



**THE MAGAZINE OF THE
LAGONDA CLUB**

Number 221

Summer 2009

DAVID AYRE



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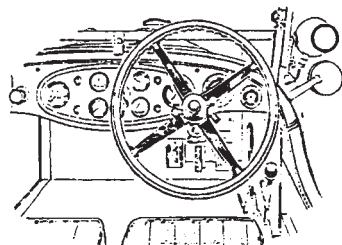
*Patrick Daniel crosses the Second Severn Crossing during the Cape to Cape Rally,
see page 6*

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From the Driving Seat

Ken Painter



MANY YEARS AGO, when I was in the Royal Air Force, one of my duties was to prepare the rosters for the Station Duty Officer and the Station Orderly Officer. On one RAF station, I discovered that, from November to April, I “lost” all the Engineering Officers because they were placed on the roster for leading the Station Snow Clearance team. I frankly couldn’t remember the last time we had snow that early in the year, so I asked our Station Meteorologist to check through the records and advise me when we had experienced one inch or more of snow on the runway. The answer surprised me.

The station had opened in June 1940 and had been in continuous operation ever since (this was in 1974) and records had been preserved since day one. There had been a measurable amount of snow before Christmas on about half a dozen occasions, and it had usually cleared within hours.

What has all this got to do with Lagondas? Nothing really, but I think of it when the Board is agonising over the choice of picture for the Club Christmas card. We usually try to pick a picture that features snow, the more the merrier. Charles Dickens has a lot to answer for. When he was at his writing peak he wrote about an exceptional series of cold and snowy winters and a white Christmas has become almost a part of

British folk law. A more modern (2001) view by Eric Malpass in “Morning’s at Seven” gives us: “It was typical Christmas weather, warmer than Easter, drier than Whit.”

Our Christmas card picture for this year, a snowy scene, is shown on Page 16. Finding a suitable picture is complex, should we use a painting or a photograph? A summer scene above a mountain snowline may not have that “Christmas” look, photographs of dark coloured cars tend to make the car look black against the snow and, contrary to the opinions of several members, our card is always in full colour. With members from Alaska to Australia and beyond, the card picture will always be inappropriate for some parts of the world, so what would you like to see? Past sales figures are no guide, the “snowy” pictures don’t consistently outsell the “non snowy” ones, but paintings often sell in greater numbers than photographs.

Don’t keep us in suspense, let us know what you prefer and, just as important, what style you don’t like. We won’t please everyone, but it would be comforting to think that we are not wasting time and Club funds on styles that are generally unpopular. I shall now sit back and await a positive flood of letters and emails!

**LAST DATE FOR COPY FOR THE AUTUMN MAGAZINE IS
... FRIDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2009 ...**

Cape Clear to Cape Cornwall

Patrick Daniell tries something a little different.

CAPE TO CAPE tours have become known as “the toughest classic car tour in Europe” and at our initial briefing we were told that the seven day 2009 tour, over a challenging 1500 mile route from Cape Clear in southwest Ireland to Cape Cornwall on the southwest coast of the Duchy, would not disappoint us. The “Cape to Cape” concept is the brainchild of the experienced historic rally and classic car trials expert Dennis Greenslade who, as a navigator, won many trials and championships including The Rally of the Tests. We expected that the 2009 tour would be a tough event, that it would reflect Dennis’ competition experience, and that also it would give us an insight of some of the navigational methods and tests used in historic rallies. We were not disappointed!

The route took us along mountain roads and tracks through spectacular countryside and scenery. We climbed steep hills that were previously used in long distance trials of the thirties, and also had opportunities to drive hard on the open road. If all of this was not sufficiently challenging every participant was committed to raising funds for Macmillan Cancer Support either by sponsorship, fundraising events, or as a result of Dennis’ cunning system of penalties that were converted into voluntary fines in aid of Macmillan. The previous five tours had raised a total of over £300,000 and this year’s result, although down on previous years, was a respectable £40,000.

The Tour was open to 40 cars registered before December 1986. The selection this year was younger rather than older with my 1934 Lagonda M45 tourer being the third oldest car following a 1932 Austin Seven Ulster

and a 1933 Alvis Firefly. Local friends Dick Burge with Brenda brought their 1953 MG TD, and John Hankin with Jane their 1951 Jaguar XK 120. John was particularly welcome because of the sponsorship provided by his company Penrite Oil. Amongst the wide variety of other cars there were more MGs, Triumphs, Austin Healys, Porsches, a Series 1 Land Rover, a Ford Falcon, a 1935 20/25 Rolls Royce, and a 1970 Austin pick-up. So we were with robust company all bar two of which completed the route successfully.

We began the Tour with a boat trip taking us from Baltimore round Cape Clear and here landlubbers incurred their first penalties. Following this unconventional start we drove a circuitous route over and around the mountains of southwest Ireland covering Macgillicuddy’s Reeks, the Dingle Peninsular, Bantry Bay, Connor’s Pass, and Moll’s Gap. There were both planned and unplanned stops and encounters, and various devious checkpoints with opportunities for accumulating more penalties. Every checkpoint was cunningly sited on a hill with a standard penalty of two points for rolling back – even a fraction of an inch – when moving away.

From Limerick we crossed central Ireland, through the gentle Tipperary countryside, before enjoying superb driving and wild scenery in the Wicklow mountains which in the past had provided refuge for outlaws and rebels. Throughout our Irish route we learnt new skills and tested others until we reached the ferry port at the northern end of the Dublin by pass – a road which contained all the hazards of any other busy international ring road.



Springtime in a Devon Lane, Tony Mayes at the wheel.



Following the Alvis Firefly, Macgillicuddy's Reeks, SW Ireland.



A fine view of the Wicklow Mountains.



Tony Mayes driving again, in front of the ultimate winner.

In Wales our route through the Snowdonia National Park took us to remote parts that we might otherwise never have visited. The dramatic grandeur of Snowdonia was in great contrast with the gentleness of the Irish mountains. Good navigation was paramount and accurate distance measurement essential. From now on there were no more timed sections and we found opportunities to stop – sometimes to compare notes with a car travelling in the opposite direction – and enjoy the spacious panoramic views. Sheep, cattle and unexpected roadworks delayed us, but they also gave us opportunities to get to know other crews and something different to recall at the end of the day.

Our drive south through the Cambrian Mountains and the Brecon Beacons seemed somewhat tame although the Welsh clouds were down and both wind and rain were strong. Those conditions, and our entrance to Cardiff on a Friday afternoon, made the warmth and welcome of our hotel all the more acceptable and tales of the day's adventures all the more dramatic.

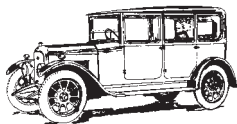
The route on the open road to Somerset was fast and in great contrast to the Irish and Welsh minor roads and passes. Crossing the River Severn via the new bridge was exhilarating but soon we slowed down while we negotiated the narrow lanes of Somerset and Cornwall.

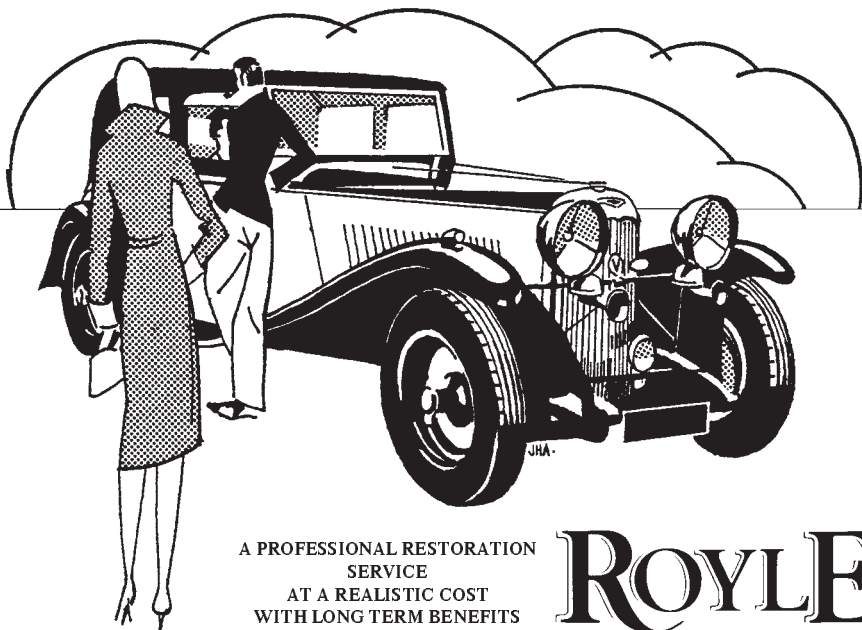
A section marked in our roadbook with 'tulips' but without distances

provided a surge for Macmillan funds, as did starts on some of the famous Cornish hill climbs, notably Porlock, and Blue Hills Mine which have been a test for cars and their drivers ever since the pre war London – Lands End Reliability Trials. The springtime beauty of the narrow west country lanes was breathtaking, as were the north Devon and Cornish coastal views. Then our route took us through Lorna Doone and Daphne du Maurier territory to St Just and our finish at Cape Cornwall.

As was to be expected my Lagonda's performance was superb – second to none. Our total of 24 penalty points made only a paltry contribution to Macmillan funds, but our earlier fundraising was significant. We also won the "Spirit of the Rally" trophy. The overall winner was the Ford Falcon the crew of which paid meticulous attention to their navigation. The Ford's power steering and electric hood were considered by some an advantage, but the satisfaction of negotiating the many hairpins and other hazards in my Lagonda, and seldom using the hood, negated the Ford's perceived advantages. My Lagonda was justly admired for its style and performance.

The comradeship of other participants, the route and spectacular scenery, and the performance of my Lagonda remain at the forefront of my recollections of this Cape to Cape tour which I would readily drive again.





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Witt (AH) Wittridge DFC (RAF Retd) 1922-2009

IT WAS NOT inappropriate that Witt died on St George's Day (April 23rd 2009) after a full life that any man would be proud of. He was known to the Lagonda and VSCC members as a good friend and an enthusiastic racer, rally competitor and fettler of his 1934 M45 (AXO 773).

Witt was a "Pilot Officer Kite" figure, was jingoistic who suffered no fool gladly. He hated the Japanese but was above all, a Christian gentleman. There was much more to Witt. His autobiography (An Evil Boy) 9ISBN 0954877802) recounts his service life in some detail and is worth reading.

A forebear was sentenced by Judge Jeffreys for stealing a chicken and was duly hanged. Witt's father died of malaria in the Star and Garter Hospital when young Witt was only six. Witt's mother, a strong willed woman, worked to keep the home together and had, in 1914, become the first woman welder in the aircraft industry, working for Hawkers.

Witt went to the local council school in Kingston upon Thames. He learnt the three Rs and had discipline knocked into him. He needed it – a bright boy lacking a father, he got into all sorts of scrapes. But these subsided when he took up aero modelling to some good effect. He won a competition and the prize was a flight in a Blackburn B2 biplane. Witt was hooked on flight but cars also featured in Witt's life. When taken to visit his aunt in Southport he saw a bandleader, Billy Cotton, racing his 30/98 on the sands. Witt in later life had a 30/98 but said it was an awful car when compared with his M45 Lagonda.

He passed his 11-plus and went to Kingston Grammar School. He received a classical education and the training to be a putative officer in the Cadet Corps. He did not, however, matriculate as war was declared. Witt left school at 16-plus to do his bit to help both his mother and his country. His first job was as a dogsbody at the Kingston firm of Parnell Aviation who made Frazer Nash gun turrets. In 1940 Witt cycled to the HQ of Fighter Command and asked to be trained to fly fighters. "You're too young, come back next year," he was told. He did, and did his basic training at Torquay. He was then trained to fly in Canada in a Fleet Finch (a Tiger Moth with a radial engine).

By 1942, after many indiscretions, he became a Pilot Officer and was posted to India and then Burma flying Hurricanes and Spitfires. His squadron, No 155, was very much in the front line in Burma, providing escorts to the air transports dropping supplies to the army forces advancing to Mandalay and always maintaining two aircraft on readiness against raids by Japanese aircraft. On one such raid he shot down a "Dinah", which was similar to the RAF's Mosquito and on another occasion he damaged an "Oscar" so seriously it was forced to crash land. He was finally rested in April 1945, when he was assessed as an exceptional fighter pilot and was awarded a DFC.

Post war Witt flew Meteors and Vampires and instructed on Spitfire Mk 16's. In 1950 he was posted to RAF Boscombe Down as a Test Pilot. In 1953 he left the RAF and became a Test Pilot for Armstrong Siddeley. By 1967 Witt

had made it to a plushy job as Chief Pilot for a private firm flying an HS125 Jet Ranger.

Witt had suffered severe back injury when he crashed a Mustang – showing off his side slipping abilities. These injuries caused his retirement from flying in 1975. He then became a meteorological officer for Birmingham University retiring in 1985.

He married, had three children and acquired various cars. He also ran a pub but, when we first met him, he had a

partner, Norma, who pre-deceased him in 2006. Witt's proudest claim to fame was the planes he flew, from an Anson to a Vulcan, not forgetting Hugheys. His biggest disappointment being the multi million TSR2 which fell off its trailer on its way to Boscombe Down and never did fly.

Witt is survived by his son, Donald, and his two daughters and will be missed and remembered by many old friends in the Lagonda Club and the VSCC.



Witt doing what he loved, this was taken during the Pan Pacific rally in 1992.





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Robert John Watts

Alan Heard mourns the passing of a fine man

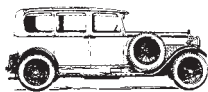
My close and dear friend Robert started driving in the late 50's with an Austin A40. Many years after, he found his way into Lagondas via his Father who had a 2.6 Saloon, and on a trip to the continent, they went over the Gotthard Pass, Switzerland and on the way back stayed at the Hotel Atlantic, Wimereux near Boulogne-sur-Mer, France. This stayed in his mind until the opportunity came with the Austrian Graz Continental Rally, so he spoke to me about it and Carol and I decided to join him in our 2.6. Though at the time, of course we didn't realise that this would be his last major rally, and for the record he covered more than 2,000 miles on this trip and enjoyed every mile of it. He was also at the AGM with his trusty 2.6 DHC. I spoke to him a few days before he became ill, when I asked how he was, he replied "I have been a bit poorly recently", an understatement if ever there was one.

Robert had been on many Lagonda rallies, being a full supporter of our club. His many jaunts included the Champagne rally of June 1999 in his V8. Last year was his most prolific year, starting with the Northern Dinner, which he always enjoyed, then the Fougères

French Rally. After returning home and three hours sleep, he got into his V8 and did a 400 mile journey to the start point of Roger Firth's Orkney trip, again having a wonderful time, then of course as already mentioned the Graz Rally, following up on what had been done many years prior. Finally the AGM, in total he travelled approximately 6,000 miles in his Lagondas, 4,000 of which, were in his 2.6.

At his Funeral there were well over 250 people including many of the farming community, of which he was very much part. The service was held in the Parish Church of Helpringham, close to Robert's home, the Vicar presided over the service with representation from the Diocese of Lincoln. The hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" was sung heartily by the congregation, this being one of Robert's favourites. Those representing the Lagonda Club were Alan and Carol Heard, Roger Firth, Simon Constable and Alan Wheatley with his 2.6 Lagonda. After the service we were invited back by the family to his eldest son's farmhouse for refreshments.

To his family we send our deepest sympathy.





Robert Watts, receiving a well-deserved award from Alan Heard.



The Awards on display at the Northern Dinner, our President David Hine is about to present them.

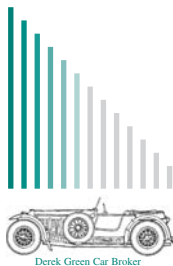


This is the illustration for our 2009 Christmas Card, get your orders in early.



The Northern Dinner and a fine collection of saloons - from either end they look splendid.





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We have enjoyed considerable success with Lagondas in recent times, and the lovely dark green 1936 LG45 Tourer continued the trend when it sold for £88,000 in our June Buxton auction.

Entries for our next sale are now invited
The Imperial War Museum,
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Beryl Firth receives a surprise gift at the Northern Dinner, see her letter on page 34.



Retiring Northern Representative Roger Firth hands over the "Badge of Office" to his successor, Tim Gresty, who provided all the pictures of this event.



Clive Dalton's Continental climbs up to the car park at Ditchling Beacon, see his article on page 28.



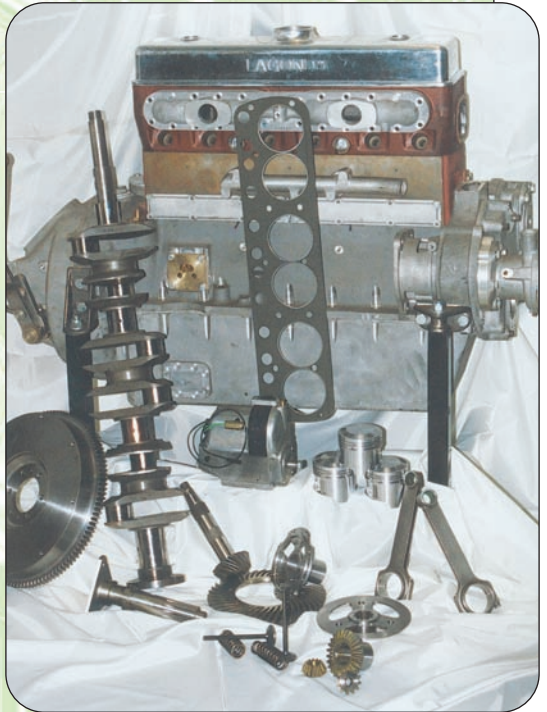
The same event: two of the participants park above Beachy Head.

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“Ever Keen”. A Review

John Brookes

I HAVE TO think back to my younger days, my very much younger days, to remember looking forward so much to something, as I had been doing before a copy of “Ever Keen” dropped on to the front door mat. Scenes reminiscent of Wednesday morning in the 50s, when the Eagle arrived, or Christmas mornings in the 40s when the latest Rupert Annual was released from its wrappings ensued. I was not disappointed then and neither was I now.

“Ever Keen” is everything that I could have hoped for but never expected it to be. From its clever and attractive cover design through the plethora of photographs to the care with which it combines text and illustration it is a masterpiece. Other one make/model car clubs will only be able to look at it with envy.

It was only in March of last year that Bernie Jacobson, the Rapier Register Hon. Australian Assistant Secretary, proposed that the Register should produce a book to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Lagonda Rapier, and made the generous offer of putting the whole thing together. Given that most Rapiers, and their owners, reside in the UK and only a handful are to be found in Australia this was going to be a task fraught with difficulties, Factor in that the cover design and layout was to be in the hands of Chris Banks, in far away America, the enormity of the task becomes obvious. That it has been achieved at all in the time frame allowed is a remarkable achievement; that it has been done with such success is a triumph.

A number of people, even one or two owners, have asked me, why “Ever Keen”? Well, when the Lagonda company went in to receivership and sold on the rights of manufacture etc to Rapier Cars Ltd. the new company brought out a new advertisement entitled, “A sports car built for those who demand more than mere motoring” and at the bottom, below a flexed rapier, the words, “Ever Keen Performance” appear. Hence the book got its name and its spirit, which is reflected in every page.

The layout is a delight from the contents page with its logical development of the Rapier story through to the pages on individual cars where the text and illustrations vie with one another for the reader's attention. A few photographs have been seen before by a wide audience, many have only been seen in the albums of the Register kept by Ann Pilgrim the club archivist, but most have never been seen before except by the proud owners of the cars illustrated.

The photographs show the Rapier in all its many guises, in repose, storming mountain passes, being re-built, sad and neglected on a low loader, hurtling round a bend on a race circuit, in disgrace and on tow but never without at least some vestiges of the dignity owed to such a magnificent car.

Did you know that a Rapier travelled to Budapest and back in 1936, that a Rapier won many pre-war races at Brooklands including at least one on each of the three circuits, lapped the Outer Circuit at an average speed of 108.8 mph and held the Campbell

Circuit record for an 1100 cc car? Read 'Ever Keen' and you will, plus much, much more.

Ask Sydney Allerton why he has kept his Rapier since 1940 and read his account of life with a Rapier and you will begin to understand the appeal of the car and the way in which this book reflects the cars character.

Could this book be improved? What is missing? Why is it not in colour?

Wouldn't it be better in hardback? The answer to all these questions is an emphatic NO. It lacks a comprehensive index at the back but has an excellent contents page at the front, is so logically laid out and lists all the cars and owners that appear with their relevant page numbers that nothing more is required.

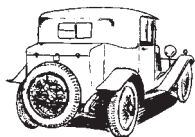
As for colour, would you expect "Casablanca" to be improved by colour? No. The period mainly covered by this book was one of largely monochrome photography and the occasional colour photograph would stand out like a Trabant in a line up of Lagondas.

I have read, enjoyed and owned many books on cars, both old and new, few if any have given me the same pleasure as "Ever Keen". Bernie Jacobson with the help of Chris Banks has produced a book which allows the character of the car it honours to shine

through on every page; produced in a limited time scale under the handicap of bringing together information over half the globe, it is perhaps a little reminiscent of the problems faced by Tim Ashcroft and Charles King in 1933 when they were told to produce a small car of the highest quality and not to drag their heels over it. The result in both cases has proved to be exactly the same, a resounding success.

Editor's Note:

This is reprinted from the Rapier Register Newsletter, with their kind permission. We don't usually feature reviews that have been published previously, but who better to review this book than John, a keen and knowledgeable Rapier owner? Your editor has owned two Rapiers and in the past has had the pleasure of the loan of two others for long term use. It was a close call whether to buy a Rapier or the 2 litre kit of parts I eventually chose and I sometimes still wonder if I made the right choice. Whether you have never owned a Rapier, or are already in thrall to the baby of the Lagonda family, this is a book that you should have on your shelf alongside the selection on the Rapier's larger cousins. K.P.P.





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16/80 SU HV3 Carburettor Needles

Brian Savill investigates

Needles.

Having had difficulties in obtaining satisfactory carburettor settings on the Tourer I have recently restored, plus having conversations on the subject with fellow 16/80 fettlers, an investigation was thought to be prudent.

The accompanying graph shows the three recommended types of needles.

It can be seen that all are the same up to the 2nd measurement and this is the relative position needle to main jet at tick over.

Position 12 is the limit the needle travels to give a relationship between main jet and needle diameter.

The distance between the graphic needle lines and the 90 horizontal line relates to the volume of fuel flow.

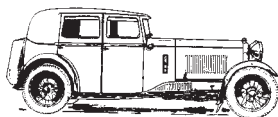
It can be seen that needles 62 and 61 show, relative to each other, an expected pattern. However QA will give a weaker mixture up to about half piston opening position but then progressively gives a richer mixture becoming very rich at fully open.

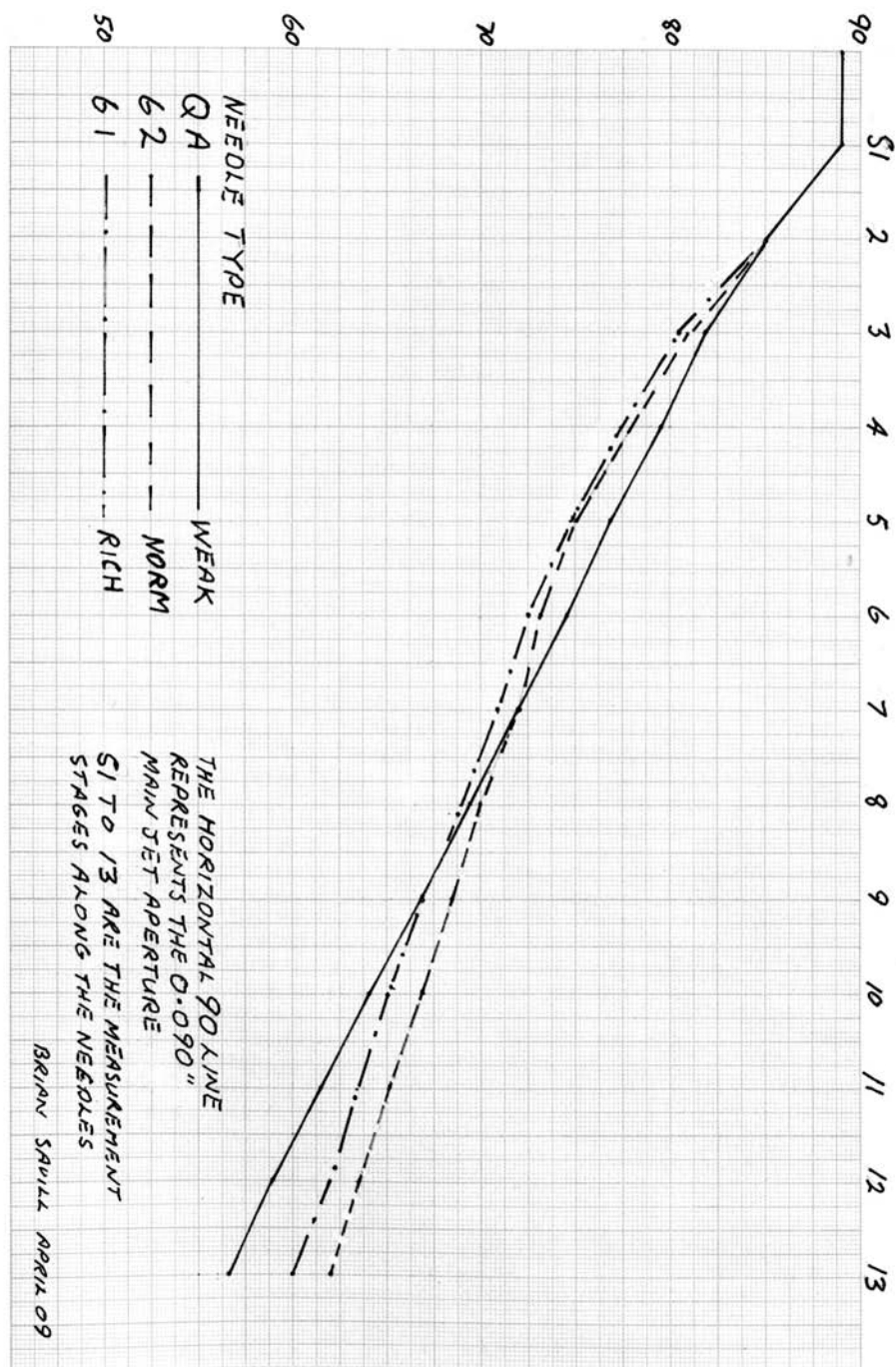
Additional musings.

Difficulties were found in obtaining satisfactory tick over settings on previous 16/80s all being too rich.

All have had their main jets modified, with satisfactory results, enabling them to be raised by 0.015"

But, the newest restoration just had to be different in that it is not rich enough at tick over. Although a temporary cure can be found, it can't be treated as satisfactory, as full testing is delayed until the engine is run in.





Four Nights in Sussex

Clive Dalton and friends tell all

WELL, IT WAS supposed to be a Lagonda do but one or two didn't quite make it. Gill and David Edwards had to come in their red E Type and Rosie and Walter Thompson had to bring their Austin-Healey 3000, both cars quite distinguished each in its own way.

"I had one of these once" says Richard Reay-Smith about the Jaguar, "I would drive it to Northumberland to see my parents". Says Mother: "Yes dear, I can see it's a phallic symbol – but which end?"

It's a pretty car though it wouldn't start on Day 2. It was subsequently discovered to be one of those resistive high tension leads which depend for their action on a row of carbon granules holding hands. From time to time they do this rather less tightly than they should. A bit of good, old fashioned copper wire worked wonders.

Mr Austin's version of a Healey got generator trouble, which was not resolved until after the end of the event. Fortunately the garage to which Rosie and Walter took it had a car to lend them so they didn't miss very much.

Two magnetos got noisy; Michael Drakeford's was fixed with some extra oil but Marlene and Bob Osborne's 2 Litre went home to Horsham at half time not fully diagnosed.

One of the delights of this sort of event is that one comes and goes as one pleases, picking and choosing from the menu and diverting to look at other interesting things as opportunity offers. Such was Day 2. Michael had started with a visit to Hamsey Church. It is a numinous place at the end of a little lane where the village was abandoned after the Black Death in 1349. The church, however, is still in occasional use especially for weddings. Untouched by

the Victorians it has no electricity, modern conveniences or 'restoration' of any kind. The visitor's book is, however, well used and it being the day of Robert Watts' funeral it seemed suitable to leave a message in his memory.

Just 100 yards across the fields lives Terry Squires in his converted barn. We, being last as usual, were charged with taking the church key back to his house and we found them in residence. So often a barn conversion has lost the barn character in the converting. Not this one. It's a real education in how to do it properly and make a comfortable and successful home with a wonderful view. The Planners get no points at all however. Having given permission for the original conversion scheme they refused the much more suitable one proposed by Terry. "It's in the Green Belt and should be allowed to fall down. We have enough photographs." was their attitude.

Lewes is a most attractive town, well worth a visit even without the Lagonda. Michael had carefully set up special parking with the denizens of the Local Authority but when we arrived it turned out the message had run into the sand before it reached the man at the sharp end. Mild panic ensued when dozens of cars turned up in the narrow street with no room to turn round. Fortunately the newly elected Chairman of Lewes District Council turned up plus dog and we were finally parked in the castle grounds. They served well and we do make a spectacle. One or two of us however, missed all this excitement and went straight up the High Street to Shelley's Hotel for coffee.

Ditchling Beacon from Lewes next. It's a steady climb all the way up in first for us as we had a standing start at the



It is a well-known fact that Lagondas are wonderful for pulling the birds...





The cars at rest in the car park of the Newick Park Hotel.



Now, where did I leave the car? Walter Thompson buys ice creams at Beachy Head.

foot. The reward is, of course, the spectacular views over the Wealds of Sussex and Kent to the North Downs nearly 30 miles away not to mention the car park full of nice machinery. Devil's Dyke behind Brighton was next on Michael's route but not many seemed to take the little side detour needed to see the view westward towards Wisborough Green, Guildford and the Hog's Back. Small trick missed.

Bodiam Castle on Day 3 is another pleasant place though it was a surprise to discover that it is a medieval status symbol with little defensive merit. The chap who put it up was a mercenary soldier who thought it would be good for business if he was seen to live in a castle. It was only some centuries later that it got knocked about presumably by another needing a status symbol. "He has reduced a castle – he must be a gear fellow."

After Bodiam and Kipling's house at Bateman's where his Roller is imprisoned we drove across the Pevensea Levels and thence to what turned out to be Our Leader's Nemesis. Michael was turning left into a road out of which a coach was coming. In Michael's elegant phrase "Turning a large coach is something for which he needs more practice." The local police will be hearing from MWD and the coach firm from his insurers. The witness who very kindly stopped turned out to have a Mk 1 Jaguar in his garage.

The route to Beachy Head confused some who missed the right turn to Jeavington immediately after a very busy roundabout with lights. They, including a Local, arrived at the car park from the East but none the worse for that. It saved some retracing of steps. The Long Man of Wilmington on the way home reminded us of the Dorset event a year or two ago and the Cerne Abbas giant, see paragraph two above.

One thinks of Surrey and indeed Sussex as almost totally built-up. If you cut down all the trees you'd probably be revealed as right but standing on the lawn in front of the hotel at Newick there

is not another dwelling to be seen anywhere in more than 180° and you can see as far as the South Downs, perhaps 15 miles away. Even those of us who have lived for many years in Sussex find this surprising.

Day 4 took us down the remote and bosky lanes of Surrey, made for 2 Litres and a considerable pleasure. They can't be too much fun at 08.00 and going home time on a weekday but in the middle of a sunny spring morning they are just perfect and also point up the curious difference between English roads and roads on the Continent. Continental roads always seem to be going somewhere. English roads on the other hand are a sort of network connecting everywhere with everywhere else. If you miss a turning in, say, Germany, it is turning round time for there won't be another in many miles. In the UK the next turning will do pretty well especially if you know which way is North. Navigating yourself by sense of direction is something of a male virility symbol which also infuriates the one holding the map.

Coffee at Gomshall Mill at the foot of the North Downs leads to some A25 motoring. What must it have been like before the M25 opened? Talk about A1 being the Little North Lane; in former times A 25 must have been almost impossible. Not bad now though and Chartwell was something of a revelation. Those who had been there 20 years before said it was amazingly improved. The National Trust is often criticised but at least in this case they seem to have got things right. Justifiably, it's one of the most visited of their sites.

We ended with a special dinner at which Mike and Georgina received some tokens of our appreciation, following which John Fitton and Peter Minett entertained us on the piano and sax. All in all these events, "Gatherings" Roger Firth calls them, are an increasing feature of pre-war car life and one can see why. Rushing about doesn't suit these cars or, now, their owners. Picking and choosing from a menu of nice things to do seems to suit many rather well.

Some Observations on Post-Asbestos Friction Material

John Ryder studies a gripping situation

IN THIS PERIOD some serious problems have arisen, not least with vintage car clutch linings and vehicles of both vintage and P.V.T. categories having drum-pattern brakes, these being virtually standard wear up until the early 60s when disc-pattern began to be fitted

Industrially, press-brakes and other machinery requiring rapid retardation under high kinetic energy conditions were similarly affected, such matters, however, are outside the scope of these particular notes.

The clutches fitted to cars of the 20s and 30s are predominantly of large diameter and hence, for any given RPM, have a high peripheral speed, certainly when compared with the Borg & Beck design of the later, post-vintage 30s and even more so, with current practice.

Automotive applications are principally clutch and brake linings, that is to say, 'dry', as distinct from pre-selector gearbox drive-bands or oil-immersed cork-insert designed clutches.

For manufacturers in the period under consideration, asbestos-based material was the universal choice in as much as it gave the best combination of:

1. Good wear resistance.

2. Adequate 'grip' with spring-pressures in clutch applications, constrained by direct, mechanical operation and brakes having no servo-assistance.

3. Moderate pedal-pressure requirements (clutch and brake).

4. Tolerance to the high temperatures generated in both of the above, particularly with large diameter drum-brakes on high performance cars.

Conditions per 1, 2 and 3 created an obvious compromise and 4, an essentially high asbestos content together, as far as clutches were concerned, with some strict disciplines for drivers!

Slipping or 'riding' the clutch would greatly accelerate wear and produce some fairly unpleasant fumes in the process - points heavily emphasised in Owner Manuals.

However, due to the unique properties of asbestos, linings usually survived the consequences of abuse.

It should be specifically noted that the flywheel and clutch/gearbox drive-assembly for 2, 3 and 3½ litre Lagonda cars, (1927-1933) are exactly the same interchangeable components; only the six-offloading springs being slightly stiffer for the two latter models.

This design was superseded in 1934 by a Borg & Beck clutch, mated to the T9 gearbox of the 4½ litre, M45 model. The earlier design, however, is especially vulnerable to excess temperature in as much as the linings are attached to the pressure and cover plates, the centre driven-plate thereby having to absorb all the generated heat. This plate is less than 1/8" thick and cannot be significantly increased due to the dimensional constraints imposed by the overall clutch assembly.

In simple terms, the design is 'inside-out', and as such very careful attention to lining material, clearances in set-up and proper usage are critical to satisfactory operation and life-expectancy. They will perform reliably, but only if the rules are strictly observed.

Asbestos-based linings were fairly liberally brass-loaded and riveted into position, although at the expense of reduced contact area due to that lost in the rivet head counterbores, also in the resultant reduction of useable thickness as the lining surface wore progressively closer to the faces of the rivet heads, thus significantly reducing the period between re-lining.

"Bonding" procedures, which effectively overcame both problems, were not really common until the post-war period and even then were viewed with considerable reservation, adhesives of the time being nowhere near as developed as they are now.

When asbestos was outlawed, the problems became significantly greater. Owners and repairers cast around for an effective substitute and some wholly unsuitable materials were found to be on offer.

The writer has personal experience of clutch linings which lasted only a matter of days - even with careful use!

Suffice it to say that some were so totally useless as to question how on earth they came to be marketed in the first place. The most common of these originated, one is reliably informed, from a manufacturer in Spain. Chemical analysis revealed it to be basically a phenolic resin moulding, randomly impregnated with pieces of glass-fibre matting. The temperature threshold was so low that even with careful use, the material simply collapsed and ran out of the clutch housing in a brown, glutinous mass.

The writer was approached to find an answer, three failures having occurred within less than a week of installation. Amongst others, Messrs 'Ferodo' were contacted and discussions held with their R & D people.

It transpired that they had recently released a new lining material formulated specifically for drum-braked vehicle application and they also confirmed its complete suitability for use in large-diameter, vintage clutches.

All drum-brakes do, of course, suffer from 'fade' when repeatedly applied from high speed; simply a question of heat dissipation within what, despite air-scoops, heavy finning and such-like, is virtually a 'closed envelope'.

A design feature of this new material is a high degree of heat accommodation, which considerably lessens the 'glazing' effect and resultant reduction in 'grip'. Bearing in mind that the material is aimed at vehicles which are unlikely to be used on a daily basis, emphasis on 'stopping-power', as distinct from 'wear-rate', resulted in a lining which, whilst acceptably durable, gave far better results in what are mainly straightforward mechanical or non-servo hydraulic brake clutch systems.

Slightly softer linings have the additional advantage of being kinder to cast-iron brake drums and ageing metal generally.

The heavy-duty 'woven' material is liberally loaded with brass segments and is 100% suitable for 'bonded' application to steel, and importantly for cars of our period- aluminium brake-shoes.

It is designated "Ferodo MZ Gold" and is available in the usual range of thicknesses, standard lining widths and sheet form.

The writer has re-lined a number of clutches and brakes with this material and obtained excellent results. One notable success was the literal transformation in the braking performance of an XK120, a car not noted for praise in respect of this particular department!

For members with a specific interest in the subject, a detailed description of the construction, set-up and 'dos and don'ts' regarding early Lagonda clutches, together with a marked-up reference copy of the original Lagonda Works GA drawing is also available.

Finally, for the avoidance of any doubt; the writer has no formal connection with, nor financial interest in, the 'Ferodo' company and/or their agents.

Letters

To the editor by Email 5th May.

Dear Ken.

Susie and I were very sorry to learn Robert Watts had died. He was such a sociable fellow, full of humour and laughter as he enthusiastically exercised his DB 2.6 DHC and AML V8 cars on many rallies and runs. We always enjoyed his company, the celery grown on his farm and it is nice to reflect our last meeting when he came down from Helpringham, near Sleaford in the 2.6 to support our 'Noggin & Natter' gathering on 21st March. His smiling persona will be much missed by all who knew him.

Yours.

John & Susie Batt.

Dear Ken,

As you are no doubt aware from Arnold's book in 1934 a 3½ Ltr Tourer was carried into Nepal.

As at that time there were very few roads in the country and certainly none that were moterable outside the Kathmandu valley I considered that it was unlikely that the car had ever come out again so I decided on a recent visit to see if I could find out what happened to it. What follows is the story:

My first port of call was to The National Museum in Kathmandu there I was taken to see the first car to enter the country. This turned out to be the wreck of a 1920s Hudson sitting in the open though under a roof and gently rusting away. When I indicated that this was not what I was looking for I was taken across the street to look through the gates of the Military Museum at a 1950's Rolls which I was told had been presented to Nepal by the Queen. This time I was not able to get close enough to ascertain its condition. I was then driven into the

centre of the old city to a Museum in Durbhar Square.

When we were admitted I was escorted through various buildings some in the process of renovation till I was presented with a rather battered Mk1 Landrover such are the problems of communication.

I left Kathmandu the next day for the primary reason for visiting the country, namely birdwatching and considered my search to be over until some two weeks later when, having lunch with a retired Colonel who lives in Pokra, I mentioned the car and, yes, he remembered seeing it in the 1950s and he even provided the name and telephone number of the then owner.

As I do not speak Nepali I asked my guide to make the telephone call which he did only to be told "car no longer here". Nothing more.

So there the matter rests at this time, if any other member intends to visit Nepal they can take the matter from there or if I return I may make further enquiries.

On an entirely different matter, namely Tony Loch's letter Spring 2009, both Alistair Gunn and I reside in Edinburgh which I consider to be part of the Lothians.

Best Wishes

John Hewat

Dear Mr Painter,

I would like to thank the members who attended the 2009 Dinner at Monk Fryston Hall for the delightful Medinilia plants which were presented to me.

They came as a complete surprise and I can report that they are both doing well and hopefully will keep flowering.

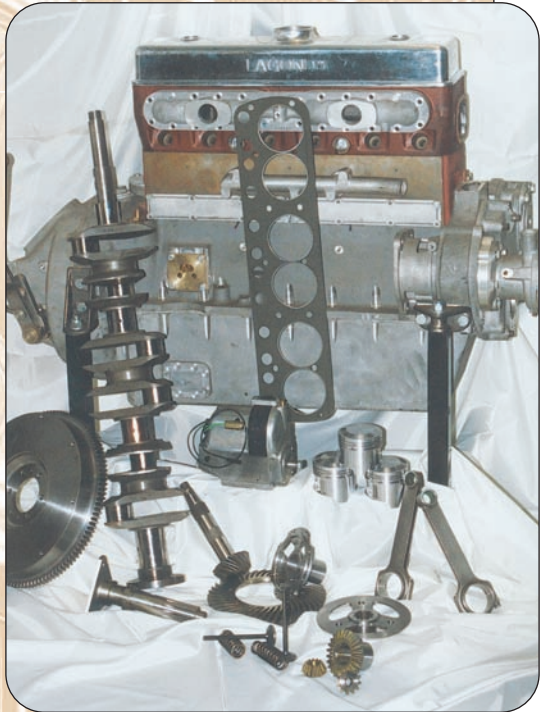
Again, many thanks,

Beryl Firth

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