and, until the article by Lt. Athol-Frazer was reported to me, I had assumed, as had Robin Cameron, that Hector Dobbs had bought the cars in order to use one or more of their 'special' engines in the first of his offset single-seaters. This might still be the case and he might have sold the cars on with standard 14/6 engines. The only thing that does seem certain is that he did not carry out the 12/4 transplant and, as I have reported before, I am certain that he would not have perpetrated the botched rebuild of ADU 29 after its pre-war accident.

I am deeply indebted to many 'Riley folks' for information provided to me during my searches, including Barrie Gillies who lent his archive of the 1934 Alpine Trial complete with copies of his correspondence with the late Arnold Farrar, late sales director of Riley (Coventry) Ltd.; Paul Gibbons, archivist to the Bugatti Owners Club; Andrew Swann for access to his collection; the Vintage Sports-Car Club librarians; and the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu. I hope my article may dispel some of the myths that surround these cars, and would welcome any response from any reader who may know more.



The three cars were reunited at Bicester Heritage in September 2016

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Prescott Hill Climb

The first weekend of August can only mean one thing – two days of vintage perfection, as **FRANK HIGGINS** *writes*

There is something special, almost magical, about the VSCC's August Prescott weekend. It takes you back in time, a time that probably only exists in our imaginations, but to a time away from the horrors and chaos of the modern world and a time of proper motor cars and real motorsport and even the chance for a bit of vintage motoring along the Cotswolds' country roads. What's more, you don't need to dress up in grandad's de-mob suit, add a splash of R40 over those Castrol overalls or send your other half around the vintage clothing shops to seek out a Coco Chanel replica. Nowhere else will you find such a fine selection of pre-war motor cars – and that's just the Orchard car park. Here bonnets are warmed by the heart that lies beneath, not some cold stationary, soulless exhibit behind a silk rope or some other object of desire locked away in a private collection only to be occasionally viewed by its owner like a miser admiring his money.

I spent a joyful Saturday in the warm summer sun wandering about the Paddock and Orchard; even so, there are some cars I missed only to discover too late that they had alluded me. There are so many worthy of comment, but here's a mixed bunch of some that delighted my eye. Over in the Orchard I came across a vintage Peugeot (Quadrillette?). I've never been much of a fan of the term 'oily rag', feeling that it applies rather better to purely mechanical devices, but, if any car was worthy of the term, it was this little Peugeot. It did look as if it had just been pulled out of a hedge, backwards. It is said that 'they are only original once', but this had taken a hundred years of neglect to achieve its current condition. May it never be restored, you won't find a better example of 'oily rag'.

Nearby the Talbot Owners Club had turned out in numbers with not only a fine collection of Georges Roesch's six-cylinder-engined models but also a rather splendid igloo type gazebo where the traditional strawberries and something fizzy were being served. Any examples of that finest of light cars, the 8/18 or 10/23 Talbot, seemed to be absent this year. In its day the GN was a popular car and along with its Salmson variant around six thousand were made, but relatively few have survived. Lots, I suppose, were the basis of specials in pre-war days and consequently scrapped. But here it seemed that many of those that had survived turned out in force and in the Orchard could be found a fine example of a properly rebuilt model in dark blue. Magnificent. Ron and Archie would have been proud. I thought I had lost my heart to the GN but then I saw the Alfa, probably a 1750 6C – I can't differentiate between a 6C and an 8C unless I can count the plugs. With Zagato-style bodywork it was vintage (or early PVT) perfection, but more on Alfa Romeo later.

In its day the Morgan three-wheeler provided the thrill of motor-cycling with a little more comfort that might placate a wife or girlfriend. Here was a fine example from 1932, an Aero complete with ohv JAP up-front. A bit garish, being more yellow than a bowl of custard, but nevertheless a lovely thing. Considering production numbers were relatively low there are always a fine collection of Frazer Nashes to be found in any VSCC paddock, but here in the Orchard I could only find one, but what a one. A fine example of an early(ish) Anzani engined model, probably a Fast Tourer, in polished aluminium looking just as good, possibly slightly better, as it did when it left the Kingston works.

The paddock never fails to produce a box of delights, it's always worth seeking out some of the more eccentric bits of machinery, particularly the multi-engined cars such as Jade Dearling's KN IV. Built by Kenneth Neve in the early fifties it sports a pair of Ariel Square Four engines. That's a lot of valves to grind in! KN IV was the last of the specials created and developed by Kenneth, KN I being built pre-war using a pair of Douglas Dirt Track 'boxer' engines. Post-war, a single Douglas engine was tried then a tuned Ariel 500 single before he settled for a couple of those four-cylinder units. Early chassis were 'seasoned ash', later cars resorted to the more conventional steel. Now in Jade's hands it is a lively performer, a welcome and regular sight at VSCC events.

Built in the same vein, but a much more recent production, is Bob Drewitt's Maggot, a pair of MAG engines and a multitude of chains within an A7 chassis. Built by Bob during Covid lockdown, it also looks impressive on the hill, though is a little outclassed in this racing car category. Amongst the more exotic cars, the Alfa Romeos caught my eye. Henry Ford is supposed to have said 'Every time I see an Alfa Romeo I tip my hat', meaning, of course, that he rarely had to lift his headgear. Here, a walk through the paddock would have had his trilby up and down like a roller coaster. Alex Pilkington's standard 1750



The Orchard car park: vintage cars as far as the eye can see (Peter McFadyen)



The Collings Mercedes provides shelter of sorts (Phil Jones)

6C in Super Sport form was reconstructed from a collection of spares about 25 years ago and bodied in a perfect reproduction of the Zagato coachwork. This well-used and no doubt much loved Alfa is a regular and successful competitor in Alex's hands. Barry Cannell's modified version with the larger 2.3 engine complete with a fin over the tail is a car clearly built and designed for competition and with Barry behind the wheel it certainly gets it. Terry Crabb had to dip into his collection of Alfas (what a choice to have!) as his 8C was suffering from mechanical maladies, so up came first reserve, the 6C with the 1750 engine. This meant Terry and James were re-allocated to Class 5 where there was to be some close competition among the Alfas.

The Edwardian class is always popular and provides a wide range of both capacities and performance, from Graham Figg's OTAV of 964cc to the mighty 13,585cc Mercedes of the Collings family, here piloted by Archie. At the dawn of motoring there was much competition between the internal combustion engine, electric and steam as to which would eclipse the horse as a power source. With hindsight it seems obvious but let's not forget that it was a steam powered Stanley that once held the Land Speed Record. It's rare, but not unknown, that there is an external combustion engine beneath the bonnet of a competing car, but here we had a giant of a Stanley H20 towering over all around. A fine example of why our transatlantic cousins describe the Edwardian period as 'Brass', and this example had more of that particular alloy than a Victorian lavatory. I wonder what it uses more of – kerosene or Brasso? A splendid sight: let's hope we see more of it in club events.

At the other end of the size range was the diminutive Singer Hillclinb of John Deveuve. Dating from 1913 with a 1,098cc engine and bullnose radiator, it might have looked like a contender for slowest time of the day but that did not fool the handicappers and it was to go up the hill with a couple of very creditable times. There were many in the Edwardian class worthy of mention but a couple that stood out were the immaculate 1914 25hp 'Invincible' Talbot of David Jones and the 1914 Straker-Squire TT of Andrew Howe-Davies, a fine re-creation of Roy (later Sir Roy) Fedden's advanced design. Both had been rebuilt with great attention to detail; all they lacked over their original versions is history and patina, but that will come in time.

At a time when most British coachbuilders were producing some rather staid and traditional designs, Corsica were breaking the mould with some attractive and well-proportioned sporting car coachwork. It is said that they did not employ a designer but produced bodywork to clients' designs. If that was the case then Corsica must have had a high number of talented clients. It seems more likely that most of the talent lay with Corsica and they were able to transform a client's ideas into purposeful and stylish reality. I wonder if the ideas of A. F. P. Agabeg (Fane) for the 1932 Frazer Nash entry to the German Grand Prix at the Nurburgring were merely 'back of a fag packet' designs or properly presented ideas and illustrations? Whatever they were, Corsica were able to turn them into that desirable compromise of a racing car with sports car capabilities, something rarely achieved since riding mechanics became no longer obligatory. Dick Smith has owned the Nurburg since 1960, though these days it is Andrew Smith that can be found behind the wheel.

There seem to be more GNs than ever in competition and most that have survived are as Messrs Godfrey and Nash had intended, having escaped the fate of having some monster of an engine squeezed into the fragile chassis. The cars more suited to touring pottered their way gently up the hill whereas the Vitesse-engined models seemed to go remarkably quickly with a healthy crackle from that 1,100cc ohv vee-twin.

There are examples of cars being made long after their original manufacturer ceased production but it is rare, if not unique, for it to happen the other way round. 'Annie' is one of those very few GNs that was put together with an Anzani four-cylinder engine before the company finally folded. It was to take a couple of years or so before Archie Frazer-Nash settled on that stout powerful little unit for his similar version of the chain-driven sporting car. During a hard life, 'Annie' has worn a variety of radiators, apart from the



David Bloxam's delightful Newton Ceirano won 2nd Handicap in Class 3 (Steve Welsh)



Some dudes hanging out by Vijay Mallya's Delage Voiturette (Phil Jones)

original: Lea-Francis, Bullnose Morris and finally the rather elegant AC can be found up-front.

It's always worth spending a bit of time wandering around that bottom corner of the paddock where the expensive, valuable and valued cars are to be found: the ERAs, jacked up with spinning wheels warming up that straight-six; Bugattis, mostly variations on the T35, looking as well-preserved as Ettore would have wished alongside, on this occasion, a single 6C Alfa. As a recent *Bulletin* Editorial put it: 'Thanks to those who race'. Let us hope that cars such as these never come to be seen as so valuable that they can no longer be used as their makers intended.

Among the others that caught my eye on my meanderings were: the handsome Humber 8/18 racing car of Kevin Jones; Duncan Cartwright's 1913 Sunbeam; and the beautiful and elegant 1939 Delage of Toby Bruce with Parisienne coachwork and a Lalique radiator mascot, which reflected the quality of craftsmanship of those high-class manufacturers that a French government policy put an end to. Like in the Orchard, there were so many cars worthy of mention but so little time and space.

The club's chosen charity, Kidney Research UK, was there in force and their gazebo attracted a lot of interest; volunteers dispensed information about kidney disease which surprisingly affects one in ten of us. There were games for the kids, a raffle and a competition for the 'most desirable car', in which selected cars were invited to enter and were judged by a couple of VSCC appointed judges. The Saturday event was for competing cars and was won by David Jones' gorgeous Talbot. Runner up was the Stanley. Sunday's event for cars in the Orchard car park was won by the Rolls-Royce, which surprised me. It was immaculate but most desirable? Runner-up was a very nice late-thirties Lancia. Winners took home a bottle of a single malt or a bottle of West Coast gin, courtesy of Edinburgh's Nauticus bar. Runners-up got the prosecco. A bucket collection over the two days raised in excess of a thousand pounds. Well done VSCC members and spectators.

We were blessed with some good weather over the weekend. Saturday was a warm, almost idyllic, summer Cotswolds day. Sunday was a little more overcast but perhaps more suited to motorsport. Showers had been predicted but there was only one – but what a one, a real deluge, beautifully timed at the middle of the lunch break so there was time for the track to dry a little, before the afternoon runs started. The Eureka Jazz Band just missed the downpour as they did their traditional march up the hill, well, as far as Orchard. It must be hard work blowing into a tuba whilst marching up to Pardon! Eureka also provided the entertainment at Saturday night's Hog Roast, which was kindly hosted by Bonhams. After the deluge it fell to Rob Armstrong to open the hill in his Rapier Special as a mark of respect to Julian Grimwade recently and tragically lost at Donington, a gesture much appreciated by the spectating crowd.

To the action on the track. Saturday's practice passed without incident, though once the competition runs started it was clear that the times for early classes on Sunday afternoon were affected by the damp track. Class 1 was entirely a variation on an Austin 7 theme, with Ulsters, a Gordon England and a few Chummies. William Marsh continued an excellent season in his Ulster to not only occupy the top slot but also 1st Vintage with a remarkably quick time of 53.06. He was followed a second behind by Patrick Teague, also in an Ulster. It was a good day out for the Mutschler family with Tiziana getting bragging rights over her sister with 1st Handicap, while Fabienne was four seconds behind to take 2nd Handicap. Mark Gold was the only award winner to go quicker in the wet with a time a fraction under 70 seconds which earned him 1st Standard Vintage.

Unlike Class 1, which was dominated by a single make, Class 2 provided a broad variety of cars under 1,100cc. The most common was the Brooklands version of the Riley Nine with nine entered, though the shared version of Andrew Hunter and Alex Hearnden failed to make it to the line after a single practice run. It was Ian Standing's car that was to come out top with a time of 51.11. Very close behind was Harry Baxter who seems to be following the family tradition as a skilled and fast driver. His HRG with 1,100cc under the bonnet, courtesy of Singer, was a mere 0.11 sec.



Ivan Dutton consistently improved his times in the Salmson VAL3 (Phil Johnson)



Chicest entry was Toby Bruce's Delage Olympic with Lalique mascot (Steve Welsh)

behind Ian. The Vale, shared by owner William Lowe and engine man Ray Knight always performs well in spite of a 200cc disadvantage against most in this class. Ray was just outside the pewterware this time with William close behind. Five GNs were entered, always a welcome sight on the hill with that distinctive sound of the vee-twin. The most pedestrian was the 95 seconds or so of Liz Cawley to the considerably quicker 76.78 of Graham Robbins. Viewers of Ivan Dutton's YouTube channel will be familiar with his VAL3 Salmson, although built primarily with trials in mind he was able to record a creditable 67.7 sec. John Polson's Gwynne Brooklands, a handsome little car, no doubt with the o.h.v. version of the Gwynne 8, achieved a time of 144 sec. on its first run and thereby the honour of slowest time of the day. I did wonder if having crept around Pardon the poor wee thing was so exhausted it had to stop for a rest (it later proved to be a vapour lock). However, John's day in the sun was to come later in the meeting. The Gwynne too would have its moment of glory a couple of weeks later when in the Mallory Light Car race it was disqualified for going too fast! Oliver Chilton was 2nd Vintage and Mike Dowell took 1st Handicap and 2nd Mod. Vintage, both in Brooklands Rileys. The Rileys didn't get it all their own way though as Jeremy Flann in his A7 Supersports was 1st Mod. Vintage and the MG J2 of Ian Robertson 2nd Handicap.

Class 3 as almost always was a Frazer Nash benefit, with Chain Gangers filling the top seven places in front of David Saxl's Riley Sprite. Top of the list was Jonathan Fenning in the Emeryson version of the Frazer Nash with an excellent 48.8. Tony Woods's Super Sports took 2nd Overall and 1st Vintage with Rufus Flann following up in 3rd with 2nd Vintage. The battle for 1st Std. Vintage was between Mark Rosten-Edwards in the aforementioned Annie, Stewart Rich in a similar Anzani-powered GN and Wilf Cawley in grandad's Super Sports. Mark proved to be the winner with 55.29 and Wilf runner-up, 3.63 sec. behind. It wasn't a class entirely filled with the ubiquitous Frazer Nash: Chris Chilcott heaved his Duck's Back Alvis up the hill in just over the minute mark. A fine time for such a touring car. Niamh Smith recently inherited a similar car that has been in the family since the mid-fifties. As well as being new to VSCC competition she was also recently married. What a way to spend a honeymoon – a weekend at Prescott. That will be a memory.

Class 4 provided spectators with a wide variety of cars from a small field of eight. There was never going to be any other victor than Vijay Mallya in his very quick BMW 328. Theo Hunt was not far behind in his similar, but Frazer Nash manufactured, 328. David Bond guided his Bullnose up the hill on his way to winning 1st Handicap in just over the minute mark, a time that would have no doubt pleased Sir William. Lucy Delaney took just under the minute with her ascent which earned her 1st Mod. Vintage. By contrast, Frazer Sloan took his time piloting his Beardmore on its gentle climb to the summit in 81.59.

Favourite, certainly among the handicappers, for Class 5 was Barry Cannell's Zagato-bodied 6C Alfa Romeo. But, as history tells us, the Talbot is not a car to be regarded lightly and it was John Polson driving a replica of the 1930 Fox and Nicholl team car bearing the number plate PL 3 that was to rule the day, the original being lost just before the war. John tells me that in the 1970s Nigel Willis manged to get hold of the original registration and chassis numbers and with the approval of Anthony Blight he re-created PL 3, although it was those doyens of Talbot expertise, Arthur Archer and John's father Ian, that did most of the work. Both John and the Talbot were on fine form, just edging out Barry by two one hundredths of a second – close. John not only took 1st Overall but also 1st Vintage, Barry settling for 2nd Overall. Alistair Littlewood's surprisingly nimble 3-litre Bentley split the Alfas on its way to 2nd Handicap and 2nd Vintage. Alex Pilkington was the best of the remaining Alfas, being a mere tenth in front of Jamie Crabb in the family's similar 6C which squeezed Jamie into 5th place along with 1st Mod. Vintage. Father Terry followed with the smidgeon of 0.04 sec behind. 1st Handicap went to Toby Bruce in that delightful Delage saloon.

Class 6 is where most of the 30-98 Vauxhalls were showing their mettle. There were a few others and it was those others that took the main spoils. We all know that the 30-98 is essentially an Edwardian



Torcuato Iriarte's Amilcar Pegase echoes the Bugatti 'Tank' (Steve Welsh)



Having 1832cc, Frazer Sloan's 1923 Beardmore was up against BMW 328s (Peter McFadyen)

design and so is no competition for the 1937 Ballamy of Mark Brett with four litres of V8 grunt. It dominated the class with a time of 48.35. John Fack in the Railton stormed up the hill but was still two seconds behind Mark, leaving the 30-98s to collect most of the minor awards, Hamish Monro being 1st Vintage, Annabel Jones 1st Handicap, and Jamie Quartermaine 2nd Vintage. Finally, that mighty 4½-litre Bentley of Roger Collings took 2nd Handicap.

The Edwardian Class 7 had an excellent entry of some 18 cars, although relatively few aero-engined monsters. With so many historic racing cars disappearing, or perhaps seen by their owners as too valuable to use, there is a strong case for the construction of period replicas built from (mostly) original parts. The previously mentioned Talbot and Straker-Squire are fine examples. Such cars sit well among the Prince Henry Vauxhalls, 12/16 Sunbeams and Napiers as well as those other more obscure marques that have miraculously escaped the scrapman. However, here it was, perhaps inevitably, the aero-engine powered devices that dominated with Archie Bullett driving the Piccard-Pictet Sturtevant that headed the list with a time of 48.49, over three seconds ahead of Tony Lees in the big-engined Vauxhall Viper. Archie Collings was the first of the non-aero engine powered cars, which earned him The Sam Clutton Award for the best performance by an automobile engined car. Fourth on the ranking was Pino Lombardi in his Luxior, an obscure French manufacturer that in its day was sold with a maximum engine size of a little over two litres. Here some 8.2 litres had been squeezed into its frame giving a lively performance, but insufficient for an award. Vijay Mallya was back on the track, this time in a rather lovely 1914/16 Delage of 3.7 litres. The open bonnet sides, which suggested cooling problems, were protected from the ingress of debris (and wildlife) by a panel of chicken wire, that worked rather well. Not only did the car look good, it went sufficiently well to earn Vijay 1st Handicap with a time of 58.44sec. Tony Carasson driving that glorious Talbot 25 of David Jones won 2nd Handicap. Owner David was just outside the awards with his ascent taking him just over the minute.

As steamers are, the Stanley looked quick off the line but soon seemed to run out of steam both physically and metaphorically once it reached the higher reaches, returning a time of 75.19. It was a delight to watch though, so let's hope we see more of it. The Edwardian Sunbeams seem to be very practical cars: popular as a staff car on the battlefields of WWI, a good few seem to have survived. Duncan Cartwright's model is a fine example, with its almost cloverleaf seating (or two little ones in the back) that makes for a versatile competition car as well as a reliable tourer. Here he took just under 66 seconds to reach the top. Hicky's similar but with almost a litre advantage under the bonnet popped and banged its way to a time of 91.4 on its first run, the misfire remaining unresolved by the time of his second attempt. This time the Sunbeam was exhausted by the time it reached Pardon and, in disgrace, returned to the Paddock.

Class 8 provided us with a variety of small sports cars, all under 1,100cc (750cc if supercharged) with Rileys, Austin Sevens, Terry McGrath's Amilcar, a Morgan of the three wheeled variety and a J2 MG in entertaining and close competition. A Riley in some form was always going to be the favourite and so it proved, with Iain Muir's Brooklands replica just squeezing out the JAP vee-twin power of Geraint Owen's Morris Minor Special, Jemima. Iain landed both 1st Overall and 1st Vintage, meaning of course that Geraint had to settle for 2nd and 2nd Vintage. The rather lovely Humber 8/18 racer of the Joneses had both Kevin and Jocelyn behind the wheel, Kevin being the slightly faster of the pair, though it was Jocelyn that took the award of 2nd Handicap. 1st Handicap went to Elinor Bergman and her A7 Special.

Class 9 was where the larger-engined Rileys could be found, the Coventry maker providing 15 of the 18 entries, though Percy and the rest of the family might not have recognised all of them. The three non-Rileys were the MG J2 of Nigel Harper, the Wolseley Aerees of Paul Compton and Robert Brown's Boulogne Frazer Nash, though all were to return home empty handed, and so it proved to be a Riley whitewash. It was Michael James who topped the class a fraction of a second ahead of Greg Lerigo in his well-known Special. 1st Handicap went to David McRobert in another special version of the 12/4 – hats off to David,



This correct early 'Nash in the Orchard car park caught our writer's eye (Steve Welsh)



Overall victor Nick Topliss in ERA R4A (Steve Welsh)

who as he wrote in the last issue of *The Bulletin* (329, pp. 14–16) is a relative newcomer to hill-climbing. Ben Briggs, also in a 12/4 special, improved on his handicap time by over a second which earned him 2nd Handicap.

Class 10 comprised mainly of the larger-engined Frazer Nashes and a variety of supercharged MGs alongside the supercharged Alvis Silver Eagle of Matthew Eade. As ever it was the 'Nashes that dominated with only Roger Tushingham's MG N Type Special with 1st Handicap preventing the 'Nashes getting it all their own way. Theo Hunt went up the hill in the remarkably quick time of 44.64 in his Frazer Nash TT Rep, not only winning the class but also fastest time of the day by a sports car. Jeremy Brewster followed in second place with the ex-Maurice Geoghegan car one and a half seconds behind Theo. The final award of the class, that of 2nd Handicap, went to Iain Roche driving yet another TT Rep.

As can be seen from Class 10, we were by now seeing some of the faster cars and Class 11 followed suit, comprising largely of proper Bentleys, a Derby Bentley, and a smattering of other large-engined devices. It was Justin Hart's Riley Big 4 Special that took him to the top of the class, although he had a full 2½ litres under his bonnet, which was small compared with the rest of the field, that had at least an extra litre to help them along. The exception was the Amilcar Pegase of Torcuato Iriarte. The Pegase was Amilcar's attempt to break into the high-quality elegant touring car market with very Parisian coachwork, the cars bodied by the works being rather less stylish than the externally clothed cars, some of which showed the influence of Figoni. The Pegase didn't last long, probably because of an act of the French government which placed a heavy tax burden on luxury cars and destroyed other top-end makers such as Delahaye and Delage. Production of the Pegase ended when Hotchkiss took over in 1937. The Pegase competing here was highly modified with a well-made streamliner body, slightly reminiscent of the Bugatti 'Tank' cars. It proved to be a very effective hill-climb car, its 2½-litre engine powering it to 2nd place overall behind Justin's big Riley. Rebecca Smith drove her well-used Ford-engined Morris into the 1st Vintage slot while Craig Collings had almost 5 litres of Delage power to help him to second Vintage. Matthew Humphries in the sole Derby Bentley went away with the single Handicap award leaving the WO Bentleys empty-handed.

Class 13 (there was no Class 12) for Small-Engined Racing Cars provided a wide variety of models including many specials, some of which had a long history of competition. Fastest of all was Eddie Williams in the Becke Powerplus: built around the ubiquitous GN frame, it boasts getting on for a hundred years of continuous use and, no doubt, development. Remarkable. Here, Eddie clocked a time of 46.47 which also gained him Fastest Vintage. Almost half a second behind was Louis McNair in his GN Special 'Katipo', another GN-based special, but one that was new to me. That got me wondering – which is the oldest competing special still extant? Basil Davenport's Spider must be a contender, but is the Becke earlier? Many of the specials that use different makers' parts in their construction competing in club events look like specials, which is no bad thing. One that breaks that particular mould is the Gillow Special of Mike Fountain. Built by Victor Gillow pre-war, it comprises of a modified Bugatti Brescia chassis with Riley Nine mechanicals. It was a welcome sight but well outside the awards on this occasion with a time of 58.95.

A time of 49.24 was good enough to take 1st Handicap for James Beddows in his ADRO special. James was closely followed by another long standing special, the GNAT of John Wiseman with a time of 49.73 to take second Std. Vintage. The only other award winner was Peter Atkinson's entry of 'Slippery Anne' with 2nd Handicap. The Elfe CC of Clive Knott and John Burgess found itself re-classified and out-classed in this racing car class. A small Parisien manufacturer which in one form or another existed between 1919 and 1925, Elfe produced cyclecars some of which competed in the Bol d'Or and even the Cyclecar Le Mans. Using the Anzani vee-twin engine, initially in the front and later behind the driver, it seems the company had some success before turning to more conventional designs.

Class 14 proved to be the class of the day. The handicappers had four equally matched favourites, including Tom Hardman in the ERA AJM1, built by Anthony Mayman a long time after the Bourne factory had closed its doors. Using many original spares, it is a fine example of a 'toolroom' copy. Patrick Blakeney-Edwards builds some fine and immensely powerful engines, producing more than enough power to compete with supercharged cars. Henry Meadows would be pleased, if not a little amazed. Michael James's Cotton is based on a Riley Sprite with that versatile 12/4 engine. With a finely crafted bit of coachwork, it will no doubt continue to make its mark in this class. Andrew Smith's Nurburg Frazer Nash had suffered from an exploding blower a few days prior to the event and though its slightly smaller replacement gave greater torque it couldn't match the larger one for power. So, in the end the order was: Tom, Patrick, Michael and Andrew, a little more than a second covering the four. There was much to delight the eye among the also-rans: a couple of fine Bugatti Brescias (the one driven by Rupert Marks took 2nd Handicap), the T37 of William Way (1st Standard Vintage), and Tim Robson's lovely MG (1st Handicap). Jim Catnatch was in the Richard Bolster Special, another special that dates back to pre-war years and has been making its mark at VSCC events consistently over the years, this time recording a sub-50 second time. That delightful twin-ohc engine of the Lagonda Rapier just lends itself to special building, none finer than the over-bored 1,500cc unit of Rob Armstrong, here recording a time of 52.92

Class 15 had a host of exotic cars alongside a couple of more eccentric entrants: the Austin 12/4 Special of Rob Lewis and the twin MAG engines of Bob Drewitt's Maggot. Another twin-engined device that I missed during my paddock walk was the BSA Wellesley of Martin Bell. Although it has been seen at a few VSCC events and featured in *The Automobile* (July '23), it somehow passed me by. A replica of the car built by Richard Wellesley in 1937 and influenced by Robert Waddy's *Fuzzi*, it comprises of the front end of a pair of BSA Three-Wheelers joined together, giving four-wheel drive and independent suspension all round. The ingenious 'rocking' left side pedal to control the distribution of power between front and rear engines has been abandoned by Martin, as it proved to be quite unnecessary. The original car, it seems, was broken up in the 1950s. So in order to re-create Richard Wellesley's car accurately Martin has done a considerable amount of research which has resulted in a fine special, built in the best tradition of VSCC specials.

On to Class 15: while the Bugattis were out in force they were to be outclassed by the ERAs, R4A being driven by both Nick and James Topliss and R4D

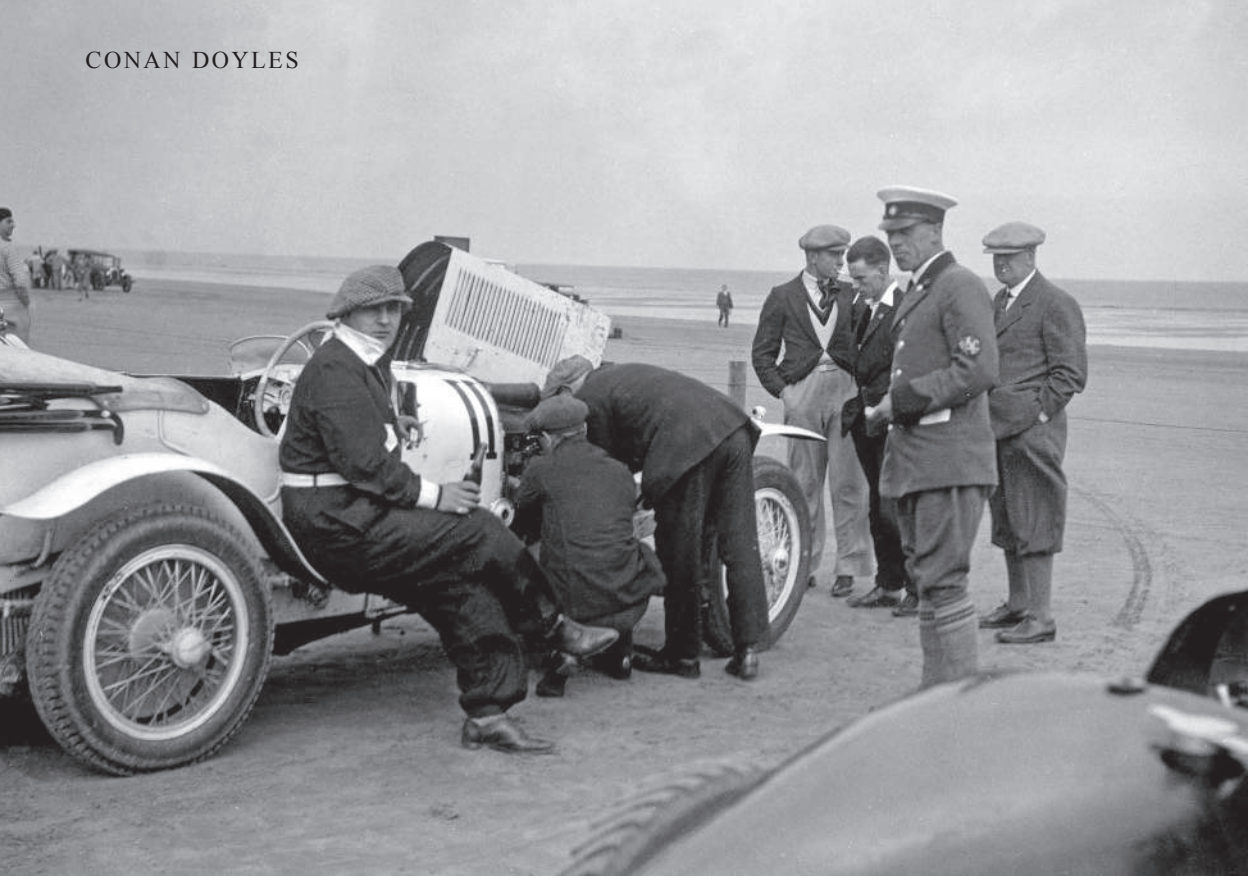


Tiziana and Fabienne Mutschler shared this 1930 Ulster (Steve Welsh)

by Ben Fidler. James Baxter was also in the mix with his ERA-powered Riley Sprite. It was Nick that came out top of the class with FTD and with that the Berthon Trophy. Ben followed with 2nd Overall. A complete whitewash was interrupted by that beautiful Riley of James Baxter even if it was ERA under the bonnet. The only thing that James would be going home with though was the Silver Con-Rod Trophy for the best-prepared car. James and Tip Top Engineering are producing some of the finest craftsmanship in the world of historic cars. James Topliss won the award for the fastest time by a young driver. Charlie Martin took the Hampton Tankard (best performance by a Bugatti). 1st Handicap went to Martin Bell in the BSA Wellesley. Yushan Ng foiled the handicapper by beating his handicap time by 1.5 seconds, a time which earned him 2nd Handicap and 2nd Vintage. 1st Modified Vintage was the AC-powered Cognac Special driven by Jolyon Harrison, another car that goes back to the mid-twenties. Senior members will remember when the Cognac was driven with equal vigour and success by Ron Footitt and later Freddie Giles.

The final class of the day for cars with larger engines had but six entrants. Robin Tuluie was with his regular mount, the aero-engined Menasco Pirate and, as always, was hot favourite. So it proved to be: in spite of a bit of sideways motoring through the esses, Robin improved his morning time by 0.05 seconds which was enough to take 1st Overall, FTD (Vintage) and, obviously, 1st Vintage. Robin Harcourt-Smith followed 1.65 sec behind in the Norris Special, previously owned by Julian Grimwade. Tom Richardson behind the wheel of the other aero-engined special recorded a time of 45.24 sec. John Burton and Nicholas Finburgh shared the drive in the 3½-litre SS, but it was Nicholas that took 1st Handicap. Nick Leston's Lovell Elkhart looked quick but was outside the awards.

And that was it. As engines silenced all that remained was to watch the Orchard slowly empty, trailers being loaded and the hard-working marshals deserting their posts as Nick Topliss made a gentle victory ascent of the hill to the applause of appreciative spectators.



Denis Conan Doyle relaxes with a beer while his Austro-Daimler is fettled at the Skegness sand races, July 1931 (Brunell/National Motor Museum)

A python, a princess, and the motoring scrapes of Denis and Adrian Conan Doyle

Part I

They were the boisterous sons of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, who as young men in the late 1920s discovered the thrills of motorsport. Having the means to fund their passion, they were soon competing in some of the best cars available, including Chitty I, though not everyone welcomed them with open arms, writes The Editor in the first of a two-part series

Oh, to have been young and rich in the 1920s, that golden age of motorsport, when anything seemed possible. Denis and Adrian Conan Doyle were both those things, having been born in March 1909 and November 1910 respectively, the elder two sons from the second marriage of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the Scottish physician with a sideline in wildly successful detective fiction. By the time Doyle had lost his first wife and remarried in 1906, he was also extremely famous – Sherlock Holmes had made him a household name.

Sir Arthur himself had always had an interest in motor cars: in July 1911, he competed in The Prince Henry Competition, a two-week reliability race in which some 80 motor cars drove from Homburg in Germany to London, covering 150 miles per day at a set average speed. (He later recorded in his diary hearing mutterings among the various British and German officers involved about the forthcoming war, with some correctly predicting a start date of 1914.) So perhaps it was inevitable that his boys should enthusiastically take up motorsport when they were

old enough, having the means and opportunity to do so.

The brothers grew up in Crowborough, East Sussex, and by 1928 had managed to get hold of a GN. This was quickly replaced by a 'Fronty' Ford, a modified Model T racer so called because it had a Frontenac cylinder head featuring overhead valves. The brothers wrote about this car in *Motor Sport* in 1928 and described it as similar to one that had won the Indianapolis 500 Mile Race in 1921. According to Bill Boddy, who met the Conan Doyle brothers in the 1930s, their car was a sister car to the Fronty-Ford raced at Indianapolis by Stirling Moss's father, Alfred. Writing in *Motor Sport*, Boddy recorded: 'It was about as wide as it was long with a track of five feet and a seven-foot wheelbase. This was thought to make it suitable for the dirt-track racing, which Denis and Adrian saw as coming to British cinder tracks. The engine had the full Chevrolet treatment of special balanced crank, lightened con-rods, pressure lubrication, 10in flywheel, alloy pistons, and pump cooling. The transverse suspension had been modified, the tyre size was 28in × 4in, and the Conan Doyle brothers wrote of "colossal acceleration" which had given Alfred Moss a course-record at Heeley Park of 23 sec, from a standing start for the 600 yards, and of getting 0–75 mph in 25 sec, with a maximum of just over 100mph. This stark racing T-Ford (reg. VB 943) had just two bucket seats and a 25-gallon fuel tank as a body; an enormous "3" had been painted on the scuttle and repeated on the radiator.'

Unfortunately, the Fronty-Ford proved almost impossible to start. In their article, they wrote of how five or six of them would assail the garage with no result after two hours, except a damaged knuckle. Next, four or five pushes down a nearby hill. Still nothing. Then a call to the local garage for a tow behind their lorry. So the Fronty-Ford was got rid of and replaced with an Anzani-engined Frazer Nash, in which Adrian promptly entered the 1929 British Automobile Racing Club's six-hour race at Brooklands on 29 June 1929. For some reason his co-driver was not Denis but R. G. J. (Dick) Nash, and they managed five hours and fifteen minutes before retiring, having suffered from various problems including a broken oil pipe and a blocked fuel pipe, the eventual cause of retirement being given as 'ignition'.

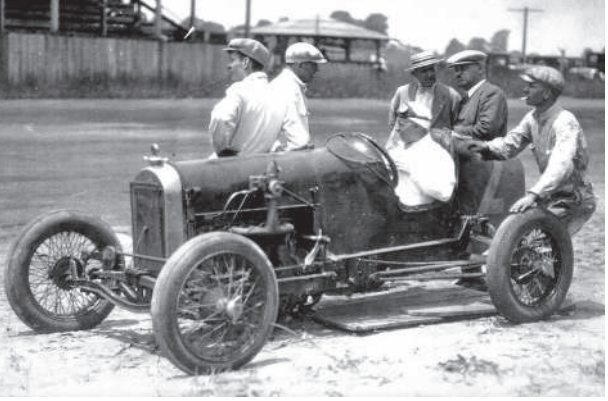
According to Boddy, this car was not the Frazer Nash which the Conan Doyles campaigned throughout the 1930s, which was bought soon after the Brooklands race. This was a very fast Cozette-blown Anzani-engined car ironically known as 'The Slug', presumably on account of its long smooth lozenge-shaped body and low ground clearance. This car, chassis 1138, was put together by the works for the 1927 Boulogne Speed Week and subsequently



Denis and Adrian with their mother Jean at Bignell Wood, the New Forest retreat bought for her as a birthday present by Sir Arthur in the 1920s

competed in by Archie Frazer-Nash more than any other car before he sold it to the Doyles in 1929. The brothers had by now joined the British Automobile Racing Club (BARC) and remained members until Brooklands closed in 1939. But Adrian's experience at the 1929 BARC Six-Hour Race seems to have been the only Brooklands race competed in by a Conan Doyle.

Soon the cars were getting seriously powerful, the next acquisition being the Maybach-engined 23-litre Mercedes known as Chitty I, one of the ex-Count Zborowski cars that inspired Ian Fleming's eponymous creation. This was quite the upgrade, chosen perhaps as much for its look-at-me flamboyance as for its racing potential. From reading Boddy's article about the Conan Doyle brothers, you get the feeling they were more interested in having fun than winning any prizes. As he puts it: 'Their motor-racing … involved a wide variety of cars and, to put it kindly,





Left: *A 'Fronty' Ford similar to the one bought by the Doyle brothers, this one belonging to Arthur Chevrolet (*Automobile Quarterly*) **Right:** The Doyles in their Frazer Nash 'The Slug' competing at the Inter-Varsity Speed Trials at Branches Park, Newmarket, in 1930 (www.austinharris.co.uk/LAT Photo)*

was conducted in a decidedly carefree style.' Indeed, preparation does not seem to have been a forte, as their cars often had problems which could have been precluded with a bit more planning. This slapdash approach and the apparently boisterous behaviour of their entourage didn't go down well with more serious members of the racing fraternity; as one po-faced reporter wrote in *Motor Sport* after the Inter-Varsity Speed Trials held at Branches Park near Newmarket in 1931: 'This equipage brought "Chitty I", but although this seemed quite a good joke at first, the time wasted in playing with it, coupled with its disappointing performance, soon failed to amuse. And the hangers-on of this particular crowd would do well to remember that when someone has been good enough to lend their grounds for such an event, a little common politeness to the regular inhabitants is about the least that can be expected in return.' One can only imagine what raucous (or arrogant?) behaviour might have prompted such a withering put-down. As Boddy put it: 'Oh dear! High spirits were sometimes part of the scene in those days.'

Chitty I proved too unreliable even for them, and they added a low and sporting Austro-Daimler 19/100 TT to the stable. As Boddy wrote: 'Living in a popular Sussex golfing resort, where anything up-to-date was unpopular, their cars were heartily disliked by local elders quite unable to distinguish between safe fast driving and road-hogging. (The breed is still with us — WB.) But on the whole the police were very good …'

As the 1930s progressed, the brothers did rack up some notable achievements. In 1931, Adrian scored FTD at the Lewes Speed Trials in 'The Slug', which had been repainted white and was fully fettled. That summer the brothers drove from Crowborough up to Skegness for the sand races, Adrian in 'The Slug' and Denis in the Austro-Daimler. It was worth it: in the race for cars of up to 2½ litres Adrian finished second behind Neville Carr's supercharged Bugatti, while Denis also came second to H. H. Sisted's Mercedes in the four-lap scratch race for unlimited sports cars and third to Raymond Mays' 4½-litre lnvicta and R. J. Munday's very fast Wensum-bodied Vauxhall in the preceding heat. The wild Conan Doyle boys seemed finally to be getting serious.

And then it all went wrong. In a plot worthy of a P. G. Wodehouse novel, 1932 would be the year of the box-hedge fiasco, and would lead to the Conan Doyle brothers being publicly excoriated in the motoring press and banned from Cambridge University Automobile Club events. The story goes like this: Sir James Hill, who lived at Hexton Hall near Hitchin, cautiously agreed to allow the organisers of the Inter-Varsity Speed Trials to hold the event that year in the grounds of his home, on one condition only: that his beloved and ancient line of box hedges beyond the finish line be carefully protected and left untouched. Well, you can see where this is going. Here is how a damning report in *Motor Sport* described the subsequent events:

The first, and we may safely say, the last speed trial ever held at Hexton Hall, Hitchin, took place on Saturday, February 20th, by kind permission of Sir James Hill. Nominally an Intervarsity event, it was almost entirely composed of Cambridge entries, there being only 7 Oxford car drivers and 4 Oxford motorcyclists out of an entry of about a hundred. The event was marked by chaotic organisation, which caused considerable delays in starting and no mean confusion in the order of running, but, being used to these events, we arrived an hour or so after the advertised starting time, and had plenty of time to assist in the stripping and preparation of a friend's car before the start.

All that is quite normal practice in these events, but what seriously marred the whole proceedings, and will make sure that this estate will never again be lent for a special speed trial, was the damage caused to the very fine box hedge beyond the finish, by one or two competing cars.

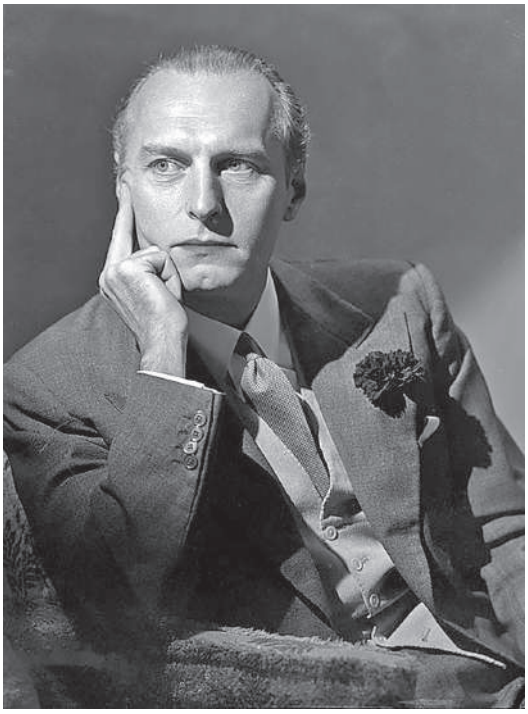
The trouble first started when Conan-Doyle (Austro-Daimler), after a mediocre run up the course, con-

tinued beyond the finishing line without shutting off, and completed a display of lamentable incompetence by failing to negotiate the bend some distance after the finish, and ending up broadside across the road.

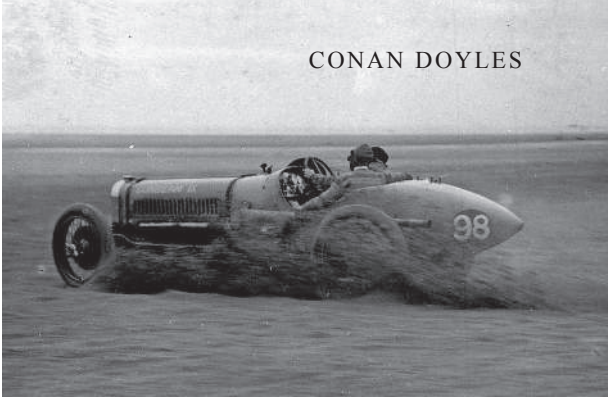
Before warning could be conveyed to the start, Rothschild's 38-250 Mercedes was screaming down the course at terrific speed to make fastest car time of the day. Shooting over the finishing line and through the narrow gateway at the end he was confronted by the other car across his path.

He did his best, and succeeded in skilfully avoiding Conan-Doyle's car, but to some extent at the expense of the landscape, turning right round in the process. He pointed out afterwards that there was nothing else for it if the other car was to be avoided. Which was perfectly true, and only reminds us what golden opportunities are daily cast aside! It has now been decided by the Stewards that the brothers Conan-Doyle are not eligible to compete in C.U.A.C. events, and their entry will not in future be accepted. The only thing wrong with this decision is the fact that it was not arrived at long before.

The ban did not apply to the Oxford UMC's hill-climb, which was held in 1932 along an unopened part of the Eynsham By-Pass on the Oxford Road, a policeman holding up those wanting to cross it, for the racing cars to roar by. Among them were the Conan Doyles' Austro-Daimler, Bunty Scott-Moncrieff in a Hispano-



Adrian Conan Doyle: he kept a pet python



A Sunbeam sand racing – the Doyles were enthusiasts for this form of motorsport (Erez Yardeni)

Suiza, Earl Howe in a TT Mercedes-Benz and Eric Fernihough's Excelsior-JAP. Bill Boddy recalled a Buick appearing, 'full of bottle-imbibing passengers'. All very Evelyn Waugh.

Also in 1932, the brothers returned to Lewes for the speed trials, Adrian in 'The Slug' and Denis by now having acquired a 36/220 Mercedes-Benz, reg KP1813, which was described as 'garishly decorated'. This was a formidable car, featuring a 6,789cc straight-six engine achieving 180bhp and a top speed of 110mph. Denis won the class for unlimited supersporting cars, being 0.7sec faster than Arthur Baron in his Austro-Daimler, which tied with Dennis Evans's T43 Bugatti.

The following year, 1933, the brothers managed to acquire one of the legendary 1924 2-litre VI2 Delage Grand Prix cars from W. B. Scott, and those attending the 100-Mile Race on Southport Sands that August were excited to learn thar the car had been entered by Adrian, with Denis in his Mercedes-Benz. But, true to form, the brothers arrived late and had to scramble to join in after half a lap had already been completed by those who had lined up in time. More disappointment followed, as the Delage was on poor form and retired after three laps. Denis was going well in the Mercedes until a rear tyre burst just after halfway but, not having brought a spare wheel, he too was forced to retire.

By now, the Conan Doyles had amassed an enviable stable of racing cars: 'The Slug', Chitty I, the Austro-Daimler, the V12 Delage and Denis's Mercedes-Benz 36/220. Impressed by this latest addition, Adrian went out and bought another Mercedes for himself, this one a 38/250 SSK, and their father Sir Arthur would also become a convert to the power and refinement of the S-Type Mercedes, acquiring one for himself. The brothers had also notched up a few impressive performances, although for the most part their 'decidedly carefree' style resulted in retirement or failure. In the next *Bulletin*, we explore how the 1930s would pan out for them, and delve into Adrian and Denis's other entanglements, one with a python, the other with a princess.

The North Yorkshire Tour

The second iteration of this event transported **JOHN HARBOTTLE** *to the lanes of France*

In 2024, Jolyon Harrison and a small troop of supporters organised the first VSCC North Yorkshire Tour, which all agreed was an excellent event. But there appeared to be some doubt in Jolyon's mind as to whether he could face doing it again in 2025, and it was a matter of great pleasure to your reporter, as to a significant number of others, that he decided to do so.

As in 2024, the run started and finished at Woodbine Cottage, the Harrison family home a few miles north of York where generous hospitality was in evidence both before the start and after the finish. From the outset one significant difference was apparent compared to last year: this time Jolyon had taken great care to arrange a dry day for his event. Not wall-to-wall sunshine but a mild, pleasant late summer day which proved ideal for those of us in open cars.

The entry comprised a cross-section of eligible vehicles, including five Austin Sevens in various formats, the interesting 1938 Austin 18 of Mark Wells, four Frazer Nashes, three Alvis Silver Eagles and a Speed 20. What you might call the more popular end of the 1930s sporting market was catered for by a Singer Le Mans, my Hillman Aero Minx, and two MGs, although Roger Tushingham's immaculate supercharged PB might not have caused the founding fathers of the VSCC to turn in their graves quite as violently as the others. At the upper end of the market were the Bentley 3½-litre and very handsome Talbot 105 tourer of William Cracroft-Eley and David Kenworthy respectively. There was one post-war car in the highly desirable form of Professor Wilson's four-cylinder Austin Healey.

This year the route took us across to the east and the Yorkshire Wolds. What we might have lost in comparison with the previous tour in terms of ultimate scenery (much of it wasted anyway in 2024, thanks to the rain) was gained in terms of delightfully quiet roads. I have often thought that driving in East Yorkshire is reminiscent of motoring in parts of rural France and our organisers had made the most of this, giving us the traffic-free roads our cars were designed for, and a driving experience we might have enjoyed had we bought them new.

The recommended lunch stop was at Sledmere House, the home (built in the eighteenth century and rebuilt following a fire in 1911) of the Sykes family. Facilities included an excellent café and shop, just as well as my navigator had inadvertently left our picnic lunch at home in the fridge. From the house we moved on about a mile along the road to the Sledmere Memorial, an impressive monolith 147 feet high erected in the 1860s with donations from the friends and tenants of Sir Tatton Sykes in recognition of his charitable works. Well worth a visit, this boasted a spacious car park and many participants (us included) took advantage of it to enjoy their picnic lunch in the company of their fellows.

The afternoon brought more 1930s-style driving on pleasantly deserted roads, passing through the charming villages of the Wolds and the curious dry valleys which are a distinctive feature of that part of the country, and eventually back to Woodbine Cottage and Carol Harrison's delicious hevva cake. A splendid day out, and a credit to Jolyon and his team. Roll on next year!

Photos by Patricia Harbottle



Bonny, the Harbottle labrador, considers making a swipe for our reporter's banana



Picnics are unpacked at the Sledmere Memorial

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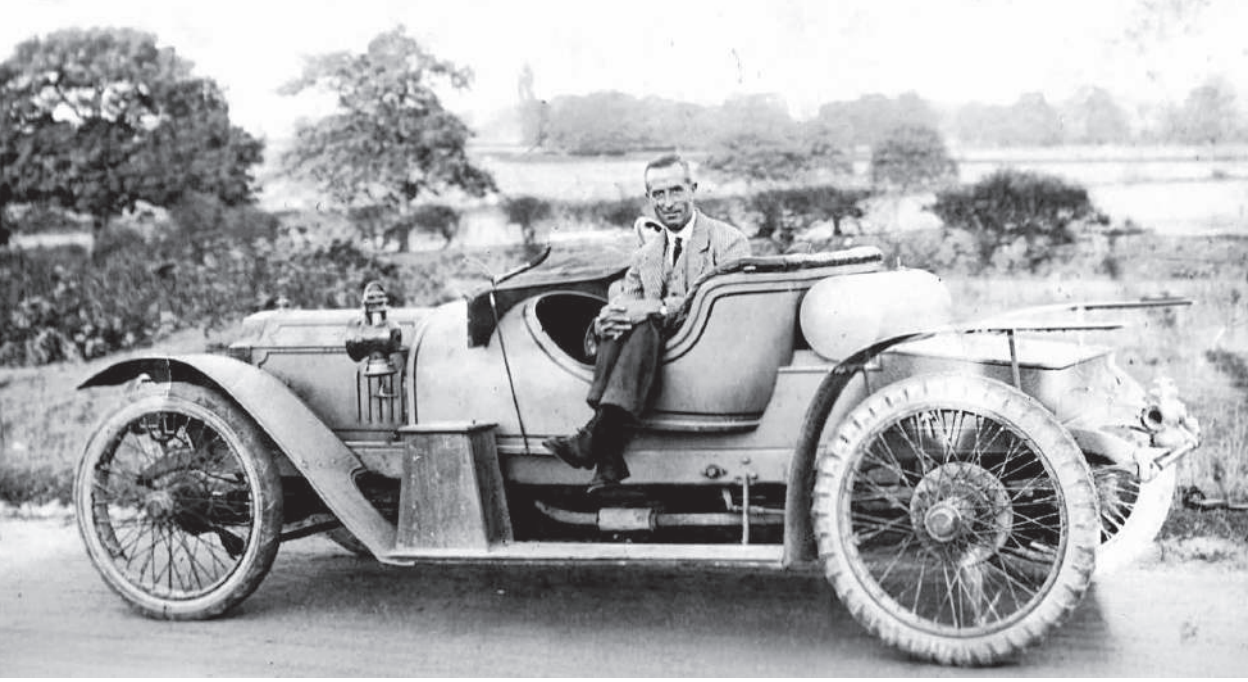


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Fred Carter and his Vauxhall A-Type with Semi-Racer body (Alex Hayward)

The Mystery of the Jay Cup

After writing a history of the Aston Hillclimb for its centenary year, **MIKE STARK** *was left with just one last puzzle to solve*

The Jay Cup is one of the oldest and most impressive trophies in British motorsport. It was first awarded in 1906 and is still awarded to this day. The solid silver cup was presented to the Herts County Auto & Aero Club (HCAAC) by Mr James Jay of Barnet prior to the club's Open Hillclimb at Aston Hill on 30 June 1906. From then on, it was awarded at the club's Aston Hill events to the highest placed member who was unconnected to the motor trade, with the aim of encouraging and recognising truly amateur competitors. This was at a time when concern was starting to grow about the impact of works cars and competition specials on motoring competitions.

The results used to determine the highest placed HCAAC member at each Aston Hill event were usually the 'formula' results, based on calculations that took into account factors such as vehicle weight, number of passengers, engine size and horsepower, as well as the time taken to complete the course. During the first three years, the award was generally referred to in the motoring press as the Aston Cup, or Aston Challenge Cup, in recognition of the venue at which it was awarded. However, *The Motor* referred to it as the Jay Cup in their event report of the 7 September 1907 hillclimb, this being the first time the term 'Jay Cup' was mentioned in a journal.

The initial winner on 30 June 1906 was Frank Young driving a 10hp Alldays, after which it was won three times in a row (on 27 July 1907, 7 September 1907 and 11 July 1908) by Ernest Edwards and his Belgian-made 24hp Minerva, resulting in Edwards being awarded the cup outright.

At the next event, on 24 July 1909, the cup presented to the highest placed HCAAC member unconnected to the automobile trade was called the Edwards Cup, presumably in recognition of the previous three-time winner (although the author has been unable



The Jay Cup in 1909 (HCAAC Archive)

to identify clear evidence for this presumption). It is unknown what trophy was actually presented for this. However, in the press reports on the following event, held on 25 September 1909, the term Jay Cup returned. This remained the case for all subsequent HCAAC hillclimbs up to and including the club's final event at Aston Hill on 17 May 1924. Strangely, there was one exception, when reference to the Edwards Cup reappeared in the press reports after the hillclimb on 8 June 1912.

The motoring media of the period regularly referred to the Jay Cup as a 'prestigious award', and in the 14 September 1907 edition of *The Autocar* it was stated that the cup was 'the finest ever presented to any motor club for purely amateur competition'.

The most successful competitor in the history of the Jay Cup / Aston Cup / Edwards Cup competition at Aston Hill was Fred Carter. According to event reports in the motoring journals of the period, he won the award four times, always driving his 20hp Vauxhall A-Type Semi-Racer. These victories came on 24 July 1909, 25 September 1909, 20 May 1911 and 8 June 1912. Carter's run of Jay Cup wins was interrupted only by C. J. Newey and his 12hp De Dion on 23 April 1910.

So, what is the mystery? Well, the name F. G. Carter appears only once on the Jay Cup as it is today. This is for his win in May 1911. In an attempt to explain this, we need to look at each of the first three names engraved on the current Jay Cup. The first name engraved on the Jay Cup is that of Ernest J. Edwards for his win in September 1907. His other two wins, in July 1907 and July 1908, are not engraved on the current cup, although this is perhaps understandable in light of the fact he was awarded the original cup outright after the July 1908 event. It seems that only one of his three victories was engraved retrospectively on the replacement Jay Cup that came into existence at some point in 1909.

The second name to appear on the current Jay Cup is C. J. Newey, whose name is engraved as the winner in both September 1909 and April 1910, even though the period event reports clearly state that Carter won the cup at the September 1909 event. The author has been unable to determine a reason for this inconsistency. However, following the April 1910 Aston Hill event, *The Motor* of 26 April 1910 stated that 'the Jay Cup was won for the second year in succession by Mr C. J. Newey'. Perhaps there was an error in the results of the September 1909 hillclimb which meant that Fred Carter was awarded the Jay Cup initially and that this was later amended to C. J. Newey after the error was discovered? This is just a guess, although it would explain why Newey's name is engraved on the cup twice and why *The Motor* refers to his winning it two years 'in succession'. It could equally be the case that Carter won the Jay Cup fair and square in September 1909 and that Newey's name appears on the cup instead for another reason.

Fred Carter's name is the third one engraved on the Jay Cup, for his May 1911 victory, which is clearly consistent with all the period event reports. However, his name does not appear on it for either July 1909 or June 1912. It is quite possible that the fact the award at these events was referred to as the Edwards Cup has something to do with it. Indeed, if the Edwards Cup was a different trophy, first presented in July 1909 after Ernest Edwards was given the original Jay Cup to keep, then it would explain why Carter's July 1909 and June 1912 victories are not engraved on the current Jay Cup. However, it does not explain why the Edwards Cup seemingly made a one-off reappearance, as the award for the highest placed HCAAC member unconnected with the motor trade, in June 1912.

It is likely this mystery may never be solved, although if anyone has relevant information that may shed further light on the matter then the author would be delighted to hear from them. Regardless, what is perhaps more important than the names engraved on the Jay Cup for each Aston Hill event is the fact that the Jay Cup itself is a significant piece of motorsport history and represents many decades of wonderful



The Jay Cup reunited with the Bentley TT that won it in 1922 (Dexter Harrison)



Alex Hayward's Vauxhall leaves the start line at the Aston Hill Centenary (Nick Salmon)



Alex Hayward's Vauxhall A-Type Semi-Racer and the Jay Cup together in 2025 (Mike Stark)

automobile competition. As well as the pioneering winners – Frank Young, Ernest Edwards, Fred Carter and C. J. Newey – the trophy was won at Aston Hill by several other motorsport notables, such as Humphrey Cook and Eddie Hall.

Following the cessation of motorsport at Aston Hill just before the HCAAC's planned Open Hillclimb in May 1925, the Jay Cup was not awarded again until 1939. Since then, it has been presented at several points throughout the club's history, always for outstanding performance by a club member. A notable recent recipient is touring car legend Graham 'Skid' Scarborough. The Jay Cup is now, once again, the centrepiece of the club's annual awards, with Tony Staines being the current holder of the prestigious trophy for being the HCAAC club member to achieve the most FTDs (Fastest Times of the Day) at sprint and hillclimb events during the 2024 season.

And what about the cars that won the Jay Cup at Aston Hill? The good news is that some of this history remains. Firstly, the 1921 Bentley TT that won the Jay Cup in September 1922, when it was driven by W. G. Barlow, still exists under the careful ownership of Richard Frankel. At the Aston Hill Centenary on 17 May 2025, this historically-significant Bentley not only climbed Aston Hill once again but was also reunited with the Jay Cup that it won 103 years before, courtesy of the current HCAAC Chairman David Gibbs.

Unfortunately, the original Vauxhall A-Type raced by Fred Carter no longer exists, but the good news is that another Vauxhall A-Type, manufactured in 1910, has been painstakingly restored to a near identical specification and appearance by owner and VSCC member Alex Hayward. This beautifully restored car made its first public appearance at the Aston Hill Centenary in May 2025, where it ascended Aston Hill just as Carter's Vauxhall had done during some of the earliest events at the historic Buckinghamshire hillclimb.

To complete the story, arrangements were made following the Aston Hill Centenary event for the Jay Cup to visit Shropshire to be photographed with Alex Hayward's car, as a fitting tribute to the achievements of Fred Carter and his Vauxhall over 110 years ago. The contemporary photographs of the cup with the Vauxhall also serve as a reminder of the long and illustrious history of the Jay Cup itself.

Aston Cup* / Jay Cup / Edwards Cup**
Award for the highest placed HCAAC member unconnected with the motor trade

Cup Awarded (as reported in motoring press)	Event	Winner (as reported in motoring press)	Engraved on current Jay Cup
Aston Cup	1906 Jun	Frank Young, Alldays	
Aston Cup	1907 Jul	Ernest Edwards, Minerva	
Aston Cup (*Autocar*) / Jay Cup (*Motor*)	1907 Sep	Ernest Edwards, Minerva	Ernest J. Edwards
Aston Cup***	1908 Jul	Ernest Edwards, Minerva	
Edwards Cup	1909 Jul	Fred Carter, Vauxhall	
Jay Cup	1909 Sep	Fred Carter, Vauxhall	C. J. Newey
Jay Cup	1910 Apr	C. J. Newey, De Dion	C. J. Newey
Jay Cup	1911 May	Fred Carter, Vauxhall	F. G. Carter
Edwards Cup	1912 Jun	Fred Carter, Vauxhall	
Jay Cup	1913 May	S. S. Barber, Talbot	S. S. Barber
Jay Cup	1914 May	W. G. Barlow, Sunbeam	W. G. Barlow
Jay Cup	1921 Jul	Humphrey Cook, Vauxhall	H. W. Cook
Jay Cup	1922 Sep	W. G. Barlow, Bentley	W. G. Barlow
Jay Cup	1923 May	Humphrey Cook, Vauxhall	H. W. Cook
Jay Cup	1924 May	Eddie Hall, Aston Martin	E. R. Hall

**also referred to as Aston Challenge Cup **also referred to as Jay Challenge Cup ***won outright by Edwards for three wins in a row*

The Summer Serendipity

Interesting cars came in two by two, says **DICK WILKINSON** *– well, sort of*

The Sunday of August Bank Holiday is, by long tradition, the date of the Summer Serendipity gathering organised by Mark Garfitt, when owners of pre-war cars descend on the Royal Oak pub in Much Marcle, Herefordshire. It was a special treat for us all to see Mark arriving in his FN-BMW 319, for this was the first time that Mark had driven it any distance since its re-build and it looked immaculate.

Parked next to Mark's car was a most unusual Lancia Aprilia that was brought by Doug Martin. It had a four-door pillarless saloon body, one of four such cars built by Pininfarina with a view to series production, had this not been cut short by WWII. It was delivered in 1939 to the owner of a Fiat dealership in Palermo and remained in Sicily until Doug was able to buy it recently.

The event attracted a small but interesting collection of American cars, a 1913 Overland and a 1929 De Soto (the first De Soto to grace these meetings), while Chris Clark, the Lanchester historian, brought a 1915 Dodge. All three were on wooden wheels and as Chris pointed out, the wheels were the only bits of wood on his car. Lanchester honour was upheld by Frank Rozelaar, who arrived in his Lanchester 21 landaulet.

There were five Lagondas present and also a Rapier so almost six old lags. Harry Bowers brought his E-type 30-98, which was the sole Vauxhall and there were three Bentleys, two three-litres and a later four-and-a-quarter saloon. It was a great pleasure to see Mike Tebbett in his quite recently acquired 20/25 Rolls-Royce with a two-seater body by H. J. Mulliner. Gilly Howard-Orchard, who had arrived in her Brescia Bugatti, was seen enjoying the driving seat of Mike's car, but it seems that Mike managed to hang on to it for he was later spotted driving it home. The slightly later arrival of a 20/25 saloon brought the Rolls Royce count to two. Malcolm Hatfield arrived in his splendid Crossley 19.6, chauffeured by Steve Kay.

Alvis was well represented by Hugh Stirling's SA 19.82 Speed 20 supported by Steve Loveridge's TG 12/50 Sportsman's Saloon and two TG 12/50 tourers. Ian Brough brought his 12/50-engined 12/40 ducks-back. There were three Rileys and Guy Gregory brought his Talbot 90. John and Fabienne Muschamp arrived in style with their FN-BMW 328, thus bringing the FN-BMW count to two and there were also a brace of MGs and a pair of Morris. A Type 44 Bugatti brought the Bug count to two, and there was also a pair of Aston Martins. This is beginning to read like an automotive Noah's Ark story and indeed at the end of months of drought it was a glorious day with rain forecast for almost every day of the following week.

As so often, Austins were the most abundant marque with seven of them present but David Boyd brought his 5CV Citroen and there were single arrivals of Salmson, Amilcar and Morgan and Robin Butler arrived in his Railton. Many of those present sampled the excellent hospitality of Hannah Slade's pub. It was one of those occasions when you get to meet old friends you haven't seen for a year or more. Long may it continue.

Photos by Phil Jones



Two Alvises, Ian Brough's ducks-back being a 12/40 with 12/50 engine



Gilly Howard-Orchard tries out Mike Tebbett's new Rolls-Royce



Light cars at speed on the Stebbe Straight (Steve Welsh)

Mallory Park

The Bob Gerard Memorial Trophy rounded off the club's 2025 racing season in style with such delights as the Longstone Light Car Race, as **STEVE WELSH** *reports*

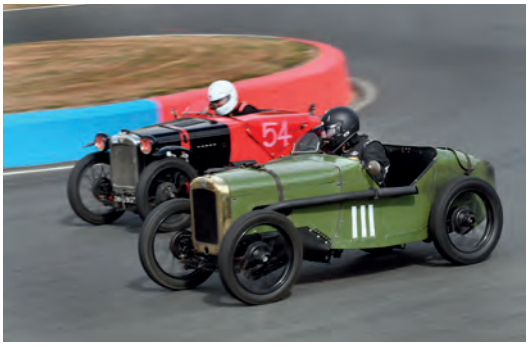
It may have been the end of the 2025 race season but there was a palpable whiff of energy and excitement – and not just Castrol and bacon – in the Mallory paddock on Saturday 30 August. It seems clear that reviving traditions can be both illuminating and energising, from the return of the high-speed trial opening race at Silverstone back in April to the third running of the Longstone Tyres Light Car Race closing affairs for the year.

The Mallory paddock defies the usual modern formality of many venues, yielding plenty of surprises for those on a stroll between the transporters and trailers. The Edwardian camp drew as much interest and buzz as ever while they readied for practice and a quarter century celebration of the Dick Baddiley and Edwardian Trophies at Mallory. Last year's winner, Archie Collings, had swapped family mounts with father Ben, who returned to the Mercedes 120 chair while the former took on the Bixia Zust, the car that Collings senior used to pass his driving test. Good to see Mark Walker and the 200hp Darracq ready for action restored to rude health following a contretemps with the scenery in the spring. At the other end of the power band and the paddock, the Light Car racers were busy winding up the elastic bands in their eclectic and hopefully (!) trusty steeds while the lost spark quest involved much pushing up and down.

With qualifying efficiently completed, racing kicked off before lunch with a more recent but well-established tradition, the Young Persons' Scratch and Handicap race. Twenty cars lined up behind pole sitter Tom Waterfield in the family Frazer Nash Super Sports. Waterfield took off at a tremendous rate with William Elbourn in the Riley 12/4 Special and Morgan pair Finley Hope-Cameron and Hamish Cameron-Eveleigh snapping at his heels. The pace proved too much for the pursuing three-wheelers, with both proving breakable by lap six, elevating Elbourne's Riley into 2nd followed by James Painter with the MG Kayne Special. Such remained the order at the flag. Waterfield's skilful and rapid charge saw the 'Nash lapping backmarkers from four out of an eventual 15 laps. Little battles raged throughout the field; a Model A power struggle over 4th between Harry Leston,



Winner of the Young Persons' Race, Tom Waterfield in the 'Nash (Steve Welsh)



Will Marsh and Patrick Teague fought a tight battle (Steve Welsh)



Max Sowerby (Talbot Lago) battles Charles Gillett ('Nash) in the Mallory Mug race (Stuart Yates)



Of these three wise men, Jim Wood looks most the part (Phil Jones)

enjoying a run in the family Lovell Elkhart dirt racer and Rebecca Smith's Mord (Morris-Ford) was punctuated and eventually bypassed by Alvis Special man Harry Irving. Smith relegated Leston to 6th with an absolutely last-second blast over the line to take the flag 0.03 up! An 'edge of the seat' all-Austin Ulster battle between Patrick Teague and William Marsh deserves a special award for lap after lap of wheel-to-wheel and respectful racing with the latter a mere second better at the flag. There is obviously still much fun to be had from diminutive Longbridge products, whetting the whistle for the all-Austin race later in the day. As an additional twist when the sealed handicap envelope was opened, Mary Baxter was revealed as the well-deserved winner with her Frazer Nash Ulster.

The lunch time grid walk, this year for Triple M cars, led efficiently into race two, an all-MG contest for Midgets, Magna and Magnettes with overhead cams. A popular addition to the usual lunchtime paddock perambulation was a chance for the public to set foot on the track, inspect the cars close-up and chat to drivers. The grid consisted of mostly blown cars with Charles Goddard's PA/PB 'Red Mist' on pole by just 0.85. The red mist must have descended when the flag dropped as grid 2nd place Mike Painter got the Kayne Special past, taking a seven-lap spell in the lead. Roland Wettstein's trip from Switzerland proved worth the effort as he swept the Parnell K3 single-seater past Painter on lap eight into a commanding lead to the flag. Painter maintained 2nd, with Goddard a distant 3rd – being the only un-lapped car may have been some consolation. The Parnell K3 appeared at the 1938 Donington Grand Prix driven by Scottish racer Humphrey Cuddon-Fletcher; the K3 ran out of brakes and had to be retired on lap 17 while the might of Nuvolari's Auto Union and Lang's Mercedes clocked up 80 to finish first and second! In a neat nod to history, Wettstein sported the number 17 as the car had with Cuddon-Fletcher in 1938.

The Burghley Trophy shifted emphasis from Abingdon back to Longbridge and the all-Austin 7 affair. Christian Pedersen showed a clean pair of heals to the rest with his well-developed single seater and a start to finish win from pole, while the top three managed to lap the rest of the field.

The race card had a bunch of real 'Club' races that produced some of the best competitions you could wish to see. Another pole-to-victory run came from Tony Seber's Wolseley Hornet in the Mallory Park Trophy for VSCC Specials. Seber should have lined up alongside Finley Hope-Cameron; however, the Morgan remained *hors de combat* after the Young Persons' Race. Off the line the gap was immediately filled by Michael James and his rapid 12/4 TT Sprite replica taking lap one lead. Seber found himself 2nd and in a Riley sandwich as he clung onto James's tailpipe for three laps, never more than a second adrift, with 12/4 man William Elbourn in 3rd still hot and



Christopher Batty bats along in the Napier (Stuart Yates)



Gillian Carr's Abbot Detroit pursued by Ben Collings aboard the Mercedes (Phil Jones)



Pino Lombardi takes an exciting line in the Luxior (Phil Jones)



Winner of the handicap race, Mary Baxter at speed in her father's 'Nash (Steve Welsh)

in the groove from 2nd in the Young Persons' Race. The Wolseley racer got the best of James's Riley on lap four, the latter faltered into a slow decline drifting down the order into retirement on lap 13 with Elbourn elevated back into the bridesmaid slot. With most eyes on the top three battle, almost unnoticed was Jo Blakeney-Edwards's dynamic Frazer Nash Super Sports drive to 3rd place by lap 14 out of 15 through traffic which affected recovery from a first lap stall at Shaw's Hairpin.

Owner Driver Mechanic Frazer Nash TT Rep racer Robert Beebee set about his task to claim the Mallory Mug with some relish. Fourteen laps of pressure from the get-go with Max Sowerby's beautiful Talbot Lago 150C filling his mirrors did not provoke any misstep from the 'Nash man. The gap at the flag was just 1.89 seconds while a distant 3rd fell to Jeremy Flann's Frazer Nash Super Sports.

The Dick Baddiley and Edwardian Trophies Handicap was its usual hare-and-tortoise affair. The opening laps were lubricated by a small sample of the promised rain leading to some lurid slides in and out of Shaw's Hairpin; having gotten used to the lack of grip the meteorological threat passed by allowing almost normal Edwardian service to be resumed! Initial leader Archie Collings's Zust was soon under pressure from limit men Lewis Fox in the GP Peugeot, Ben Collings's Mercedes 120 and Luke Roberts in the Bianchi. As the trio set about winding in their handicaps, the mightily quick Bianchi driven with much skill by Roberts forced his advantage to bump Archie Collings off the top spot on lap eight. As conditions continued to improve, Peugeot man Fox was reeling in the Bianchi taking a couple of laps out of him and setting fastest lap on lap 14 with a time of 1.13.44 at 66.18mph. Leading on the road with one lap to go, Gillian Carr's Abbott-Detroit became swamped by Roberts, Fox and Marcus Black's delightful Sunbeam Coupe de L'Auto at the Hairpin, finding herself unceremoniously elbowed down to 4th. Posting 14 laps, Richards flew the Bianchi over the line 1.34.7 ahead of Fox and the Peugeot bagging the Dick Baddiley Trophy with Black's Sunbeam 3rd but one lap adrift.

The Boulogne Trophy Vintage and All-Comers Scratch saw Patrick Blakeney-Edwards leave all in the wake of his Frazer Nash Super Sports. Julian Wilton (Cooper Bristol) and James Baxter in ERA GP2 E Type probably had the best chance of overhauling the rapid 'Nash, stalking PB-E in 2nd and 3rd respectively early on. Meanwhile from the back of the grid Michael James had been making meteoric progress through the field with the Riley Cotton Special and bumped the ERA for 3rd on lap six. The same fate befell Wilton and the Cooper next time around and the order maintained to the flag. Such had been the leading pack's pace that lapping began on five out of 16; at the flag PB-E was almost 40 seconds to the better with only four out of 16 finishers on the lead



Two Sevens at sixes and sevens (Steve Welsh)



If the glove fits, or rather, doesn't ... (Mick Herring)



Little and large: Tamara Morley's Lagonda LG45 is a mighty beast (Mick Herring)



The Groves/Brewster Salmson GN during the Light Car Race (Phil Jones)

lap. Fourth place saw a commendable challenge to the usual front-runners from Mathew Walton with the ex-Derek Howard-Orchard Bugatti Type 51.

The Handicap for Pre-War cars saw this year's regular handicap winner Dr Vijay Mallya off with the BMW 328 after exiting the Esses, the resulting stout thump into the barriers enough to prompt retirement. By lap nine the field was sorting itself out; Sian Slater with her pretty Riley Imp acquired the lead from Jeremy Ball's Riley Lynx, while Riley Brooklands racer Mike Dowell was chasing hard some 53 seconds behind in 3rd. Dowell was cutting into Slater's lead by almost 10 seconds a lap – the race was on! The Riley girl kept her head down and out of trouble, still in the lead by the 14th and final lap; Slater got the Imp over the line 1.56 seconds from the more racy Brooklands with Tim Parker's Lagonda 3rd. Slater must have been relieved there was no lap 15!

The third edition of the Longstone Tyres Light Car race that first turned wheels and heads at Oulton Park in 2021 was a blinder. It is actually the category's second revival as when the Light Car race was run in the 1950s, the Club had taken inspiration from light car races in the 1920s at Brooklands and Montlhéry. The 1920s was of course the halcyon period for light-weight cars and cyclecars with diminutive litreage and often vestigial bodywork as they fulfilled a need for cheap transport for the masses. However, if a thing will move under its own power then the human race will compete in it! As the first half of the 20th century progressed, cars became more developed and offered some refined comfort, so the popularity for light cars and especially cyclecars dissipated. However many found homes with enthusiastic Club members. When light car racing began again it encouraged owners of cars with less recognised names and low power to participate with them in suitable competition. Interest in racing light cars waned in the 1960s and grids struggled to find numbers, which brings the story back to the 2025 Mallory grid where there was no such issue.

Twenty-seven cars took the start for 40 minutes of 'slowth' with a pit stop for driver changes. The Anglo-French 1920s light car theme from the two banked tracks was well represented by the entry. Marques such as Gwynne, Mathis, Morgan, Salmson, Trojan, BSA, Sénéchal, Bédélia, New Carden and Morris Cowley were appropriately joined by seven representatives of the ubiquitous Austin 7 Chummy. As the grid rolled off the start into Goddard's led by Nick Hildyard and Francesca Wilton's Morgan Road Car, rain that had threatened since a sprinkle during the Edwardian race began to fall with more intention. By the time the field returned to the start/finish line for the first time the Austin Chummy of Harry Colledge/Ed Williams had the advantage, but not for long. The next tour saw the Gwynne 8 of John Polson/Mark Gold heading the pack with the Chummy 2nd before it was bumped a place by William and Harry Irving's Sénéchal T52. All



Austin Scott's equipe fettle his Talbot (Mick Herring)



The Bédélia thunders round the circuit while Will Marsh looks the other way (Stuart Yates)





Left: *Paul Rogers's New Carden appears to overtake Austin Scott's Talbot but of course that simply can't be true (Steve Welsh)* ***Right:*** *Mark Walker urges the De Dion past Matt Shepherd's Chummy (Phil Jones)*

this place-swapping could be considered 'trying too hard' in Light Car circles.

Driver changes happened around the halfway mark, sometimes vigorously, sometimes with the correct amount of lethargy. The rain and light car races are synonymous, so it felt right that precipitation intensified as the race progressed. That progression included spins, drifts, opposite locks and a range of exciting angles, not necessarily restricted to the exit of Shaw's Hairpin, although that was a focus for much rotary action. Archie Waterfield was applying all his 'Nash experience to the Chummy shared with Archie Miller, but the car must have been giddy from the number of 360 and 180 degree turns. Such a display of skill surely deserves a special Rotate and Recover award! The pair managed to keep it mostly on the tarmac to come home 9th.



Vicki Sly steers her Chummy through the rain (Steve Welsh)

Out at the front there was some mid-race position juggling between the first three. By lap 14 the Colledge/Williams Austin Chummy was first, locked in a give-and-take battle out of Shaw's Hairpin with William and Harry Irving's Sénéchal every lap as 750cc played 1100cc; the two cars never more than a few tenths apart. Most of the field had been lapped multiple times by three quarters distance with the record going to the Bédélia Tandem of William and Richard Marsh, nine laps behind at that point. A true story of endurance, one that came to a premature conclusion when something in the mechanical department gave up having completed six laps with a best speed of 25mph. It looked a certain Austin Chummy win for the Colledge/Williams équipe until a cheeky last gasp lunge down the Devil's Elbow to the line saw the Sénéchal sweep past to win by 2.63 seconds. However – all this daring fell foul of the 'Try Too Hard' rule that would disqualify the first three home, promoting John Polson and Mark Gold's shared Austin Chummy to the winner's circle; their shared 3rd place Gwynne 8 had been excluded.

Thus concluded one of the most memorable and enjoyable Club meetings, one that felt very true to the original Club philosophy of fostering competitive and accessible motoring and sport, preserving certain standards of pre-war design and craftsmanship surrounded by camaraderie and fun. 91 years later, it seems the founding fathers knew what they were on about.



The winning Sénéchal – it lost on account of trying too hard (Mick Herring)



The Parkins' Trojan bears down on the Bullett Bédélia (Mick Herring)

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Attractive paint scheme on this 1933 Delage D8 by Gurney Nutting (Chris Cooper)

Twenty years of Salon Privé

Now over five days and with a bigger indoor space, the Blenheim concours has established itself as a true crowd-pleaser, says **ANDREW PRESTWICH**

When I was a lad, 'green' indicated either jealousy or youthful naivety. In recent years, the connotations have changed. But none of that provides the explanation for Salon Privé this year featuring a Green Collection. The colour reflected the 20th edition of the event, emerald being the gemstone often associated with a 20th wedding anniversary.

A double line of green cars greeted the arriving guests. It created a walkway leading to the South Lawn. And in that line-up was a vintage Bentley – the sole survivor of the three team cars that started the 1927 Le Mans 24-hour race. That, of course, was the year of the Maison Blanche crash. All three of the team Bentleys were involved and only one of them was able to continue. It continued with such success that it won the race – only to be destroyed in a collision with a lamp post in New York in the 1940s. But the car that bore the number 2 for its curtailed race at La Sarthe in 1927 was still bearing that number as it stood in line adjacent to a Bentley Speed Six Continuation.

The current owner of the 1927 car also owns another car with a Le Mans pedigree – a 1928 Alvis, driven in that year's Le Mans by Bill Urquhart-Dykes and Sammy Davis, the latter having won the 1927 race, sharing the driving on that occasion with Dudley Benjafield. The 1928 Alvis was the first front-wheel-drive *production* car ever built. Earlier attempts had been made by other manufacturers; indeed, some previous Alvis *racing* cars had FWD but they did not have the success of the 1928 car which was 9th overall and 2nd in class at Le Mans.

Studying the inboard front wheel brakes of the Alvis was illuminating, as was looking at two pieces of period equipment that were next to the car – a petrol funnel and a large metal jug for pouring oil into the engine. The current owner can't be sure that these are the very items used with this car in period but they certainly looked the part and matched those being used in the black and white photographs which he has of the car in action. Bearing in mind the history, presentation and accoutrements, one might have thought that the Alvis merited a prize within the Pre-War Sports Class but first and second places were taken, respectively, by a 1933 Alfa Romeo 8C Monza and a 1930 Bentley 4½-litre supercharged, originally owned by Woolf Barnato. This was his personal car, the lightweight coachwork for which was built from aluminium by Gurney Nutting, the mudguards in particular revealing sporting flair.

The Alfa Monza is thought to be the car raced by Jean-Pierre Wimille in the 1933 season, painted blue



The judges have a good rootle around in the Alfa Monza



Vast 1928 Cadillac 341A Sports Phaeton by Fisher

in period, and still today, to reflect his French nationality. The car spent some years in South America but has been restored, including being fitted with the correct type De Ram shock absorbers.

Sitting between the Alvis and the Bentley was a 1929 OM 665 Superba 2.3 by Carrozzeria Sport Milano which would also have made a worthy winner. But they can't all win. The Gurney Nutting Bentley was the only vintage car to win a prize of any type at Salon Privé this year and the main prize has still never been won by a vintage car. But the quality of post-vintage cars on display more than made up for the limited numbers of early cars this year – a 1931 Invicta S Type holding particular appeal and a 1933 Delage D8 SS (also by Gurney Nutting) winning the Elegance, Grace and Luxury Class, the runner-up in that class being a 1949 Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith Drophead Foursome Coupé by James Young.

The winner of Best in Show at Salon Privé in its 20th year was a 1936 Mercedes-Benz 500 K Spezial Roadster by Sindelfingen, a car which bears more than a passing similarity to the 1938 Mercedes-Benz 540 K Cabriolet A which won in 2021. It is the 1930s elegance coupled with the pre-war obsession with aerodynamics that produces some of the most attractive of all motor cars. In particular, this is a tale of tails. Look at the pictures of the 1930s Hispano-Suiza J12 and Bugatti Type 57C which were alongside the Mercedes in the Pre-War Open Class. It could have been the tossing of a coin that determined that the Mercedes would win and that the Bugatti would come second in class, thereby leaving the Hispano empty-handed – but the coin would have said 'tails' whichever way it had landed.

If there had been a class prize for the best story, the Hispano might have won. This car has the upgraded T68 V12 engine (11.3 litres in lieu of 9.4) and originally wore Van Vooren clothing. Its third sale saw it owned by Prince Poniatowski, Head of Public Relations at Hispano-Suiza. He had the car re-bodied in 1937/38 by Labourdette as a two-door, two-seater cabriolet for which the chassis was shortened. The only part of the Van Vooren body to be retained was the bonnet; the front wings were made by Hispano-Suiza. Having been stored in bits during the Second World War, the car was re-built in 1949 and, having been sold in 1954, went to Guadeloupe.

The poor relation in the Pre-War Open Class might therefore be thought to have been the 1939 maroon Lagonda V12 Drophead Coupé languishing on the end of the line, the only one of the four not to have a tail to rival a peacock's. Yet that car, with a



Best in show, the 1936 Mercedes-Benz 500 K Spezial Roadster by Sindelfingen



1929 OM 665 Superba 2.3 by Carrozzeria Sport Milano



Ex-Charlie Chaplin 1936 Packard Twelve



Woolf Barnato's supercharged 4½-litre Bentley with Gurney Nutting flair

bulbous tail that had an elegance all of its own, was adjudged the most opulent car in the show. Given the competition, that is some endorsement. And it has an engine to match, the Lagonda V12 being the final engine signed off by W.O. Bentley before he left the company. In its day, this was a car capable of 100mph whilst retaining a refined ride.

There was one vintage car in the class for Pre-War American Classics, a 1928 Cadillac 341 A Sports Phaeton by Fisher. Resplendent in bright blue with red wheels and white wall tyres, it encapsulated the cliché of 1920s America. But that was not enough to win it a prize. First in class went to a Duesenberg SJ Dual Cowl Phaeton by LaGrande, one of the fastest and most powerful cars of its day. The owner chatted animatedly with the public, informing us that all Duesenberg engine blocks were painted green so that drips of (green) oil would not be seen, though she had a clear view on this: 'That's not very smart. I'd want to know if my car was leaking oil.'

Second in the American Class was a 1936 Packard Twelve, described as an 'All-Weather Cabriolet' by LeBaron (although only the driver's compartment could be opened to the elements, so perhaps Coupé De Ville would be more accurate). Only four like this were built, of which two survive. Perhaps one should be surprised that this one has lasted so well – it was formerly in Charlie Chaplin's company fleet of cars for use in films.

One car owner this year drew a distinction between Salon Privé and another world-famous concours competition, saying, in a moment of indiscretion, 'Pebble Beach is one of those shows where you have to go every year in order to win.' No doubt there are statistics to prove that this is incorrect but the mere fact that someone thought it, let alone said it, might be thought to be noteworthy.

As well as all of the more modern cars, stretching from the 1950s all the way to 2025, there was one major feature of Salon Privé this year that cannot go unmentioned. For several years, there has been a so-called Glass House for corporate entertainment. But this year, a new structure appeared – two long buildings of metal frame and glass construction, one for diverse elements of hospitality, the other for displaying cars. These two were joined by a glass and steel corridor, thereby creating one comprehensive indoor space which came into its own when the heavens opened at about 5 o'clock on the afternoon of the opening day.

I asked David Bagley, co-founder of Salon Privé, about the new addition. One exhibitor had suggested to me that it led to the cars outside the building being peripheral. Some felt that there was an intrusion into the garden party atmosphere which, I suspect, is just another way of saying the same thing. But the overall reaction to this development had been enthusiastic and David made the valid point that Salon Privé is a five-day event that has to cater for a wide range of visitors and attractions over a period where there is every likelihood of at least a little rain. And for the last two days of the event, the concours cars dis-





Prize-winning Duesenberg SJ Dual Cowl Phaeton by LaGrande



Morgan's latest offering, the retro-looking Supersport

appear: modernity is to the fore. The main concours day, the Wednesday, the opening day is the one that VSCC members would most enjoy.

The glass building itself is fascinating. When I said to David that I had never seen anything quite like it before, he was bold in his assessment: 'That's because it's unique.' It even managed to up-stage Blenheim Palace itself. Much of the central section of the Duke of Marlborough's home was covered in scaffolding and white sheeting for the duration of repair works. But Salon Privé's glass palace made for a worthy alternative backdrop.

The internal space for car displays had exclusively been taken by current manufacturers but two of those would be of interest to readers: first, Morgan had put their latest Supersport offering on display. With extras, the cost of this retro-looking machine is £128,000 which puts it in competition with some quite exclusive motor cars. But the staff on the stand assured me that it is holding its own in this elevated market and that they are selling all that they can make.

The other indoor stand to catch the eye of the vintage enthusiast featured two modern Bentleys, albeit that one of them, the Speed Six Continuation, did not look like a 21st-century car. Indeed, given the immaculate presentation of the concours entrants outside, it would not have looked out of place if it had been placed amongst them. The other Bentley on the stand was a magnificent Continental GT Azure in Moroccan Blue which could only have looked better if it had been outside after the heavy shower, the rain-water glinting in the sunlight.

The additional space for entertaining guests was put to good use by Boodles who had their own dining space as part of their shop premises. There was even enough room for a master diamond cutter to sit at his polishing stone in order to give informative demonstrations to those who could drag themselves away from the outdoor delights to see what was going on indoors. There is *always* something new here. The entry ticket is now priced so as to be well within the reach of all – especially when purchased far in advance. Tickets for 2026 are already on sale.

Photos by author unless otherwise marked



It was a tale of tails this year, this Bugatti T57C having a fine one

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Niamh Smith spent the summer campaigning the Alvis 12/50 she inherited from her grandfather, as well as getting married

Loton Park – Saturday

Class entries were small but the countryside, weather and atmosphere were as beautiful as they were 40 years ago, when **BILL ROSTEN** *last went*

It's probably the best part of forty years since I visited Loton, and that was as a spectator, when I used to live not far away. How nice to see it nestling in the same beautiful Shropshire countryside, enjoying splendid late summer weather. This year I decided to take part in the first of the two one-day competitions held over the weekend of 6 and 7 September. The drive up the day before in 'Annie', my 1924 Anzani GN, was only spoilt by the traffic and a stubborn misfire on no. 2 plug. A bit of fettling at my hotel in Shrewsbury seemed to help and we arrived in time to prepare and attend the drivers' briefing. Soon the practice runs began and I found the course fantastic. Very challenging and twisty but almost 10 seconds slower than my handicap. At least the misfire was mostly gone. We are in Class 3, one of the most popular, and I had left the touring ratios on as we were unlikely to trouble the engravers.

A club event such as this enables a lot of socialising, but little real time for reporting. Class 1 had only two entries, one a non-starter, so was merged with Class 2. This was a Riley benefit with a stonking first timed run by Nigel Dowding beating his handicap by almost two seconds, breaking the class record and claiming the class. Class 3 saw a virtuoso performance by Rufus Flann in his Frazer Nash, getting over three seconds inside his handicap and taking the class from Tim Sharp in his MG PB. Jon Mellor in his Double-12 'Nash was third ahead of an enthusiastic bunch of competitors, mainly 'Nashes, but also HRG, Riley, and MG, Derek Tew in his Wolseley Hornet Special, me in the GN and a pair of very fine Alvis 12/50s.

Class 4 was depleted and Class 5 also, with Richard Gatley the only runner in his stylish Frazer Nash BMW saloon. I think they must have been merged with Class 6 which seems a little unfair. John Fack took the honours in that class with his Railton. John Deveuve was the only Edwardian in his Singer and swept the board with a rousing climb.

Class 8 was hotly contested with many competitors under or near their handicap. Tim Stamper took the win in his Riley Brooklands with a new class record, Iain Muir second in his Riley. First handicap went deservedly to Elinor Bergman in Dad Clive's Austin. Class 9 was another Riley benefit with Greg Lerigo taking the class and FTD sports car. There appeared to be no vintage cars in this class. Shame! Neither were there any in Class 10, which seemed to be merged with Class 11. This denied Jo Blakeney-



Our reporter in 'Annie' – they overcame a misfire caused by a failing magneto



Sole Edwardian entry was John Deveuve's 1913 Singer

Edwards a win in her newly refurbished 'Nash, Justin Hart taking the merged class in his Riley Big Four Special.

We moved on to the racing classes, the most hotly contested being the up to 1100cc, Class 13. Jon Giles won this in Salome, getting within a whisker of the class record with Louis McNair pushing him and improving each run in Katipo to take FTD Young Driver and second in class. Katipo is an exciting newish addition to the GN specials and deserves a careful look at its well-planned engineering. Class 14 was more sparsely contested, but did contain Patrick Blakeney-Edwards in his beautifully prepared 'Nash. He took the class and FTD overall.

Classes 15, 16 and 19 were won by David Pryke, Thomas Richardson and David Bond respectively and all suffered a little from depleted entries. Jade Dearling had the misfortune of one of his engines letting go in a big way in his GN Ariel, Caliban. At least his sump plug was still secure even if the sump was no longer intact. There was a top 10 run-off to entertain us at the end of the day, heavily featuring the chain gang and won by PB-E.

The misfire came back a little on the return journey and eventually transpired to be caused by a failing magneto. Once home, this was changed and the misfire disappeared. En route I called in at Broseley near Ironbridge where I once lived and worked. John Wilkinson of The Lawns, Broseley, was one of the leading ironmasters of the 18th century and was heavily involved in planning the first cast-iron bridge. He also developed a boring machine which developed accurately bored cannons and later cylinders for steam engines. Not well known now, he was a giant of his time and can be regarded as the father of machine tools. So next time you make something on your lathe, raise a glass to John Wilkinson.

Photos by Dennis Rushton



Dennis and David Johnson's shared Frazer Nash Colmore



Jamie Quartermaine kicks up some dust in the Vauxhall Special



Ben Purnell missed practice but was going well in the Riley Special



Winner of Class 16, Thomas Richardson in the GN Gipsy

Loton Park – Sunday

Torrential rain meant considerably slower times than on Saturday, as **NICK WILSON** *reports*

Those competitors who chose to enter only on the Sunday of this two-day event must have been kicking themselves as the Saturday enjoyed glorious late summer weather while the Sunday was a wash-out. Nevertheless, the competition went ahead as scheduled, with two or even three practice runs in the morning followed by two timed runs in the afternoon. Many people had entered on both days, and a look at their various times across the weekend shows what a difference the weather can make.

For example, the Saturday competition closed with the President's brother, Patrick Blakeney-Edwards, achieving an FTD of 65.44 in his Frazer Nash. The fastest performer in the wet on the other hand was our incoming president, Jon Giles, who achieved an FTD of 71.78 in the Morgan GN 'Salome', more than six seconds slower, and about four seconds slower than the previous day when in practice he recorded a run of 67.68, and later won his class with a best afternoon time of 67.93.

Rufus Flann is one of the club's rising young stars, and he was giving it his all on both days in his father Jeremy's very quick Frazer Nash Super Sports. Having won his class on Saturday he repeated the feat on Sunday, albeit like Jon taking an extra four seconds to do so, his best timed run being 75.35 against a best Saturday time of 71.37. He also scooped the award for Fastest Young Driver, beating Will Marsh in his Ulster who won Class One.

As on Saturday, a few classes had to be merged due to poor entry levels, namely Classes One and Two; Four, Five and Six; and Classes 15 and 16. Notwithstanding, there was a good overall entry with some 71 cars competing, several with double driver entries. The



Hood up, Archie Collings won Class 11 in the Bentley 3/4½

Edwardian Class Seven fared slightly better than the Saturday, John Deveuve's 1-litre Singer this time being joined by Simon Scott aboard his 2.4-litre Talbot and Ben Collings with the 13.5-litre Mercedes 120, which duly won the class, climbing the hill some 28 seconds faster than either class-mate. Anomalies like this suggest the Edwardian class, were there more entries, would merit a subdivision based on engine size.

Other notable drives included David Pryke in the Frazer Nash Shelsley who won Class 15 with 72 dead (compared to a class-winning 65.92 the day before) and Jo Blakeney-Edwards who saw off competition from Iain Roche on both days to win Class 10. Next year, Loton Park is to be held over the weekend of 18/19 July, the format yet to be confirmed. No doubt this shift will boost entry numbers, and those who experienced this rather soggy day of competition at Loton in 2025 will enjoy a hopefully drier and even faster one next year.

Photos by Bertram Hill



James Burmester (MG PA) during practice – he later retired



Jo Blakeney-Edwards splashes her way to a class win



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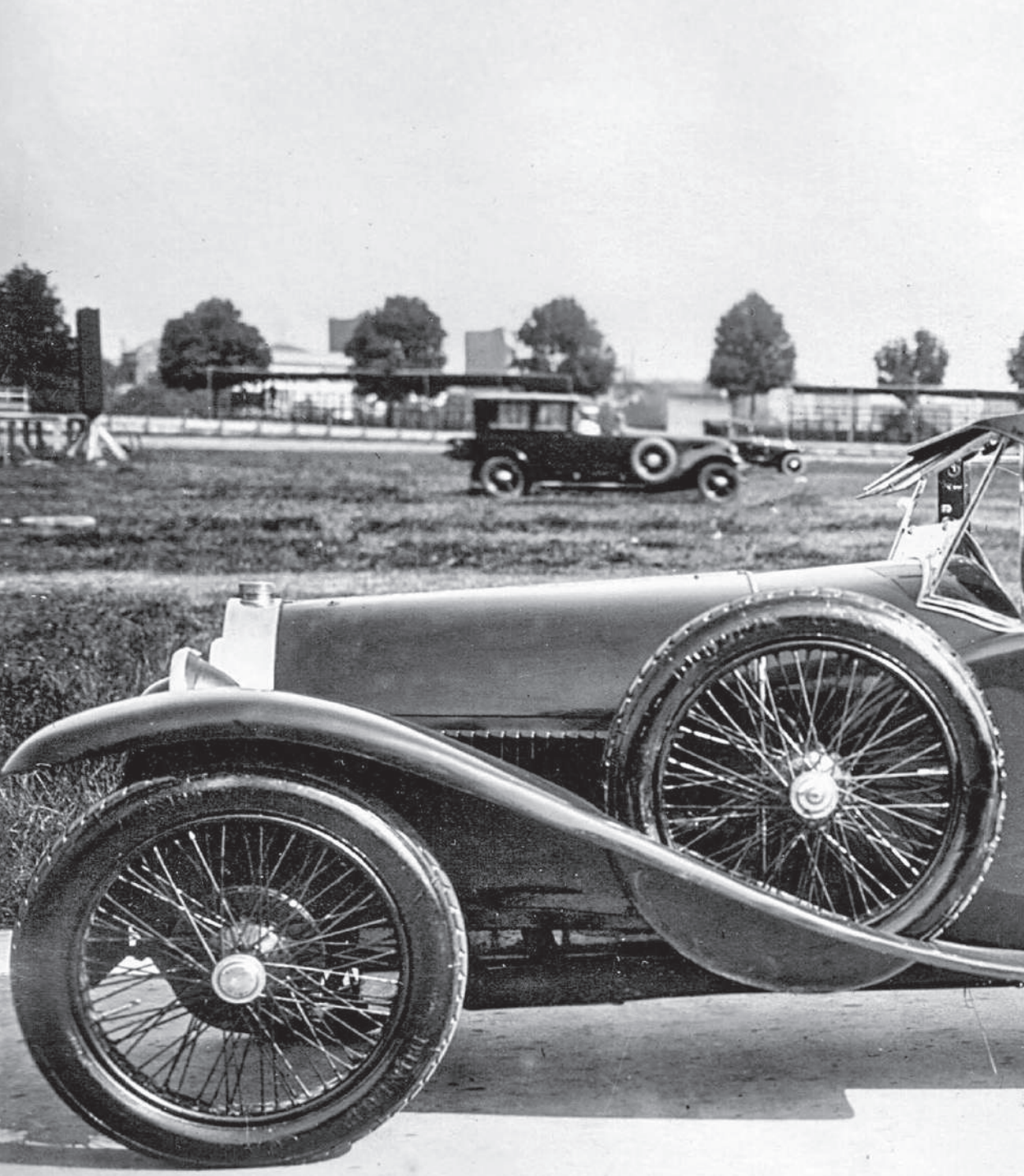
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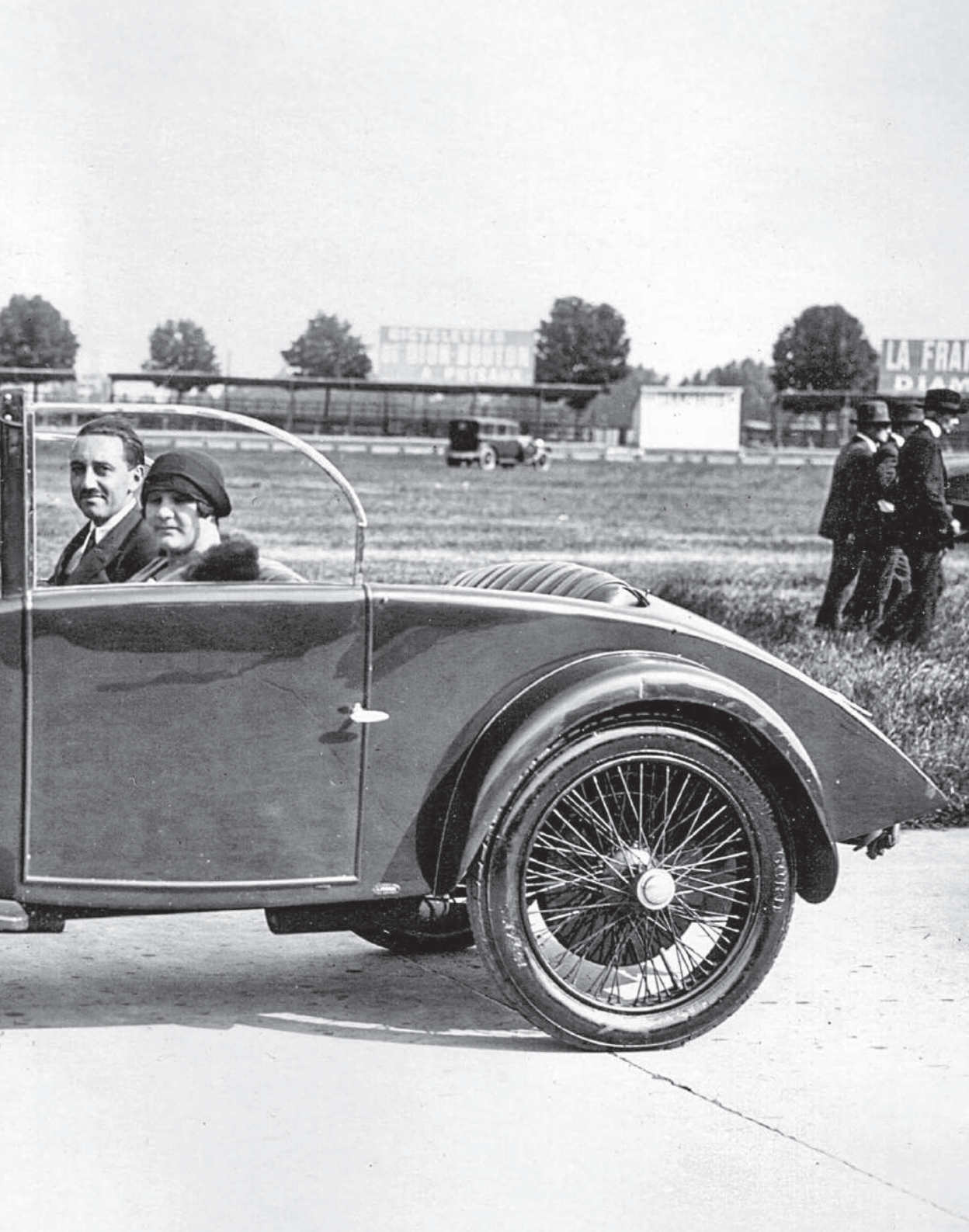
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This unusual yet chic-looking Type 30 Bugatti, chassis 4440, wears coachwork by Joseph Figoni and is seen at the 1925 Concours d'Elégance de l'Auto *at Parc des Princes in Paris. At the wheel is Marcel Rossi, who that year was appointed chief fitter at Figoni as well as workshop foreman, with Figoni's wife, Victorine, beside him. Rossi worked for Figoni for more than 40 years, retiring in 1963, and became a close confidante. A new three-volume book about Figoni's life and work,* Joseph Figoni, Le Grand Couturier de la Carrosserie Automobile: Bugatti*, is reviewed on pages 94–95. Our thanks to the authors, Peter Larsen and Ben Erickson, for use of this image*





The Goodwood Trophy gets going with David Morris in R11B in front (Steve Welsh)

Goodwood Revival

Some of the club's greatest drivers did battle in West Sussex despite some challenging weather, as **CHARLES PRESTWICH** *reports*

'Give me Goodwood on a summer's day and you can forget the rest of the world.' At this year's Revival meeting over the weekend of 13/14 September, Roy Salvadori's famous quotation adorned the footbridge that connected the circuit from the land 'Over the Road', where most notably there were the Bonhams auction hall, many traders and a fairground. But what about Goodwood on a rainy autumnal day? While there were sunny spells across the weekend, the weather overall was changeable at best, with Saturday and Sunday in particular featuring long periods of rain and dark cloud. However, this did little to detract from all that the Goodwood Revival has to offer. As well as the racing action, the event featured an air display of Spitfires and Hurricanes each morning (although the Saturday morning's was cancelled due to low cloud), a Cosworth engine display in the Earls Court Motor Show, a celebration to mark the centenary of Alfa Romeo winning the inaugural Manufacturer's World Championship, a parade of cars formerly driven by Jim Clark to honour the 60th anniversary of his 1965 World Championship victory, and a series of traders in the 'Revival Style Village'. There were also many among the crowds who had embraced the period dress code, creating a wonderful atmosphere which was enhanced by the many bands playing period music across the site.

The racing programme featured the Goodwood Trophy race for Grand Prix and Voiturette Cars that raced between 1930 and 1951, the star race for those with a preference for pre-war cars. Indeed a number of the drivers competing in the race regularly play a part in VSCC race meetings. There was also a race for Grand Prix cars that raced between 1954 and 1960 (plenty of them front-engined) in the form of the Richmond and Gordon Trophies Race, as well as the Glover Trophy race for the later Grand Prix cars of the early '60s. Qualifying for all three races took place on the Friday, with the cars competing in the Goodwood Trophy race taking to the track mid-morning.

On the entry list were no fewer than 11 ERAs, as well as the Parnell Challenger of Duncan Ricketts and the Riley TT Sprite of James Baxter, each of which has an ERA engine. However, one of the ERAs was missing from the event altogether – Roland Duce's newly-built ERA RJB1, which was due to be driven by Marcus Black, a versatile driver who competes in Edwardian races in his Sunbeam and who also owns a 1966 Mclaren. Due to an error, Roland Duce's car was initially understood by Goodwood to be R3B. This caused a degree of disquiet and it was decided by Roland and Marcus that it was sensible to withdraw the car for this year so as to ensure that there would be no ill-feeling in the paddock.

Not long into the practice session, another ERA was lost as Tom Hardman in ERA AJM1 found the tyre barrier at St. Mary's. Thankfully he was unharmed and the car only suffered minor damage but it would

certainly be out of action for the race the following morning. The initial reaction of owner Ben Fidler was that it wouldn't be fit to run at Prescott later in September, either. Fidler himself was on track in ERA R4D but it was David Morris in R11B who went fastest of the ERA contingent, ahead of Gillies in R3A, Topliss in R4A and then Fidler. However, the quickest lap overall was set late in the session by Ian Baxter driving the Alta 61 IS, a combination which had won the past two editions of the race at the Revival. For most of the session, the fastest car on track had been a Maserati 4CL with Richard Bradley at the wheel but his practice session came to an end prematurely as an engine problem forced him into the pitlane, meaning he could do nothing about Baxter's late surge to take pole position from him. Patrick Blakeney-Edwards took pole position last year in wet conditions driving the ex-Fane Frazer Nash Monoposto and looked quick in the same car this time around on a dry track but pole position was out of reach – he finished the session 7th. However, the weather forecast for the Saturday morning – when the race would take place – looked promising for a car and driver combination so well-suited to the wet.

Whilst the practice session was run under fairly sunny skies, the conditions were nonetheless tricky for the drivers with significant gusts of wind blowing across the circuit. Peter Greenfield in the Alfa Romeo 158 'Alfetta' had not one but two spins onto the grass at Woodcote, on each occasion safely rejoining the circuit and continuing on his way. Julian Wilton in ERA R7B remarked after the session that the wind was such that he was fighting the car even on the long Lavant straight but he was happy with his performance and to have been able to finish the session – which wasn't the case for two cars usually seen towards the front. ERA R5B 'Remus' only managed one lap before Paddins Dowling had to pull onto the grass with magneto trouble. Julian Majzub in his Alfa Romeo 308C had not been running for much longer than Dowling when he came into the pits with the car not sounding quite as it should. The rest of the day would be devoted by his mechanic to working out what had been causing the issue. Majzub exclaimed to one enthusiast after the practice session that his Alfa 'should eat the ERAs for breakfast!' when on song. His mechanic would have his work cut out to have the car ready for the race.

The afternoon practice sessions included those for the Richmond and Gordon Trophies race and the Glover Trophy race. Competing for the Richmond Trophy would be the front-engined Grand Prix cars of the mid-to-late 1950s. Present at Goodwood were a pair of Lotus 16s (although three were listed in the programme), three Maserati 250Fs, a pair of Ferrari 246 Dinos and the Connaught C Type of Malcolm Cook driven by Charlie Martin. Of these cars, it was the Lotus 16 of Joaquin Folch-Rusinol that went fastest in practice, although in keeping with how Lotus 16s ran in period he did not complete the session due to gearbox trouble. Luckily, with the race not until Sunday, the mechanic had all of Saturday in the paddock to take the car to pieces and resolve the problem. The other Lotus 16 was an ex-Graham Hill car and driver Ewen Sergison was sporting a Graham Hill replica helmet and goggles. Richard Wilson in his Ferrari 246 and John Spiers in his Maserati 250F came just behind Joaquin in the pecking order. Of course, the cars at the front of the grid would be those competing for the Gordon Trophy, that is to say Lotus 18s and Cooper T53s in particular. As for the cars that would be competing in the Glover Trophy race (also scheduled for the Sunday), Nick Fennell's Lotus 25 was a standout entry on a list that featured 15 Lotus cars in all. Fennell put the car 6th on the grid whilst on pole would be Lukas Halusa in a Brabham-Climax BT7.

The first race of the weekend took place on the Friday evening, a one-hour race for sports cars of the type that competed in the Goodwood 9-hour races between 1952 and 1955. This saw familiar faces from the VSCC go head-to-head with a number of profes-



Justin Maeers (Cooper Monaco T49) chases Julian Majzub (Sadler) in the Sussex Trophy (Steve Welsh)



Christopher Mann with the Alfa Romeo 6C 3000 PR Disco Volante (Steve Welsh)



Spitfires in action over Goodwood – backflips were performed (PA)



The track parade featured 22 pre-war Alfa Romeos (PA)

sional drivers, including former Le Mans 24-hour winners, as well as former Formula 1 World Champion Jenson Button. Indeed talented young driver Theo Hunt, who is a regular at VSCC race meetings in Frazer Nash cars in particular, was 3rd on the grid but on the front row with Button who was on pole. On this occasion, Theo was driving a 1954 HWM Jaguar, whilst Button was in the ex-Fangio Jaguar C-Type. Also featuring in the race were Patrick Blakeney-Edwards, who had swapped the 1935 chain-driven 'Nash for a 1951 Frazer Nash Mille Miglia, and Christopher Mann, this time in his 1953 Alfa Romeo 'Disco Volante'. As day turned to night, Theo demonstrated all of his credentials, storming into second place early on and following Button for a few laps before the 2009 World Champion pulled clear. When Theo handed the car over to Sam Hancock (for it was a two-driver race), he had a comfortable advantage over 3rd place and Sam brought it home in second as the rain began to fall late on. It was a fabulous spectacle with which to end the day.

For some, though, the day was not yet over. With complete darkness having descended over Goodwood, certain mechanics were still in the paddock fettling, including Julian Majzub's, who had still not found the issue which had prevented Julian from completing the morning's practice. In the end, it was discovered that water was infiltrating one of the cylinders, either due to a crack or porosity, and so Majzub and his mechanic packed up at around 10:30pm, with the car not fit to run the following morning. In the words of Marcus Black, who was speaking in relation to his 1966 McLaren which was also having problems over the weekend, 'That's racing – 95% of it is rubbish but the other 5% is just wonderful.'



Duncan Pittaway in Rowan Atkinson's much campaigned MKVII Jaguar (Steve Welsh)

On the Saturday morning it was an early start for the drivers, with the Goodwood Trophy race set to get underway at 9:35. By 8 o'clock, not only was the rain already falling hard but the sound of pre-war engines was cutting through the paddock as drivers and mechanics prepped the cars for the race. Such preparations did not simply involve warming up the engines. David Morris changed both front wheels on ERA R11B for newer and grippier tyres. Meanwhile, the mechanic working with the blue Maserati 8CTF (8th at Indianapolis in 1940 and which would be on this occasion driven by Andy Willis) was busy adjusting the brakes on the car to account for the wet conditions. Amusingly, with the manual fuel pressure pump broken on the car, it was also necessary to use a tyre pump to pressurise the fuel in the car. Unfortunately, a small number of cars weren't being warmed up and wouldn't compete in the race. Most notably, the Maserati 4CL driven by Richard Bradley looked abandoned in the paddock with nobody tending to it. It had been taken off the start list having not recovered from Friday's problem. This would leave David Morris to line up alongside Baxter's Alta on the grid and Mark Gillies was bumped up to the front row. The other Maserati 4CL of Fritz Burkhard, which is the original prototype, was also unable to take to the line. Under a nearby shelter in the paddock, there was better news as ERA R5B was being warmed up for Paddins Dowling, with the magneto having been completely changed after Friday's disappointment.

For most drivers, the weather would also have constituted a disappointment, but not for Patrick Blakeney-Edwards who stood by his car discussing the conditions with Gillies. Both seemed extremely confident at the prospect of a wet race and discussed where the standing water would likely be on the circuit, most notably on the exit of the chicane. By



The Phantom I on display to mark the model's centenary (Andrew Prestwich)



The Aubusson tapestry interior inspired by Marie Antoinette's sedan chair (Andrew Prestwich)

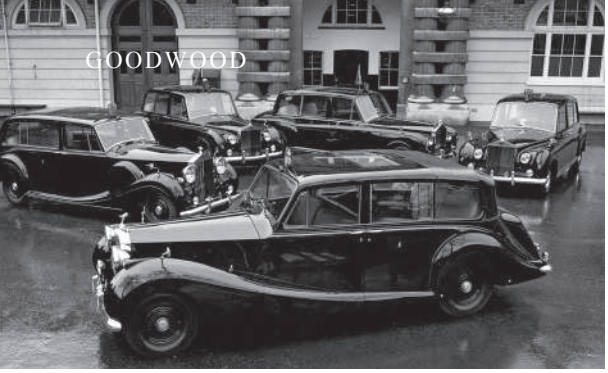
the time the cars were lined up on the grid, having completed an extra green flag lap to acquaint the drivers with the wet track, the rain had pretty much stopped falling and the sun was making an appearance from behind dissipating cloud cover, but there was indeed much standing water in various sections of the circuit. The pair capitalised on the conditions immediately: Blakeney-Edwards gained three places on the opening lap, whilst Gillies had gained two to take the lead of the race despite a poor run off the line. Blakeney-Edwards then wasted no time in moving up into 2nd place, overtaking Morris in R11B as they exited Madgwick on lap two. Unfortunately, things would get much worse for Morris as he slid off at St Mary's on the same lap and hit the barrier. Almost simultaneously, Brad Baker and R10B also went off the track, but his contact with the barrier was much softer, such that there was no visible damage to the car. Even come the end of the weekend, it was thought that the car had escaped any damage. As for R11B, there was a big dent in the bodywork at the rear of the car, but nothing that will be too troublesome to repair. In period, the bodywork formed the outer wall of the fuel tank – thankfully, the bodywork now protects the fuel tank and had done its job on this occasion. The yellow flags weren't out for very long as Morris managed to keep the car running. He trundled back to the pit lane whilst R10B was given a push start by the marshals which enabled Baker to follow suit.

When the yellow flags were lowered, Gillies and PB-E quickly pulled clear of the rest, but behind there was further action as Andy Willis in the Maserati 8CTF overtook Ian Baxter's Alta for 3rd place as the pair put the power down heading onto the Lavant straight. Pole man Baxter admitted after the race that he struggled in the wet conditions – the car always seemed to want to swing its tail out when Baxter was trying to accelerate out of a corner – but he also pointed out that the Alta is his 'toy' and so the priority lies in bringing it home in one piece (even if it means taking it a bit easier in tricky conditions). For many, as parts of the circuit began to dry towards the end of the race, that made the conditions all the trickier, with some corners more slippery than others. The exit of the chicane, where Gillies had correctly predicted there would be much standing water, was one area that remained slippery and a number of drivers found themselves a little sideways as they tried to accelerate away onto the main straight. Andy Willis was taking a different line from the rest of the field: rather than sweeping off the kerb early to avoid the large puddle of water on the outside of the track, he stuck to the kerb and ploughed through the standing water, creating an impressive shower of spray lap after lap. This, despite the twitching of the car as it carved through the puddle, allowed him to take a straighter line exiting the chicane and therefore accelerate away faster than other cars. With a couple of laps to go, he had all but secured his place on the podium.

Out front, PB-E was keeping Gillies on his toes but never found himself close enough to attempt to overtake, perhaps owing to a slight misfire as Patrick 'couldn't get enough temperature in the engine'. This left Gillies to win this race for an eighth time, with Patrick featuring on the podium for the second time in as many years. Even if the Frazer Nash had been absolutely on song, Patrick himself admitted he would have struggled to get past 'Rain meister' Gillies. Behind them, Willis did indeed come through for a hugely impressive 3rd place in his first race at the wheel of the Maserati, which spends most of its



Mark Brett debuts the 1947 Delage D6-3L in the Goodwood Trophy (Steve Welsh)



More Phantoms, these ones looking decidedly spectral (Rolls-Royce)



Julian Majzub's Alfa 308C being worked on in vain late on Friday evening (Andrew Prestwich)

time in a museum. There was drama further down the order as along the Lavant straight came a trio of cars headed by Duncan Ricketts' ERA Parnell Challenger, with Peter Greenfield in the Alfa Romeo 'Alfetta' and Gareth Burnett in the Vanguard. Ricketts locked the wheels under braking at Woodcote and went straight on, sliding into the barrier. Past him went Greenfield and Burnett and a drag race to the line ensued between the pair, with Burnett getting past in the final metres and reaching the line ahead of Greenfield by a tenth of a second; the Alfa Romeo added to the spectacle by squirming left then right over the line but all was gathered up by Greenfield. Thankfully Ricketts was able to get out of the Parnell Challenger and was back in the paddock not long after the race.

By the time the cars were once more under the protection of the paddock shelters, the rain was falling again, much to the dismay of Blakeney-Edwards, but he was quickly reminded by those with him that this was exactly the weather he had hoped for – and there wasn't much he could say back to that! The weather did not stop Julian Wilton (who was happy with his drive in R7B) and his team from bringing out the champagne, which was shared generously among the drivers.

Thankfully, there were plenty of indoor attractions at Goodwood, including the Bonhams auction hall which featured a few vintage and pre-war cars. The 'Revival Sale' took place on the Saturday, with the cars being sold in the early afternoon. The oldest car at the sale was a 1921 Vauxhall 30-98 E-Type Tourer, which sold for £90,000 – nowhere close to the £1,079,000 for which an Aston Martin Zagato Coupé was sold but irrespective of price I know which one I would have chosen!

The array of cars presented in the Bonhams hall was not the only static display of cars at Goodwood. In celebration of the centenary of the first Rolls-Royce Phantom, one of each of the first five Phantom models were displayed near the Goodwood Aerodrome (the more recent models 'VI', 'VII' and 'VIII' came after 1966, the year in which the Goodwood Motor Circuit closed). The Phantom I on show had a unique palatial Rococo interior, including authentic Aubusson tapestry, inspired by Marie Antoinette's sedan chair. On the information board placed in front of the car it was noted that the car had been worth 13 houses when new in 1926 – the Aston Martin sold at the Bonhams auction no longer seemed quite so expensive. The Phantom II model was introduced by Rolls-Royce in 1929 and the PII present at Goodwood had been used by an American industrialist in which to travel around Europe and so was fitted with a sunroof and yellow-tinted sun visor. Meanwhile, the Phantom IV that was on display is currently owned by King Charles III – a formidable array of cars.

Another notable collection of cars at Goodwood were the four from Jim Clark's memorable 1965 season. For the first time ever, his F1 Championship-winning car, his F2 Championship-winning car, his Indianapolis-winning car and his Tasman Series-winning car were reunited, a reminder of just how versatile Clark was. Furthermore, the Jim Clark parade on the Saturday featured a herd of sheep in recognition of Clark's humble background as a farmer. A unique moment saw the sheep stampede down the circuit from Woodcote and weave their way among the ex-Clark cars which were lined up on the grid, all the while being directed by a couple of sheepdogs.

The Alfa Romeo parade was also impressive. No fewer than 22 pre-war Alfa Romeo cars were listed in the programme and 46 in total going up to 1972. Among them were Chris Mann's 1922 Targa Florio, a couple of 1934 P3 Tipo B (the first ever single-seater Grand Prix car) and the 1938 'Alfetta' which won the first F1 World Championship in 1950 with Guiseppe Farina.

The races of interest to VSCC *Bulletin* readers on the Sunday took place in the afternoon, with the Glover Trophy race followed by the Richmond and Gordon Trophies race. The early morning sunshine had by lunchtime given way to dark clouds and by mid-afternoon the rain was pouring; conditions for the drivers were the most treacherous they had been all weekend. This meant that the first two laps of each of the races would be run behind the safety car, effectively cutting the length of the races from 25 to 20 minutes each. Andy Middlehurst had won



A man in a striped blazer obscures an otherwise decent photo of some racing (PA)



The weekend was rounded off with the Settrington Cup and its Le Mans start (PA)

the 2024 Glover Trophy in the Lotus 25 but this year, with Nick Fennell at the wheel, it pulled into the pit lane after just one lap behind the safety car. There were still a number of Lotus 21s in the field and once the safety car pulled off to the side and the cars were allowed to get up to full speed, it was Stuart Hall in Karl Borges' Lotus 21 who looked to have mastered the conditions the quickest, going from 4th to 1st in a matter of a few corners. There were a couple of drivers who missed their entries into the chicane, one being pole man Lukas Halusa in the Brabham on the second lap of racing. He was not the only front runner struggling. Joe Colasacco, in the only Ferrari in the race, had started alongside Halusa but lost a number of places on the opening lap and eventually finished 9th. Halusa just missed out on a podium in 4th. Stuart Hall looked untouchable and streaked clear to win ahead of a field that was rather spread out, but one of the closest finishes was over second place as Ben Mitchell in a Cooper T56 kept ahead of Kyle Tilley in the Gilby-Climax Type B (one of only two Gilby Type B cars built, the other being a sports car and not a Grand Prix car) to finish 2nd after a close battle throughout the race.

The Richmond and Gordon Trophies race saw Sam Wilson in the Lotus 18 on pole, although on the first lap he dropped three places and sadly retired before the end of the race with a misfire. This could have left many to believe that the notoriously fast Will Nuthall in a Cooper T53 would win the race fairly comfortably but that was not the case. Andy Willis (now in the 1960 BRM P48 of Charles McCabe) and Rudi Friedrichs in another Cooper T53 were both putting pressure on Nuthall, who had taken the lead after just a couple of corners. The trio were separated over the line after lap one by just 0.6 seconds. A lap later and it was Willis who led, having had a better exit out of Lavant corner than Nuthall which had enabled him to power past on the straight. Meanwhile, of the front-engined cars, Richard Wilson in a Ferrari 246 Dino had started best, while John Spiers in his Maserati 250F was never too far behind and Charlie Martin, driving the Connaught C-Type, was expertly making his way through the field; earlier in the day, the mechanic working on the C-Type reckoned that a top 10 finish would be an excellent result; from 13th on the grid and with the car being driven superbly, it looked as though that target would be met. All the while, VSCC regular Eddie Williams was having all sorts of sideways fun in Charles Gillett's Cooper T43, providing great entertainment as he slid the car expertly round the track lap after lap, reminiscent of his performances in pre-war Frazer Nash cars at VSCC race meetings.

Out front, Willis maintained a relatively stable lead to the flag ahead of Nuthall who after the race remarked that he 'just couldn't seem to get out of the corners' before adding 'if you don't feel like you're going off every corner then you're not trying hard enough!'. If the drivers on track felt as though they were going off at every corner, it certainly didn't show – of the 23 cars that started, only the Lotus 18 driven by Sam Wilson didn't finish. Richard Wilson's Ferrari finished first of the front-engined cars just ahead of Spiers' Maserati (in 4th and 5th place overall respectively) whilst Charlie Martin finished well inside the top 10 in 6th.

And so a weekend which had seen a little bit of everything was over. There had been a fabulous array of cars from Grand Prix machinery to Austin J40 pedal cars, which had been campaigned by children from 4 to 10 years of age in the Settrington Cup, a race which involved a 'Le Mans' start at the beginning of the main straight and saw the kids pedal ferociously down to the finish line (about 200 metres). There were even blocks laid out halfway down the straight so as to form a chicane, an extra obstacle in the way for the young drivers to contend with on their way to glory – indeed, the smile on the winner's face was as broad as on any winning driver's face all weekend. From Spitfires performing backflips mid-air under blue skies to 1950s Grand Prix cars tearing round the circuit under pouring rain, there had been something at Goodwood for everyone.

Roy Salvadori's quotation very nearly captures the Revival in one sentence, but it could do with one small amendment – 'Give me Goodwood "come rain or shine" and you can forget the rest of the world.'



Madresfield Court is the backdrop as Andrew Macdonald carefully stops his Humber 8/18 (Paul Freeman)

The Madresfield Driving Tests

The organisers came up with their usual tricks to confuse the bewildered entrants only for the weather to add its own challenges, as **JACK PEPPIATT** *reports*

Madresfield Driving Tests, now in its 77th year, is a picture-perfect example of fun on wheels, an opportunity to turn up in anything within the specified years of manufacture and add to the display of British eccentricity while enjoying a day of gentle-ish competition. This year's event was on Sunday 14 September, the weekend of the Goodwood Revival, although much more low-key.

Scrutineering and signing on complete, the local Rotary Club were on hand with bacon rolls, tea and coffee, which they provided throughout the day. The sound of meetings and greetings filled the air over the grass verge paddock before it was time to tackle the first part of the tests – understanding the Byzantine instructions. Clerk of the Course Rob Gibson was apparently schooled at the university of obfuscation



Amanda Hyett's 30-98: they won a 1st class award (Phil Jones)



John Burgess has his hand on the AC Sociable's tiller (Phil Jones)





Left: *Winner of the Bob Watt Trophy for most desirable spectator's car was Robert Chester-Lamb's 1934 Bentley 3½-litre (Phil Jones)* ***Right:*** *This lovely 2-litre Lagonda must also have attracted a few votes (Phil Johnson)*

and had excelled himself this year. The instructions were absolutely clear and at the same time capable of multiple misinterpretations. This was illustrated by the windmill-like arm gesticulations and head scratching of the forty drivers, as they walked the course of the arrow-straight road with its ranks of lettered marker posts alongside.

At 10:30am, drivers were called forward to begin Test One: 'Forward and backwards with possible shuffles'. The bane of being car number one is that you get to do it incorrectly first, which either leads to clarity amongst the other drivers or yet more confusion, and I was that unfortunate entrant. The five tests of the day are all on the single-lane tarmac drive and involve forward and backward motion to place front or back wheels ahead or behind, sometimes astride white lines on the road. Complication can be added to this with hamburgers to be avoided by one front or back wheel often with a time penalty, sometimes without the use of brakes while driving as slowly as possible. Other tests require speed and braking within a given period of time in which the driver may elect to extend the length of the course to achieve fewer penalty points.

By now you will have got the general idea and be asking yourself, when does the fun part begin? It is in watching these antics being performed and the sheer diversity of makes, models and forms of transport. I counted twenty different manufacturers represented on the entry list, from AC Sociable to Rolls Royce, between 1912 and 1955, three and four wheels, single-cylinder 723cc to 4,700cc four-cylinder vehicles. In various states of appearance, oily rag to shiny, rag tops, tin tops and others with umbrellas, all equally loved by their owners and admired by the onlookers. The spectator cars parked alongside the drive are as interesting: Citroen Traction Avant, Reliant Scimitar, Austin, Lancia, Morris, Rover and Rolls were all represented.

The day had begun overcast and drab-looking as I set off from home. The forecast had improved over the preceding days, now it would only rain heavily from around 2pm. Usually the first three tests are run before a picnic lunch is enjoyed, accompanied by the tick-tick of cooling engines and brakes. Once the marshals have been fed and watered and the Clerk of the Course and timekeepers have steadied their beating hearts, the last two tests follow. Early on this day it was announced that lunch would be taken on the run and the day would end as early as possible due to the weather.

Around 12.30pm, a few spots of rain were noticeable on the windscreen. To the west, behind the imposing façade of Madresfield Court, the Malvern Hills were framed by the darkening sky. The end of Test Three was hastened and the remains of the hamburgers which were supposed to be avoided were shovelled off the course, by which time the hills had



Comp Sec Andrew Tarring enjoys a day out in his Humber 9/28 (Phil Jones)



Two Fords, four entries, three awards – well done teams Harrold and Bowyer (Phil Jones)





Left: *Roger Collings in the Brixia-Zust, which won the Montagu Trophy for most coveted competing car – well of course it did (Phil Jones)* ***Right:*** *Stephen Kay reverses the three-wheel Morgan (Paul Freeman)*

been obscured by very dark clouds. Those with hoods quickly erected them as the first big drops of rain began to fall, while those with umbrellas hoisted them over driver in-car. Those in tin-tops looked smug.

Test Four, 'Stop wherever you want', gave a choice of three distances between lines to cross in various combinations, forward and backward in a time of 40 seconds. For this an observer was required to sit in each car to ensure the driver had no check on the passage of time. If the reader has had any experience of entering and leaving an open car with the hood erect, they will understand the complications this might involve. Insert one leg, followed by head, torso, backside then second leg. With the observer settled comfortably on the rather damp passenger seat, the driver must peer under the raised hood to see the starter's flag drop, then accelerate on the rain-slicked surface before stopping with all wheels beyond line CC (for instance), reverse, stopping with all wheels behind BB, forward, stop with all wheels in front of BB, reverse to all wheels behind AA, forward to all wheels in front of AA, reverse to all wheels behind XX, finally forward to all wheels ahead of CC. This must be done in 40 seconds, penalties being awarded for times above or below the magic number or transgressing the order or not being beyond or behind the line. Bearing in mind that the rain was by this time teeming down and the rear celluloid screen is being fogged by the exertions of driver inside the car and rain on the outside, all in all, it was not that simple.



Richard Marsh is always ready for a sharp exit (Phil Johnson)

I parked and watched the faster cars, wheels spinning and sliding under braking on the now very wet surface. Soft-top cars braking hard unleashed a torrent of water from the hood onto the bonnet. This in some cases provoked a misfire from the soaked engine. The tin-top drivers no doubt continued to look smug; I was not able to see through the pelting rain. By now one or two spectator cars had called it a day, the entrants however stuck to their guns, retiring to the paddock to await Test Five.

This was called 'Brakes? Let us hope so'. Against the clock and a target box in which to stop, from zero penalties to 20, the possibility of aquaplaning



Our reporter's Wolseley Hornet does battle with the burgers (Paul Freeman)



Richard Holdsworth borrowed French Dave's Renault and actually did slightly better than him (Phil Johnson)



Douglas Hore tests the acceleration of his newly acquired Morris Cowley (Phil Johnson)



Will Marsh on his way to a 2nd class award (Paul Freeman)

and not being able to see the markings on the road, compounded by the lack of forward visibility suggested caution was going to be worthwhile but, what the heck, let's go for broke! The marshals had taken a sensible step or two back from the roadside. The possibility of a soaking from the puddles and/or misjudged braking was no doubt on their minds. Poised, huddled under a cloud of umbrellas, stop watches and clip boards, ready they waited. What a stoical breed are marshals, without complaint, still smiling, with the job of clearing all the kit away at the end of the day still to come.

Due to the weather, the usual end-of-event gathering around the organisers' tent was abandoned, so there was little opportunity to thank, in person, the team of marshals, helpers, officials, timekeepers and scrutineers. I am sure all participants will add their thanks in emails to the Secretary of the Meeting, Ethan Harris. The results later showed that Richard Marsh had won a 3rd class award in his late father's Austin Seven Top Hat Saloon, as did Mark Lynch in his Rover 8 and Charlotte Bowyer in her shared Ford Model A, also winning the Ladies Award. Seconds went to Will Marsh in his Ulster and Stephen Harrold in his shared Ford A Phaeton, while firsts went to Amanda Hyett (Vauxhall 30-98), Charles Lees (Model A Tudor – he also won the Saloon Award), James Harrold in the shared Ford, John Reed in his Austin Healey 100 and, last but by no means least, seasoned expert David Pryke in his very quick Morgan Riley combination, who was the overall winner and therefore took home The Madresfield Trophy. In the concours, Roger Collings won the competing car most other competitors would have liked to take home, with his magnificent Brixia-Zust, while Robert Chester-Lamb's 1934 Bentley 3½-litre won the Bob Watt Trophy for most coveted spectating car.

The event came to a close as drivers scarpered for home through large puddles of standing water. It was apparent that all present and the countryside had endured (or enjoyed) a soaking, all in the name of fun and, dear reader, it was. I shall, I hope, be back next year.



David Rushton gets a soaking despite having the Alvis's hood up (Paul Freeman)



Martin Trentham's delightful little Wolseley Hornet (Paul Freeman)



Robin Butler's Rolls-Royce looks ready to cross the Alps (Paul Freeman)

Prescott – The Long Course

The final competition in the club's 2025 Speed Season was a day of jubilation for some and disappointment for others, as **RICHARD GATLEY** *reports*

It's 4:00am on Saturday 20 September and I'm awake and thinking: have I got everything packed? Will it rain? How will I report on the meeting? Meanwhile Heidi, my Frazer Nash-BMW 319/45, is quietly slumbering in the garage. There's still another hour and a half before the alarm is due to go off but I can't get back to sleep. It's dark when I get up but it has just started getting light when I drive Heidi out of the garage and set off for Prescott.

By the time I arrive, at 7:30am, the paddock is already half full with other drivers finishing off preparing their cars ready to be scrutineered. I go down to the office to sign in, and finish off preparing Heidi. The scrutineer is soon with me and fortunately finds nothing amiss, and I get my competition pass. Thankfully, drivers were not required to attend the elaborate safety briefing which had featured at Vintage Prescott in August, normal service having been resumed.

I set off round the paddock to start to pick up valuable information for you, my reader. I'm very pleased to find Alistair Pugh in Zone A with the much-campaigned FN-BMW 328 (previously owned by Alastair and now owned by Roland Duce) out for the first time for a long while. Alistair is now driving the car for Roland and will compete at the Castle Combe Autumn Racing Festival tomorrow. Sadly, whilst he's competing in my class (Class 4), he's paddocked next to Roland Duce's ERA B-Type in Zone A, not in Zone M alongside Heidi.

I carry on walking down Zone A and find Vijay Mallya, who now owns the ex-Crossley Meates FN-BMW 328, tucked away on the grass. His car is beautifully turned out and has a very hot engine under the bonnet courtesy of Blakeney Motorsport. Given a dry run, Vijay could possibly take the class record, but he too is sadly not paddocked along with me in Zone M. In Zone B, I find Louis McNair with his GN Katipo. I first saw this car two weeks ago at Loton Park and was amazed at how quickly the little car goes. It is entirely self-built by Louis and is an impressive piece of engineering. It's named Katipo after the eponymous venomous widow spider native to New Zealand from where Louis hails, and the car being very spider-like in car terms. Another self-built car was the Riley 9 Special of Mark Chandler who was competing in his first VSCC hill climb.

Mike Pallett was entered in Class 4 but had had to withdraw as the repair to the supercharger on his Lea Francis 'S' Type Hyper, which blew up at Vintage Shelsley Walsh earlier in the season, was not quite complete. Nonetheless, he came to the meeting and was fairly sanguine about the situation.

It was good to see Robin Harcourt-Smith out with the Frazer Nash Alvis Norris back in commission following the car's transmission failure at Museum Corner at Loton Park two weeks earlier. Robin told me that he'd heard that earlier in the morning a black and white heifer cow had been found roaming round the orchard campsite in the vicinity of the marshals' club house, having escaped from a neighbouring field. The cow was rounded up safely back into its rightful pasture, but apparently reappeared a short time later before its second and successful eviction from the orchard. Perhaps it just wanted to watch the cars go by.

Whistling Billy, the 1905 White Steam Car graced Zone B and, when in steam, is quite a spectacle. It



Winner of the Edwardian class, Duncan Cartwright's Sunbeam alongside Edward Sykes's Fiat (Phil Jones)



Fergus Gunn and the adoration of the nut (Phil Jones)



Simon Bowyer competing in his newly acquired Frazer Nash Colmore for the first time (Peter McFadyen)



Head in the clouds: the Dykes's Whistling Billy was unable to compete (Phil Jones)

made it to the start line but was required to retire having dropped a slick of a mixture of oil and water on the track just beyond the start line. I discovered that it is a part of the design of the engine that there is some loss of oil when moving. On this point the car was sadly precluded from any further part of the competition. It seemed the only remedy was to put a drip tray under the car, something not possible on the day. The team didn't give up until a very dramatic appearance of flame shooting out of the 'exhaust' was too much for the paddock marshal who ordered the fire to be put out.

Alex Pilkington was paddocked near to me with her beautiful Alfa Romeo 6C 1750. She was full of hope for the day having had the car 'professionally' set up. However after her second practice run, it was clear that the engine was not running right so she retired from the competition, not wanting to change anything before handing it back to the 'professional'.

David Pryke was hoping to compete in his Frazer Nash Shelsley but the engine was not running right. It was ultimately diagnosed with reduced compression on two cylinders. Thus he competed in his Morgan/Riley 4/4 which he'd not used for 18 months, and itself had a tired engine. David gave me the impression in the paddock that he was not expecting the car to be particularly competitive. Simon Bowyer was competing in his lovely, recently acquired Frazer Nash Colmore 4 Seater Open for the first time. Whilst he was busy trying to work out what gear selections might give him the best times, he did a creditable 69.26s first run against a handicap of 66.0s.

The weather forecast for the day was not very good. The best we could expect was to have a dry first practice run, with rain forecast from mid-morning on. Happily, though we had mainly cloud with a little sunshine, we had no discernible rain during the morning. However just before the first competitive runs we had a very light shower, which was not enough to consider it a wet track, so good times were possible. The rain didn't hold off entirely, and we had a short heavy shower just before the changeover between first and second runs which definitely resulted in a wet track. In wandering round the paddock, talking to various people, I got the impression that no matter who I spoke to, almost all had something they would like to change on their cars. For some it was something that was wrong with the car, whilst for others it was something they wanted to do to improve performance or handling. Having a competition car is to have a continuing project, there's always something to do. That's what a hobby is, after all.

Despite having a 'tired' engine, FTD and Fastest Sports Car award went to David Pryke in his Morgan/Riley 4/4 with a time of 56.67s against his handicap of 55s, and was closely followed by James Baxter only 0.05s behind in his Riley/ERA Sprite. The award for



Clive Knott tricycles the Elfe CC round Ettore's (Steve Welsh)



Bruce Stops finished 2nd in Class 15 in his T35/44 Bugatti (Peter McFadyen)



It's all a bit much for some (Phil Jones)



Jonathan Cale in the 747cc 1927 Singer (Steve Welsh)

Fastest Young Driver and Fastest Vintage Car went to Louis McNair in his impressive self-built GN Katipo.

William Marsh further increased his domination of Class 1 by winning 1st Overall and 1st Vintage in class. Nigel Dowding won Class Two in the Riley Brooklands, and 1st Vintage, while in Class 3, Wilfred Cawley did well with a time of 59.01s beating Championship leader Rufus Flann to take 1st Overall, 1st Vintage and 2nd Handicap. In my own class, Class 4, Vijay Mallya took 1st Overall, while I took Best Handicap. As it turned out there were no cars competing in Class 5, as Alex Pilkington had retired as previously mentioned, and Dick Wilkinson was entered but unable to get his Alvis Silver Eagle Sports started at home and therefore unable to drive it to Prescott.

Neil Thorp in his Hudson Spikins Special was 1st Overall in Class 6, beating his handicap, with John Fack in his Railton Light Sports taking 2nd Overall, making him the Championship class winner for the season. 1st Overall in Class 7 for Edwardians was Duncan Cartwright aboard his 1913 Sunbeam 12/16. Graham Figg in the Otav Cyclecar gained 2nd Handicap.

In Class 8, Iain Muir was 1st Overall and 1st Vintage in his Riley Brooklands Replica. Ethan Harris in the Riley 9 Special was 2nd Overall, while Mark Chandler in his Riley Brooklands Replica gained 2nd Handicap and 2nd Vintage, and Elinor Bergman won 1st Handicap in her Austin 7 Special. David Pryke was 1st Overall in Class 9, with Greg Lerigo 2nd Overall. 1st Handicap went to Richard Stott in his MG PA, and 2nd Handicap went to Ben Briggs in his Riley 12/4 Special. In Class 10, David Knight drove his Frazer Nash TT Replica to 1st Overall, narrowly missing his handicap of 61.0s. Christopher Batty, alone in Class 11, had an unchallenged 1st Overall and 1st Vintage.

In Class 13 the honours of being Fastest Young driver, Fastest Vintage, 1st overall in class and 1st Vintage in class went to Louis McNair in the GN Katipo. 2nd Overall was Samuel Archer in the Austin 7, and Chris Hubble was 2nd Vintage in his Austin 7 Ulster Replica. Jake Purnell took 1st Historic in his Austin 7 Replica, and was closely followed by Ian Goddard who took 1st Historic in his MG PA-PB. Patrick Blakeney-Edwards was unchallenged in Class 14 so gained 1st Overall, 1st Vintage and 1st Handicap in his Frazer Nash Super Sports. In Class 15 James Baxter was 1st Overall in his Riley/ERA TT Sprite, Bruce Stops was 1st Vintage in his Bugatti T35/44, and Paul Dawson was 1st Handicap in his Wolseley Hornet Special. Robin Harcourt-Smith was unchallenged in his Frazer Nash Alvis Norris gaining 1st Overall and 1st Handicap. In Class 17, the Invited Class, Derren D'Archambaud was the only entry in his Austin 7 Special, as was Alan Harrison in his Cooper T56 in Class 20 for Rear-engined Postwar Racing Cars dated prior to 1 January 1966. And so concluded another excellent VSCC speed season. No doubt we shall all be back for more next year.



'I'm alright!': thumbs up from David Ellison after some excitement in the B-Type ERA (Peter McFadyen)



Patrick Blakeney-Edwards also brought the kitchen sink (Steve Welsh)

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The tourists at Hackthorn, the author's family home since it was built in the 1790s (Peter Lole)

The Lincolnshire Tour

Never ask a question to which the answer could be 'yes, if you do it' – although as **WILLIAM CRACROFT-ELEY** *found, organising a tour is actually great fun*

Some months ago, having asked what had happened to the Lincolnshire Tour, I was told there could still be one and would I like to organise it? This was a sharp reminder that the smorgasbord of amazing events put on each year by the VSCC for our enjoyment is only possible with the good will and effort from the membership and others. The great day was Sunday 28 September and, despite heavy rain until 10am, we had 12 cars – an Alfa Romeo, a Morgan, and two examples each of Alvis, Austin, Bentley, Riley and Vauxhall, who travelled from Worcestershire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Most had driven their cars over and were most appreciative of the roaring fire, hot cuppa and sausage-in-a-bun on arrival.

The advice I was given about planning the route was 'two hours before lunch, two hours after lunch, and something of interest along the way'. Starting at our home at Hackthorn, we headed south via lanes and villages to Lincoln, drove round the magnificent cathedral and through the city to the International Bomber Command Memorial on the south side. This excellent and humbling memorial and exhibition seemed to captivate all the drivers and crews, and the line of VSCC prewar cars outside provided an added period attraction for the other visitors to admire and enjoy.

From there we took a quick cut across the northern tip of the flat fens to cross the River Witham at Bardney before meandering through the lanes and very rural villages to Wragby and along the gently undulating edge of the Wolds to Wright's Ice Cream Parlour at North Willingham, our stop for lunch. By now the rain was well forgotten and we were able to enjoy wonderful weather for the rest of the tour. After lunch the undulations got much steeper and longer as we explored the depths and ridges of the heart of Lincolnshire's Wolds – scenery and topography that few know Lincolnshire has – before wending our way back to Hackthorn for tea.

As for the directions, I witnessed or heard about a few navigator errors en route, all by different people at different places, but everyone found their way round and safely back after a very enjoyable day. Three drivers were under 32, and driving their first tour. A further five of similar age were navigators or passengers, and all really enthusiastic. Would we organise one again? Definitely. We have really enjoyed the tours, doing Worcestershire, Suffolk, Yorkshire and now Lincolnshire this year. They complement the trials season and provide a full day's entertainment for the entire crew. They offer a great opportunity to enjoy vintage motoring, wonderful countryside and great camaraderie.

If you feel your region is under-represented with VSCC events, then you know what to do. It's very rewarding and fun. Many thanks to all who took part, to Mike Shields the scrutineer, and the home team for tremendous hosting and hospitality. This year we didn't set a tyre on last year's route, and there is plenty more of Lincolnshire to see. Please join us in 2026.

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The tour attracted a wide variety of makes, models, ages and sizes (Steve Welsh)



Hector Bailey's Talbot AV95 cruises through the cider orchards (Steve Welsh)

Cakes and ale

Despite Storm Amy's best efforts, this year's Somerset Tour was a glorious autumn's day rounded off with – of course – cider and apple cake, as **PETER GODWIN** *reports*

Storm Amy battered into the UK on Saturday 4 October, causing a tree to fall on to a power line in our village in Somerset, which resulted in a power outage for much of the day. Fortunately, by Sunday morning the winds had eased, and the roads were mostly dry as we set off under clearing skies for North Down Orchard Cider Farm near Crewkerne for the start of this year's Somerset Tour. Chris Pickering and his team of helpers had been rewarded with a very full entry list of 42 cars, including examples of Alvis, Austin, Bentley, Buick, Bugatti, Citroen, Ford, Healey, Jowett, Lagonda, Lea Francis, MG, OM, Riley, Singer, Sunbeam and Talbot. The oldest car was John Burgess's magnificent 1914 Vauxhall Prince Henry, fresh from a recent engine rebuild, which had been driven down from Bristol. The youngest was Ben Abbots's 1955 Morris Minor.

After a welcome beverage and bacon roll, we set off in broadly chronological order at one-minute intervals. The morning route started through the pretty ham-stone villages of West Chinnock, Chiselborough and Little Norton before climbing to the top of Ham Hill itself to admire the extensive view to the west. The route continued down across part of the Somerset Levels to Somerton, from where we followed Andrew Rowland's lovely OM 665S past Castle Cary and through Evercreech, to arrive at the East Somerset Railway for lunch. Here GWR 'Prairie' class 2-6-2T tank locomotive number 4555 was in steam, and about to haul a lunchtime special along what remains of the branch line between Witham and Shepton Mallet. During lunch, a very enthusiastic volunteer gave the writer and his wife a very comprehensive tour and history of the signal box. In the early days after the renowned artist David Shepherd had acquired the line, the empty signal box was used to exhibit his paintings, but a signal lever frame has since been acquired from a derelict box in Cornwall, and now the volunteers are in the process of linking this up to the points and signals in the station.

The afternoon route took us on some faster roads initially, skirting Shepton Mallet before passing through Pilton and the site of the Glastonbury Festival. Glastonbury Tor loomed large on our right-hand side as we entered the town. From there, we dropped down on to the Levels again passing through Butleigh and its impressive court house, then continuing through Somerton and Langport, and passing the remains of



Seth Stanbury arrives at Cranmore in John Burgess's wonderful Prince Henry (Steve Welsh)



The 'Prairie' class 2-6-2T tank locomotive in steam during the lunch break (Peter Godwin)



The Mille Miglia? No it's Andrew Rowland's OM 665S in Somerset (Steve Welsh)



All smiles aboard Bruen Walford's elegant Citroen Light 12 (Steve Welsh)

Muchelney Abbey before ultimately arriving back at North Down Orchard.

Here, their Apple Sunday event was in full swing, with live music provided by the 13-strong Wessex Big Band. Tea and a slice of apple cake was on offer in exchange for tokens provided at the start; cider and beer were also available for real money. The weather was now at its best, with bright sunshine illuminating the early autumn colours brought on by the hot, dry summer, and many of us lingered for some time listening to the music and talking to friends.

It remains just to thank Chris Pickering and his helpers for the excellent route and organisation, and the Mangles family for hosting the start and finish of the event.



Tobias Bruce never drives a modern; here he exercises his J-Type Lea-Francis (Steve Welsh)





A Herbert of Austins at Cwm Whitton – is that the correct collective noun? (Phil Jones)



Mia Cook has a go at the stop–restart in the Morris (Phil Jones)

The Joy of the Welsh

Held as ever over two days in early October, the opening meet of the trials season was as perfect a weekend as you can have, says relative newcomer **ALICE LOCKE**

This year's Welsh was only my fourth trial, but by now I'm beginning to feel like I half-know what I'm doing. The Welsh, though, always feels like another level. It's the season opener, the one everyone talks about – equal parts excitement and expectation. It began, fittingly, with a proper Welsh morning: mist hanging low, cold enough to sting your fingers, and the roads slick with dew. With Izzy, my irrepressibly cheerful Saturday bouncer, a can of spare fuel and an optimistically light tool bag packed into little Julia (my Ulster), we set off.

The miles to scrutineering were blissfully uneventful – Julia humming happily, Izzy and I having a good natter (screaming) over the sound of the engine – and we were greeted by familiar faces and the smell of petrol and coffee on arrival. Hot chocolate and the first of many Marshmallow Squares followed – but our peace was short-lived. Before I'd finished the cup, Ryan Goodyear appeared and spotted a disaster waiting to happen: my front wheels were hanging on by the goodwill of last year's washers. Before I could panic, Ryan miraculously produced a perfect replacement set and, with help from Ben Collings, fitted them in minutes, saving the day and my dignity. Typical of the VSCC: people appear at just the right moment with exactly the thing you need. We passed scrutineering without a hitch, which felt like cause for celebration.

Wheels properly attached, we rolled back into Presteigne to collect our score card and head to the first hill: Old Impton. Determined to be brave, we opted for the stop–restart. At my last trial, the Herefordshire, I'd skipped an optional restart and spent the rest of the event regretting it, so this time we were all in. With Izzy providing first-rate bouncing, we launched off the line and shot upwards. For a glorious few seconds we were unstoppable – until, inevitably, we weren't. No sooner had we basked in triumph than we perished a little way beyond, grass having never been my strong suit. Still, getting off the restart felt like a massive win; better to fail with enthusiasm.



Winner of the Smatcher Trophy, George Diffey in the Humber Dogcart (Phil Jones)



James Collins's 1930 Lea-Francis Ace of Spades; he later retired (Mike Griffin)



Charlotte Bowyer's Ford always has the smiliest crew (Phil Jones)



Many hands make some progress for Luke Roberts's Bianchi (Phil Jones)

On to the second hill and second round of Marshmallow Squares and we went far better: a bit more throttle than finesse, perhaps, but we crested it cleanly and were greeted by the marshal's clipboard with twenty-five points in the bag. Our confidence was growing – as was our volume. Turns out you could hear us coming – screaming – before the engine. Around us, the rest of the group was flying. Toby Kirkby, driving his newly acquired Ford Model A for the first time, had brought wife and children along. To add to the excitement, Ben had installed a row of (purely decorative) 'boost switches' in the back for the kids to flick whenever Dad needed 'extra oomph'. Whether or not they worked mechanically, they certainly worked morally; every time Toby cleared a section, the celebrations from the backseat left no doubt about it.

Annie Peake, meanwhile, was of course her usual glamorous self – perfectly turned out and infuriatingly good. She sailed up Old Impton earlier in the day and still managed to look like she was on her way to a lovely lunch rather than wrestling a vintage car up a wet bank. Archie Collings's Bentley ran beautifully and looked splendid with its team of perfectly coordinated bouncers in pink and red scarves. Ben Collings, trialling the mighty 1903 Mercedes, was a sight to behold – it was pure theatre.

The afternoon hills passed in a blur of mud, chatter and triumphs. There's something wonderfully rhythmic about it once you're in the flow – climb, queue, climb again, swap stories with the crew ahead, wave to the marshals and admire the parade of wonderfully eccentric VSCC folk. Special mention to the woman who managed to keep a white veil spotless all weekend (a true miracle) and to the duo in matching neon orange hats. Next time, Izzy and I clearly need an outfit strategy.

Sunday dawned with fresh mist and slick grass. Our first hill was Lloyds – a tricky start, and watching a few cars ahead lose momentum didn't help the nerves. With my Dad now bouncing and both of us pretending not to be intimidated, we decided to just go for it. Full throttle, plenty of bounce – and half a hill later, we were firmly embedded in a rut. Undeterred, we ploughed on, and the rest of the morning went smoothly. The car was in a cooperative mood despite the occasional crunch, and we ticked off the next few hills without incident. The marshals were in good form too – cheerful, efficient, and clearly enjoying the novelty of a dry weekend. They're always good-humoured, but I suspect it's easier to smile when it isn't raining sideways.

The hills had been cleverly set – twisty, unpredictable and just muddy enough to keep everyone on their toes despite the dry spell. Conditions were slick



Laurie Patton's standard Chummy going well; he was just out of the prizes (Mike Griffin)



A LWB line-up at Cwm Whitton (Phil Jones)



Archie Miller on his way to a 3rd class award in his standard Chummy (Phil Jones)



Toby Kirkby and family in their newly acquired Model A out for the first time (Mike Griffin)

in places but mercifully short of the wheel-swallowing quagmire we've all faced before. Miraculously, we avoided any mechanical drama: no broken shafts, no punctures, just one heart-stopping moment when a lump of mud stuck to the exhaust and sent up enough steam to make us think we were on fire. Otherwise, it was nothing but good, clean(ish) fun.

By lunchtime we were back in the woods, the sunlight coming through the trees and the cars throwing up clouds of dust and leaves. The atmosphere there is always special – quieter somehow, apart from the occasional burst of engine noise echoing off the banks. My dad and I took far too many selfies as we went, and delighted in the trees arching overhead like a cathedral of autumn colour – gold, copper, and russet swirling in the wake of every car.

The final sections at Cwm Whitton are always a highlight – relaxed, spectator-friendly, and full of laughter. We had three clean climbs to finish, rolling back down grinning. There we found Izzy again, now marshalling alongside her parents and grandfather – three generations of Wards ensuring the last hill ran perfectly. It was the most fitting reminder of all: the Welsh is as much about people as it is about cars.

Prize-giving was held in the usual spirit of cheerful exhaustion: tea, exceptional cake and Wilkie's wit. He thanked the course-setters and marshals who'd spent weeks preparing and gave a heartfelt nod to the growing number of young women taking part – a small but important reminder that the sport keeps evolving without losing its charm. Then came the winners – greeted with the sort of applause that only comes from people who know exactly how hard-won those hills are.

In the Short Wheelbase Standard Cars, victory went to Matthew Parkin in the tireless Trojan Utility, with Richard Rowe and Archie Miller clinching second and third. Among the Short Wheelbase Clubmans class, the competition was fierce. Harry Hoskins and Ollie Leston both claimed the Harry Bowler Memorial Trophy, owing to superb drives all weekend – neither dropping a single point. They were joined on the top step by Freddie Owen, who is only 15, and would have scored even higher had he been able to drive on two sections that consisted of footpaths and therefore the public highway. Nevertheless he still scored a strong first, as did Will Marsh and Derek Chatto. Hot on their heels came Lucy Grimshaw, David Talbot, Alan Bee, John Fack and Keith Dobinson, each taking fine seconds, while Gaynor White, Sarah Owen, David Knight, Patrick Cunningham and Graham Cannings rounded things off with well-earned thirds after a weekend of determined climbs. In the Short Wheelbase Experts class, the honours went to Peter Batty and Simon Price, who both lifted the Harry Bowler Memorial Trophy. Stephen Arkell and Matt Price followed in second place, and Stewart Rich and Simon Blakeney-



Hats off to Freddie Owen, 15, who did exceptionally well in 'Jemima' (Mike Griffin)



Only Vintage cars can enter the Welsh; here Will Marsh is driving a 1928 Chummy (Mike Griffin)



Bird's eye view of Eddie Williams and crew in the 3-litre Bentley (Mike Griffin)



Winner of Class 1c, Pete Batty in the Ford T Special (Mike Griffin)

Edwards wrapped things up with third. Meanwhile, over in the Long Wheelbase Standard group, fine climbs from David McRobert, Jessica Scudamore and Rhiannon Carvell-Crook – all in Ford Model As – showed the mettle of the big cars. And, finally, in the Long Wheelbase Modified and Specials, John Chilman claimed the Presteigne Trophy in a Chrysler 65, with Jane Bond, Archie Collings and Owen Jones also earning firsts. Paul Jeavons secured a strong second, with Stephen Hill, Robert Beebee and Richard Baxter taking the well-deserved thirds.

Absolutely shattered and heading home to London, my Dad and I delighted in reliving the weekend. It's not just the hills, though they are magnificent, or the competition, though it's always fierce. It's the camaraderie – the shared madness of flinging ninety-year-old machinery at muddy banks with friends who'll cheer whether you fly or flounder. Julia looked battered but proud, and I swear she purred the whole way home. Four trials in, I'm still learning – which hills bite, which flatter, and when (if ever) to lift off. But mostly, I'm learning that the real reward is the simple, ridiculous joy of doing something this daft, this demanding and this utterly delightful with the best sort of people. The Welsh had it all: bright skies, good hills, friendly chaos, and the right amount of mud. The car survived, the crew survived – though the Marshmallow Squares, of course, did not. Roll on the rest of the season.



Newlyweds Mr and Mrs Matthew Roberts enjoy married life in the Ford (Mike Griffin)



Gaynor White powers her way to a 3rd (Mike Griffin)



Jane Bond driving with great skill to win a 1st in the Morris (Mike Griffin)

The Tour of Sussex

And also a bit of Kent, each county looking as lovely as the other in the turning autumn colours, as **MICHAEL HARWOOD** *reports*

Sunday 12 October was a cold and overcast morning but we had a good run down through Kent in our Aston Martin to the Orchard Tea Room on the outskirts of Hartfield where the Sussex Tour was to start. The tour consisted of two loops each of about 40 miles, one in Sussex and one in Kent, both starting and finishing at the tea room, and you could do one of your choice in the morning, lunch on the way at a pub or at the tea room, then do the other in the afternoon.

Soon 18 delectable cars had arrived, of which only two were vintage: a lovely 1930 supercharged Lea-Francis Hyper and an Austin 7 saloon. The majority of the cars were PVT and included two Aston Martin Mark II short chassis, two MGs, a J2 and a larger 6-cylinder NA model, a Sunbeam 18.2, Lagonda M45, Alvis Speed 20, Railton Ranalah sports coupé, Fiat Ballila, Riley Lynx, 4¼-litre Derby Bentley and a V8 Ford Coupé Deluxe with tuned engine and full roll cage, which had completed some long-distance rallies. We were joined by four postwar cars, two Jowett Javelins and two high performance sports cars, a Jaguar XK140 and an AC Ace Bristol.

After an efficient welcome and briefing we all set off on our chosen routes at small intervals to avoid bunching. We chose to start with the Sussex one as we thought the Kent one would be easy as we knew most of the route. Soon we were in Hartfield then the Ashdown Forest, Winnie-the-Pooh country, where we passed an area where you could go to a stream in the woods and play Pooh sticks. But we motored on through the forest, which was used for hunting in medieval times and was looking its best in its autumn shades. We passed through some quaint villages and past some grand houses then onto Ardingly reservoir. En route we passed through three fords, two of which were more or less dry but one quite a stream and was best to take slowly. In parts it was hilly but nothing too difficult, which gave us the opportunity to enjoy some splendid views over the Weald and Ashdown Forest. After about a two-hour drive we returned to the tea room for lunch, which they served very efficiently considering there were so many of us in addition to their normal customers.

In the afternoon we tackled the Kent section, and by now the clouds had lifted so we were treated to a sunny afternoon. These lanes were more twisty and also had a few hills but nothing too difficult and were most attractive, the autumnal leaves looking golden in the sunlight. We passed three country estates: Hever Castle, Penshurst Place, where Henry VIII met and courted Anne Boleyn, and Chiddingstone Castle, a crenellated house. The Kentish countryside and pretty villages with many typical oast houses made our run particularly attractive. As a bonus the route passed over the Bidborough Ridge and past one of my daughters' house so we were able to stop for a short break. The run lasted just a little under two hours and then it was back to the tea rooms for a chat with some of the other tourists.

It had been a most enjoyable four-hour drive in lovely countryside. Most of us managed it trouble-free, the only problems being that one of the Jowetts had cylinder gasket problems after some work on the engine and the Lagonda had a slipping clutch. The other Jowett travelled a total of 175 miles in the day. Thanks to Bruce Girvan, Chris Swann and John Williams for organising such a great day and ensuring it ran so smoothly, and also the staff at the Orchard Tea Rooms for being so helpful and hosting us for the day.

Photos by Bruce Girvan



The Hyper Lea-Francis and two Jowett Javelins at the start



Handsome Bentley next to a perky little Fiat



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Robert Beebee on his way to a 1st in the Vauxhall (Peter McFadyen)

The Cotswold Trial

Every hill is a delight, says **GEORGE DIFFEY**, *even the ones that outfox you*

Thanks to the Quilters' hospitality, we now have an amazing place to start and end the Cotswolds Trial. So, my ride-on mechanic, Lewis Smith ('Golden Spanner'), and I got Humbug off the trailer and jumped in the queue for what Dad always referred to as 'Scrotumneering'. Toby signed everything off and we were ready to go. We were just one bouncer short.

The only problem with having a Cotswolds VIP as a bouncer was getting him out of bed and to the start on time. But finally, he arrived smelling good,



Ivan Dutton's Salmson VAL 3 cleared more hills than not (Peter McFadyen)



The standard Chummy of William Cracroft-Eley (Phil Johnson)



Dr Rachel Williams picks her way through the woods (Phil Johnson)



Bogged down: Eliot Rutland-Tucker and his Ford Phaeton (Phil Johnson)

hair in place, and armed with a hamper full of pork pies and loveliness and all was forgiven. We formed an alliance and mounted a three-pronged attack consisting of three very different weapons: Big (Archie Collings in the Bentley), Medium (myself in Humbug), and Small (Will Marsh in the Austin Seven Chummy).

One of the best parts of any trial has got to be the road miles, or even the adventure of finding the hills once on private land. But by far my favourite this year was the farm near Laverton. Once off the main road, we enjoyed a fantastic journey to reach the section, bouncing around and giggling before the day had even begun. So thank you, new landowners, because that was a real highlight. Minus the hill that went up into some trees and had a 90-degree left. That section was tricky, and Big, Medium and Little all struggled there. We were first to arrive, and the score sheet shows that most people got 25 after that!

When leaving some sections, or on the road miles, you are spoilt with some of the finest scenic panoramic views in the Cotswolds. With the elevation gain, you really do get those pinch-yourself moments at how beautiful the countryside is.

I shall try not to be too forensic and get bogged down by constructive feedback, but it's safe to say I didn't score very well in this trial. Without a big hug from Ben Collings at one point and being told 'it's OK to mess up', I probably would have been upset with my performance. However, I can comfortably say that this trial was the most fun I've ever had while scoring the fewest points I've ever scored.

What happened? Was it bad luck? Did our start hills get progressively easier after we churned them up? Did the rain fall at the wrong time? Or was it a trial where full bore wasn't the best plan of attack and 'trickle and grip' were king? Probably.

It was tremendous fun going around with Arch and Will, because watching them both tackle the same hill with very different approaches was, from an academic point of view, fascinating. Watching an Austin wiggle and dance upon the surface, finding grip at a crawl, versus a Bentley in second gear hurling rooster tails of mud in its wake, it was academic fascination and pure entertainment combined.

There was not a single hill this year that wasn't entertaining, and sometimes when you get outfoxed, you have to respect the hill and honourably accept that the skill required to defeat the foe is not yet in the locker. I will go back to the drawing board, and I must practise my clutch control.

I would personally like to thank everyone at the VSCC: especially Rob Hubbard, the marshals, and the landowners, for allowing us to do what we do. It's a privilege I do not take for granted, and I look forward very much to coming back next year, hopefully a little wiser, and with a few more points on the board. Love and champagne, Geo Diff.



Dominic Boulton (Alvis 12/50) enjoying the craic on the way down (Peter McFadyen)



Thataway! Chris Williams (Riley) gets directions from his bouncer (Phil Johnson)

Cotswold Novice Trial

Introduced in 2023 for those who have driven in five trials or fewer, this popular addition to the main Cotswold Trial attracts some interesting cars and drivers, says hill chief **PIERS TREVELYAN**

Few events evoke such stirring in mankind as the chance to pitch one's pride and joy against the rigours and torment of mother nature. The Cotswold Novice Trial is a relatively new addition to the trials calendar, intended as a way of introducing more people to the sport. For a few years now your scribe has been elevated to the lofty heights of Hill Chief for which he takes his duties very seriously, along with his A-team of marshals all hand picked from the very cream of VSCC marshalling.

This year the event was held on Sunday 26 October, the day after the main trial, and Pardon Oak Valley was to be our battleground. A cheeky stop–restart halfway up the hill would be a baptism of fire for those brave enough to attempt such a feat. The day dawned misty and overcast to the distant throng of vintage engines all scrabbling to find their start hill and the gentle whistle of George Shackleton's kettle. After a walk of our hill and some deliberation over our stop and restart box, we were open for business. Suddenly from the top of Cleeve Hill a gaggle of Austin Sevens followed by a flock of Model A Fords descended on the start, and out of their steeds stumbled their valiant crews all eager to see how far they could get. First up was Tom Peppiatt in his Austin Seven Special, who went on to win Class 1a. With engine revving he was looking good up until the stop–restart but then just couldn't get away. Little did we know then that his score of 12 was the first of many to come.

A highlight of the day was the amazing and brilliant De Dion Bouton of Guy Debes which was clearly a well set-up car, as demonstrated by him starting it on the handle before approaching the start line. Speaking to Guy and judging by his scorecard, he had clearly had huge success on other hills. But when the radio sparked into life and his score on our hill was relayed – guess what, yes, a tricky stop–restart resulted in another 12. As it turned out, nobody was able to better a score of 12, and Guy won his class, 1b. Hats off.

Now those who know me will know that if you cut me in half you would read Vauxhall 30-98. So the car of the day for me had to be the beautifully prepared OE 30-98 of Jack Lunn. Before the start Jack was very patient with my barrage of questions and enthusiasm while battling the effects of a particularly merry night the evening before.

He got off to a superb start on our hill, the Vauxhall's exhaust echoing round the hillside intermingled with the howl of first gear. But would he do it? Out of sight, they are still going, engine back to idle, they must have made the restart? Engine revving, everyone cheering, then silence. The radio crackles into life: 'A very spirited …12', report James and Bruce from up the hill, Caroline and Jules make a note on the official score card and we move on.

The day draws on with quiet spells and spells of frantic activity. Cups of tea are consumed and offered around and everyone is in good heart. It was lovely to see the newlyweds George and Jess Scudamore in the Model A. On this day George was allowed to take the wheel; fortunately, he didn't disgrace himself and marital relations remained intact. Next up we had VSCC royalty in the form of the club secretary showing Adam Jones how it should be done in the



The Novice Triallists assemble under a glorious Cotswold sky



Emily Martin gives it some welly in the Ford



Guy Debes won Class 1b aboard his splendid De Dion



'A Trojan level of bonkers': Simon Barringer and his 3-wheel BSA

Ulster. Adam really pulled out all the stops and after an unfortunate encounter with a modern car (I can sympathise) had brought the Ulster back breathing even more fire than it was before. Tania certainly knew where the loud pedal was and used it to full effect, but again that dreaded 12 echoed down the radio.

Next came another strong contender for car of the trial. Not only was it driven by one of my favourite people in the world but was summed up beautifully by the legend that is Geraint Owen: 'Anyone who attempts to trial a FWD BSA deserves a medal. They are at a Trojan level of bonkers.' It was of course the hero that is Simon Barringer. So here we go. 'Simon, are you ready?' 'Yes Piers,' comes the reply with a wry grin. The radio announces, 'hill clear!' and so with swinging arms and hilarity my encouragement starts: 'Come on Si – come ON!!' Wheels spinning, that V Twin giving it everything … still in sight … still in sight … 'Umm is that it, Si?' And with that patient expression looking back at me: 'Yes, Piers'. Now in this trial you can elect to use the joker, a second go effectively, but you can only use it once throughout the day. The joker was used and well, they do say one is the loneliest number. Sadly, in this case, so it was to be.

At this point the young guns descended on us in the form of Will Marsh, this time in the passenger seat, with Evie Mason at the helm, along with Jack Bond, Harry Leston and Fergus Cameron, all causing mayhem at the start as they juggled for position as to who would go first. Even as much weight as possible and enthusiastic bouncing couldn't get past that dratted 12. Last to go were Will and Evie – could they do it? Well, on the line and off the line the Chummy looked good, everyone then crowding round the stop and restart where they went neatly into the box, a masterful demonstration from Will on the handbrake and Evie on the clutch. But still they couldn't quite get off and so again, yes, it was a 12.

And just like that, as the Austin Sevens disappeared and dusk started to fall, so too did our time on this wonderful hill and thus concluded the 2025 Cotswold Novice Trial. It's easy to focus on the cars in these articles but without the kindness and generosity of those willing to give up their time or provide locations, none of what you have just read would be possible. Every year this trial goes from strength to strength and it's a credit to those who work tirelessly behind the scenes. There are far too many to name individually but Martin and Rose Quilter who so generously host us, Rob Hubbard and Tim Milvain who organise such a brilliant weekend and of course all the marshals, in my case my A Team made up of George Shackleton, James Gresham, Bruce Young, Jules Kinsella, Caroline Beck and Jon Lee, we couldn't do it without them. So, same time, same place next year? Oh gosh, yes!

Photos by Mike Griffin



Kate Glover powers ahead in the Ford-engined Alvis



Ingenious routing of the exhaust on Jason Moses's Chummy

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LETTERS

Dear Sir,
Please may I use your letters page to bring the benefits of the club library to the membership's attention? The library belongs to the members and we really would love more members to make use of it. It is a library and an archive and has an amazing amount of information, which I hope will be there for future generations to enjoy. We have a collection of over 4,000 books divided by marque, biography, technical, competition, and everything in between which is motoring related. We even have a small section of motoring fiction. Perhaps of most use to members are the bound volumes of magazines including *Autocar*, *Light Car & Cyclecar*, *The Motor*, and *Motor Sport*, all dating from the very earliest issues, together with more recent publications like *The Automobile*, *Classic Cars*, *Magneto*, *Octane*, and *Classic & Sports Car*.

We have a great range of marque handbooks, event programmes, and sales literature. Our photograph collection comprises over 40,000 scanned photos and about the same number awaiting scanning. We have some marvellous early albums compiled by members in days gone by, containing some truly unique photographs. We can trace the competition history of your car, provide photos and results, and give you technical information on any aspect. Our team of volunteers are all vastly experienced in all aspects of vintage motoring and are there to help you. We also welcome visitors on any Wednesday or Thursday at Hockley Heath. A cup of tea and a biscuit are always on offer.

SUE DARBYSHIRE
Hockley Heath

Dear Sir,
Regarding your comments about flying a Tiger Moth (Editorial, 329) – you are so right! A 30-98, Frazer Nash and Tiger Moth is Heaven. May not be the most practical collection but wonderful life affirming FUN! Congratulations on producing excellent *Bulletin*s.

HAMISH MONRO
Westfield, East Sussex

Dear Sir,
What a fascinating article about Tom Plowman (329, pp. 38–42). An unusual link is that he supplied my Talbot BA75 new in 1935 to a Dr Woods of Old Bedford Road in Luton. It is also quite possible he met my grandfather Ernest as they were both working on transport in Cairo in 1915, one in the ASC and one in the Fusiliers Transport and both ended up in hospital in Cairo.

KEYTH RICHARDSON
Coldridge, Devon

Dear Sir,
Some reflections on a wet Madresfield Driving Test event and how AI helped me. But first, I wish to say a big Thank You to the marshals and other helpers who worked in some very inhospitable conditions. They are the lifeblood of our club and without them none of the super vintage events that we all enjoy could take place. Now, returning to AI. Lest members think that I have been engaged in some dastardly electronic modification to my car, and subsequent cheating, be reassured. I refer to 'Artful Intelligence' that was built into a lot of VSCC cars by the manufacturers and has been enhanced by the passage of time, often known as 'The Gremlins'. This form of AI keeps us all on our toes and makes sure that old cars can never be boring, though they can be exasperating at times. So how could this phenomenon have possibly helped me? As I managed to muddle through the often (for some) confusing instructions, I made a point of having a quick look at the instructions just before each test. However, in a car in the rain, the only dry place for the paper sheet was under the dash, and I failed to notice that Test Four was to a target time of 40 seconds. I assumed it had to be done as fast as possible and having completed the first part going forwards, AI stepped in to help by making the selection of reverse gear extremely difficult. It took three attempts to get it in before I could complete the test, which resulted in a near perfect time with only a one second penalty! Yours, confused of Ross-on-Wye …

JOHN REED
Perrystone Hill, Herefordshire

Dear Sir,
Needless to say I always enjoy *The Bulletin* when it drops in through our letterbox. I write with particular reference to 'The Frazer Nash Story'. In Part IV (326, pp. 34–37), you tell of BMK102, more or less the complete history from Flying Officer Jimmy James through most of its postwar life with Ulsterman Joe Fairley. Joe was a contemporary of mine age-wise and he was a good owner of the 'Nash, in that he used it





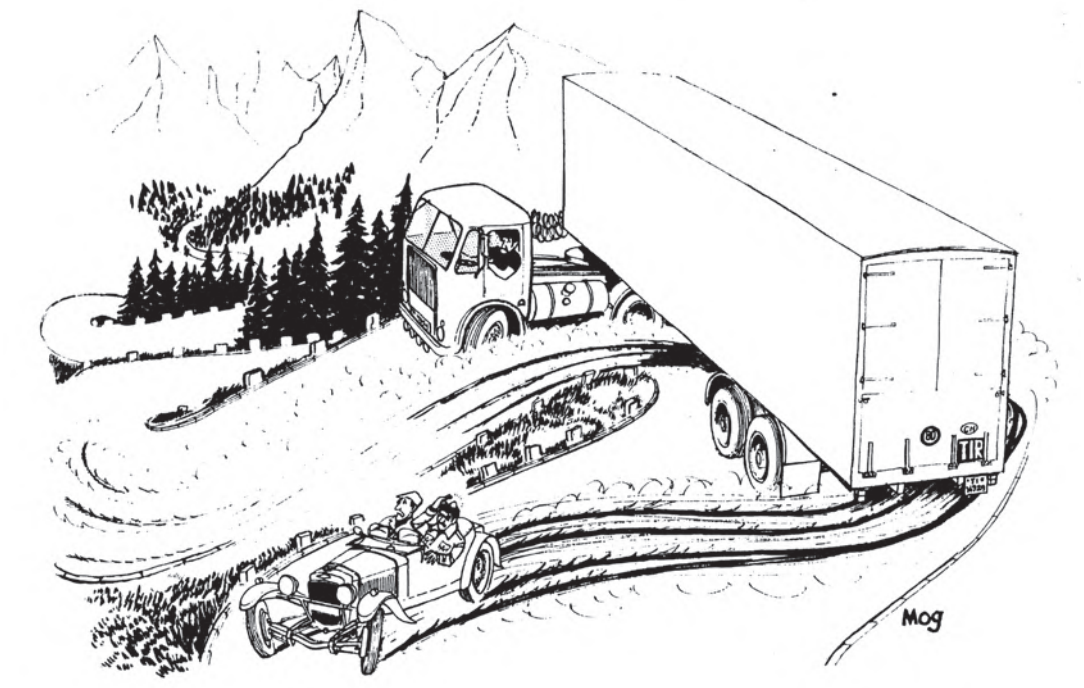
Ulsterman Joe Fairley competing in driving tests at Shanes Castle and Larchfield in his Frazer Nash BMK102 in 2008 and 2010 (Alan Clarke)

and fixed it when it was broken but it wasn't dormant for too long. Your article sent me scurrying through old Ulster Vintage Car Club News-sheets in the hunt for more action photographs, which I enclose herewith.

BASIL McCOY
Kircubbin, County Down

Dear Sir,
Regarding MOTs for old vehicles (Editorial 327 and Letters 328), for many years and with great support from old vehicle drivers and owners, my experience is as follows. I have offered my 1920s vehicles for a 'safety check' MOT at a cost of £25. My current modern vehicle MOT cost is £45, carried out at Tyreman Ltd., Cherry Street, Warwick, opposite the old Austin Healey works. It is obvious and logical to drive carefully and within the law. However, there must be hundreds, if not thousands of drivers/owners/enthusiasts who are not conversant with automobile engineering. They just want to see and drive their fantastic 'safe' old vehicles. That's what it's all about, isn't it? We are amazed that insurance companies have not insisted on a 'safety check' MOT. Once again, please keep up the good work and happy motoring in 'safe' old vehicles.

JOHN TAYLOR
Kenilworth, Warwickshire



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Donald Day

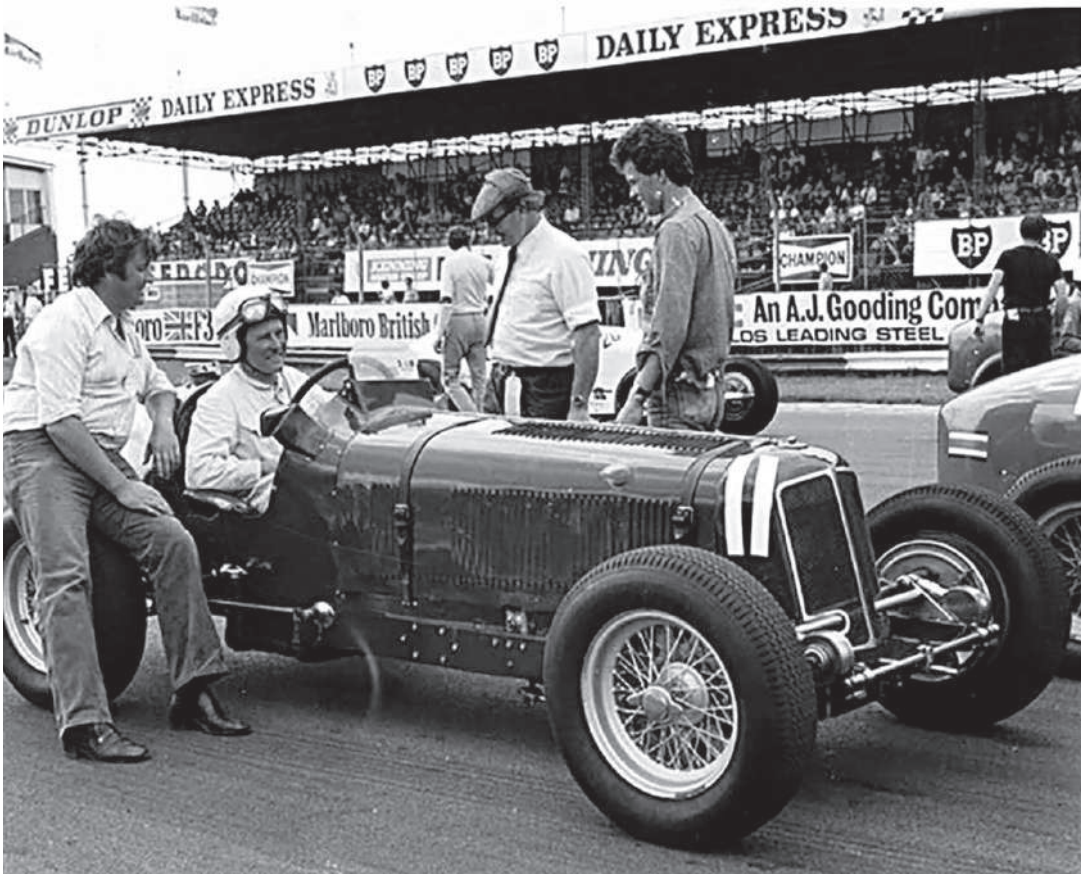
1933–2025

For those VSCC members who attended race meetings and hill climbs in the 1990s and Noughties, few people will have stood out quite so much as Donald Day. Here was a driver so committed to his sport that even after a horrific accident in his ERA at Silverstone in 1995, in which he lost an arm, Day continued to compete doggedly for a further 20 years, well into his 80s. It was only in 2016 that he finally sold R14B, a car his wife Susie referred to as 'the mistress', because 'she's always come first in our marriage'.

Donald Henry Day was born in Swindon in November 1933. His parents had no interest in cars, and his father didn't even drive, being of a generation more involved with horses, having fought with the Wiltshire Yeomanry during the First World War. Donald once recalled being surprised to discover his father's affinity with horses. 'I was most impressed when we went to a local farm, and my father, who to my mind was a million years old, got on this little pony and suddenly he was part of that horse. He was a superb horseman.'

After leaving school at 16, Donald joined the navy as an apprentice. This was where he learned the skills in engineering that saw him become one of the most trusted and respected fettlers in the old car world, particularly for Bentleys. After two years he became a cadet and attended Dartmouth Naval Engineer College, where he met Chris Lawrence, who got him into cars. In 1954, aged 21, Donald bought his three-litre Bentley, and joined the Bentley Drivers Club. He hadn't heard of the VSCC until a year later when, while driving through London, a man detached himself from the crowd and said 'Oh look, a three-litre Bentley – have you joined the VSCC?' So he did, and remained a member for 70 years. He immediately took the Bentley racing, but soon decided it wasn't fast enough for his needs.

A visit to Silverstone, during which he saw Lord Ebury race an ERA, made him resolve to get such



Donald Day in ERA R14B (VSCC library)

a car. So he placed a 'wanted' advertisement in *The Autocar*, which elicited two responses. One was offering R1A, a 1½-litre car, and the first ERA made. The other was R14B, a 2-litre car, the last ERA made. He chose the latter, on the basis of its larger engine, paying just over £900 for it, which he borrowed from his sister (she made him pay her back with interest). It was a lot of money in 1958, although good value for a car that only ten years before had almost won the British Grand Prix. Martin Morris, who bought R11B a year later, complained bitterly that he had to pay £1250 for his. The vendor of R14B was Keith Schellenberg, who in typically gung-ho manner had managed to mangle the gearbox before Donald could collect it, by towing it on the back of his car.

It was in many ways thanks to Donald and people like Bill Morris and Patrick Lindsay who also raced ERAs in the 1950s that the cars were preserved and not chopped up for scrap. The VSCC committee of the day is also partly to thank, having introduced historic racing for prewar cars which otherwise would have had nowhere to go. Having got to grips with the ERA, Donald demoted his Bentley to being the tow-car.

In 1969, Donald was offered a job to run the small dock repair facility in Belfast. Unbeknown to him it was the year the troubles started. He didn't particularly want the job, preferring to remain in England where he could more easily race the ERA. So when a posting came up in Singapore, he leapt at it, as he knew there was an active vintage car club there. He managed to get the Bentley and ERA shipped out virtually for free with the navy, and enjoyed spending evenings and weekends rebuilding their engines, often having to make parts from scratch.

Donald left the navy when he turned 40 in 1973. He also married Susie that year, and they bought a house in the village of Wroughton just south of Swindon, where he started his business, D H Day. The wedding was in the village church and Patrick Marsh provided the wedding car, a Delage, as Donald's Bentley was in bits and they couldn't find another. Two children followed: Peter, now a doctor, and Mary, whose partner Paul Richardson used to work for Donald and now runs a similar business.

Among Donald's many friends were some of the great figures of the VSCC: Hamish Moffatt, Patrick Lindsay, and Bruce Spollon, who persuaded Donald to join the committee in 1993, saying that it needed more racing drivers, as the majority were more interested in trialling. Despite having a reputation for being highly competitive, Donald always maintained he enjoyed taking part more than winning, although he was delighted to have won the Seaman Trophy on one occasion.

The accident at Silvertsone was a life-changing moment, which put Donald into a coma for three months. After six weeks, it was decided to amputate his left arm, a procedure the surgeon had never undertaken before. The ERA, meanwhile, was impounded and took two years to rebuild. When, eventually, it was modified for control with one arm, Donald found that some people were nervous about him returning to the track. For while the MSA assessors, one of which was the late Joy Rainey, accepted that he was still able to conduct his race car satisfactorily after a test conducted in the paddock at Donington, the Committee had received feedback from some drivers who said that if they found Donald in a race in which they had entered, they would scratch. Although his racing days were over, Donald was able to take part in sprints and hill climbs, which he continued to do until 2016.

Notwithstanding, Donald remained a loyal and dedicated member of the club, and always supported the club's race meets, generously hosting a hospitality marquee at his own expense for club members at Silverstone. Donald continued to run his business mending magnetos and other parts, especially for vintage Bentleys, from his workshop in Wroughton. He died in hospital in Swindon on 12 October 2025, aged 91. Our condolences go to Susie, Peter and Mary and all the family.

MB



Driver laureate: with Rivers Fletcher, Peter Hull and Martin Grant Peterkin (VSCC library)

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Ted Widgery

1947–2025



Ted Widgery: lover of life

Ted was born in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, on his way to Hereford where he lived all his life. He attended Malvern College and became well known for driving his Lagonda around the town wearing a stick-on moustache. This prompted one of the teachers to say 'Widgery, I saw you speeding in your Lagonda. Just hope your essay arrives with similar speed.' Ted was not one for studies; he much preferred the roar of vintage cars over textbooks. He had 26 'O' levels and three 'A' levels because every time he failed an 'A' level he received an 'O' level. He may not have had a degree but he most certainly had a PhD in enjoying life.

He was a huge lover of art and music, especially the organ and trumpet. Handel was his favourite composer. The span of his love of music incorporated many different genres including jazz and opera, Buddy Holly and Debbie Harry. He would often surprise me by playing a piece of music or a song that would become a firm favourite of us both. He also read constantly. He has left behind a library of roughly 3,5000 books, all of which he had read. Subjects included aviation, militaria, Vintage cars, ships, tractors, buses, World Wars I and II. The Battle of Britain fascinated him and he would have loved to have been the pilot of a Lancaster Bomber. He read about the lives of all the pilots and aircrew and spent his evenings following them across the skies through their stories.

He had varied occupations but none that lasted any length of time apart from running his own antique shop in Hereford, Marberry Antiques. He loved the Territorial Army and spent nearly 40 years in various regiments including the Queens Own Warwickshire and Worcestershire Yeomanry. So many of his fellow comrades attended his funeral and left cards saying: 'Thanks for being my first OC and thanks for lending the use of your regimental sword to cut our wedding cake.' 'Always the gentleman'. 'Fond memories of an amazing character who made us laugh every day. RIP Major Wig.' He travelled with the army to all the battlefields in Europe and driving tanks was one of his truly great memories. One of his commanding officers wrote in a yearly report some years ago 'Widgery is a character who would not have been out of place in Queen Victoria's Army.'

When he decided to start his own auction house selling vintage cars and memorabilia he really came into his own. I have never seen him happier than when involved in Hereford Vintage Auctions. He wrote all the catalogues, took all the photographs and hardly had to look one word up. His knowledge of vintage cars was truly amazing. His love was not just of old cars but also the charm and nostalgia of a bygone age. Through Hereford Vintage Auctions he made friends all over the world, adding to the huge friendship base he already had. His legacy will live on in the hearts of all those who knew and loved him.

The car that stole his heart completely was his 1930 3-litre Lagonda, once the car used by John Steed in the television series *The Avengers*. This was the car that truly transported him back into the age he loved. His last project was a Sid Lawrence Special Bentley and this totally consumed him while it was being rebuilt. During his lifetime he owned and drove countless vintage car makes including Vernon Derby, Austin, Morris, Alfa Romeo and Aston Martin, among many others.

We married on Ted's 70th birthday, having been together for some 45 years. 45 years of much fun and laughter and so many stories. A sharing and love of so much: blackbirds, squirrels, flowers, candlelit meals, picnics on the Malvern Hills but most importantly a great love of life. He became a great father to my two children and then an amazing Gramps to five grandchildren who all enjoyed trips in many different vintage cars. They loved his encouragement and his stories. Morgan, the eldest, said 'Thank you for your encouragement, you taught me to laugh at most situations and to appreciate the smaller things in life like finding treasure in charity shops and giving all the photos in the newspaper red noses using crayons.' He taught some of them to drive and also gave them free Latin lessons in the garage. Learning to drive was the best but their Latin became much improved.

During Ted's illness, cancer and Transverse Myelitis, he never complained but got through each day as it came. He always looked for the positives with a smile. In the final five weeks after some 12 years of much discomfort he was admitted to Garway Ward in Hereford County Hospital where he continued to make friends with the nurses and doctors and became a most popular and loved patient. Still he never complained and continued smiling and contin-

ued his fight for life. His funeral at Hereford Cathedral was attended by all his close friends and family and so many people from all over the country. It was a testament of love for a very original and special man. 'They don't make many like him any more,' as one old soldier said to me. He was a most lovely man and so very knowledgeable about so many subjects, and yet delighted in the simplicity of a full English breakfast with his favourite newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* and a large pot of coffee. I miss him every minute of every day.

Wendy Widgery



This montage of Michael Bowler and his cars by Rodney Diggens was given to him as a leaving present when he left Thoroughbred & Classic Cars *to work for Victor Gauntlett in 1980*

Michael Bowler

1939–2025

The motoring writer, editor and racing driver Michael Bowler died on Saturday 16 August after a long period of illness. He was 85. Michael grew up in a family with a passion for cars: his father Harry raced a 3-litre Bentley at Brooklands and Donington Park before World War II and was an early member of the Vintage Sports-Car Club, becoming a long-serving committee member then president of the club in 1955.

After attending Malvern College, Michael read for a mechanical sciences degree at Cambridge and, on graduating, embarked on a two-year apprenticeship with English Electric at Rugby. But soon he gravitated towards journalism and joined *The Motor* magazine as a junior road-tester. He also began to compete in old sports cars, in particular Frazer Nashes, although his first race, which he won, was in a contemporary Riley 1.5. During his time at Cambridge Michael won a half-blue for Rackets and in 1963 was Royal (Real) Tennis Champion.

Once the blanket 70mph speed limit had been imposed, road testing of faster cars had to be undertaken either on the roads of continental Europe or at the Motor Industry Research Association (MIRA) facility near Nuneaton, which had a high-speed banking. One of Michael's more unusual feats was to tow a caravan behind a Ford Zodiac around the Monza banking at 70mph for 24 hours which earned him an entry in the *Guinness Book of Records* for many years. During his spell as a road tester, Michael developed a series of articles involving track tests of historic cars, the owners of which were happy to entrust their treasures to him as a fast but safe pair of hands.

In 1965 Michael became assistant to the magazine's Sports Editor, Philip Turner, whom Michael succeeded on Philip's retirement in 1971.During his time as Sports Editor of *Motor*, Michael came to know well the Formula One drivers of the day including in particular Jackie Stewart. *Motor* and *Autocar* became stablemates under the ownership of IPC, an unforeseen consequence of which was to bring Michael under the same roof as *Autocar*'s art editor Lionel Burrell who shared Michael's interest in vintage cars. What Michael would later describe as 'backstairs plotting' between him and Lionel led to the birth of *Classic Cars* magazine in October 1973, which catered for readers and advertisers with an interest in cars of the postwar era for whom the only outlet until then had been the idiosyncratic *Motor Sport*. Despite, after pressure from the Classic Car Club of America, a name change to *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars*, the new magazine proved to be a great success and it was not long before its sales figures surpassed those of *Motor Sport*.

The fact that Michael was a racing editor also helped. He had acquired the ex-Gillie Tyrer BMW 328 Mille Miglia and oversaw its restoration to its 1940 specification before coming to an agreement with BMW for the car to be returned to its original manufacturer. The BMW gave way to a rare Frazer Nash Sebring which Michael raced in the 2-litre class of historic sports car events before, in 1978, racing John Pearson's ex-Peter Mould 'knobbly' Lister-Jaguar in the Lloyds & Scottish Historic Championship. Finding the power of the Jaguar engine to his taste, Michael acquired a Costin-bodied Lister-Jaguar of his own. Painting it Cambridge blue in deference to his alma mater, Michael raced it extensively and successfully over the next few years, winning the FIA Historic Championship in 1979, 1980 and 1981; the Jaguar Driver of the Year Award and the Guild of Motoring Writers Rootes Cup in 1979; the BRDC Nigel Moores Trophy in 1980; and the Lloyds & Scottish championship in 1981.

In 1973 Michael was elected chairman of the RAC MSA's newly-formed Historic Committee

where he gained great respect and played a major role in formulating rules and regulations for the burgeoning but somewhat undisciplined world of historic racing. Historic racing's shape today owes much to the work put in by Michael and his colleagues in the 1970s. Michael was also the RAC MSA's delegate on the FIA Historic Commission from1974, becoming president from 1988 to 1990 and a member of the MSA Motor Sport Council from 1975 to 1987. From 1998 to 2004 Michael was a director of the Guild of Motoring Writers.

Through his involvement in historic racing, Michael came to know oil magnate and motor racing enthusiast Victor Gauntlett of Pace Petroleum fame, for whom Michael went to work in 1981, becoming a director of Aston Martin Lagonda and subsequently Zagato until 1993. Michael was joint managing director of Zagato when plans were laid for a 'baby' Aston Martin which never came to fruition through lack of the enormous financial resources required. Michael was involved with AML when the Nimrod Group C project was in full swing. He was also involved with the Yamaha Formula One engine project and the OX-pp supercar. Michael's career came full circle when he became editor of *The Automobile* magazine from 2003 to 2009. For a couple of years Michael ran the 96 Club. He was also the author of numerous books about cars, some about Aston Martin whilst others were of a more general nature but were informed by his wealth of knowledge about the automobile. Our condolences to Jane, Michael's wife of over 50 years, and to their sons Simon, James and Andrew.

Nick Wilson

Adam Stacy-Marks

1952–2025

Adam Stacy-Marks, who died on 25 April, was the last of a distinguished and well-regarded family of fine art dealers, who began trading 136 years ago, the business having been founded by his grandfather, Edwin, in 1889. Adam's life was filled with beautiful art, cars and music. Born in 1952 in Eastbourne, he first attended Newlands Prep School before moving as a boarder to Canford School in Dorset, where he shared a room with a boy named Mark Spill, whose father was a Naval Commander. He owned a 4½-litre Bentley, GU 8136.

Adam was instantly smitten with the 'Bentley Bug', an affliction which led to lifelong friendships with other local Bentley owners, including the Sandwiths, the Llewellyns and the Rose families, all prominent in the Vintage Sports-Car Club and the Bentley Drivers Club. In 1968, Adam's father Ronald moved the family to their new home, Folkington Manor, a magnificent Grade II* listed mansion built in 1843 between Lewes and Eastbourne. Surrounded by 84 acres of Sussex parkland, it was intended to be a centre for the arts and became synonymous with important exhibitions as well as a successful livery stable catering for, eventually, up to 70 horses. In 1970, Adam joined his father on the board and in 1987, he took over E. Stacy-Marks Fine Art completely, his younger brother Nigel having decided to start his own business.

Adam was made a BDC member through his father at the age of just 14 and later a member of the VSCC. Around five years later he began racing in his first car, an MG TC (which he purchased for £250 including spares). One day this car caught fire while stopped at traffic lights. Luck was on his side, however, when a fire extinguisher salesman pulled up behind him. Although instinctively a dealer, he did not haggle too much about the price of extinguishers that day. In time, he acquired his first Bentley, an ex-Bill Thompson MKVI Special, LOL 950, built originally by the Bradley brothers. He raced this for the first time at August Silverstone, 1978, competing with other BDC stalwarts such as Charles Teall and



Adam Stacy-Marks: he loved art and Bentleys but most of all his family

Martin Trentham. In later years, Adam looked back on those carefree days when one arrived in the car one was to race, with a very worn helmet, farming overalls, and much optimism. There were no gravel traps, no Armco, no sleepers or tyre barriers, drivers being protected by that most valuable of shrouds – the instinct to survive.

In 1988, after being persuaded by David Llewellyn, Adam took on the role of BDC Competitions Captain, a task at which he excelled. In the same year Adam purchased the ex-Harold Pounds 4½-litre two-seater, GO 5629, from Ed Hubbard, via Stanley Mann, and made a number of changes, converting the chassis back to 9 feet 9 inches, changing the gear ratios, fitting an overdrive for long distance rallies, and installing shell bearings in place of the white metal used on this heavy crank engine. The car, under the stewardship of Tony Fabian, could rev freely beyond 4,500 rpm and was once timed at almost 120mph. (This car has recently been converted into a 'Birkin' Blower.)

There was an occasion when this car had to be brought home from Montlhéry on a trailer when, for various reasons, the car and trailer had to be abandoned in a French barn while Adam rushed back to the UK for spares. Imagine the insult to his pride, when he returned, only to find GO sat forlornly on the ground, bereft of its trailer, the thieves clearly valuing the trailer more than the car!

Meanwhile, LOL was transformed by John Guppy who installed an S1 Turbo engine, virtually doubling its power-to-weight ratio. However, in 2010, both GO and LOL were sold to make way for a 3/4½-litre, RM 3927, which Adam campaigned until very recently and which attended his funeral.

Following the death of Adam's parents and coupled with the unavoidable social changes that were reflected in the demand for top quality art, Adam made the painful decision to sell Folkington and take on a peripatetic life. Travelling in a 'Fifth-Wheel' American mobile home, this may not have been one of his best decisions, but he and Audrey ultimately stopped travelling when he settled in Helmsley, Yorkshire, where a new gallery thrived until his death.

Throughout his life, whether as an art dealer advising his clients or as a competitor on the track, Adam was the perfect gentleman. He possessed a gentle demeanour, great generosity and a huge sense of humour. He leaves a wife and three sons and a daughter, Iona, who will take over the Bentley. Shortly before he died, he said: 'I have had a wonderful life. I have handled some of the most beautiful works of art, I have raced some fabulous cars and above all, I have a beautiful wife and family. What more could a man ask for?'

Philip Strickland

Bryan Downes

1938–2025

Bryan Sidney Downes spent his entire life within a radius of approximately 20 miles from where he was raised in Wednesfield in the Midlands, dying in July in Acton Trussell. He was a quietly spoken gentleman who was very knowledgeable mechanically and construction-wise as well as being practical, helpful and kind-hearted to all who had the pleasure to meet and know him.

The eldest son of Sidney and Ann Downes, he was schooled in Wednesfield right through to graduating from the Polytechnical College as an electrician, specializing in radio and early television electronics. Upon completion, he was awarded first prize and received a certified book on Automotive Engineering – a portent of his many skills yet to unfold. Adjacent neighbours of the Downes family were seriously



Bryan Downes: he enjoyed Austin Sevens as much as Bentleys

involved with motorbikes which included racing, an activity of much interest to Bryan, although he never owned nor raced a motorbike. His first bicycle still remains at home but it was motor cars that really interested Bryan.

Ralph Dainty, who operated a brass foundry in nearby Willenhall, also owned an electrical retail outlet in Wednesfield called Stuart Electrical. Ralph had always been fascinated in electronics, building himself an early TV from parts obtained from various stores in Wolverhampton. This shop is where Bryan started his first job, undertaking all manner of sales, deliveries, repairs and installations. A Morris 1000 van became his first automobile. It was during this period of electrical retailing that he met Roberta, whom he called Robin, one of Ralph's three children.

Bryan was called up for National Service training which he undertook for two years with the Royal Air Force, after which he joined ATV Commercial TV in Birmingham. Some five years elapsed before Bryan married Roberta in Short Heath Anglican Church on 4 April 1964, where Robin's mother had also been married. Bryan and Robin had bought an acre of land in 1962 at Acton Trussell before their wedding, whereupon Bryan commenced building a modest three-bedroom bungalow as a temporary home on the site which was completed within 12 months – ready for a married couple.

Bryan acquired his first Bentley in 1978 – a 1923 3-litre 'wreck', reg PM1923, which Bryan managed to keep driveable with various engine repairs while retaining the body. This car was driven to Le Mans the following year on a BDC tour, but while walking up and down a French beach, Bryan and his friend Phil Evans decided that they both needed to update to 4½-litre cars. So in 1980, Dr Hummel, a psychiatrist in Devon, sold Bryan his 1931 4½-litre, GJ 3235, with its replica team body, warning Bryan to be careful due to its lack of use. Sure enough, the big end just managed to get him home and over the ensuing years, Bryan rebuilt the engine three times. During WWII, the car had belonged to Ronald Loader, who was involved in the BDC Spares scheme, and with its attached gas equipment used it to deliver goods from his Castle North shop. Bryan later enquired if the Bentley had been used for carrying heavy goods – 'no, only cakes'. It remains in bits at their home.

Bryan thoroughly enjoyed working in television. However he was one of 400 employees who were suddenly made redundant in 1982 after a memorable visit to ATV by then prime minister Margaret Thatcher. This became a pivotal moment as after careful consideration, Bryan and Robin decided to build their dream home. Bryan's many skills came to the fore as the couple jointly designed then started building the house with integral double garage on their land. This extraordinary effort took some 5½ years to complete, working every day other than the obligatory two-week annual motoring holiday in France, which they undertook every year since 1985. A year after completion, the bungalow was removed to make way for a three-car garage with woodstore.

Bryan and Robin loved being members of the VSCC, having great fun with a pair of Austin Sevens. Also BDC members, both were committee members of their Midland region before Bryan also became a BDC Committee member for three years. The car collection increased when Bryan surprised Robin for her 40th birthday with a brand new 1980 MGB roadster, one of the last built.

In 1985 and 1986 Bryan and Robin organised two-week tours to France for the BDC Midland Region, with approximately 25 cars from all eras both years. In 1987 they organised this annual getaway to France on a private invitational basis with a reduced number of Bentleys, predominately WO cars, which gradually decreased from 15 to usually 10. In total they organised 40 tours to France. A UK reunion tour in 2023 centred around The Old Vicarage, Wortfield, was the crowning success of these endeavours.

Bryan was in reasonable health until his last six months when he began to suffer kidney and heart problems. On a recent hospitalisation and change of medication, he was diagnosed with a form of blood cancer but seemed reasonably OK on discharge, but on returning home unexpectedly passed away aged 87. Bryan is survived by Robin, her two siblings and her three nephews, all of whom have some affinity with Bryan's love of motoring.

David MacDonald





Joseph Figoni

Le Grand Couturier De La Carrosserie Automobile: Bugatti

By Peter M. Larsen and Ben Erickson, published by Moteurs!, £650, 1,128pp, available from www.moteurs.dk
Reviewed by **MATTHEW BELL**



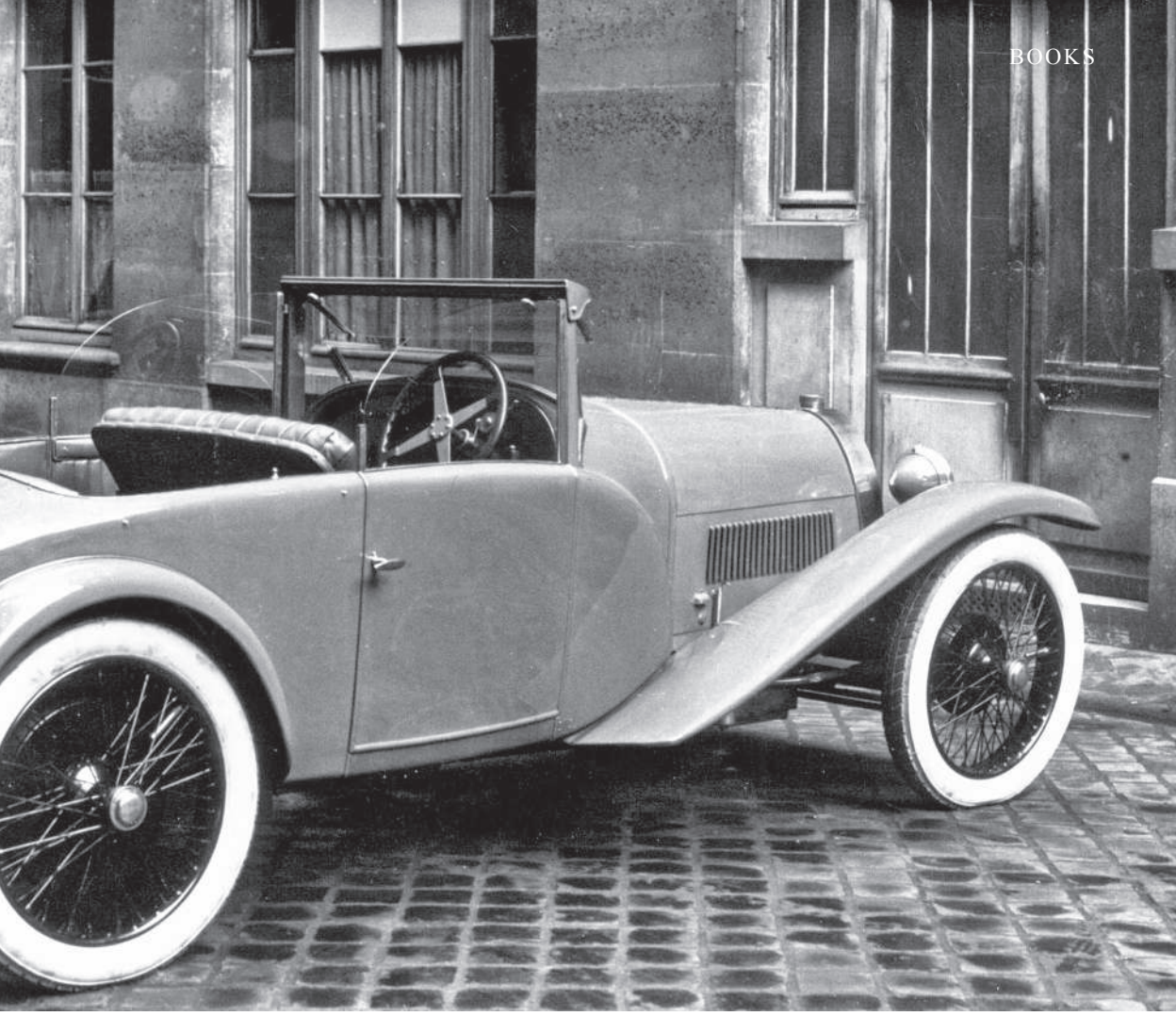
As the authors of this monumental three-volume book acknowledge, there are already a lot of books about Bugatti out there. But that makes it all the more remarkable that they have managed to add something new to the library by looking at the marque from the perspective of the coachbuilder Joseph Figoni, and by examining the Bugatti sales and distribution network that existed in Paris in the 1920s and '30s.

The three volumes come in a smart black slipcase and are numbered II, III, and IV. This is because Volume I has already been published, in 2021, and covers Figoni's work for Alfa Romeo (that book was named RAC Motoring Book of the Year, as indeed has this book this year). These new books are the culmination of years of dogged labour and research, during which time two people who were helping with the project died, to whom these books are dedicated.

The first two volumes are a biography of Figoni. We start with his birth in Piacenza, Italy, in 1892 and follow the Figoni family as they move to France, to Boulogne-sur-Seine, while Joseph is still a boy. He finds work in about 1912 as an apprentice panel beater with Muhlbacher and then Clément-Bayard. Conscription follows, and he survives the First World War despite some injuries while serving in Tripoli. After the war he builds his business and we follow the twists and turns of his career up to 1930, by which time the majority of Figoni-bodied Bugatti chassis had been completed. It seems further volumes are planned, as the authors state their intention to complete Figoni's biography next time.

The book tells the story not just of Figono but also of his firm, Carrosserie Joseph Figoni, which was favoured and promoted by the businessman Étienne Bunau-Varilla, who was responsible for building the Bugatti sales empire in Paris during the 1920s. Towards the end of the decade, however, his power became too great for Ettore Bugatti and ties were severed. The consequences of this are explored in detail by the authors, together with the repercussions on the wider luxury car market of the Wall Street Crash and Great Depression.

The third part of the book chronicles all the Bugatti cars clothed by Figoni and is ordered by



The unusual 'Forostovsky' type cabriolet coachwork by Figoni on this 1925 T30 Bugatti is believed to have been ordered for Léon Bonnet, who may have been a private buyer or worked for the Garage Olympic. It is similar to the car in the centerspread on pp. 52–3, but not identical

model, starting with the Type 13 and ending with the Type 57s. Some 113 chassis are recorded, and the level of detail is astounding. There are chassis numbers, registration numbers, prices paid in francs, shipment dates, owner names and addresses, facsimiles of entries in factory ledgers – you name it, if the data exists, it's here. For the Bugatti historian or completist, this a very rewarding book, collating so much information in a readable and attractive way.

Added to the facts and figures are many excellent period photographs, some never published before. Also enlivening the text are a wonderful series of digitally created colour line drawings which were the hobby of Gerrit-Jan Caviet, one of the two men who died before the book was published. The other, Benoit Bocquet, was a model and fashion designer with a side interest in the aesthetics of Bugattis and the illustrations of Géo Ham. His only book, *Quand Joseph Figoni Habillait les Delahaye*, was published in 2000. Sadly Bocquet died of a stroke in 2008, aged only 44.

Why are these two people so prominently mentioned at the start of the book? Perhaps because the world of Bugatti research, or indeed any automotive digging, is a close-knit one in which great characters and friendships emerge. Reading about Figoni, Bugatti and the various personalities responsible for producing some of the most stylish cars ever made, one is reminded that it is not just the cars that matter, but the people, with all their strengths and flaws. These books are a remarkable achievement, and their authors are to be commended for adding to the wider body of automotive knowledge in such a stylish but useful way.

Forever Young

Six Lost Talents of Motor Racing

By various authors, published by BHP Publishing, 152pp, £32.80 including p&p from bhp-publishing.co.uk Reviewed by **JOHN HARBOTTLE**

This is an unusual book. Four motoring writers have joined together to write the biographies of six young racing drivers whose promising careers were cut short by fatal accidents. The choice of subjects results in a spread of drivers over the second half of the twentieth century, so we get a view of the whole process of becoming a racing driver and how it changed. The short lives are spread over a period of 60 years – the first, Stuart Lewis-Evans, was born in 1930, and the last, Paul Warwick, died in 1991 – and provide a revealing picture of how that pattern has developed.

Lewis-Evans grew up in the early 1950s and was lucky to have a father with the income and enthusiasm to involve them both in the exciting new world of 500cc racing. There was another essential ingredient: exceptional talent, which carried him rapidly through to Formula One, initially with the underfunded Connaught concern and then with Vanwall, with whom he enjoyed a successful 1958 season before his horrific death in a burning car at the final race of the year, the Moroccan Grand Prix.

Second subject is Chris Bristow who arrived in Formula One in 1960 with the nascent UDT Laystall team after progressing through 1,100cc sports car racing, the replacement for 500cc single-seaters as the main support formula in the late '50s. At the Belgian Grand Prix, Stirling Moss and Mike Taylor were seriously injured in separate practice accidents and put out of racing for some time, and in the race Bristow and Lotus works driver Alan Stacey were both killed.



Lost talent: Stuart Lewis-Evans in the pits at Monza before the 1958 Italian Grand Prix

My knowledge flags after that. Chris Lambert, born in 1944, got into karting thanks to his father's success in publishing a highly successful chemistry A-level textbook. Bert Hawthorne, who came to the UK from New Zealand and whose entry was via his ability as a mechanic, also made money as a driving instructor and died in an F2 race at Hockenheim in 1972. Born of Italian extraction in 1962, Bertrand Fabi raced in his birth country of Canada before following the fashionable route to the UK. He made it into the then highly competitive British F3 series with top team West Surrey Racing and was killed while testing his car at Goodwood in early 1986.

Final subject, Paul Warwick, may be better known to many readers thanks to the efforts of his big brother, Derek, who also contributed a thoughtful foreword to this book. Paul's way to mainstream racing followed that of his brother via the unorthodox route of stock car racing to the usual junior formulae and would no doubt, according to author Andrew Marriott and Derek himself, have taken him to Formula One. He was killed, aged 22, in a Formula Three racing accident at Oulton Park.

The experience of reading this book is a mixed one. Many VSCC members may find it interesting to follow at close quarters the efforts of various young men as they make their way in an increasingly cut-throat world. In another sense it is depressing because you know each time how it ends. Perhaps the four authors, all extremely competent, should write another book about six drivers who *did* make it?

Whether you buy this book is likely to depend on a number of factors. If, like the 17-year-old me of 1958, who read with dismay of the death of Stuart Lewis-Evans, you are still confidently expecting to make the grade yourself and become Formula One World Champion, you may find it a useful textbook. If, again like a more recent version of me, you are fascinated by certain periods in racing history, you will value the period insights. I found it particularly interesting to read detailed biographies of both Lewis-Evans and Chris Bristow, lives which have never, so far as I am aware, been as fully recorded. Whatever, it is thoroughly researched and well-written and, if in doubt, you should not dismiss it.

Not Another Pit Stop

By Julian Gerard and Pip Greasley, published by Gentleman Garagistas, £18.49 including p&p, available from www.notanotherpitstop.com Reviewed by **EDWARD BICK**

Not knowing anything of Bob Gerard, I didn't know where to start with this book, as it commences from both ends. Flip it over and you can read halfway until you meet the topsy-turvy text coming the other way. A bit disorientating at first, I dived in and quickly discovered that this is a combined autobiography of Julian Gerard and a biography of his 'uncle' Bob, a racing driver who helped to put Mallory Park on the map. It is also a mix of high jinks and sober reflection on how difficulties in upbringing can cause a man to lead a somewhat erratic life full of highs and lows.

Bob Gerard was an eccentric car salesman who competed on the racing circuit in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. He was one of the last Garagistes – private teams who tried their best against the big boys of Mercedes and Ferrari. Not having the finance nor manpower 'The Boffin', as Bob was known, did his best with ageing machines fettled with technical obsession and secret fuel blends. There was also room in the 1936 ERA for the ultimate mod, 'Bunty', which I feel it would be unfair to share details of here.

The biography starts off as the recollections of our author, Julian, as a young boy travelling the UK and Europe in awe of Uncle Bob. Not actually an uncle but a more distant relative who became a replacement for Julian's father, a cold figure who was more interested in managing his soap factory. Bob's wife, Aunty Joan, similarly acts as his *de facto* mother following the premature death of his own. The biography takes on a *Carry On Racing* meets Ealing comedy spirit as we are taken through a dense succession of anecdotes illustrating Bob's refusal to accept that the days of a one-man racing army are over. All the contemporary names feature: 'Swerving' Moss, Hawthorn, Collins and a host of Italians. Aunty Joan, a red-blooded socialite, makes the most of après-circuit life, driving at speed (herself a Shelsey Cup winner) to meet up with her husband, usually with young Julian in tow, stopping off to buy luxury goods and drink champagne. Such is the world they inhabit that the book apes *Who's Who*.

Starting from the back of the book we have the autobiography of Julian Gerard. Reeling from the disinterest of his father, and the early death of his mother, Uncle Bob and the racing world become everything. He too starts his adult life as a racing driver under his uncle's tutelage. One senses that the relationship is frequently strained, both on the racetrack and working in Bob's business. Julian goes on to detail a Confessions of a Racing Driver lifestyle. Partying with a newer generation of drivers, Hunt et al., and getting overly refreshed watching flickering blue movies. After his limitations as a driver become apparent, he sets up various racing teams in the 1970s and beyond. When Andrew Ridgley of Wham! gets into the seat of a Renault 5 GT Turbo, one realises that our author has been witness to a sizeable chunk of racing history. And that's before we hear about London to Brighton calamities and some karting kid he should keep an eye on called Lewis Hamilton.

I wish the cover was a bit less comic-bookesque and instead hinted at the stories at the heart of what is a rich and well written memoir. I promise you'll be getting your phone out to check whether it's all true. So far ChatGTP Present agrees with these chaps from the GP past. And I doubt whether lives like this will happen again.



Bob Gerard: one of the last Garagistes

LM4 – The Life Story of an Aston Martin

By Steve Waddingham, published by Oblique Books, £125 + postage, 216pp, available from www.lm4astonmartin.co.uk Reviewed by **HEW LLAMBETT**

Any car approaching its 100th birthday will have a story or two worth recording, but an Aston Martin built for racing should have enough to fill a book. That's the idea behind this handsome new volume telling the story of the 1930 Aston Martin, LM4. The book is part of a trend started by Porter Press for hefty and glossy biographies of individual cars which began some years ago with some of the most famous one-off cars ever built, but has now widened to include slightly less important cars which are nevertheless of great interest.

LM4 was one of a series of cars built for long-distance endurance racing in the days when 'Bert' Bertelli was in charge of Aston Martin, beginning with LM1 which was entered for the 1928 Le Mans, hence the LM acronym. LM4 was designed to be especially light, with a lightened gearbox, front axle and internal engine parts. It made its racing debut in May 1930 at the second Brooklands Double Twelve with Bertelli himself at the wheel, sharing the drive with Nigel Holder. LM3 was also entered, with Jack Bezzant and Sir Ronald Gunter driving. LM4 finished 4th, the gruelling race being won by Woolf Barnato and Frank Clement in a Bentley Speed Six, whose engine was four times the size. It was a great achievement for Aston Martin, one which they would brag about for years afterwards.

Next up for both LM3 and LM4 was the Irish Grand Prix at Phoenix Park in Dublin, both cars being driven from the factory. The author goes into some detail about this race, which ended with LM4 finishing 7th, LM3 12th. The car was sold immediately after the race to its first private owner, a Mr Henry Leeson of Eastbourne, who had always nurtured ambitions to race at Brooklands. The book dedicates a chapter to researching Leeson and his life in motorsport, which sadly ended in tragedy when he fulfilled his dream of racing at Brooklands in an MG but then came off the track and died on his 29th lap.



LM4 after finishing fourth in the gruelling 1930 Double Twelve

The book's narrative then follows each of the car's subsequent owners, each of whom are given their own chapter. It's an intelligent structure, allowing the author to delve into the lives of the various intriguing characters who owned the car in period. The fifth owner, John Davis, bought LM4 in around 1952 and kept it for 44 years. He was a perhaps atypical Aston owner, being a commercial artist who allegedly produced the artwork for Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey* and who, according to the author, 'lived a complicated life', but disappointingly we don't discover in what way.

By 1996 the car had considerably deteriorated, and when VSCC member Rob Davies persuaded Davis to sell it, the car needed a full restoration. Via Ecurie Bertelli it later passed to its present owners, Jonathan and Kate Lupton, a young and active couple from Yorkshire who are relatively new to vintage motorsport but have oodles of enthusiasm and the resources to have the car prepared for Goodwood and Le Mans.

This book is the author's first and is written with enthusiasm and brio. At times his descriptions of his detective work are a little breathless and wide-eyed ('the next challenge in this historical adventure *was* to be a real puzzle') but I suppose it keeps the narrative bobbing along. The print quality is excellent and as well as some wonderful period photos, there are images of the car from various photoshoots specially staged for the book, so that by the end we have seen every possible angle of LM4. Whether the car merits such an exhaustive biography is for the reader to decide, but one cannot fault the many people who were involved in producing it – they have done an excellent job.

MG Midgets in Detail

M-Type to TF, 1929–1955

By Malcolm Green, published by Herridge & Sons, £45, 160pp, available from www.herridgeandsons.com Reviewed by **NICK WILSON**

Had it not been for the introduction of the first small MG in 1929, the now world-famous firm of sports cars may not have survived beyond the early 1930s, such were the devastating consequences of the Wall Street Crash. This is the argument set out by Malcolm Green in this attractively presented and highly readable history of the Midget series of MGs, which started with the M-Type and carried on in various iterations until the mid-1950s.

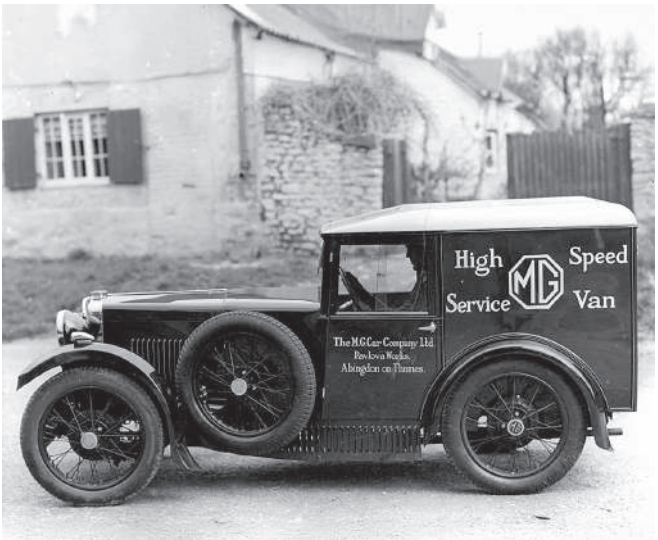
Before 1929, the fledgling firm devised by Cecil Kimber as a Morris offshoot had made only large and relatively expensive models, the 14/40 and 18/80, demand for which collapsed along with the stock market when, according to Green, even those who could afford them did not want to be seen driving a big and expensive car. So it was just as well that Kimber and Morris had, in 1928, come up with a plan for a smaller, lighter, cheaper model, some of whose components were taken from the Morris Minor.

The M-Type was cautiously launched by Kimber more as a putative gesture at the 1928 Olympia Motor Show, before production had begun, with two prototypes appearing on the Morris stand. Happily they got a positive reception, and some 200 orders were placed. This emboldened him to order 498 fabric two-seater bodies from Carbodies in Coventry, the largest number of bodies hitherto supplied to MG. By March 1929, an assembly line was bolting these onto rolling chassis at the newly-opened factory in Edmund Road, Oxford, having been towed there from the Cowley works.

This book then traces, over 13 chapters, the development of the Midget through its many guises up to the postwar TFs. A short two-page chapter is dedicated to EX120, the 'ex' standing for 'experimental', which in the hands of George Eyston at Montlhéry in February 1931 set the record as the first 750cc car to exceed 100mph. That was the car's last run however, as during a final slowing lap it caught fire and Eyston was forced to bale out before it had stopped. A replacement, EX127, was sent out, as Kimber wanted an MG to be the first 750cc car to achieve 120mph, and another short chapter is dedicated to this car and its achievements, which was not without its problems, such as a propensity to overheat.

By the time the PA was introduced in March 1934, it could boast in the sales brochure of having 'over 100 new and improved features' which included everything from a revised cylinder head with a more robust valve train and optional extras such as an eight-day clock and quick-filler radiator and petrol tank caps. However in reality the revised engine was not much more powerful, and four-seater versions would struggle if four-up. Superchargers were therefore introduced as a way to deliver true sports car performance, a Zoller kit being offered for an extra £33 10*s* including fitment, but increasing engine power was the obvious way to go and so the PB was born.

The story ends in 1955, with the introduction of the MGA, by which time the TF model seemed seriously outdated. All in all, this is an excellent history of the Midget model, with lots of good imagery and technical information interspersed throughout the narrative. For anyone who owns such a car, or would like to, it is not to be missed.



Despite being fitted with van bodywork, this M-Type maintains a sporting stance

The Artful Bodger

Edited by John Bradshaw and Peter Henshaw, published by JRB Publishing, £10 + p&p, 124pp, available from www.jrbpub.net Reviewed by **MATTHEW BELL**

This eccentric but highly enjoyable volume is a compendium of tales from people who have bodged their cars, bikes or even helicopters in imaginative ways to get them home. As the subtitle on the frontispiece puts it, it's 'a celebration of inspired get-you-home fixes by possibly the last generation of ingenious people who want to, and still can, do it themselves'. A tongue-in-cheek 'disclaimer' on the cover warns that the book 'contains no useful information', but I would beg to differ.

For example, did you know that bananas can be used to lubricate the gearbox of a 2CV in the event of total oil loss while crossing the Atacama desert? This was apparently the solution devised by two young Frenchmen, Jacques Seguela and Jean-Claude Baudot, in 1958 while driving around the world in their 425cc OHV flat-twin Citroen. Having discovered that the gearbox drain plug had fallen out due to constant vibrations (or possibly a crack in the sump – recollections vary), and with no spare oil, the bananas were peeled and crammed in, which with their high oil content did the trick until civilisation was reached.



Several tales involve solutions for snapped throttle linkages or cables. In one, a one-armed motorbike-and-sidecar rider called Colin Bembridge found that he could fix the broken end of the inner cable to the strap of his crash helmet and continue his journey by raising or lowering his head. He looked like a nodding dog but it got him to the start of the Dragon Rally in North Wales where a more permanent solution was found. In another story, a small child is squeezed into the engine bay of a Lada Riva Estate in order to operate the carburettor by hand after the throttle linkages had broken, his head poking out of the forward hinging bonnet while making signals to the driver.

It's one thing to bodge a car, quite another when it comes to airborne machinery. A couple of stories involve helicopters, one being a Russian Antonov twin-rotor which was taking part in one of the Paris Air Shows in the 1980s. It was a busy show and parking space was tight, but the Antonov was able to squeeze in near a hangar. So near that when it was fired up the next day, one rotor blade clipped the edge of the hangar, losing part of its tip. Rather than have a new blade fitted, the crew decided to saw an identical amount off each of the other blades, to keep them in balance. The Antonov apparently flew back to Russia with no problems.

Many of the stories in this book relate to motorcycles, which are the editors' primary interest. But the cheerful attitude of overcoming disaster with a bit of imagination and whatever you have to hand is one common to most VSCC members. Reading it, I was reminded of the time I drove across the Western Sahara with some Spanish friends in a pair of Citroen Dyanes. One of them snapped the chassis on a particularly rough stretch and for a couple of hours we thought we might have to leave it there. But after some head-scratching and inventive use of spare wheels for jackstands we managed to strap it back together using some ratchets and limp on to Nouakchott where a welder effected a better repair.

Reading this book will remind you of your own similar experiences and indeed the authors invite readers to submit their own tales for inclusion in future editions. It's a delightful tome, and although first published some years ago, remains available via John's website and would make an ideal stocking-filler.

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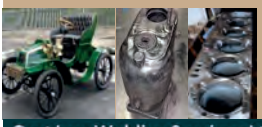
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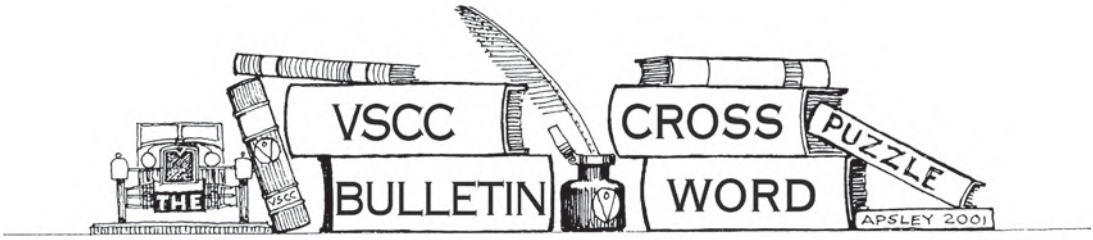
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Lots of people completed Crossword 98, which Richard Derrick described as 'another dose of therapy to stave off mental decline'. John Buckley particularly liked the anagram for Raymond Mays, while Chris Baughan enjoyed it despite having 'quite a battle with 10 across and 6 down'. Others found 1 across more taxing, including Jessica Fetherstonhaugh who said it took her a few days, and Neil Stanford who said he'd feel very pleased with himself if he had got it right, which he did. Andrew Wright admitted to receiving 'considerable help from my partner Emma, who understands the principles of cryptic clues far better than I ever will. I just provide the automotive knowledge,' a predicament shared by Martin Cranmer 'down under' who said his was a joint effort with 'SWIMBO' – She Who Indoors Must Be Obeyed (was that Rumpole of the Bailey?)'. In unrelated news, Martin Pollard had trouble spelling 'submissively'. Hats off though to Miles Gallant who is our winner this time – the VSCC mug is on its way. Entries for 99 please by email to vscc.editor@gmail.com or carrier pigeon to 12 Wellington Square, Hastings TN34 1PB. Good luck!

Name .....

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Answers and winner in the next *Bulletin*.

Answers to Crossword No. 98

Across

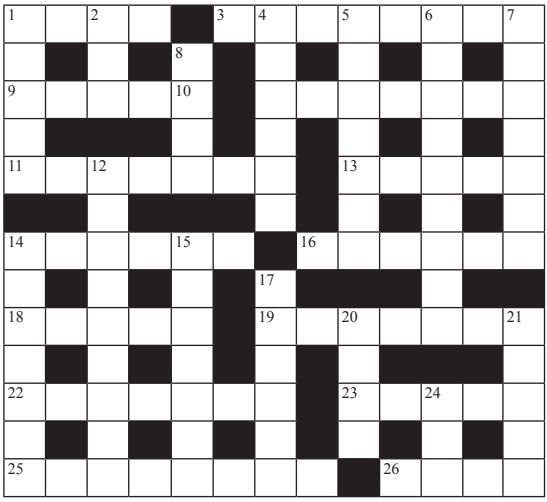
1 Silver Eagle 8 Idolised 9 Grub 10 Lago 11 Autonomy 12 Naiad 14 Hansa 17 Wolseley 18 Shim 19 Pier 20 Reheeled 21 Raymond Mays

Down

2 Indianapolis 3 Volvo 4 Reseat 5 Audits 6 Lagonda 7 Submissively 13 Austria 15 Alarum 16 Hyphen 18 Steam

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Crossword number 99



Across

1. Strong-smelling billionaire? (4)
3. A corner of Silverstone (8)
9. Could be an aeroplane or a car (5)
10. Keyboard instrument that isn't grand (7)
11. Another 3 across (7)
13. These are often found under collars (5)
14. Old van that sounds as though it is telling you to pause (6)
16. Another 3 across (6)
18. Ditto (5)
19. Post-vintage Lancia found in Georgia (7)
22. Operatic Rolls-Royce? (7)
23. Pulse found when stirring broth (5)
25. Popular online but comes to a close in a Hertfordshire town (8)
26. Tense part of a two-wheeled gyrocar (4)

Down

1. A macho blend of coffee (5)
2. Horologist and Itala driver (3)
4. Flights in East London (6)
5. You can do this without synchromesh! (6)
6. Maybe it applies under the rear bumper (9)
7. Relating to a marriage of spa and soul (7)
8. Maker of the four-wheeled 9 across (4)
12. Panel team makes a badge (9)
14. Could be found at the front of the other 9 across (7)
15. Chosen for a seat (7)
17. Mom ran around this American automobile (6)
20. Grand blend of tea guides the gear lever (4)
21. Another 3 across (5)
24. This might come after a con or a push (3)

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