

THE  
*Lagonda*

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
LAGONDA CLUB  
Number 232 Spring 2012



# — DAVID AYRE —



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## FRONT COVER:

*Ken Smith's beautiful DB Rapide, photographed at one of our AGMs.*

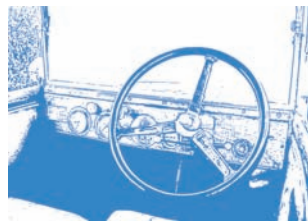
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# From the Driving Seat

*Ken Painter*



THOSE OF YOU who attended the 2011 AGM will recall that Michael Drakeford bravely volunteered to compile an index of all the technical articles that have been printed in "The Lagonda" over the years. Michael doesn't hold a full run of the back numbers, so he was offered the loan of the collection created for the present and future Editors.

Before they could be taken to him, they were all checked, to ensure that no copies had accidentally been omitted and, as is inevitable when the full run of magazines is spread out, the urge to re-read them was irresistible. Wearing my new hat as the early cars' Model Champion, it seemed a good time to copy all the articles on the Tricars, 11-1s, 11-9s and 12/24s and what a treasure trove of information there was!

Both Arnold Davey and Valerie Bugler have shared their history files on these early cars with me and we are working together to ensure that each car record is as comprehensive as possible. It is surprising just how much additional information has been found, hidden within the pages of the magazines and gaps in the early histories of some of these cars have been filled.

Not surprisingly, some cars that were well known in the Club many years ago, but left us before the current files were created, are featured in the early magazines and we have been able to

sketch out a 'skeleton history' for each of them. Some were very active in their day, taking part in races, International Rallies in this country and as far afield as Sicily, plus a wide range of events organised by the Lagonda Club and the Vintage Sports Car Club.

Traffic speeds and congestion have both increased considerably since those early days. In 1960, when I bought my first Lagonda, a 16/80 tourer, I routinely cruised at 55 mph and was rarely overtaken - until the Mini became a common sight! Cruising at 20-30 m.p.h. on fast roads today is not a pleasant or always a safe experience, but to give you a hint of what it was like in the past, there is an article from a 1952 Lagonda magazine, beginning on page 7 of one very demanding event where three light cars took part. I think it is time to refurbish the solid tow bar created by Colin Mallet back in the 1980s to transport Connie to events.

By the time you read this, Connie should have had her second MOT test in my care. As is so often the case, when you decide to do 'that little extra job' on an old car, you find that there is more to be done, so her return to the road has taken longer than planned. All I will say at this stage is that it all started when I decided to change the steering wheel. If you are very good, I will tell the story in a future magazine.

***Last date for copy for the Summer magazine is  
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Graham Moss,  
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# A Letter in "The Lagonda," No 6, September 1952

Dear Mr Editor,

It may come as a shock to you to learn that some of us can read. I can assure you that it is true. Furthermore, many of us did not like your last issue one little bit for, being Lagonda enthusiasts all our lives, we'd seen most of it long before you copied it all out again. Perhaps you are short of material so I am writing to tell you of my experiences in the re-run of the 1927 London to Lands End Trial organised by the V.S.C.C. and the M.C.C. this Easter.

I'd been told about this Lands End run a long time ago but one gets hold of a lot of things at my place that, in fact, never come off. Imagine my excitement when I was told by my mistress that all was fixed up and that I was to be driven by an Important Editor Fellow in a team with Titus (*Nancy Audsley's 11-9 who used to live with Wilbur, - Ed*) and Lady Grey (*John Vessey's 11-9, - Ed*). A month before the day I had awful tummy pains like white metal in the appendix but everyone seemed busy on other things and I was left to suffer in agonies of pain and apprehension. Indeed it seemed that I was not going to be able to go until at the very last minute my insides were taken out and rushed away to London. They only came back on the morning of the event and you should have seen the panic. My mistress trying to clean me and cursing master for putting oil on his fingers. My radiator was put on two hours before the start which was at Virginia Water forty miles away. Oh, dear! Mr Oates and Mr Needham never used to do things like that! I believe Mr

Needham is a member of your Club; you should get him to write something about the old days. He likes writing too.

I was to be run in on the way to the start. Indeed I was! How I ached! At Virginia Water there were crowds of people including the Important Editor Fellow who was rather smaller than I had hoped. He was very worried about my non-arrival but had time between jumps to introduce me to a moustache who had navigated the winning car in some winter rally to Monte Carlo. Oh how I hoped that he would not navigate too fast. How I ached.

And oooh! the I.E.F. let the clutch in with such a bump just as I caught sight of Titus starting off and I wasn't ready for it. Then he said I was worse than a Clyno he knew about. I daresay he did, but I nearly seized up solid in protest and probably would have done if I hadn't seen ever such a nice dainty Calthorpe starting off. I just HAD to follow.

We started twenty minutes late but the I.E.F. hurried me along gently enough with my indignation retarded and soon we began to catch up the others. We passed a Hillman doctor's coupe whose lighting set would not work when the bonnet was fastened and a 1921 Morgan with more oil on its plugs than in its tummy. A Trojan was stationary changing chains for the morning hills. Oh yes and we were nearly run into by a bull-nosed M.G. who said that his name was Cecil Kimber's and that he was the first ever built. "Nothing to boast about", I told him, "when you were designed after Wilbur

Gunn died"; but he couldn't be expected to see that as he hadn't any lights. By morning he hadn't any big ends either. Breeding does count.

Porlock was easy although a Humber blew its core plugs out there. Such inconvenient things I always think. I do not know why detachable heads were ever invented. We just had to laugh when the rider of a 1914 Lea Francis had to dismount over the handlebars because the cylinder was too hot.

We had to go all the way down Countisbury in bottom gear and then straight up Lynmouth. My gearbox ached something dreadful with the stitch and I'm afraid we had to stop and wait for a minute before the top. Then came Beggars Roost. It was a beggar all right and both Titus and Lady Grey failed to get up. This was very sad, especially as I remember that the whole team got up in 1924. Perhaps gravity is growing stronger.

On Bodmin Moor we ran along with the dainty Calthorpe. I liked that. Then we hurried on passing Titus and Lady Grey. The Titus crew looked sleepy but Lady Grey's master was talking about Lancias. Such silly talk, Titus, who was following all the time, was taken in by it all at first until I told him afterwards that my master has one now and such trouble it gives. You see the pistons and valves are always playing at Lions and Christians. When the Christians are thrown at the Lions, as I told Titus, "My dear, the noise." Bluehills Mine was as near original as any of the hills and was really the greatest fun. I went up first. Lady Grey followed at top bottom speed, valves bouncing fit to float, and she showered stones out behind as she rounded the hairpin. Titus, on the other hand, took it very gently and seemed very pleased with himself. At the top we

found some of the cars having air put in their tyres. Pity it wasn't a hot day.

Cornwall has rather rude small boys but the grown ups seemed to respect us and certainly paid us the compliment of taking notice. At Lands End it was bleak and cold but I was allowed to park next to the Calthorpe, such a pretty daffodil yellow.

It seems that only four of our party of twenty-two failed to arrive, which a Rapier in the modern section had to admit was a better percentage than his lot were able to achieve. It came on to rain hard as soon as we turned round but we managed to make Newquay before it got dark. I was rather afraid that I was going to be left out all night but Lady Grey's master came and took me to a big airy garage and put us to bed together. There was no sign of the Calthorpe.

Next day my mistress came to take me away and left the I.E.F. to follow in master's Lancia because the I.E.F. stayed overlong in bed and they all thought that the Lancia would be quicker. Of course, the inevitable happened and when I had got all the way to Exeter, master had a telegram to say that the Lions had been given another good feed of Christians and I had to go all the way back to Liskeard to pick up the I.E.F. and the moustache. We didn't get back home until early next morning and I had to set out almost at once for Goodwood. Master promised that there would be a meeting of Lagondas after the racing had finished. Some meeting! One of these days I shall write you a letter about what I think of your Club and its members. "Oil on the hearthrug Society" I call you.

Well that's the story of a pleasant 900 miles of weekend. I hope that you publish it as I think that some of your car readers would like a bit of real news.

Yours cheerilly gearilly,

**WILBUR**



P.S. - Whilst I was going in the wrong direction back to Liskeard we met the Calthorpe coming the other way. She never even recognised me. Never, never, never trust a blonde.

**The Garage,  
Apsley Cottage.**

*This is a verbatim copy of the letter, as published.*

*Many of our younger and/or newer members will not recognise the names or the cars in this story, so a little background information might help.*

*Nancy Audsley's 11·9, Titus, is a 1923 Coupe, registration number XN 4927. John Vessey's car, Lady Grey, is a 1922 Coupe, registration number WA 5786, now in the care of Gary Hanson's grand-daughter. Wilbur, the "writer" of the article is the 1924 12/24 MC Coupe, NN 8080, then owned by Arthur Jeddere-*

*Fisher, now owned by Robin Aikman. Titus is no longer in the Club and has not been for some time and its present whereabouts are unknown - unless you know otherwise.*

*Constance Gunn, Wilbur Gunn's wife, was known locally as 'Lady Grey', as she had a rather imperious manner and her first husband was a Mr. Grey.*

*Wilbur still carries a plaque showing that the car won a Bronze Award in the 1952 Lands End Trial, driven by Bill Boddy, the Editor of "Motor Sport". His navigator, "The moustache", was Tom Lush, who navigated the Allard P1 of Sydney Allard and Guy Warburton to victory in the 1952 Monte Carlo Rally.*

*The Editorial addenda within the letter are by G.W.P. Taylor and not yours truly.*

**K.P.P.**

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*Gary Hanson driving the car formerly known as "Lady Grey".*



*"Wilbur", now owned by Robin Aikman.*

# Down the Creek Came Lagonda

*By J Dewar McIntock*

*This article was first published in the May 1969 edition of Veteran and Vintage Magazine. It is re-printed verbatim here. Think of it as recollections of Lagonda ownership just after the war and not as a serious history and don't bother to write to your Editor to correct the many factual errors in the text!*

EVEN QUITE NICE people sometimes referred to the 2-litre high chassis Speed Model Lagonda as the "poor man's Red Label Bentley", but this did less than justice to a fine piece of machinery from Staines - the Middlesex town famed for Lagonda and linoleum.

The Speed Model was by no means as fast as the more expensive, 3-litre-engined Bentley, neither was it out of the same engineering drawer. Structurally the Lagonda had more of the lawn mower and less of the sewing machine about it, although it felt smoother than the taut, rawboned but thoroughbred Bentley. You got a lot of car for the money in the 2-litre, because it was nominally only a 13 h.p. car, taxwise and it would do better than 25 to the gallon.

It was these very qualities of frugal, honest, peasant simplicity that endeared the car to most owners and would-be owners. The only feature that could possibly be considered in any way complicated about the car was the use of twin overhead camshafts, but even this was no-nonsense engineering. You did not need to be a research engineer to make adjustments, if they were ever needed. Even a ham-fisted lawn-mower improver like myself could take the valve gear to pieces and put it together again without disaster, which is more than can be said for, say, a present-day twin-cam Ford.

In my case, moreover, one single mechanical component was worth the whole Red Label mystique, and this was the fat, square, simple gearbox, full of cobby, straight-cut cogs which made soul-stirring orchestral sounds in second and third. There was a gate-type change, and as on my beloved old Clyno you had to *slide* the lever when making transverse movements, and not just wobble it vaguely about. Most important of all, to me, was the fact that there were no encumbrances on the lid of the box. It was just a flat, simple, stout aluminium plate, held on by a couple of dozen studs and nuts.

There was a special reason for my concern about the gearbox lid. This was something of an indirect reason and it is necessary to take the reader back, as they say, to an occasion when the noble machine was used for a vulgar pub crawl, carrying a reasonably sober driver and an unreasonably inebriated crowd of passengers. (There was no more room in the Lag. body than that of a Mini, but somehow you could *crowd* people in; they just dripped over the edges like Salvador Dali watches.)

It happened that when closing time came at the last pub, and I tried to reverse the vehicle away from the car park wall that sheltered its proud nose from the north wind, I simply could not get it into reverse cog. Every other gear could be selected, but because the nose of the vehicle was so near the wall, I only wanted reverse. Since nobody seemed eager to get out and shove, I had one more go, without success and tried bottom gear again just to make sure I had a forward cog; this time it stuck firmly in low gear...

We could have shoved off backwards, then motored home in low





*A photo of the car featured in the article opposite.  
This may be contemporary with the article.*



*KW 4070 as she is now.*

gear, but one of our number decided the gearbox should be investigated there and then. This was the memorable moment when it was discovered that you only had to take off a "few" nuts and expose all the cogs and selectors, but it was not really so simple as all that - not the first time anyway.

Long after the last post-war pressed-steel fug-box had burst into life - this being 1947 - we were still settled like tinkers, grovelling in the mud with bits of carpet, seat cushions, squabs, floorboards and lumps of felt all around us, and a couple of dozen nuts and spring washers put aside somewhere.

It was a great relief to find that any gear could be deftly selected by levering the mechanism with the jack handle and we left the box in third cog, just in case it stuck again. Then we started to reassemble. At least we looked for the nuts and washers. It was pitch dark, horribly muddy and starting to snow, and most of the searchers were well boozed, so spirits did not run so high when it was discovered that somebody had stepped on the floorboard bearing the nuts and they had been catapulted over a wide area, more or less in company with the spring washers. People go to great trouble to devise treasure hunts and they can take a tip from me - this would be a very good way of getting competitors into the mood. Just chuck a handful of nuts and washers on some mud and gravel, and prohibit magnets. Unluckily we had no magnet, so we were there for a while, until we had collected maybe half a dozen out of the dozen nuts, and about four or five washers. They held the lid on all right: it was not stress bearing, neither were we, by then.

For months I kept the car in that condition, I am ashamed to say. It occasionally stuck in first, sometimes in reverse, and at other times you could not select either gear, and usually this was in confined spaces. We got the job down

from about two hours to something more like four minutes after a week or two, largely by dispensing with carpets, losing two or three more nuts and keeping the quarter-inch spanner and jack handle really handy. If it was raining, one did the job without getting out of the car, although if there were passengers this could be a little trying. Later on the selectors were straightened and the lid went on the gearbox.

This car had been bashed around a lot during the war. One of its owners was John Lloyd, a well-known scribe who said of it in a short-live paper called "Car Topics" "The car commanded great devotion once the gearbox had been clearly understood". So *that* was who bent it! Or was it Sir Ralph Richardson? The story is getting complicated again, and I must return to square one.

I bought the car from Leigh Howard, now Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, and he had lent it or hired it to a film company some time before that; it was still a dirty matt grey all over (and just think of that for a film title - "Dirty Matt Grey all over"...).

The car was used, or misused, in the popular film *School for Secrets*, a story of British radar, written by Peter Ustinov for Two Cities. The cast included Raymond Huntley, John Laurie, David Tomlinson, Finlay Currie and Dickie Attenborough, as well as Ralph Richardson. The last-mentioned took the part of Professor Heatherville, a "world authority on poisonous reptiles", and I quote the following from the book of the film by D. L. Ames. (The scene is at the end of the film, and the boffins are leaving their hotel for the last time before the invasion. They have all piled into the Lagonda.)

"Heatherville grunted and continued his experiments with the gearbox. There was a horrid grinding sound, a terrifying explosion or two from the exhaust pipe and a cloud of blue smoke. Then furiously the Lagonda accelerated - backwards..."



When I read this I wondered if, after all, it was the great actor who had bent the selectors. Or was it the Editor of the *Mirror*?

I explained all this patiently when I sold the car, after a fair period of careful use, to an earnest and dedicated young man who was some kind of research engineer (a real one this time) at K.L.G.s. but I am not sure that he thought it very funny. Yet strangely enough he was not at all put out when I explained that the chassis was plated.

I was always trying this on people - saying the chassis was plated, and waiting for them to ask did I mean like Norah Docker's Daimler was plated. But this man knew very well what I meant - that a main chassis member had cracked just aft of the gearbox cross-member and had been repaired by bolting a steel plate on over the crack. This model was inherently weak in that region of the chassis and plating was quite common, although welding and flitch-plating would have been the proper repair. Anyway, this young fellow was not in the least upset. In fact everything about the car delighted him, and it was a long time before I realised that I sold the vehicle much too cheaply. But I am glad the buyer was someone who could cherish and improve such a property. He had the means and the money.

I could never quite afford to keep the Lag, even in average condition once I had restored it from terrible condition. To get it into average condition consisted mainly of flattening down or removing where possible the awful grey paint, which had been slapped all over the fabric body as well as bonnet and wings, then applying a flexible type of primer, and a couple of finish coats of a nice fire-engine red, which horrified all the purists. All the brightwork was polished vigorously, revealing some very fine brass here and there, and the chassis was blacked carefully. New rubber matting was put on the running boards, the

electrics were renovated and the hood given some attention.

At this stage the only mechanical work related to brakes, which hardly functioned. Those brakes were a joy to work on. You could get at everything so easily; it was all man-sized and simple and robust. But the drums and linings were in a terrible state, the former badly scored and the latter paper-thin. Somebody at Ferodos went to a lot of trouble to have the drums skimmed for me, and supplied a complete set of 10 linings (separate shoes for the handbrake!) at moderate cost. The difference was amazing when I road tested the car; it was as though I had fitted a servo. I took all the brake gear rods to pieces and cleaned and greased them, and it was wonderful to find that they were all copper-plated. I thought this might have meant the car had been a show model, but somebody assured me they were all like that, copper-plating being an inexpensive method of corrosion prevention.

The engine felt and sounded good, but I persuaded myself I could hear a squeaky rocker, just as an excuse to pull that lovely valve gear to pieces after lifting that noble head. Some people incidentally, believe that this was a Crossley engine, but surely there never was a twin-cam Crossley? It is more likely that the 16/80 Lagonda was fitted with a Crossley unit, although my guess is that Crossley engines were Meadows in any case! Maybe there are some clues in the Leyland files...

Of course, the valve gear was in perfect order, and I put everything back all nice and clean. Then I dropped the many-studded, many-splendoured sump, and the first thing I noticed was that the big ends had no split pins. Neither did they need any, because the bolt-ends were well bashed over the nuts! Admittedly this is effective, but it seems rather a drastic way of making the nuts shakeproof, and its only merit

would be the avoidance of necessity for a split pin hole, thus strengthening the bolt, in theory anyway. All the nuts were tight, so I cleaned out the sump and put it back.

After that I did a lot of trouble-free motoring, until the back axle gradually started making that dreaded tramcar noise. Finally it got so nerve-wracking I had to do something about it, and this in the first place consisted of contracting severe manic depression on getting a quote for a new crown wheel and pinion. £60! And that was in 1947!

There was a big cloud on the horizon, but it had a silver lining. The cloud was caused by the reimposition of petrol rationing at this time; I was granted a measly gallon a week, so I bought a bicycle and laid the Lag. up. The silver lining then showed itself, in the form of a very good used crown wheel and pinion from a member of the Lagonda Register for £12, and I spent the next three months fitting it at great leisure and with great pleasure! The job could have been done in half a day, but that was not the point. Besides, I wanted to scrape, sandblast and re-enamel the wheels and one thing and another and I only worked at weekends. I had a bench in the box-room and used to work lovingly on the final drive unit, with feeler slips and engineer's blue. Lovely stuff, blue, and I used some of it to complete an abstract picture I did at the time.

I got my car on the road again when my fuel ration was increased, and it went like a bird for many miles, although one windy day it got an evil spirit in it. Traffic was thin in those days and we were going lickety spit across Waterloo Bridge when the bonnet strap broke and the bonnet rose slowly like a drawbridge in front of my very eyes, then took off and disappeared diagonally backwards, nearly decapitating an innocent pedestrian. The new strap seemed to cost a lot of money, the silencer started to

blow soon after, and the wheel splines were getting more and more worn, so reluctantly I sold the car to this young man who spent the earth retrimming it and making it mechanically superb. He was heartless enough to drive over and show it to me one day. I could have cried, but Wilbur Gunn, the American operatic singer and engineer, would have been proud of that lad,

The name Lagonda? It is derived from Lagonda Creek, near where the most mechanical Gunn in the west was born. Whether Wilbur was told by the sheriff to get outa town, or whether the Indians ran him out for dreaming up a horseless covered wagon, history does not relate, but he came to Staines in 1897, built a motorbike in an old shed and started a business that thrived there until 1947, when Lagondas moved up the road to Hanworth, which had an airport when Heathrow was a market garden.

So you see, although many people think Lagondas went up the creek, actually they came down it. And in any case they are probably still planning that elusive reincarnation up at Newport Pagnel,

*This article was contributed by Arnold Davey, who adds a few more (accurate) details from the 2 Litre Register and current Club records to the story:*

*The "dedicated young man" who bought the car was CG Martin, who was a member of the 2 litre Register from January 1949 until January 1953. The car is KW 4070 and is now owned by Roger Corry in County Down.*

*The original article featured a picture of a very fine 2 litre high chassis Speed Model Lagonda, presumably from the Museum archives and not at all in the condition described of the car in the article. Since Club records tell us exactly which car the article describes we are able to picture it here as it looks today.*

**K.P.P.**

# Book Review - "From Vintage to Classic to Amphibian" by David AC Royle

THIS IS AN ambitious and self-published book, compiled by David, who for many years advertised in "The Lagonda" and restored many Lagonda models. David tells first of his family history, going back to an ancestor unfairly hanged for witchcraft in 1612. He brings the story up to date and tells how his interests in restoring vintage cars were developed, culminating in the formation of his company.

His period working in what was known as the Old School Workshops are dealt with in detail; what began as a hobby became a full time job as other owners asked him to work on their cars. He restored a 3 litre Lagonda for his own use and ran it for many years. A second 3 litre followed in time and he clearly has a great enthusiasm for the marque.

His wife, JoJo, was a relation of the Maules coachwork family and he includes a short history of this little-known company in his story.

The book relates in great detail the background and history of a Rolls Royce Phantom VI, which was purchased, still unfinished, from Frua the Italian coachbuilder by a Swedish businessman and taken to David's company for completion. The work was done to the highest standards and the car certainly looks superb in the many photographs detailing its progress.

The story of the events surrounding the car and the subsequent High Court hearings, as Royle sought to be paid for the work makes harrowing and sobering reading for those who put their trust in

our legal system. The apparent lack of legal support to back up the findings of the court after the judge found in the Company's favour, leading to the closure of his business may shock the reader.

David lists many case histories of restoration work the company undertook. Lagondas are heavily represented and the pictorial record accompanying each case history is very interesting. The book is copiously illustrated throughout.

His interest in sailing led eventually to his desire to build new types of amphibious vehicles that could be used as a public transport vehicle on land or water, but could also be developed for flood rescue duties around the world. He tells the story of the development of the five prototypes and, then lists the depressing results of attempting to get Government funding for the project. They were full of enthusiasm to begin, but it becomes clear that few have any technical knowledge or even sympathy for the talented individual and their main efforts seem to be channeled into finding funders who want to buy the business at a rock-bottom price and keep the profits for themselves!

The book runs to 750 pages, with 2000, mainly colour, photographs. Being a self-publishing initiative, the production run is small and this means that it costs £39.99 per copy, plus £7.62 postage and packing. It can be purchased direct from: David Royle, The Old Vicarage, 27 Low Green, Gainford, Darlington, County Durham, DL2 3DS.



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*Jeoff Ody chats to Wendy Jones in front of a gaggle of two-litres, also Hugh Hill's DB 3 litre.*



*The Royal Oak with Phillip Mayhew's 3 litre tourer, Philip Neate's 3 litre saloon and Ian Dimmer's recently acquired 16/80 saloon.*

# The New Forest Lunch Meet

## *Alan Elliott reflects on the history of this relaxing event*

THE ANNUAL CLUB gathering in the New Forest took place as usual in 2011 – on Sunday 21st August. The format is always very simple – meet lunchtime at the Royal Oak for a noggin and natter, or if you prefer, bring a picnic. Once a Royal Hunting Lodge, the inn is now a delightful thatched 17th century hostelry, looking across the village green with its duck pond and grazing ponies. It has the advantage of almost unlimited parking on the grass for picnics, as well as the actual pub car park. In 2011 we had an excellent turnout of fourteen cars.

The origins of the event date back to the 1950s when Ivan Forshaw began running the New Forest picnic. Members assembled on the green in front of the Sir Walter Tyrell Inn, in the heart of the forest close to the Rufus stone. Some enjoyed a picnic, others the facilities of the inn. This arrangement continued for a few years before the event disappeared from the calendar.

Then we come to the 1970s when we moved to Dorset. Dudley Palmer was the local Club representative. I suggested that we should resurrect Ivan's event in a slightly different way as a treasure hunt, finishing at the Sir Walter Tyrell – and the New Forest Rally was born. As usual, when you suggest something, you end up running it – so beware! The first event took place in 1973, the winner being Dick Sage in his well-known 16/80. He won again in 1974! As a reward for this effrontery, he was persuaded to organise it in 1975. I then could compete myself. Thus

commenced the principle that the winner one year was always asked to run it the following year.

The Club has quite a lot of spare trophies, so various cups were allocated to the winner over the years, including, perhaps inappropriately, the Night Trial Trophy. This has the interesting engraving – Awarded for the Best Performance of the Night! The first change to the event came in 1977 when some official from the Ministry of Spoil-Sport dug a trench across the grass in front of the Sir Walter Tyrell, so after many years we had to move elsewhere for our picnics. Later on the rally strayed from the New Forest into parts of Somerset and even Devon, so the name was changed to The Wessex Rally, but still following a similar format.

Now we come to 2001, when it was intended that the Rally would be incorporated into John Fitton's West Country Tour. But then fate took a hand. The Foot and Mouth outbreak forced the RAC/MSA to cancel all road events. However, later on in the year there was nothing to stop us meeting at a pub, so the annual lunch meet, back in the old home territory of the New Forest was inaugurated. And so it has continued to the present day. The Royal Oak Inn is in the picturesque village of North Gorley, just off the A338, 5 miles north of Ringwood. Here, you can enjoy old style vintage motoring with your Lagonda on the peaceful rural roads. At the inn you can relax with a pint of real ale and a traditional pub lunch. Why not join us in 2012?





*Some Australian Lagondas, photographed by Warren King, Graham Lawrence and his M45 tourer with a Rapide engine in Sydney.*



*The car is stored in an underground lock-up garage.*



*The rear is unusually shaped, resulting in a more cramped rear seat.*



*The M45 tourer of Les Miller in his workshop in Hornsby in Sydney; the 17-year restoration requires only trim and paint for completion.*



# How to Fail the MoT

## *John Bates has an unfortunate experience*

*This article was first printed in the Stourbridge Pre War Car Club Newsletter in February 2012 and describes John's attempt to get his pre-war MG tested. It serves as an Awful Warning that we should make sure our chosen testing station is staffed by people who have read the whole of the tester's manual and actually have some understanding of pre-war cars.*

*Experiences such as this might well be behind the Government's desire to abandon the test for classic cars.*

### **K.P.P.**

THE TEST STARTED with an introduction to the team, Darren, the tester and Wayne, the assistant (names have been changed to protect the innocent, but the story is true). I didn't introduce myself as it seemed so odd already.

So, Darren is standing in front of the car facing the radiator and I am in the driver's seat. "Pull the bonnet catch." says Darren.

"There isn't one."

"OK, how do I open the bonnet?"

"Which side?"

"Oh! Er, the side with the brake servo."

"There isn't one."

"OK, how do I open the driver's side?"

I got out and opened the bonnet on the driver's side. Wayne was now instructed to get into the car. He couldn't do it as he put his bum in first. I showed Wayne how to get into the car. He now managed to seat himself in the driver's seat. Darren stood looking into the engine bay. "Right, Wayne, pump the brake pedal." ordered Darren. Wayne duly pumped.

Darren said, "I can't see anything happening".

"Well," I said, "If you are looking for the brake master cylinder, it's under the floor." Darren gave up on the brakes at that point.

"Right Wayne." said Darren, "Switch on the lights." Wayne looked around for a 'stalk' on the steering column but couldn't find one.

Thinking it would be helpful, I said "The switch is on the dash." Using his thumb, Wayne pushed all the turn and pull switches. There are NO push switches on the dash.

"The lights don't work." they said, practically in unison.

"They do, let me show you." I turned the switch to side lights and they came on.

What about the headlights?" asked Darren.

"Its the same switch." I said helpfully, or so I thought, but Wayne's thumb couldn't press it to switch on the lights. I helped out again by switching on the lights.

"Main beam, then Wayne." said Darren. Wayne couldn't find a 'stalk' again.

"It's on the transmission tunnel." I offered.

The reply from Darren I found unbelievable.

"What's one of them?"

"It's the cover over the gearbox and propshaft."

"What's a propshaft?" After that nothing was going to shock me.

"The dipswitch is foot operated and it's there." I said, leaning over and pointing.

That's not legal, You'll have to change that."

"It's where the car manufacturer put it and it's never failed on that before."

Darren still couldn't operate the dip switch, so I suggested pushing it gently with his foot as he couldn't reach it with his hand! Once pushed with his foot, the lights went to main beam. He had already forgotten how to switch the lights off.

"Windscreen wipers, Wayne." This threw the lad again as he couldn't find a 'stalk' with a little 'picture' on it.

"The switch is on the wiper motor." I said. That didn't help as they both assumed that the motor was under the bonnet. I pointed out the motor on top of the windscreen.

"That can't be legal" said Darren. "You can't easily reach the switch while driving." I insisted that you could and switched it on. Wayne switched it off and the wiper blade stopped in mid stroke. "And the wiper parking is broken. That's a failure."

At this point I had had enough. "OK, let's terminate the test here.

"Sorry, said Darren. "We are locked on to the DVLA computer and we have to finish."

"Indicators, Wayne." Wayne couldn't find the switch so I pointed it out and he managed to switch on the indicators left and right. "Hazards, Wayne." I said there was no hazard facility so Darren said that that was another MoT failure.

The car was then raised on the four post lift.

"OK Wayne start her up." Wayne tried turning the key but it wouldn't move beyond ignition and the starter did not operate.

"The starter is a pull switch on the dash, second from the right." Wayne tugged, the starter motor turned the engine but it did not fire. He tried several times but it still didn't fire.

"If we can't start it, that will terminate the test. You'll also be stuck here."

"Well, it would start immediately if Wayne touched the throttle lightly."

"You shouldn't do that, It will throw the settings out." "No it won't. Try it."

Wayne tried it but his foot was rather heavy and the engine started but almost immediately screamed for mercy as the revs rose. Wayne eased off his foot and the engine revs died to tick-over speed. Darren examined the exhaust and the integrity of the underside of the car. "OK Wayne, switch off." Wayne remembered how and switched off the ignition.

Suspension and steering were checked and Darren was satisfied, apart from the nut on the steering arm which, as it was castellated, should, he said, have a split pin. I explained that there was no corresponding hole in the arm for the pin and that I had used the only nut I could find with the correct thread. Darren was not convinced and said that that was another failure.

The car was lowered and it was time for the rolling road. I said "Rolling roads are not appropriate for cars of this age. Could we do a road test with a Tapley meter?" I guessed what was coming.

"What's a Tapley meter?"

Next, brakes The front brakes passed but the rears failed as braking was said to be poor on the left.

Now it was emissions. I said that the only test was supposed to be 'visible smoke'. "No," said Darren, it's a carbon test with the analyser." It failed.

The fail notice was drawn up and the list was long. At home I examined the left rear brake. Annoyingly, very annoyingly, Darren was absolutely right. Oil had leaked from the axle into the drum. I was grateful to Darren for finding that! I cleaned everything up, stopped the leak and went for a test elsewhere. The car passed.

The car has not been back to that testing station.



*More from Warren King, see page 30.*

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# Letters

Dear Ken,

On a cold dreary afternoon, both Crossleys sizzling away in the garage covered in salt (but hosed down), I found myself re-reading the Autumn magazine number 230. Aghast at Brian Savill's letter about his 16/80's impressive power output, I read on, to read about Lagondas in Malaya and the MSVCR, whose badge had adorned my Crossley tourer since I returned from Malaya in 1967.

I arrived in Malaya in late 1964 hot foot from the Radfan Mountains of Aden. While on the six weeks Malay language course at Nee Soon in Singapore, needing wheels I ventured into the Orchard Road and to Progress Motors - I had left the Crossley in the UK at the Montague Motor Museum as it then was. Later that day I returned to Nee Soon Barracks mounted in a white 1954 XK120 roadster - faster than the Crossley but at least it had a nice six cylinder engine too.

One Sunday I gave the Jaguar a test run and ventured across the causeway to Johore and thence to Jason's Bay near Kota Tinggi. Who should I find there enjoying a tropical picnic but a gathering of the MVCR (as it was then). I don't remember who were there but I think there were an Alvis and a Lagonda present. I joined the MSVCR but was unable to contribute much as most of my time was spent on operations in Borneo; in Sarawak my principle transport was the Sioux (Bell) helicopter. This also had a beautiful six cylinder engine - a flat six air cooled Lycoming.

With best wishes,

**Stephen Weld**

(Memories of very happy and warmer times!)

*The MVCR was the Malaysian Vintage Car Club. When Singapore*

*became an independent state the club became the MSVCR - the Malaysian and Singapore Vintage Car Club. I think Stephen's memory is remarkably good, although the only event at Jason's Bay I can find in the MVCR Magazine lists just three cars taking part, an Alvis, an SS100 Jaguar and a Rolls Royce Phantom 1.*

**K.P.P.**

Dear Roger,

Following your article in the autumn 2011 Lagonda club magazine could I please point out that the ex-Dennis Clarke Lagonda of 50 years is not a Carlton bodied car. It is in fact a James Young supercharged drop head coupe. The car is painted in the original colour scheme as found by myself after extensive research, could you please amend your records.

There is no need for a response, hope to see you at the next AGM.

Kind Regards,

**Robert Sloan**

Dear Ken,

The two photos of a 2-6 were taken a few months apart, the second was taken in January.

They have taken the engine and gearbox, presumably for another car. They then cut off the front grille and two feet of the body. I understand that this was made into a wall display. All that is left of the car is shown in the second photo.

Please publish this in the next magazine, with any comments you would like to add.

I thought we had abandoned this type of destruction long ago.

Regards

**Alan Heard**





*See Alan Heard's letter on the previous page.*





*My comments would be un-printable in this magazine.*

**K.P.P.**

Dear Ken,

I had hoped that publishing a picture of Lagonda's Foden steamer in last autumn's issue would generate interest and so it has. Our member Allan Lloyd is also keen on steam trucks and suggested that if the registration number was known, the history could probably be unravelled. Apparently, most Foden trucks of that era were registered in Cheshire, with an M number. So I wrote to Malcolm Jeal, who had the original photograph and he produced the registration number M 9587. Back to Allan with that information and sure enough Bill Wells, the Records Officer of the Road Locomotive Society came up with the history of the vehicle.

Which was;

Foden chassis number 7898, four-wheeled overtype 5 ton compound. Build date 27th February 1918. Sold new to Lagonda Ltd, Staines, Middlesex.

2nd owner: Noakes & Co., Bermondsey, London 1920

3rd owner: Courage & Co. 1930

4th owner: George Painter & Son Ltd., Rotherhythe 1932

Last licensed December 1934

So Lagonda did buy it while they were making munitions in early 1918. Allan suggests that the company may have wanted something to carry heavier loads than the plentiful 3-tonners available at the time. As munitions makers, the company would have been able to overcome any government restrictions on buying vehicles.

Just to carry on the story, is George Painter & Son anything to do with your family?

Best wishes,

**Arnold**

Dear Ken

I am writing with regard to the Foden Steam Wagon in magazine No: 230.

I have been involved with and owned various full sized steam road vehicles during the last 42 years.

Although the registration number cannot be seen, I am still able to provide details taken from the Road Locomotive Society (a steam only related society known as RLS) and Foden records.

The Steam Wagon was a 5-ton compound. Works No: 7898.

New to Lagonda Ltd, Staines on 27th February 1918 and registered M 9587.

By 1920 it was with the brewery Noakes & Co Ltd. Bermondsey, London who were taken over by Courage & Co Ltd. in 1930.

Breweries into the mid 1930's used many of these wagons.

The wagon then moved to George Painter & Son Ltd, Rotherhithe, London.

It was last licensed in December 1934 and probably scrapped shortly after. This lifespan was typical for the period.

It is almost certain that Lagonda were allowed to have this wagon for use in connection with the munitions work they were engaged on. These Foden Steamers were very capable machines. They had a compound engine, able to run double high (for short periods) - meaning both cylinders running on high pressure steam, therefore, excellent for getting underway with heavy loads and dealing with steep hills. In addition to them being superior to internal combustion examples at this time, coal was also cheaper than petrol and

consequently Foden Steam Wagons were economical and preferred for serious haulage.

The maximum boiler pressure was 210psi and they would usually use Welsh steam coal, which had a high calorific value with little smoke and economical to use. These 5-ton wagons had two gears giving an operating speed up to 15mph, nevertheless 30mph was possible with different chain sprockets although this would result in less pulling power. It was common practice to coast out of gear on downgrades and possibly hit 40mph but at this speed the wagon would be lively to say the least and naturally there were many accidents as a result of this frowned upon practice. The legal speed limit was 8mph and often exceeded when possible! As for weight carrying ability, around a maximum of 14 tons was possible if an additional trailer was used - up to 7 tons on the wagon alone.

The cost of a Foden was around £900. A large number of these 5-ton Fodens were bought by the War Office and deployed in France during World War One.

Getting back to the Lagonda-Foden photograph, the wagon is shown when new alongside the Foden factory in Sandbach, Cheshire.

With reference to Tony Loch's letter in magazine 231, the Foden is coal fired, not oil as suggested. The story he was told of 80mph is unfortunately unlikely, they would need some serious BHP for that; then again, perhaps it was down a good descent and out of gear – necessitating in a change of underwear!

In the 1920's Foden went on to develop the steam wagon further when many more were sold giving excellent service; however, taxation changes in the early 1930's in conjunction with rapid development of the internal combustion engine lorry generally spelt the end for the steam wagon. There are some great

examples in preservation and if you are lucky enough to see a Sentinel Waggon (Sentinel used two g's in Waggon) on the road you may find yourself amazed by its speed!

I hope readers have found my account interesting in view of it not directly relating to the Lagonda car.

Best regards

**Steve Hayes**

*It is interesting enough to merit two letters to the Editor and any aspect of the company's history is valuable. It also goes to show what a wide range of interests and expertise we have within our membership!*

*In answer to Arnold's question, although my family were Londoners from the "East End", I know of no links with George Painter. My Grandfather never spoke of any relations and the last of my father's generation died about 20 years ago.*

**K.P.P.**

Sir

I am enclosing a photograph which may be of interest to Club Members. It would also be nice to know if the car still exists, though I doubt this. Simple checks on the registration number on the DVLA website and in the 2012 Register of Members and their Cars have not revealed anything.

The picture is posed (I believe!) and shows two of my late uncles and a friend 'breaking into' or 'vandalising' a 1935 Lagonda 3 litre owned by another uncle of mine, the late Dr Hamish Bowie. My uncle was a keen appreciator of quality cars of the time, I believe the picture dates to the late 1930s, and very regularly changed his cars to try something different, but sometimes because he had to!

He bought the Lagonda second hand but close to it being new, and kept it for a couple of years, then bought the fastest



*The 3 litre Lagonda of Antony Bowie's late uncle.*



*See Warren King's letter on P 33.*



*The advertisement found by Mark Yeomans.*



*See the letter from Bill Inglis. See the letter from Bill Inglis.*



car he ever owned "The Auburn". He regularly drove down to Brooklands events in his cars (especially in a Bentley) and particularly liked to drive at night. It is said that before the war he drove overnight from Aberdeen to the Motorshow in London (540 miles), in under 12 hours. In the Auburn he once drove from the outskirts of Edinburgh to the Glasgow speed limit sign, with an average speed of over 80mph.

He did say though that the Lagonda was the best car he ever owned with very good handling and that it could beat the Auburn on twisty roads, but not on the straight.

**Antony Bowie**

*The car in the picture is unknown to the Club and it is likely that it did not survive the war. I believe the body to be an ST 24, introduced in late 1932 and discontinued in 1934 when the M45 body range was introduced and shared with the late 3 litre models. My 1934 3 litre saloon, AFG 571, had the M45 style body and it didn't have P100S headlights.*

*Further correspondence with Antony has established that the car is almost certainly an ST34 Selector Special, with the Maybach gearbox and the probable registration date is 1933.*

**K.P.P.**

Dear Ken,

Last summer, in an idle moment, I succumbed to that well known internet auction site and searched 'Lagonda'.

To my surprise an old Lagonda advertising print was listed. Casting caution to the wind (as I did when buying my 2 litre!) I decided not to pay off my son's student loan and to pursue this rare item at all cost. I was successful, and attach a copy of what turned out to be a cardboard print of full-page magazine size, which had been folded down its centre.

Arnold had not previously seen this charming Close Coupled Saloon (or Honeymoon Coupe) advertisement, and has dated it to 1929. It is possible the advert was an insert into a motoring magazine or a display card for a showroom or exhibition. It seems unlikely it would have been bound into magazines of the period due to the thickness of the card and Arnold advises that normally only half page adverts were taken out in Country Life or Tatler.

So what did internet auction fever cost me? £1.99 including postage!

Best Regards

**Mark Yeomans**

Dear Colin,

Greetings to you from Napier in New Zealand.

A big occasion for us during our summer was the wedding of our daughter Anna. It was a great pleasure to polish up the Lagonda and use it as bridal transport. The day was very hot and towards the end of it our three-year-old grandson Rupert was discovered asleep on the running board.

Kind regards,

**Bill Inglis**

Dear Ken

Attached are photos featuring 'Lagonda' used in an unexpected setting.

Ingleburn is a suburb of Campbelltown which was once an old country town lying about thirty miles to the south west of Sydney. Now Sydney has expanded to such an extent that Ingleburn is regarded as an outlying suburb of Sydney itself.

When Ingleburn was being developed a few years ago the Council authorities had run out of street names of local pioneers and worthies, and they decided to use various themes for local



residential areas. So you come across a large number of English county names and town names. There is a huge area where all the streets have names of birds. There is another area where a right-minded Council official has used about thirty classic and vintage marque names for street names. One of the principal roads is Lagonda Drive, and I also spotted Bugatti, Maserati, Ferrari, Cadillac, Leyland, Delaunay, Stutz, Sunbeam, Pontiac, and Delage.

Halfway along Lagonda Drive is Lagonda Centre, comprising a garage for repairs and petrol, and a few shops. The main one is Lagonda Takeaway, a quite spacious shop with general supplies as well as tables for eating in, and while I was there it was doing good business in the early afternoon, despite a lengthy heavy rain shower. At first sight the mind boggles at 'Lagonda Takeaway' - it could have any number of interpretations!

So after a Lagonda racehorse, we now have a Lagonda Takeaway - wherever next are we going to find 'Lagonda'?

Regards

**Warren King**

*You must wait until the next magazine to find out, but there is more to come!*

*Don't forget that we learned of the Lagonda Tearooms in New Zealand some time ago and the National Gallery were selling Lagonda biscuits the last time I visited.*

**K.P.P.**

Dear Colin

I am researching the Atalanta marque, the company originally started behind Dexters Cafe in Staines High Street, but they were soon to move to an

impressive new garage on London Road in Staines. They had an impressive spec of independent suspension made from a Hiduminium on all 4 wheels and hydraulic brakes which made use of electron on their 16 inch brake drums. Dennis Poor was the Atalanta test driver and he scared the journalist from the Motor Sport magazine by getting up to 90 mph, putting the nearside wheels on the grass verge, then removing his hands from the steering wheel. There were only 21 cars made pre war, they had varying body styles made mainly by Abbots of Farnham and either 1.5 or 2 litre engines some supercharged. The last cars had the bigger 4.4 litre Lincoln engines which proved to be cheaper and more reliable. Post war Major Dick Shattock purchased the name and parts he continued to develop the car for racing and was fairly successful using mainly glass fibre bodies. He ended production in 1958. I am now restoring an Atalanta V12 saloon. There will also be a new Atalanta car being unveiled next March 75 years since the first one.

I have most of the magazine articles on the car but I wondered if any of your club members may have any personal memories of these cars or the people that helped produce them: Albert Gough from Frazer Nash, Peter Crosby, Eric Scott, A C Bertelli previously of Aston Martin, Neil Watson, Midge Wilby, Peter Whitehead.

Regards

**Barry Ward**

Barry's email address is:  
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*If you can help him, please contact him direct. If you don't have email facilities, write to me and I will forward your letter to him.*

**K.P.P.**

# EXCELLENCE



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