



**THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
LAGONDA CLUB  
Number 243 Winter 2014/2015**



# DAVID AYRE



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## FRONT COVER:

*Interesting associations for some Lagonda owners! M45s at the Shere Hill Climb.  
Picture from Michael Drakeford.*

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# From the Driving Seat

*Roger Seabrook*

WISHING ALL MEMBERS happy motoring in 2015.

A correction to the 2014 AGM report - Peter Walby writes: 'I have been recorded as having attended in our 1931 2 litre L/C GP 4585. Alas it is still undergoing a major restoration, and has not been on the road since 1969. Arnold will be thinking he missed it! We were in our 1930 3 litre KY 2832.'

Alan Elliot has stepped down as South West Area Representative, and is replaced by Nigel Paterson. Many thanks to Alan for his long service, and welcome to Nigel.

John Batt suffered a serious health setback in December, and was in hospital. We wish him a speedy recovery, back to his usual busy self! His exciting LG6 refurbishment is nearly complete, and a picture of the supercharged engine is on page seven.

The featured cars at the 2015 AGM will be Specials, which should provide an interesting spectacle. The Board had a debate about what actually constituted a Special - more difficult than you may think! My first Lagonda was a 12-24, but I acquired a 2 litre special from a friend (Mike Maher) in 1978. The remains of an early low-chassis car were disinterred from a ditch behind the 'Jolly

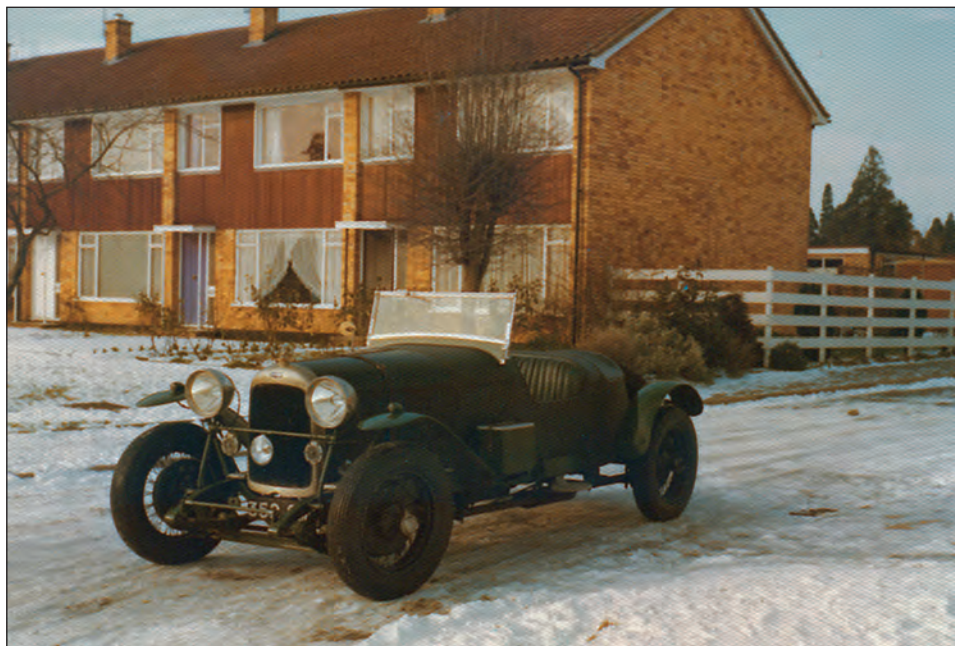
Woodman' in Burnham (the pub was used in the film 'Genevieve'). Mike noticed a 2 litre dynamo propping open a door, and this led to the discovery. The car had been dismantled by Ticker Beck (landlord) and George Stanton (who, I believe, still has the engine). Mike built the body in his back garden and managed to source a back axle and Z type gearbox through the Club. He could not, however, find a 2 litre engine, so he installed a 2½ Riley unit, making a sub-frame to support the front. The offside rear chassis frame had an insert welded in by a lady at the local scrapyard, as it had rusted due to laying in water. The chassis number was OH 9552.

I had an indicated 95mph out of this car, but traded it in for my 2 litre SM in December 1978. Dan Margulies gave me a good price for it and the pictures were taken in Marlow just before my drive to London, to deliver it to Queens Gate Place Mews. It was advertised in Motor Sport, and I was told it disappeared to Italy. I expect it survives, probably with a new registration, and another body. I would love to see it again. Does anyone know where it is? If so, can they persuade the owner to bring it to the AGM?

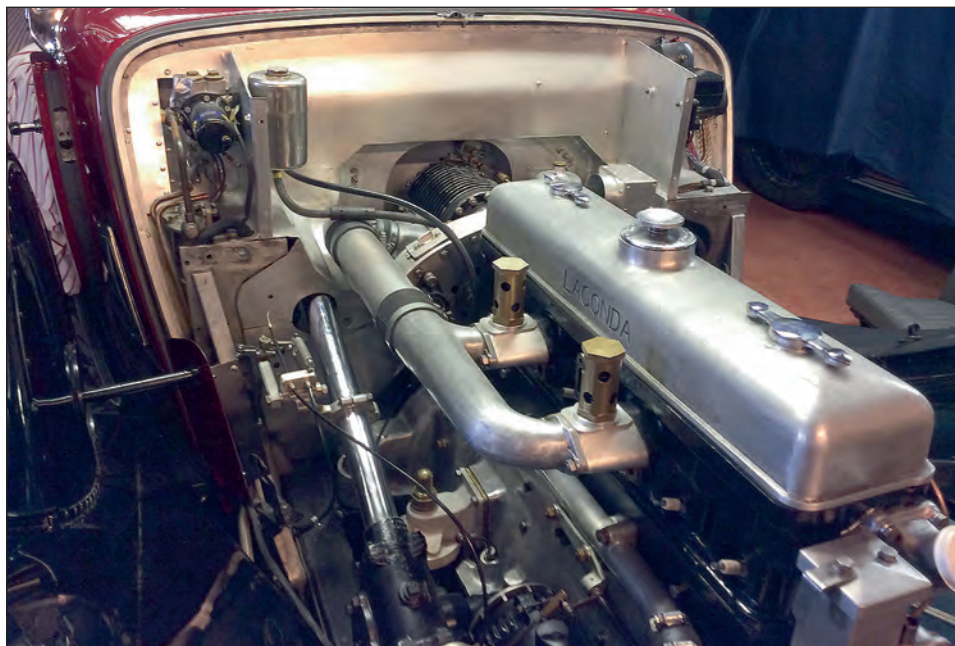


***Last date for copy for the Spring magazine is  
... FRIDAY 27th March 2015 ...***





*The Editor's 2 litre special in 1978, also showing the Riley engine*



*John Batt's LG6 special showing the supercharged engine*

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# Antipodean Adventures

## *Ken Painter goes "down under"- Part 2*

The next day, I flew to Coolangata, just on the Queensland side of the State border, where Peter and Beverley Henson were waiting. Before we left the town, we had lunch in a restaurant overlooking the sea at Point Danger (so named by Captain Cook) with James and Susan Dyer, who arrived in their lovely M45. It is currently fitted with a twin cam Jaguar engine, but it has been installed so cleverly that it looks as if it was fitted from new. After lunch, we began our long drives to our respective homes, taking me back into New South Wales again.

Peter's farm lies inside the caldera of a long extinct volcano and the un-made track to his house runs around the inner wall. It is narrow, very steep in places and with many very tight bends. I was to come to grief on this track later...

I was promised wallabies, rather than kangaroos, and there were some grazing on the grass around the house when we arrived, but the setting sun was behind them and I couldn't get any decent pictures. From that point on, they grazed very far from the house and I never did get my pictures. They have Koalas and Duck Billed Platypus too, but they stayed well out of sight during my stay.

With no other Lagonda owners for many miles from Peter's, he arranged a visit by the local vintage car club and we had a display on their lawn. As vintage cars are comparatively rare in Australia and New Zealand, the clubs are open to owners of post-war classics as well, so there were several on display here. It was a great meeting and, as the only 'Pom' present, I was asked a lot of questions

about the British cars on show, most of which I was able to answer. It helped that two of the cars were Bullnose Morrisises, another was a Morris Minor Ute (pickup truck to you and me, and I have owned examples of both). Another was a Riley Pathfinder. In the 1950s, Rileys were made in the MG factory in Abingdon, where I went to school. If I wasn't selected for a team on our Wednesday sports afternoons I sometimes hitch-hiked home, and was regularly given lifts by the Riley test drivers as they took each car for a trial run. Life was so much more innocent in those days, and I can't imagine this happening today. But I digress...

My moment of shame came after the visiting cars had left and I was persuaded to drive Peter's 2-6 Lagonda tourer to the farm gate to lock it behind the visitors. The trip down the track to the gate was easy, but the climb up the steepest part of the track on the way back caught me out. I tried to snatch first gear as the car slowed down, but failed. The engine stalled and the car began to roll backwards very slowly. I had very little rear vision, as the mirrors weren't adjusted for my height, and one rear wheel dropped gently into the shallow drainage gully along the side of the track. There was no way the car could be driven out, so Peter walked to the farm, fired up his big four wheel drive tractor, and towed me back onto the track and up until we reached a less steep part. From here I could drive back to the top. No damage was done to the car, but my pride took a hard knock! Peter, bless him, was kindness itself and didn't criticise me at all, which is much more than I deserved!





*The Local Vintage Car Club visit Peter Henson's farm. The ground really does curve!*



*One of the V12 engines at Mark Whitehead's, waiting to be re-installed*

If he was relieved that I was due to move-on the next morning, he didn't say, and another epic drive began as he took me to meet Mark Whitehead, the second of my hosts who I had met before, at the halfway point of the journey. Before we parted, Peter and Beverley presented me with a beautiful bowl, carved from the wood of a Mango tree, as a present from the Australian Lagonda Group, and an Australian flag to display on my car.

The drive to Mark's farm was another long one, but very interesting, as were all the other drives during my trip. We had crossed The Great Dividing Range and we were now in an area seriously affected by drought, the land the other side of the range was still beautifully green and lush. Here, there were no animals in the parched brown fields and only a few birds to be seen.

Once we arrived I was introduced to Judy, Mark's wife, who prepared a lovely meal for us. We sat eating, drinking and, most of all, talking until late in the night. Sadly, this was only a very brief stay, but I enjoyed a morning looking at Mark's large collection of Lagondas and his two Alvis, a 4.3 litre and a post-war TD21. Mark's late father, Jim, liked V12s, and it isn't often that you see a row of fully restored V12 engines, all waiting to be refitted into their chassis. The old car movement is a small world in many ways, and one of his cars resided about 10 miles from me, when I lived in Yorkshire in the early 1960s.

In the afternoon, Mark took me for a ride in the TD21 Alvis and I was bemused to find myself in a small town called Apsley, since my son Adam works in the English Apsley. We drove just outside the town to visit Apsley Falls, normally a spectacular waterfall dropping 360 metres into a very deep gorge, but for the first time in about 100 years it was completely dry.

Next morning, Mark and I were up early to take me to yet another hand-over point at roughly half way on my long journey, where I met my final hosts, Clarry and Susan Robinson, who live about 30 miles outside Sydney. Shortly after we arrived at their home, Anthony de Young, a DB Lagonda 2.6 owner, arrived. He presented me with a series of mostly Australian articles about the DB Lagondas for the Club archives. He has a large collection of DB spares that he is willing to sell to the Club, as the Australian members have shown very little interest in them. By the time you read this, the Board may have decided whether the cost of purchase and shipping would make this a viable option. Clarry is restoring a DB 2.6 drophead and it promises to be a superb looking car when it is completed.

Clarry was full of surprises and, next day, he announced that fellow Lagonda Club member Graham Lawrence, who owns a lovely M45 tourer fitted with a Rapide engine, had invited us to lunch at the Royal Sydney Yacht Club. The setting was glorious, the weather perfect as we sat on the veranda overlooking the bay, under the shade of sail-like awnings.

The next day was my last full day, and Clarry had planned another surprise. We drove all the way into the Blue Mountains to visit Peter and Pru Docker. In a strange way, this completed the circle, as Peter was Mike Truter's nearest fellow member - but they did live about 250 miles apart! (Peter sadly passed away later in the year - see the obituary in the Autumn magazine). He had a smart 2 litre High Chassis tourer, an early Bullnose Morris Cowley, and a post-war Riley 2.5 litre. These Rileys seem to hold a special attraction for Lagonda owners, and many of the people I met either have one, or had one in the past. Who knows,

I might even have ridden in one or more of them, when they were given their road test straight off the production line, all those years ago...

The Lagonda talk went on for many hours, and the view from Peter's veranda was spectacular. It is easy to see why they chose to live there. The area seems very sparsely populated, but there is a small town just a few miles further along the main road. The road to Peter's seemed to climb forever up the mountains and the journey took a very long time, so Clarry's wife, Susan, drove us home.

Sadly this was the end of my stay, next morning we took the train to the airport. I had chosen to fly home via Hong Kong and then across China, Russia and the Baltic States to Heathrow. It is probably the shortest route back to England, but we arrived at Heathrow at 4:30 in the morning. Adam was waiting

for me as I walked out of the Customs Hall - this was most unexpected, but it was a wonderful end to an incredible holiday.

To judge by the time each journey took, and the very light traffic we encountered, I may well have covered something between 2,000 and 3,000 miles.

The kindness and hospitality shown by everyone I met was overwhelming and I have made many new friends. Special thanks must go to Peter Henson, who arranged my itinerary, and to the lovely people, Mike and Gail, Alec and Anne, Peter and Beverley, Mark and Judy, Clarrie and Susan, who took into their lives someone who was, for most of them, a total stranger, and made every day of my stay something very special. The phrase "the holiday of a lifetime" is often over-used, but these two weeks in Australia must rate as mine.



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# Lagonda Lecture

## *Benjamin Hargreaves attends*

ON SATURDAY 11TH October 2014, Arnold Davey gave the Dudley Coram Memorial Lecture at the Aston Martin Heritage Trust (AMHT). His subject was "The Lagonda Legacy". AMHT was formed in 1998 by the Aston Martin Owners Club (AMOC) to look after the many valuable historical artefacts that had been acquired by the Club over the years.

The home of both the AMHT and the AMOC is an historic 15th century barn, originally a storage barn for Dorchester Abbey, on the edge of the little village of Drayton St Leonard, near Wallingford, Oxfordshire. The barn itself is of considerable interest, especially in its structure of wooden beams, and the collection of drawings, photographs, brochures, parts, models and other Aston Martin artefacts (including a handful of cars) is of even greater interest for us enthusiasts. Dudley Coram was a major force in the AMOC in the nineteen fifties and sixties and held most of the important offices in the Club until his death in 1976.

Before the lecture, an informal lunch was held at The White Hart in Dorchester-on-Thames for those who wished to attend. A car stationed outside the front entrance to the hotel moved away as I arrived, so my 1939 Lagonda LG6 drophead was placed in prime position outside the front door for everyone to see as they arrived (and also inevitably drew attention from passers-by). I was talking to Lagonda people in the bar when the summons to lunch came. I then found myself ushered to what seemed like the 'top table' of Lagonda grandees beyond my station ..... being only a rather new Lagonda owner of some 10 years standing! I should

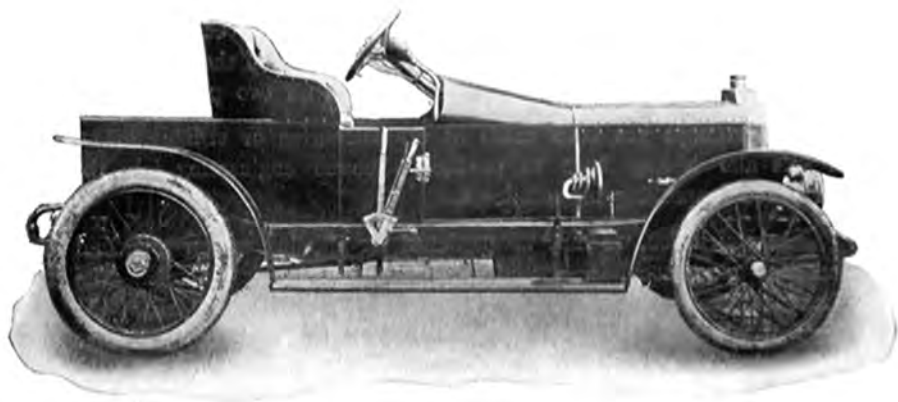
admit that I have, however, been an Aston Martin owner for some 40 years (a fact not known when I was asked to write this piece!).

On arrival at the Barn there were a handful of Lagondas drawn up among the Aston Martins, to give a flavour of the marque. Arnold was introduced as the Lagonda Club's equivalent of AMHT. He spoke for some 2 1/4 hours with extensive illustrations on the history of Lagonda, including on what is known about the earlier life of Wilbur Gunn, to a quiet and attentive audience of about 45 people. It is true to say that the audience had largely reached the years of good manners and, as a Lagonda owner had said to me earlier "We are all nerds here" !

For me the most fascinating parts were those relating to the early life and multifarious activities of Gunn himself. He came across as an extraordinarily talented and multi-faceted character. For those less conversant with the Lagonda models of the later twenties and thirties it may have been other aspects that were of more interest. Arnold took the history of Lagonda into the post-war period, but fortunately (to me) stopped short of showing the ugly sport- utility proposal of a few years ago.

The lecture showed what an extensive subject the history of Lagonda is, with its richness of models, images, anecdotes, successes and failures, even though the greater part had taken place in the first half of the last century. It remains to be seen whether the assembled Aston Martin owners will now wish to try a range of cars (a little) less expensive than their own historic models!





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*A rare picture – what a pity none of these early cars survive*



*Charles Brackenbury in the V12 at the 1939 BARC Brooklands meeting.  
Photos courtesy of Arnold Davey – from his presentation*

# Travelling through Myanmar (Burma) in a 1933 M45 Lagonda

*Richard Cunningham popped out for a paper, and look where he ended up!*

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE I have had a deep fascination and interest in Burma, and a passion for driving vintage cars in interesting places. In January 2014 I was fortunate to combine both these passions, taking my M45 Lagonda (AUU 295) to participate in the first classic car rally through Myanmar.

In 1945 my 24 year old father, as a young Royal Engineers officer with the Madras Sappers and Miners, fought from the plains of Imphal to Rangoon in 7 months. The 19th Indian Division was at the forefront of the assault, being the first across the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers, relieving Swebo and Mandalay. It was an astonishing feat of arms which only General Bill Slim, his field commanders, and most importantly his men, believed was achievable. Certainly no one in London at the time thought that such a victory was possible.

After the war, Burma gained its independence in 1946. In 1962, following a military coup, the Myanmar government effectively closed the borders, severely limiting tourism. These restrictions have only started to be lifted over the last few years, ensuring that the country, its infrastructure, and its people remain relatively untouched by the more damaging aspects of modern mass tourism.

In 2010 H&H Rallies announced the first Classic car rally to Myanmar, enabling foreigners to import their cars and to drive unaccompanied through the

country. The opportunity was too appealing, and I immediately sent in my entry without a co-driver. Walking down the King's Road later that day I bumped into an old friend, Polly Hanson-Smith, who asked what I was up to. Full of enthusiasm, I blurted out that I had just signed up to drive my Lagonda through Myanmar. "Oh," she said "Julian would love to do that, his Grandfather lived in Maymyo, and his father was born and grew up there before the war". And so the team was formed. Two old friends, both with great connections and interest in the country, joined forces to drive a 1933 Lagonda through Myanmar.

My local mechanic, Roy Gibson, made the car ready for the trip. Having previously prepared one for the 2010 Peking to Paris rally, we had learned a lot of lessons. AUU 295 was in good shape, but the exhaust and sump are always vulnerable on rough roads. We re-engineered the exhaust and installed a skid plate to protect the underside, checked all the usual suspects, and off she went to CarsUK for shipping last November.

On 18th January we arrived in Yangon (Rangoon), the largest City in Myanmar. We picked the car up from the Customs shed with no problems. Much to my delight she started first time. Yangon is unusual in South East Asia. Amongst other things, the Governor had banned both dilapidated old cars and, with the exception of the police, motor



*The M45 after joining 10 other cars for a blast down a deserted 20 lane highway!*



*The minister of Tourism tries out an M45 - he recognises class when he sees it!*





*M45, Chevrolet, and LG45*



*M45 and LG45 off-road in Burma*



bikes. When you arrive you cannot immediately put your finger on what is different, until you realise that the usual challenges of avoiding thousands of motor bikes and mopeds simply doesn't exist in Yangon. My main concern was that the 1933 Lagonda did not satisfy the Governor's age constraints!

Yangon is the bustling commercial centre of Myanmar and the Kanawgyi Palace Hotel, located in the centre of the city, proved an ideal base. Built on banks of the Kan Daw Gyi lake, in the middle of Yangon, it provided the perfect circuit around the lake on which to calibrate our trip and get a feel for driving on the right hand side of the road, when all the cars are right hand drive. It also provided the opportunity to meet old friends as well as make new ones. In Class 2, Vintage over 4000cc were a 1928 Bentley Le Mans, a 1937 Chevrolet driven by my old friend Xavier del Marmol and Ines Bodner, a 1944 Rolls Royce Silver Dawn and another Lagonda, a 1937 LG45 driven by Michael Haentjes and Simone Ricart-Garcia. The team to beat was always going to be Gerd and Birgit Bueler in their 1938 BMW 327/28 in Class 1, Vintage up to 4000cc. I had met both Xavier and Gerd on the 2010 Peking to Paris, Gerd driving car 65 next to my M45 Pillarless saloon, car 66. From the first dinner in Yangon one knew that this rally was going to be a great adventure.

The first day saw us assemble in front of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. Apart from being one of the largest and most impressive temples in Myanmar it was also the site of the surrender of the Burmese to the British at the end of the Second Anglo-Burmese war in 1862. The surrender was taken by Major-General Sir Henry Godwin, my wife's direct ancestor. We were provided with a police escort through the teaming

Yangon rush hour traffic and, apart from the entire convoy having to wait whilst a new battery was installed in car 1, the BMW 327/28, arrived at the Pin Bo Gyi Shrine for the cars to be blessed by the monks next to a sacred Bayan tree. We stopped at the Allied War Cemetery to pay our respects to the fallen of World War 2. As always with Commonwealth War Cemeteries it was extremely well maintained, peaceful and moving, commemorating some 27,000 fallen soldiers.

Pushing on through paddy fields we entered the city of Bago, where immediately one felt the mass of motorbikes on the road. We visited the reclining Buddha which was built in the 10th Century followed by the Kanbawzathadi Golden palace, a reconstruction of a 15th Century Palace and Throne room. After lunch we headed on to Taungoo, the roads becoming less inhabited and less busy. Taungoo was as far south as my father reached in 1945, the 19th Indian Division being ordered to turn east and to pursue the Japanese into Thailand. At last I was on the road that my father travelled as a young man.

The following day we drove to Naypyidaw, the new capital of Myanmar. It is an extraordinary monument to central planning and certainly one of the most bizarre cities I have visited. The regime built this new capital from scratch for a reputed \$4bn. It has all the facilities of a capital city, a massive Parliament building (straight from a Bond film) an international airport (with no international flights), an Olympic scale sports facility (unfinished when it hosted the ASEAN games, with few tourists), a 20 lane highway (with no traffic), large hotels (with no guests) etc etc, but few people and no visitors. We drove around the sports stadium and

then, 10 cars abreast, hot-rodged down the 20 lane highway. All the cars seemed to be running smoothly, which is a prerequisite for a happy rally. Given that so far there were simple time controls, the competition hadn't yet warmed up, but that was soon to change.

We were due to leave Naypyidaw for Kalaw with two regularities set for the day, travelling along rural roads. Sadly one of the bridges had been swept away and the route became impassable, so the more adventurous driving scheduled for the morning was curtailed. The excitement of the day came when the retaining bolt holding the spare wheel on the back of the Chevrolet of Xavier del Malmot, sheered resulting in his spare wheel careering down the road behind him. Since this was almost the only time in the rally when we weren't immediately behind the Chevy, the gods must surely have been smiling down on us. No damage done to car or local population. The afternoon saw our first regularity. Julian drove, I navigated and made an almighty hash of the entire thing. Having misread the route book and going too fast for the first section (luckily no intermediate check), we then went too slow for the second and came in with 1 second of penalties! We were 1st in our class and second overall, a position never experienced before by this old campaigner.

The route then took us to Inle via the Red Mountain Estate vineyard, a producer of surprising drinkable wines and one we would get to know all too well over the coming days. The Aureum Palace resort on the shores of the lake is a stunning location, and a rest day gave us time to repair a broken mudguard bracket, the only damage so far. Inle is the most beautiful lake, an extraordinarily fragile eco-system soon to be destroyed by the 17 new hotels

being built on its shores by the Chinese. The floating gardens on the lake, the weavers, the boat builders and the markets all made memorable visits. But the best entertainment of all was the local pillow fighting played whilst balanced on a pole. Without boasting I can only report that the score was UK 1, Belgium 0!

From the sublime Inle we drove to Pindaya via the extraordinary Shwe U Min Caves. We discovered that we had a leak in the bottom of the radiator and that night removed it to resolder the bottom, which seemed to do the job. A couple of hours of hard work but a better job than Radweld! Then it was onto Mandalay, relieved by the 19th Indian Division in 1945. The Royal Palace was used by the Japanese as their main depot and despite Slim's specific orders to protect it, it was destroyed in the battle for Mandalay. It was rebuilt by the Generals in the 1990's in the belief that such an act would bring them good karma. At the halfway stage we found ourselves still in second place overall with 13 seconds of penalties, and first in our class.

From Mandalay we drove up into the mountains to Maymyo, where the British colonial government retired for the hot summer months. This is where my co-drivers Grandparents lived, and his father grew up. As we drove into the town we could see the considerable number of colonial houses which still remain. We stopped at the Church where Julian's father was christened. The pupils from the small nursery school behind the church all came to sit in the Lagonda. Then we set about finding Grandpa's house which, with the help of the deputy director of the Botanical Gardens (another legacy of colonial rule) we eventually found, much to everyone's delight.



*A fine car in fine weather*



*Young children greet the M45 as it rushes by in the dust*



We left Mandalay for Monywa where the amazing 947 Pho WinTaung caves date from the 14th century. We then motored to Bagan, the capital of the Kingdom of Pagan and originally home to some 10,000 temples. The regularity was held on dirt tracks through the temples, very tricky navigation but an extraordinary experience. We completely nailed the regularity but unfortunately came across two cars blocking the finish, picking up unwarranted penalties. Sadly Gerd in the BMW, in first place since we had set off, overspun his engine at the start and bent the valves. He was out of the rally. Bagan is one of the most extraordinary places in the world and, without doubt the place to take ones first balloon ride at dawn. It was an unforgettable experience. During the rest day at Bagan Julian and I climbed Mount Popa, the highest mountain in central Myanmar. As we set off in 36C heat our fellow competitors thought

about mad dogs and Englishmen. The views were simply stunning and worth all the hard work.

From Bagan we travelled south to Magwe, then Pyay and finally, with a police escort, arrived back in Yangon to complete the first classic car rally around Myanmar. We won our class and came third overall, beaten by a 1968 Volvo 142S and a 1971 BMW 2800CS. Despite it not being one of the most competitive rally's on the circuit, it was without doubt one of the most enjoyable and memorable. It's a beautiful country, wonderful people and will over the next decade, change out of all recognition. I had the privilege of travelling the roads my father travelled in oh so different circumstances. Julian found his father's birthplace, and saw the country across which his Grandfather travelled for so much of his life. For both of us it was a simply fantastic expedition.

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# Has anyone seen my old LAG?

## *Len Cozzolino looks into the history of a unique and flamboyant V12*

IT'S TIME TO dip into the electronic post bag of the Lagonda Club Website enquires and reveal another, hopefully interesting search. On this occasion, a seemingly run of the mill enquiry was recently posted - "Hi, We own a 1938 V-12 Lagonda. Is there an expert we should deal with for authenticity issues ?" A quick reply email revealed that this car was the first of the 11ft (medium) wheel-base V12s made in late 1937 and completed in January 1938. Digging a little deeper a very interesting, and unique, car emerged.

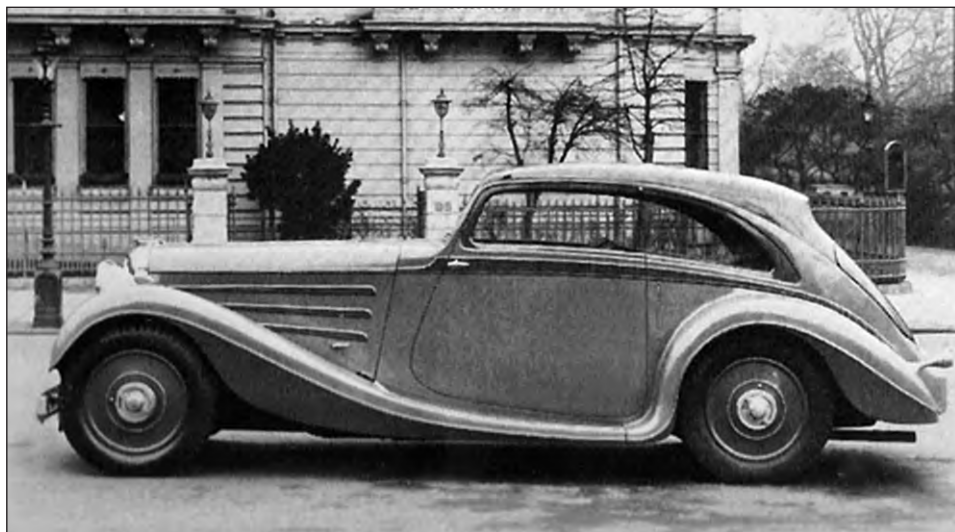
Our records showed the first owner to be the Maharaja Yeshwant Rao Holkar of Indore, locally known as Holkar State now part of Madhya Pradesh in central India. Following in the footsteps of his parents - his mother is believed to have been the first woman driver in India when cars were still a novelty - the Maharaja was a keen motor enthusiast. The cars he bought were top of the range sporting vehicles, usually using coachbuilders to achieve his personal view of sartorial elegance - cars with sleek flowing lines, then in fashion. Unlike many he was so keen that he contributed to their design, with attention paid to every detail - even down to the door handles. His collection of sleek automobiles was renowned in the US and Europe, where he kept stables of cars for his frequent visits. He had a particularly large collection of Bentleys, Alfa Romeos and Rolls Royces as well as Bugatti, Delahaye and Hispano Suiza. The family maintained large establishments in Beverly Hills, Paris and the French Riviera. His chosen cars would be shipped across continents for

the "social seasons" where the family mingled with the crème de la crème of the European and US society.

An interesting anecdote I discovered, written by Akshay Chavan, was the Maharaja's love for fast driving. He often did record runs while driving from Ratlam to Indore. His chosen car would be made ready for him at Ratlam and then he would drive non-stop to Indore, a distance 90 miles which he achieved in 60 minutes. 90mph on the roads India in the 30's must have been something. What could he have done at Brooklands? The inhabitants of every village on the way were informed beforehand, so that they stayed off roads till he had passed by- a wise precaution!

His choice of the Lagonda V12 was therefore no simple whim, and confirms he had a keen eye for sporting quality. Equally to have received the very first production mid wheel base V12, meant he presumably ordered his as soon as it was available. As is well recorded Alan Good, the 29 year old who came to the rescue and bought Lagonda Motors from the receiver in 1935/6, was so keen to announce that the new Lagonda company was developing the "best car in the World", that he somewhat prematurely announced the V12 at the 1936 Motor Show. The need for full development work by W O Bentley and his team meant that the first V12s were not available until 1938.

The V12 engine was a testament to the pioneering spirit of W O Bentley and the brilliant Stuart Tresillian, both joining the new Lagonda company from Rolls Royce. Between them and their teams, not only did they revitalise the



*M45R with Gurney Nutting coachwork*



*The V12 at Great Fosters in 1948*

M45A into the LG45 and then into the LG6, they set about designing and building Alan Good's desire for the best car in the world. This was all achieved in an astonishingly short period. Other than the revolutionary high-revving smooth engine, the V12 had the new chassis with cross bracing. This novel cruciform chassis had its cross-bracing as far forward as possible, which gave both rigidity and good weight distribution. Independent front suspension and hydraulic dampers were standard, as were central lubrication and a jack-all system.

Whilst the V12 was a master piece, it was not without its issues at the time the Maharaja bought the chassis. One that the Maharaja presumably did not suffer, was starting the engine on a cold damp February morning, typical in the UK. The V12 had been designed and built to such tight tolerances to achieve W O's insistence of a smooth running engine that, when freezing cold, it was so tight it could not be turned over by the starter. It is for this reason a clutch assembly was fitted to the starter motor. What rich customers thought of having to wait a couple of hours while the temperature rose during the day to start their cars, can only be guessed at.

The Maharaja ordered his bare chassis which was completed by the factory in January 1938, and delivered to his UK aide Mr C Shelford, based in London. He, in turn, oversaw its delivery to J Gurney Nutting on 7th February 1938. The car was completed and finally registered in the UK on 17th August 1938 - it is believed in Mr Shelford's name. The Maharaja had two other similarly-bodied cars by Gurney Nutting commissioned at the same time, a Bentley aeroflow coupe and a Duesenberg SJN. The latter is thought to be the last Duesenberg chassis built.

As Lagonda, unlike most of its rivals, built bodies for its cars, there are relatively few coach-built Lagondas. Gurney Nutting were responsible for three Lagondas - the Maharaja's V12, an LG45 and a M45R. J Gurney Nutting & Co Ltd was an English firm of bespoke coachbuilders, founded in 1918 as a new enterprise by a Croydon firm of builders and joiners. It was an appropriate, but perhaps uninspiring, start for a company that was to go on to such prominence. It was responsible for some spectacular and interestingly sleek flowing bodywork which was at times, cutting edge. It was A. McNeil, Gurney Nutting's Chief Designer from 1924, who would give the firm the greatest and most successful of its designs. McNeil was an instinctive designer, and his bodywork designs were always elegant with sweeping curves that just seemed right. It is therefore not surprising that in 1931 Gurney Nutting won the contract for the streamlined body of Sir Malcolm Campbell's Land Speed Record car, 'Bluebird'.

The photo of the Lagonda M45R is typical of Gurney Nutting's sweeping lines of the period. Their design for the Maharaja's car was amazingly sleek with particularly flowing lines. Photographs can only partially do this design justice. Equally the colour scheme was entirely individual. Mr Shelford's grandson, with whom we have had some interesting correspondence, confirmed that the car was deep orange/red and black, with orange/red trim. The hood had a red centre and black sides. There were three sets of side screens, which is unusual for a drophead.

One interesting feature is that all the cars had twin lamps on the mudguards, one blue and the other red. When the car was driven by the Maharaja the red lamp was switched on, and the blue when it

was driven by the Maharani (queen). Both were switched on when both were in the car.

After completion by Gurney Nutting we assume it was taken to India, where the number HSC-1 (Holkar State Car – 1) was applied. As can be seen in the early photograph, taken at Great Fosters Hotel in Egham, the number HSC 1 is clearly visible. This was taken in 1948 when the car was back in the UK for a major

overhaul, following a long lay-up during the War. This hotel was often used by Lagonda for new model launches, quite why this car should be photographed there is a mystery.

After the Maharaja's death in 1961, his daughter disposed of some of the collection. This car was owned by a Lagonda Club member in England. After a brief spell in the UK it was shipped to the USA, where it remains to this day.



*Pictures copyright to Robert M Lee Trust 2014*





*The driving compartment of the V12*



*The four downdraught SU carburetors show this engine to be built for performance  
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# Southern Area Activities- Summer & Autumn 2014

## *Michael Drakeford wraps up a busy year*

### **Nymans Gardens – July**

It was a first for the Lagonda Club to visit the RHS gardens at Nymans, in mid-Sussex. With the generous help of the property manager, we were able to park, not at the often over-crowded main car park, but at an area for 20 cars by the main house. Signs were placed to guide the cars around the garden to this excellent area where we could both park in safety, and enjoy a picnic with a view over the Weald. The nearby gardens were in full bloom, and a joy to behold.

Cars were brought by John Foulsham, Ian and Rosemary Dimmer, Peter and Natalie Blenk, Nigel Walder with Rodney Saunders and, of course, Georgina and me with the Red Lady. Whilst not the number expected, the general public, having been previously been made aware of our expected presence, found the cars to be an excellent selection of 'The Marque', attracting much interest all afternoon.

### **Brooklands Reunion – July**

Many members will recall the annual reunion of the Brooklands Society. The well-publicised difficulties between the Brooklands Museum and the Brooklands Society led to a reduction in the interest of this event. Whilst the 'Society' is being wound up, the Museum has resurrected the Reunion. It was pleasing that that we were asked, as a club, to attend for the inaugural event. Part of the deal was that the competition for the Robby Hewitt Trophy would take place with all the Lagonda cars competing.

No fewer than eight Lagondas turned up to what was a fantastic day. The crowd attending was larger than it had been for very many years. There were three 'events' for all the participants, if they dared use their cars as they should be driven! Not with abandon, yet not with timidity. Importantly all cars had to be pre-war, thus giving a true reflection of the Brooklands era. The appropriate dress was recommended. Easy enough for the chaps with a cloth cap, Harris Tweed jacket and brogues!

First off was the chance to line up with six others on a starting grid at the end of the Finishing Straight. The flag went down and we surged forward, to get under the Members Bridge and finish first on the Home Banking. My being next to Robert Lewis in his V12, just back from the Le Mans classic, must have had him quaking in his shoes! Nearby was Philip Neate in his 3 litre saloon, far more of a gentleman. We all did this twice, with no incidents to report.

Next in line was a series of runs up the Test Hill. As usual, it was great fun. Start in first, then to second and stay in that gear. Changing to third would be at the point that the incline increases and, having done it previously, I can say with good authority, that even a 4½ does not like it!

The final bash was around the new Mercedes-Benz World circuit, over the river. As ever, there was a pace car to keep things in order, and certainly no overtaking was allowed. The participants waited for it to get ahead, allowing some acceleration until the first bend comes up all too quickly, then it is heave-ho around the fearsome corners. This





*The line-up at Nymans Gardens attracts the public*



*Outside the Lewis Car Collection*

invariably allows cars with a shorter wheel-base and smaller engines, to catch up with the big boys.

The event ended with a thank-you from dignitaries such as Allan Winn. Indeed, it was a great day. But hold on, where was the Robby Hewitt trophy? Alas, it could not be found and hence there was no presentation. Agreement was reached to the effect that if we could find it, those Lagonda owners with cars present could choose our winner, and award the trophy at our AGM. After much enquiry, it transpired that it was still with the Brooklands Society elite. The 'Lagonda' vote resulted in the magnificent prize being presented, by David Hine, to Philip Neate at the club AGM. A most satisfactory conclusion.

Those taking part with a Lagonda were Messrs Blenk, Burgess, Corry, Drakeford, Howe-Davies, Lewis, Neate, and Walker.

### **The Lewis Car Collection – August**

Robert and Tanya Lewis have an amazing enthusiasm for cars and racing, that brings out the best in everyone. Since our last visit the stable has increased to 51 vehicles, and an outbuilding has been changed and expanded to house these pristine cars. More workshops are being added to maintain them.

This was a favoured opportunity for members to give their own cars a run. As his Lagonda is still having work done, Tony Saunders cadged a lift from his son Duncan in the majestic Bentley. Jim Valentine gave the V12 an airing with Gary and James, and we were delighted to see Richard Bush, a regular participant in these Southern events.

There were also new members present. Dougie Lawson came along in his recently acquired LG6 DHC, and Dick Slaughter came with daughter Phoebe in his very smart 2 litre. Also attending

were Fred and Hattie Fisher, who came to see what the club was all about.

David O'Rorke came with his friend's imposing Cadillac. A few days later he showed me his wonderful M35R saloon, which seems to be close to being back on the road.

Jeremy and Margaret Oates were concerned about a reduction in power with their 2 litre. Other members included Ian Dimmer and his 16/80 saloon, Philip and Gina Neate in their 3 litre saloon, Phil Erhardt in his roaring V12 Le Mans, and Andrew Howe-Davies in the Old Grey Mare. Quite a party.

*Thank you, Robert and Tanya.*

### **Shere Hill Climb – September**

David Rowe had waxed lyrical after attending the inaugural meeting last year. He was not wrong to encourage us. Three Lagondas signed on for this charity event and fun day out. The weather was kind, and the show of over 120 cars was brilliant.

The idea was to have three 'attempts' up the hill. Incidentally, the thought of a hill-climb sent my insurers into a frenzy, and they placed a £5,000 excess on my policy. It was only after a description of the fun day that they relented. When I say a hill climb, it is in fact a country lane closed to the public for a day. It is narrow with a series of chicanes to slow cars down and, as for being a hill, the word 'incline' would be more appropriate.

After the half-mile run, cars returned to an open road, which led to the A25, and up a real hill at Newlands Corner (of Agatha Christie fame). Now that is a hill, but an M45 will get to 55mph with a free run, and only if either modern slow-coaches or cyclists do not hold us up.

There is no restriction on taking passengers, save that your car must have been made for carrying. As I arrived at



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*Peter Blenk's LG45 and Michael Drakeford's M45 at the Brooklands Reunion*



the start with someone else's brood of three in the back seat, the question was asked "Was this car designed for three in the back?" With the repost "Rather like our Jaguar old boy, yes, if you withdraw the armrest!" And did the children love it!

On the programme 137 car owners had paid their dues in favour of the charity. Probably 120 turned up. On display were pre-war exotica such as the 1907 Berliet Curtiss, three Bentleys, five Frazer Nashes, M and P type MGs, Alvis, AC Jaguar and Lancia. However, the majority were post-war and there was exotica there too – Maserati, Aston Martin, McLaren, Ferrari, AC Cobra, Vanwall, and more. These cars were not just for show and were all to tackle the course. Lagonda Club participants were Nigel Walder, Nick Jubert and Michael Drakeford. Spectating, we were pleased to see Tony Loch, Dougie Lawson in his LG45 DHC, Robin Saddler in his Wolseley, Anthony Dady in his newly-acquired Frazer Nash BMW FHC and Tony May who shared a ride in the Red Lady.

### **Wisborough Green, pub meet at The Cricketers Arms - October**

After a dry September the English weather caught up, with 5 inches of rain in Findon, Sussex between the 1st and 18th of October. Fortunately, this cleared for the pub meet, and there was a good turnout to enjoy a very warm and sunny lunchtime.


As a sign of the times, we counted three XK Jaguars from the 1950s, brought by members as replacements because either their Lagondas are having attention, or they needed more space than the Lagonda could provide. We were again privileged to have Raymond

May's White Invicta among our number, driven by Duncan McGregor, along with a surprise from Ian Dimmer who brought his amazing 1911 Austin. If anyone harps on about heavy steering on the Lagonda, I will refer them to Ian who eats lots of spinach! It was good to see Margaret and Dave Mould in their attractive LG6 saloon; rumour has it he is looking for a buyer. Sadly they have suffered bad health of late and we wish them well.

Peter Minett and Alan Rendall parked next to each other providing for super photographs of high and low chassis 2 litres. David Wraight came all the way from Ashford in his 3 litre H/C, and Len Cozzolino and Matthew in the 16/65 Tourer from Hatfield, braving the M25, well done to them all.

So, with 21 'correct' cars at this event, this bodes well for 2015, which will include a visit to the lovely Petworth House – for your diaries, Petworth Sunday 12th July 2015.

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# Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters

Dear Roger,

I have written previously singing Ivan's praises, but seeing the copy of his letter to Tim Wadsworth brought back such memories. Visiting my parents in the New Forest in the Crossley, in the 1960s, would include a quick trip down the A31 to Longham. Ivan always found time to chat, his busy office decorated by a pristine Vincent Black Shadow in later years. He was always complimentary about my regular use of the Crossley - it was my only car for 25 years. In my garage I have a 16/80/Crossley cylinder head gasket wooden box, still with its label - main headings underlined in red biro!

Using Ivan's excellent written guidelines, I embarked on the restoration

of the Crossley's fabric tourer body over the winter of '62-'63. Yes it was cold, but snow banked up against the stable doors kept the worst draughts at bay. Key to the business of stretching the fabric over compound curves in sub-zero conditions, was an electric bowl fire - Ivan's recommendation.

"Capt. Ivan Forshaw" was recommended to me in 1961 by John Shutler, of Burley Garage in the New Forest. There was a Meadows link there, as the garage was full of Invictas. John had a superb close-coupled low chassis 4.5 litre Invicta saloon - hugely fast and, since, vandalized to become a tourer.

Yours aye,

**Stephen (Weld)**



Dear Roger,

In April 2014 I was delighted, through the good offices of Arnold Davey, to represent the Lagonda Club at the grand opening of the new Haynes Motor Museum. It was originally established in 1985 by John Haynes OBE, who earlier had founded his well-known range of workshop manuals. The museum has now had a £5m redevelopment, which includes three completely new exhibition halls and three modernised halls, housing a 400 -strong collection of vehicles.

After a Champagne reception, the opening ceremony was performed by The Hon Ed Vaizey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications & Creative Industries. The guests included Lord

Montagu, no doubt making comparisons with the Beaulieu museum! After a buffet lunch, we were able to enjoy rides in a selection of museum cars. Sadly the queue for the Ferrari was too long for me to partake!

There are two Lagondas in the collection. A superb 1937 LG45 Coupé which was, I believe, John Haynes' own car. The other Lagonda is a 1982 William Town's V8, immaculate in white. Other vehicles range from the earliest veterans to pre-war racing cars and post-war classics. The museum is not far from Yeovil, very close to the A303, and so easy to visit whilst on a journey to the west-country. Club Members why not pay a call? You will not be disappointed!

**Alan Elliott**

# Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters



*Haynes Museum – 1937 LG45 Coupe*



*Haynes Museum – 1982 Towns V8*



# *The Suffolk Dinner*

Saturday 28 March 2015, 6.45pm for 7.15pm

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*Celeriac and Truffle Soup*



*Prawn Cocktail with a Marie Rose Sauce*

or

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or

*Apple and Cinnamon Crumble Pie with Caramel Sauce and Vanilla Ice Cream*

or

*Selection of Cheeses and Biscuits*



*Coffee and Petit Fours*



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