



**THE MAGAZINE OF THE
LAGONDA CLUB**

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COVER: John & Susie Batt with their supercharged 2 litre enjoying a trip to the Dordoyne in 2016. Pic by Barry Halton

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From the Workbench

Roger Seabrook

THE LAGONDA CLUB is as much about people as it is about cars. It brings together folk from all sorts of backgrounds, and many friendships have been forged as a result. So it is sad that John Batt is no longer with us. That he was so well liked is reflected in the collection of memories included in this issue.

We attended the Northern Dinner in the 2 litre, and then went on to the Lake District to Ravenglass, to ride on the little train, and take in the beautiful scenery. The ride up to Yorkshire was in very heavy rain, but this cleared up in Cumbria, and the journey over Corney Fell was spectacular, with the Isle of Man in the distance as we approached the coast. Cadence braking was essential on the way down, to avoid fade.

The car was its usual reliable self until we used it next to go to the AMOC event at Wormsley (only three miles away). Ticked over in the drive, but as soon as it was on the road it was banging and spluttering. A fractured KiGass pipe seemed to be the cause, and when repaired it ticked over happily again. The next trip was to France, but the misfire returned about 100 yards from home, and wouldn't clear. After a fruitless two hours I gave up, and assumed it was gummed

up exhaust valves. So in the end I removed the cylinder head, cleaned the valves of varnish, and lapped them in. But on starting up there was still this misfire (only slightly better). Changed the magneto, and the plugs – no joy. As a last shot I swapped the plug leads for an old set I had lying around. It ran perfectly – why didn't I do this before!!!!!!? I have been advised to stop using supermarket fuel, and to put richer needles into the SUs to cool the exhaust valves. The car is fitted with Newman Cams, so the better performance needs better fuel!

The 2 litre saloon is, or rather was, running – lots of water blowing out from the pump gland, and a badly worn drive to the pump, that rattles.

Both magnetos that came with the car had stopped working – luckily I have a friend who is very good with these devices, and he has got both of them working again. The Bosch had to be re-magnetised, and the Lucas needed the contact breaker points truing up.

He will also rewind where necessary and had already done one of the Scintillas I use on the tourer (it cost me a fiver at an autojumble – I got it working and it lasted for over 30 years on the car before the coil finally packed up).

Oh the joys of vintage motoring. ■

***Last date for copy for the Autumn Magazine is FRIDAY 25th October 2019.
New articles are needed please, and interesting photographs.***

The Suffolk Weekend

John Sword drives there in the Wylder M45

THE SUFFOLK DINNER is the first of the major events in the Lagonda Club calendar every year, and 2019 is the second year that it has been run under Colin Mallett's stewardship, at Ufford Park, near Woodbridge. Colin bravely volunteered for this task, following 40 years under the management of Mike and Ann Pilgrim, which was a hard act to follow, and we are very grateful to him for taking this on.

Being the first event of the year carries two risks - firstly, people who have had major work programmes on their cars over the winter often find that these run late and that they therefore either do not come at all, or they have to arrive in a 'modern'; and secondly, the weather can often be unkind and discouraging to all but the hardiest Lagondistas. There was one year, when the Dinner was in March and with snow in evidence, when the furthest-travelling Lagonda was Ian Whyte's Rapier, which lives just around the corner, in Woodbridge!

This year, the weather forecast was 'cloudy but dry', and your correspondent set off in fair weather, some 150 miles west of Woodbridge, with high hopes of an enjoyable run, but as he travelled east the skies gradually darkened and drizzly rain descended, not rain of the put-the-hood-up variety, but enough to dampen the spirits. After arriving at Ufford Park, the assembled Lagondas soon amounted to seven cars - the Rapiers of Jonathan Oppenheimer and Rodney Saunders, the Breens' 16/80 (now owned by Rachel Bagnal, John's daughter), John Hutchby's

Gardner LG45, Warren King's DB 3L, Colin Mallett's M45 saloon, and your correspondent's Wylder M45. There was also, quite coincidentally, a visiting Speed 20 Alvis from Holland. In the circumstances this was not a bad turnout, and it was particularly good to see some of our younger members, the Hutchby brothers and Rachel Bagnal, supporting the event in their Lagondas.

The Suffolk Dinner has always had a particular focus on Rapiers, and this time the car park was graced by two fine examples - Rodney Saunders's well-restored Abbott-bodied tourer, and Jonathan Oppenheimer's Eagle prototype. It is always a struggle to find the right adjective to describe the lime-green colour of the latter (which its owner swears is correct to the original) - lurid, luminous, and others less polite - but it certainly brightened the gloomy dusk.

Another feature of this event is the presence of a number of ex-Post Office engineers. Whilst most people think of the Post Office in terms of mail distribution, we forget that, back in the 1920s and for several decades afterwards, the Post Office Research Centre in Dollis Hill was probably the world leader in communications science, and it made crucial contributions to the cryptographic triumphs at Bletchley Park, and to the building of Colossus, the world's first electronic computer. In the 1960s, the Research Centre moved to Martlesham Heath, near Woodbridge, which was full of seriously clever people, including



Rachel (Breen) has ditched the L-plates this year!



The Gardner diesel engine in John Hutchby's LG45

Pictures from Ann Pilgrim

some of our more prominent Anglian members, who were employed there for most of their working lives. Foremost amongst these was the late Phil Ridout, and they include Mike Pilgrim, Colin Mallett and Ian Whyte - apparently there was quite a crowd of vintageants amongst all the high-tech.

The main pleasure in these club gatherings is, of course, in meeting congenial kindred spirits and chatting about our cars, and it is the great atmosphere at events like this, which is a distinctive feature of our club. We are also, I think, quite good at recognising that spouses and partners do not always want to talk about con-rods and camshafts, and many wide-ranging conversations are enjoyed, making this a fine social occasion.

We sat down 45 for dinner, which was a respectable number and included a welcome splash of younger faces, although there were several absent friends, largely owing to health problems; and the evening seemed to pass quickly as everyone enjoyed themselves. Unusually, there were no speeches, which was a disappointment for some, but perhaps a relief for others! Your correspondent had been hoping that Colin Mallett would give the company a virtuoso performance on his concertina, as he has done at least once in the past, but it was not to be! Mike Pilgrim had a tough task in deciding which of the two Rapier drivers should be awarded the Gary Guiver Gong for having come the furthest and, after re-calibrating his micrometer, he decided that Aldermaston was further away than Balcombe, so Jonathan got the Gong.

Sunday morning dawned grey and

wet, so there was every temptation to linger over breakfast, but there was the now-annual attraction of a visit to Lagonda Spares on the way to lunch, so we set off to enjoy the hospitality of Robin Cooke and his team - Leah Knee and Francis Pawle - at Carlton, where we were joined by other Lagondas which had not been at the dinner on Saturday. Despite the weather all enjoyed the hospitality, and we were impressed by the changes in the spares stores since last year. All the stocks have been moved into a new (to us) and larger shed, in order to accommodate the ex-LMB items, with an improved layout and some new racking. Several members were seen enjoying a good rummage through the stocks, also including the large array of second-hand parts, and a four-figure sum of business was done on the day, which helped to make things worthwhile. Members also enjoyed looking at Chris Banham's workshop next door, where that large Bugatti was still not finished!

Leaving Carlton (still raining), with many thanks to the Spares Team, we wended our way to the usual hostelry, The Old Mill at Saxtead Green, for lunch. Although Lagondas were more numerous than on Saturday, numbers were inevitably reduced by the weather, which also meant that one spent much less time outside, looking at the cars - always such an enjoyable part of the day. However we enjoyed good food and good company, which made everything worthwhile. Afterwards, travelling home to the west, the rain stopped, the clouds lifted (a bit) and it was a fine drive. ■

The Lagonda Northern & Award Dinner 2019

*A well-provisioned voyage in Northern waters,
as Tim Gresty reports*

TRADITION. THAT'S WHAT drives the Lagonda Club, and its hallowed Northern Section. For nigh on 70 years, they have hosted an annual Dinner on their sacred home ground. Commencing in red rose territory to the west of the Pennines, the proceedings soon adopted the white rose, coming to eventual rest 60 years ago at the venerable Monk Fryston Hall Hotel, between Selby and Leeds. A Friday Tour was added to the programme some years ago, as was the optimistic title of 'Northern & Awards Dinner'.

THURSDAY ASSEMBLY

And so, on Thursday 9th May, in the Year of our Brexit 2019, those northern hordes welcomed their early-arrival friends from more equatorial lands in the Monk Fryston historic lounge bar prior to a long-table supper in the restaurant, in a manner that would have given the Bessarabian Ambassador cause for comfort. As our Emissaries to the Orkneys, Bill and Sue Spence arrived by Lagonda via an East Anglia diversion: a cunning diplomatic ploy, aimed at confusing our European neighbours. Oban-based Peter Weir and his corps diplomatique journeyed across international boundaries, too.

FRIDAY VOYAGES

The morning of Friday dawned wet and cold. "We should all aim to be away by 10.15am" stated the Friday

Tour Plans prepared by Ian Waugh and his management team, Megan. We are an obedient bunch, so a fair percentage launched their warships in the direction of our coffee stop in the foothills of the Yorkshire Wolds by the appropriate hour. Others followed, including the intrepid Alan Brown. He spectacularly overshot the Oaks Golf & Spa, disappeared in the direction of the dark side of the moon, and then re-entered the orbit of Monk Fryston a hundred miles later without having encountered a single other Lagonda. Footnote: a cake in the shape of two fat ladies was awarded at the evening's dinner, possibly in numerical recognition of his off-course adventures: others suggest it reflected Alan's birthday score that day.....

Enjoying the admiration of the golfers, whose enthusiasms usually run to more esoteric wedges and slices, the Lagonda Northern Fleet faced a choice of routes organised in the (wait for it) "Waugh Room". The Inshore Squadron sailed Plan B's seven nautical miles NNW in improving weather, arriving at Elvington Airfield, home to the two-mile runway from which the Handley Page Halifax four-engined bombers of 77 Squadron RAF operated from 1943, joined in 1944 by Squadrons 346 and 347 of our valiant French Air Force allies. Elvington now houses the comprehensive Yorkshire Air Museum and Allied Air Forces



Ian and Megan Waugh - 3 litre - climb out of Millington Wood



The Oppenheimer V12 contrasts nicely with the Wisteria

Memorial.

Our hosted tour of the venue spanned the dozens of exhibits and displays, ranging from a replica SE5A, through Douglas Dakota, Messerschmitt ME109 and Hawker Hurricane, then to the long list of post-WW2 aircraft led by Gloster Javelin, Blackburn Buccaneer, Dassault Mirage and Handley Page Victor. The culmination of our visit was the positioning of the Lagondas of Club President David Hine, Northern Secretary Nigel Hall, Magazine Editor Roger Seabrook, Tour Organiser Ian Waugh and AGM Coordinator Nigel Smeal under the protective wing of Yorkshire Air Museum's Handley Page Halifax replica.

This exceptional reconstruction (Halifax, not President) is built around a fuselage section from HR792, which crashed on the Isle of Lewis in 1945, and survived as a well-weathered hen-coop. The reconstruction is named "Friday the 13th" in honour of Halifax II LV907, which completed 128 operations with 158 Squadron, powered by four Bristol Hercules sleeve-valve 14-cylinder two-row radial engines, a widely used aero engine which eventually delivered a Merlin-matching 1735bhp.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in white rose country, the intrepid Long Distance Squadron explored Plan A via the country lanes beyond Pocklington. Cresting the higher reaches of the Wolds, they delved deep into meandering Millington Dale, its spring-enhanced Woods, and (despite the National Cycle Network accolade) its welcome paucity of bucket-shop-seeking cyclists. After surfacing by the hidden village of Huggate, they plunged the sweeping 1-in-6

Garrowby Hill to the Vale of York – a scene celebrated in oils by local boy David Hockney. A number found post-Garrowby relief with a group luncheon in the Three Cups Inn.

Their extended Tour then crossed the River Derwent at Stamford Bridge, best known for that epochal battle in an earlier equally confused version of Brexit. If you can recall your history books, good King Harold Godwinson was entrenched at Hastings, ready to repel nasty William the Bastard and his repulsive Normans. Harold's brother Tostig and a bunch of equally-hostile Norwegian Normans suddenly invaded Yorkshire, so Harold and his merry band speed-marched north in 4 days, defeated the Norwegian horde in swift order, and returned to Hastings at a similar pace, where his tired troops were despatched summarily by well-drilled Norman knights, aided by eye-piercing arrows.

Clearly, Harold was not hindered by anything like Stamford Bridge's 21st century traffic, which raised the temperatures of our Lagonda battle cruisers, before their rolling charge to Elvington, and their rendezvous with the less adventurous 'Inshore Squadron'.

The combined fleets navigated via Escrick to Cawood, crossing its fully-functioning time-warp swing bridge over the River Ouse and back to Monk Fryston, where Robert and Sanford Sloan's delectable Aston Martin DB 2/4 Mark III Drophead Coupe (powered by WO Bentley-designed Lagonda 2.9-litre Straight 6 engine, developed by Tadek Marek) greeted them as door sentry behind the Oppenheimer's magisterial V-12 DHC.

The finest pre-war and post-war Lagonda display we have seen

in decades of our Northern Dinner assembled, as their proud owners prepared for the evening's festivities. Michael Fishwick's attractive Jowett van provided intriguing local interest, and was en route to the Historic Commercial Vehicle Society's London to Brighton Run on the Sunday of our Northern Dinner weekend.

FRIDAY CELEBRATIONS

As dictated by our decades of tradition, our lovely Lagonda ladies and their smartly jacketed escorts crammed the Lounge Bar, under the helpful eye of Monk Fryston's long-serving barmaid Margaret. The call to dinner from Northern Secretary Nigel Hall, and a polite Lagonda grace by his long-forgotten predecessor, heralded the start of our hearty banquet, served with considerable style by the accomplished Monk Fryston team. Exotic innovation or complex cookery techniques did not sully our multiple-choice menu, with terrine, beef and crème caramel well favoured.

And so on to the evening's entertainment. While our event was marked as 'Northern & Awards Dinner', it was swiftly abbreviated to accommodate the single Award presented that evening, and brought by our devoted trophy-master Martin Sumner. David and Francesca Rowe had driven 230 miles from Womersley in Surrey to receive the Michael Trophy from Club President David Hine, in commemoration of the magnificent score of events in which they participated in their 3-Litre Tourer. As the well-deserved applause led by our Chairman John Sword and fellow Director Richard Jenkins subsided, the recently-re-

discovered explorer Alan Brown leapt to his feet, to relate the hilariously troubled story of his Orchestrated Cat, and its progenital challenges. He was awarded the aforementioned 'Two Fat Ladies' Cake for his efforts. Thus encouraged, he introduced David Hine to commemorate the Club's commitment to English Heritage by reciting Jake Thackray's salacious ditty "Isobel Makes Love Upon National Monuments".

A crescendo of acclaim followed the final news that "with style and enthusiasm and anyone at all, Isobel makes love in the Royal Albert Hall", and the known offenders led the rush to the Lounge Bar, where the night porter was kept active into the early hours. More delicate members and their partners retired early, to ready themselves for the next morning's leisurely departure for home. Tradition had been observed. All was well in the Northern waters of Lagonda's empire. ■

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Monk Fryston Hall's lovely grounds, enhanced by some fine motor cars



The Halifax Bomber and a good selection of Lagondas at Elvington Airfield

Wormsley Estate Concours

Tom Wilcox takes his 2 litre CCS and wins a prize

THE DAY BEFORE the appearance of the Lagonda group at the Wormsley Estate, for the Aston Martin Spring Concours, the weather forecast for the 19th May was mixed. It showed overcast weather for the morning and then a significantly increased likelihood of rain during the afternoon. In fact, the day of the Concours was fine, even after leaving time. Clearly our organiser, Stephen Matthews had been in touch with the Weather Gods and had persuaded them to give us a very pleasant early summer day.

We have lived fairly close to Wormsley (near Stokenchurch in Buckinghamshire) for several years but had never before visited the Estate, owned and beautifully restored over the last 30 years or so by the Getty family. The approach down through the trees was very enticing. Soon we arrived at the cricket ground with its thatched pavilion and score-board. A more idyllic setting for a cricket match would be difficult to imagine. The ground itself had been excavated to provide a horizontal area for the cricket, with the pavilion on one side, some twenty steps above the field. Beautiful fields and woods on all sides surrounded the whole area.

However, by the time we arrived the field was covered with neat rows of Aston Martins. Quite what the head groundsman thought of all these cars on his carefully manicured cricket ground we did not learn.

The Lagonda group was to one side of the pavilion, above the level of the playing field, surrounding Len

Cozzolino's splendid Lagonda "pop-up" stand. This was fitted out with a display of the progress made by the Lagonda Company over its 120 years of history. Inevitably it is not possible to cover the whole story, but the pictures shown gave a very good impression of the Company's history, well-illustrated with appropriate photographs. To tempt those with money to spare, there was also a display of Lagonda themed items, such as the excellent mugs, and key fobs.

In addition to the considerable number of entrants on the field of play, there were selected Aston Martins around the upper level of the ground. Further down the hill were more Astons and at the lowest level was a gathering of "other makes". The total number of cars assembled was well into the hundreds and well worth seeing.

The AMOC also laid on a 1962 Bristol Royal Blue Coach, with overhead glass panels where one would normally find the light luggage racks. This splendid vehicle drove people to the walled garden and back, to see the displays of plants. Shirley was very interested in the plants, but I must admit that I found the driver's use of the bus's gearbox at least as entertaining. It was clearly a crash box requiring just the right intervals to be made while double-declutching to effect a silent change. There was never a sign of a "crunch" during any of the gear changes. Fleeting, I wondered how he would get on with a vintage Lagonda box.....

At the walled garden we were given a single sheet guide to the various areas ranging from the wild garden to the Irises, which were just coming into bloom. The greenhouses had that lovely special earthy smell associated with such buildings and any deep water was clearly marked as such, to avoid any accidents.

We arrived back at the cricket field in the Bristol Coach to claim our very welcome glasses of Taittinger Champagne. What better place to sip the wine, than amongst such wonderful surroundings. A splendid cold lunch was laid out in the catering marquee.

Then out again to the cars. I went over to the Bonham's tent, well more of a canvas pavilion than a tent, to have a look at the cars for sale. The Astons on show were superb and I kept looking round to see if James Bond or "Q" were in attendance to discuss the latest gadgets fitted to the cars. I could not see them!

I found the prices, shown on an electronic screen, in sterling and

half a dozen other currencies, quite remarkable.

During my visit, one car reached three quarters of a million Pounds, which in Roubles seemed even more, wondering what the total value of all the Aston Martins attending would be. It would certainly be just a little more than my piggy bank contains.

Altogether a very enjoyable day, blessed with fine weather and amongst friendly and welcoming AMOC members. From the Chairman and President down we were made to feel welcome wherever we went on the site. A special word of thanks must go to Stephen Matthews for his arrangement of the outing, and to Len Cozzolino for the Lagonda Tent.

The day ended with the prize giving outside the cricket pavilion, when three Lagonda owners went home with happy smiles on their faces:-

1st : 2Litre CCS – Tom Wilcox

2nd: M35R – Carl Marklew-Brown

3rd: 11.1 – Steve Lawrence ■



2 litre CCS, 11.9, and 11.1 next to the Lagonda Gazebo in Wormsley's lovely setting

GF 8843 – ‘The Old Lady’ – Part I

By James Baxendale

Dedicated to Roly Evans, who restored the car



PART ONE: RANDOLPH TRAFFORD AND HARRY GOSTLING

I FIRST HEARD of GF 8843 in 2007, when I was talking to Hedley Wilding, a garage owner in Vowchurch, Herefordshire, about my great-uncle, Randolph Trafford. Mr. Wilding was by then almost ninety, but very much ‘on the ball’. I was there to ask him about two photos he had hanging up on the wall behind him of my great uncle’s Gypsy Moth, but he was more interested in Randolph’s cars. He said that Randolph had owned a Lagonda, which he dated to 1931-32 and had, he said, front wings, which moved with the wheels.

I thought little more about this until 2011, when my late cousin sent me a photocopy of an April 1975 article by Bill Boddy, the founder editor of Motor Sport, which he had

discovered when clearing out his mother’s house following her death. The article included the tantalising comment that Randolph “did much long-distance flying, when not driving his Lagonda or an Essex Terraplane.” From the accompanying note by Bill, it is clear that he had got the story from my uncle, who had inherited Randolph’s estate, but had died in 1988.

I emailed the Lagonda Club in June 2018, giving the brief details I had, but Len Cozzolino replied that the Club could not help, all the Lagonda factory records having been destroyed. Then a few months later, rummaging through some old photos in my mother’s attic, I found by chance both a photo and the negative of Randolph’s Lagonda, dated 12th August 1931 – complete with cycle wings and registration number

GF 8843. A review of the old family ciné films also revealed a brief clip of GF 8843 in front of Randolph's house, with Randolph loading up the car.

One thing led to another, and a few months later I drove with the indefatigable Len to Swansea and – somewhat inadvertently, and certainly rashly – ended up buying the car!

The previous owner and Lagonda Club member, Gareth Jones, had done a good deal of work researching the car's history. It had not only belonged to my great uncle, but also to Harry Gostling, a prominent member of the Club and one of the founder members of the 2 Litre Lagonda Register. The fairly complete history of GF 8843 (green, chassis OH 9670, with matching engine number OH 1414 / SL958) will, I hope, be of some interest to Club members.



Michaelchurch Court 1931

1930-35: RANDOLPH TRAFFORD

Randolph was 23 when he bought GF 8843 new in April 1930, likely from the showroom of Lagonda Distributors Ltd. of Albemarle Street, just a few hundred metres from the Royal Aero Club, where he stayed when he was in London. Randolph would have paid £730 for her. Three other 2 litre low chassis Lagondas, with the prefix “GF” and all registered in March 1930, are members of the Club, making it possible that they were also bought from the same dealer.

Randolph was a lucky man, having inherited the estate of Michaelchurch Court in Herefordshire on his twenty-first birthday, his father having died when he was three. In late 1926, aged just 19, he had bought a chalet on Lake Geneva and started to learn to fly, buying himself a Mourane-Saulnier plane the following year. Aviation remained his passion until he was killed flying a plane during the war in 1943.



Randolph in his Mourane-Saulnier

On his twenty-first birthday, having come into his inheritance, Randolph bought himself a secondhand 1922 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost. This he sold two years later to buy the Lagonda 2

litre low chassis Speed model – GF 8843 – just two months before he also bought himself a second plane, a Gypsy Moth.

Randolph's 1931 diary records some of his outings in the Lagonda, often with the time recorded against them. The 53 miles from Shrewsbury to Hereford took 1 hour 10 mins, a fairly impressive average of 50 mph (certainly quicker than Google says it takes today!). Another journey of 69 miles a few weeks later to Hardwicke Grange in Hadnall (which was about to be demolished, the contents being sold off), took 1 hour 44 mins, with five grown men squashed into the Lagonda. Perhaps no surprise then that there were accidents, GF 8843 colliding with a Morris on 24 June. Randolph borrowed a Riley from the garage whilst the car was being repaired.

Randolph had a taste for speed and was president of the local Wye Valley Auto Club. Competitions were held from time to time at Michaelchurch Court. According to Mr Wilding, time trials were held down the front and back drives of the Court, with someone directed to stand at the road junction to ensure that there were no collisions with oncoming traffic, when the cars sped out of the drive onto the road. One can imagine GF 8843 hurtling down the gravel drive. There is a 1932 newspaper report of an Auto Club rally, where one of the competitions was for the cars to chase Randolph in his plane. It is not clear how long Randolph kept GF 8843. He likely traded it in in 1935 for a Hudson Eight Drophead Coupe (the Essex Terraplane mentioned in the *Motor Sport* article), which he kept until the war.

Who owned GF 8843 between 1935 and 1942 is unclear. It may have belonged to a pilot from Wales. Whilst the car was in the ownership of Viv Newman, he met a man at a vintage car show in Cowbridge, near Cardiff, who said that the car had belonged to his brother who was in the RAF. During the war, a bomb had landed near the garage where the car was stored, and the roof had fallen on top of it. The story of the Spitfire owner has stuck, but it may have been that the man was Harry Gostling's brother, Ian, who lived at Penarth, just 15 miles from Cowbridge. The car seats were likely replaced around this time, to light unpadded aluminium pilot seats from a plane. They may have been from a Short Sunderland seaplane, rather than a Spitfire, there being an indent in the seat for the joystick. The bucket seats remained in the car until they were converted back to standard Lagonda seats during the 2000-01 rebuild.

1942–1950: HARRY GOSTLING

From at least 1942, GF 8843 was owned by Harry Gostling, a well-known member in the Lagonda Club



Harry in India in 1942

(joining in January 1949 and later serving on the committee) and also a founder member of the 2 litre Lagonda Register (member no 85).

A number of members may remember Harry's younger brother, Ian, who died in 2012 (*see Lagonda Club Magazine no 235* for Ian's obituary). In addition to (green) GF 8843, Harry also owned two 1932 2 litre low chassis Continental Tourers, one dark blue with black wings (YY 1778, chassis OH 10149, engine OH 1898) and the other cream, also with black wings (GX 2565, chassis OH 10133, engine OH 1882). He bought YY 1778 in July 1953 for £175 from Rowland Smith Motors in Hampstead, following a featured article on her in *Autocar*, the car being described as in fairly used condition. The Lagonda Club records that he acquired her in July 1954, but in an interview Harry gave for the *NatWest* bank magazine in 1969, he specifically notes 1953 at the purchase date – and he was anyway already racing her at Silverstone in July 1954. He kept YY 1778 until his death in 1973. The car then passed to Ian, who kept her until she was sold in 1997. GX 2565 was likely bought in 1962, and sold in November 1971, when it was exported first to Canada and then to the United States. Her current owner is Club member, Patience Bundschuh.

World War Two

Harry was a banker, working in London for NatWest bank (his final job being as the manager of the Kennington branch) and living in Isleworth. In 1937, he joined the Territorial Army, the 53rd (City of London) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment (53 HAA), Royal Artillery,



Harry's mother and GF 8843 in 1942

made up principally of men working in banking. When war broke out, 53 HAA was immediately mobilised, being deployed to France in October 1939 to defend the RAF's airfields around Reims and Guignicourt. The regiment remained in France until June 1940, when the British Army was forced to evacuate (158 Battery 53 HAA evacuating from St Nazaire, rather than Dunkirk). When Harry drove GF 8843 to France after the war in September 1948 (see Part 2 to be published later), he visited the places where he had been based during this period.

53 HAA was in England during the Blitz. But at the start of 1942 Harry deployed with his regiment to India (Bombay and Calcutta). He appears to have bought GF 8843 around this time, as there is a photograph of it dated June 1942 – with the censor's stamp on the back – with his mother, Ethel, alongside the car, which she presumably sent to her son in India. The car sports a third headlight, which remained on it throughout Harry's ownership (the blackout mask removed after the war). ■

To be continued ...

The Northern Rally - Snowdonia

9th – 13th June

Barry & Rachel Halton took their trusty 14/60 tourer

WELL NO-ONE COULD say we weren't warned - the BBC had been predicting heavy rain in the North West for several days before the start of the five day Northern Rally, which started on 9th June. We set off in hope and, in fact, had a dry and uneventful journey to the Seiont Manor Hotel near Llanberis, to join 27 other cars for a well-planned tour of a region we hadn't visited for over 40 years.

Seiont Manor is a rambling, secluded place at the end of a long driveway and proved ideal for the tour. The hotel is under relatively new management, its staff welcoming us with tea and scones, and they run a very comfortable establishment. I'm not sure how many guests used the pool facility - we didn't as most days we felt we had experienced enough water already and the cosy bar areas were a greater draw. After a drinks reception and introductory dinner with an opportunity to renew acquaintances most folk retired early after their journey, speculating on what the morning might bring.

In the event, we woke to bright sunshine and a programme, which promised a perfect traditional day at the seaside. A fine array of Lagondas was on show in the car park, complemented by worthy substitutes in the shape of an Alvis 12/60, an E type Jaguar and an Aston Martin DB2/4. You could tell immediately from the detailed folder presented to us on arrival that the organiser David Hine had spent a great deal of time preparing the itinerary and catering

arrangements.

We all set off in our own time to head for the well-known Llanberis Pass, which was remarkably free of traffic and not as steep as I recall, and then descended to the Conwy Valley for a coffee stop at Maenan Abbey for more chatter. The next leg took us to Llandudno and the Great Orme with its Marine Drive. Reserved parking had been arranged at the summit of the headland and it proved a stiff climb with a couple of awkward hairpins to get there. We managed it with one section requiring first gear - the only time in the past five years or so that I have had to use it - and were pleased to arrive with only an acceptable amount of steam emerging from the radiator! From the top, the views on this clear sunny day were spectacular - down the North Wales coast towards Anglesey, across the estuary to the Snowdon mountain range, and even out to sea with the massive array of almost 60 wind turbines stretching across Liverpool Bay. The long line of parked Lagondas competed well for the attention of visitors, many of whom had come to enjoy the famous Great Orme Tramway ride. Most of us made the trip down into town on the two sections of the cable-hauled system, which was built 1901 and has a steepest gradient of 1 in 3.8. Llandudno's elegant seafront has enjoyed a revival in its fortunes in recent years and the attraction of a walk along its 700 metre pier with an ice cream at the end has never waned.

The return to the hotel was left



Experts discuss how to deal with a fault on Walter Thompson's 2 litre - the tool for the job lies on the driver's seat



The Breen 16/80 dodges a steam engine, while Barry Halton looks for something interesting to photograph

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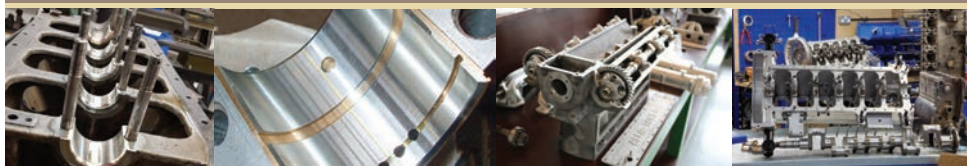
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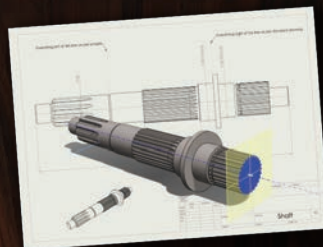
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to choice and many elected to visit Conwy en route.

The estuary with its innumerable boats makes a lovely view as you cross the road bridge into the town, but the same can't be said for the way the sight of Thomas Telford's suspension bridge (now a National Trust footpath) and Robert Stephenson's tubular rail bridge have been obscured by the concrete parapet of the modern road bridge which runs alongside. It was well worth finding a car park in town to have a proper look. It had been a 'grand day out' and after suitable refreshment and more joviality in the bar we were all ready for the promised hog roast, which did not disappoint with its huge portions of succulent pork.

It was all going so well - what could possibly go wrong? Well the next day was the longest touring route and it started damp and ended in rain. That said, no-one baulked at the drive through the spectacular scenery of the Aberglaslyn Pass to our first stop at Harlech and the intense greenery of wet Wales had to be seen to be believed. Our parking space at Harlech was being protected and it was soon clear that several generations of David's family had been recruited to the organising team for the Tour. The 13th century castle has had recent investment and its new entrance footbridge and visitor centre compliment the severe looking fortress well. The views from the top of its walls, which have an alarmingly low parapet, to Snowdon and the Llyn peninsula looked as bleak as they may have done in Edward I's time.

From Harlech, the coastal road southwards climbs and falls with great views, though like many others in this part of Wales, there seem to be very few stopping places to

admire them and much of the time there are unforgiving slate walls to discourage attempts to pull over. We were heading for Fairbourne and the wooden planked toll bridge en route at Penmaenpool is a wonderful relic of old motoring times worth every penny of its 70p charge. Fairbourne Golf Club had kindly agreed to provide a buffet lunch in their clubhouse and were generous hosts, providing a very traditional home-made spread with great enthusiasm in their modest premises. Their golf course is situated behind a huge defensive sea wall, which was breached not long ago, and they have been told that if it happens again there will be no funds for repairs and nature will take its course. It's called 'managed retreat' and is causing great distress to local residents.

As the rain became more intense, we left the rapidly flooding car park and drove to Tywyn, the home of the Talyllyn Railway. Arriving in the town, which had busy traffic, we were forced into convoy driving and the lead Lagonda (unfortunately unidentifiable) took a wrong turn which resulted in a dozen or so cars having to make three point turns into the entrance of a local nursing home. This clearly caused great amusement to passing locals standing under their umbrellas watching the spectacle, but perhaps didn't do much for the image of the dashing Lagondas.

We had the privilege of parking in the station yard itself, which required careful positioning to accommodate all the cars in the limited space, all of which was conducted by Hine family members and the immaculately uniformed railway staff who were out to make this a special day for their visitors. The Talyllyn railway opened in 1865 to carry slate from the hillside quarries to the coast and was



*It did rain a lot. Here is a picture at the Talylllyn Railway -
note the nickel items gradually tarnishing!*



But there was some fine weather and the hoods could go down

the first narrow gauge line in Britain authorised to carry passengers using steam engines. Rescued from closure in 1951 by volunteers, including the industrial author L.T.C.Rolt, it is now one of Wales' most visited attractions. Our visit was one of the highlights of the Tour and our group had two coaches reserved for the return trip to Nant Gwernol. The journey up the valley is possibly the slowest way of travelling 7.25 miles imaginable, but most enjoyable nevertheless. On return, the amiable railway staff laid on a splendid dinner featuring Welsh lamb, which made a perfect antidote to a damp evening.

The last full day had been left clear for people to please themselves. A recommendation taken up by some was a visit to the Welsh Heritage and Language Centre at Nant Gwrthryn, developed from the cottages of an abandoned granite quarry village on the coast and approached down a 1 in 4 hill. Others opted to revisit favourite places from previous trips. The weather continued to be poor so we headed for the National Museum

of the Slate Industry in Llanberis.

It is based in the former workshops of the quarry, where all machinery was maintained and repaired. The site had its own narrow gauge railway and was self sufficient in that locomotives built by the Hunslet Engine Company in Leeds were dismantled and patterns of all the parts made so that the foundry could reproduce spares when needed. Skilled demonstrations of slate splitting and finishing are given and a row of furnished cottages show life at different periods over the life of the industry.

The farewell drinks reception and dinner on the last evening had a most convivial atmosphere with all agreeing that despite the climate it had been a very enjoyable break and a tribute to David, Jill, Nick, Emma and Alex Hine's hard work. Dave Berry's local knowledge and practical help had also been invaluable and much appreciative applause was given. And to round off a good Northern gathering, what better than Mr. Hine's rendition of that Jake Thackray classic 'The Bantam Cock'.... ■

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Via Flaminia - Peaks of the Adriatic Rally, May 2019

Roy & Brigitte Callow went in their M35R

VIA FLAMINIA IS a Dutch company that organises four rallies per year, one of which is limited to pre-war cars. Starting in northern Italy the route passed through Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and finally Greece, a total of about 2000 kilometres.

The entry list was limited to 31 cars, 14 of which were Bentleys! Lagonda was represented by Michael and Bettina Diekmann from Germany in their M45, and us in our M35R. Twelve participants came from Holland (many of whom we knew from previous rallies), eight from the UK, and a Bentley from Ireland. Unusually 4 entries came from Spain.

The road book consisted of a series of maps on which key points are marked. The shortest route between the marks is the correct route. There are no route checks (apart from the lunch stops) but there is an optional competitive element based on observations en route. Crews participate in this with differing degrees of diligence, but it is pleasing to report that the Diekmanns emerged as easy winners, upholding the honour of the Lagonda Club. Our own performance was less edifying - let's just say that we were placed mid table!

The absence of regularities, timed sections and driving tests makes for a relaxed social event, although the route was not without serious challenges, especially in view of the weather we encountered.

Day 1, Sunday May 19, Cividali de Friuli (Italy) to Crickvenica (Slovenia)

We assembled on Saturday afternoon. Five of us had arranged to have our cars delivered to Cividali from the UK by Joe Coleman of Oldtimer Services. Other crews had taken the car train from Dusseldorf to Innsbruck and driven 300 kilometres to the hotel in pouring rain, a portent of things to come. The forecast for Sunday was heavy rain. It proved to be very accurate.

The sodden start was at 9am, and after some tricky navigation we crossed the open border into Slovenia at about 10. From there we drove through dense woodland at elevations of up to 1300m on roads alternating between potted tarmac and mucky gravel! After lunch we headed southeast towards Croatia in rain that can only be described as biblical - a description that was to become commonplace on this trip. Along with others we were twice forced to pull off the road with visibility at zero and the road awash under a torrential thunderstorm. The border crossing into Croatia was uncomplicated and we pushed on through the hills of the Risenjak national park to our overnight destination on the coast at Crikvenica. The hotel Kvarner Palace was excellent. Things could only get better.....

Day 2, Crikvenica to Iadera

Well, things did get better. Early morning drizzle gave way to

intermittent sunshine and warmer temperatures. With the hood down we continued on the spectacular coast road to Stinica from where we took the ferry across to Misnjak which is located on a long spit of land extending north from Zadar. Here the scenery varies from barren moonscape to high pasture within a few kilometres. Excellent roads with views to the sea on both sides. The overnight stop was at a new resort hotel at Punta Scala just north of Zadar.

Day 3, Punta Scala to Trogir

A short day (153km) along the coast road (in reasonable weather) to the charming town of Trogir about 40km north of Split. Here we stayed at the excellent if strangely named Brown Beach Hotel, probably the best of all the hotels we visited. On all other days lunch and dinner were provided but this was a “free” day to enable crews to visit Split, which we did. This was a mistake - traffic jams, road works, impossible parking and thousands of tourists from massive cruise ships. We turned round and went back to Trogir where we enjoyed a memorable dinner in the company of four other crews.

Day 4, Trogir to Mostar

Sunshine and the roof down. From Split we drove north on a sinuous road climbing to 1100m at the Bosnian border. From here the road descended through a series of hairpins with spectacular views across a massive plain and the city of Livno. Lunch was in Tomislavgrad. We drove up the distinctly unimpressive main street towards a crowd of young men supervising parking. Across the road was a restaurant, the lavish interior of which would not be out of place in any major city. The food was excellent. The event was overseen by

a large bald man wearing a version of a Hells Angels outfit. We soon learned that he owned the restaurant and made no secret of the fact that he ran the town. Was this our first brush with the crime syndicates that are alleged to run the Balkan states? Maybe so, but our welcome could not have been warmer. Just in case he has global reach we can confirm that he was a very nice man.....Largely as a result of the shelling it endured during the civil war and its subsequent reconstruction (notably of the famous bridge) Mostar has become a tourist attraction and a UNESCO heritage site. The museum bears testimony to the hardship endured by the mainly Muslim population during the war. For some intangible reason it was not a town that we enjoyed visiting, but enjoyment was perhaps inappropriate.

Day 5, Mostar to Zabljak

From Mostar we travelled east in the rain on to what the road book described as “32 Km of good dirt road”. “Good” is a subjective assessment. “Very rough” would have been more accurate. Second gear all the way with the worst potholes hidden beneath unavoidable puddles. The subsequent tarmac was little better. Really hard work although the scenery was, again, exceptional. This part of Bosnia is still known locally as Serbian Bosnia and we saw posters of Mladic proudly displayed close to his birthplace.

The afternoon route was to have taken us across a mountain range (rising to nearly 2000m) to the ski resort of Zabljak. At the beginning of the rally the pass had been declared open, but at Mostar it was confirmed that it was now closed due to heavy snowfall. There was no alternative but to make a 100km detour (in fact still very scenic)

to reach the night stop. Fortunately the Polar Star hotel at Zabljak had facilities for hanging up and drying wet clothes. Pure luxury!!

Day 6, Zabljak to Shkoder (Albania)

From Zabljak we travelled along more amazing mountain roads with incredible views (even in the rain!). The roads crossing this wooded mountainous wilderness were almost free of traffic.

The border crossing into Albania was reminiscent of a 1950s film - remote and very bureaucratic with humourless guards and a vicious Alsatian dog looking for its next meal. Eventually we all got through despite a minor hiccup with one crew's green card.

Once through the border we were confronted with a terrible stretch of dirt road. Do we have this for the next 100km we were wondering? Then, after less than a mile, there was tarmac and we started descending possibly the most amazing mountain road we have travelled. For some reason the road had been recently resurfaced with new crash barriers. It was not a difficult road to drive, but the views, descending into what is believed to be the deepest gorge in Europe, were amazing.

Albania is, to use that overworked cliché, a country of contrasts. There are no less than 173,000 pill boxes (an average of 6 per sq.km.) built by the dictator Enver Hoxha in the 1960s and 70s to defend against invasion - quite who might have wanted to invade has never been established, but no doubt the memory of the Italian invasion of 1939 lives on.

Alongside the pillboxes lavish houses and restaurants are incongruously dotted along the main

road in between tiny agricultural plots. Shkoder is a surprisingly sophisticated town - the tree lined main street is full of cafes, shops and bars. Everybody seemed to be smoking. We all parked in a pedestrian area in front of the excellent Hotel Colosseo. Clearly our arrival had been publicised as an event, and the crowds were almost intimidating, many wanting to sit in the cars.

Our Lagonda had developed a gaping hole under the silencer, which needed welding. With the help of the hotel, the support crew located a garage that could repair it later that night. Accompanied by a posse of short, track-suited men with shaven heads; we made our way to the garage. The owner did not arrive until 10.45, having been delayed at Friday prayers. During the next two hours he fabricated a semi circular patch, which he welded onto the underside of the entire length of the silencer. A brilliant job carried out wearing the ubiquitous track-suit with sunglasses for eye protection while welding. No H&S rules here!

Earlier during the day I was talking to a local man who was, he claimed, in a 'well-paid' job. Keen to practice his English (and no doubt hoping that I might be able to pull strings to get him a visa to the UK) he described his bleak existence. He earned 400 euros a month. He said that corruption dominated all levels of Albanian society - this explained the lavish houses and restaurants. He could see no future for himself or the country. When I asked why driving standards were so bad he explained that a lot of people have never been taught to drive - they just turn up with a wad of cash and bribe someone to



Singing in the rain – well almost!



A Bentley negotiates the Albanian rush hour

issue a licence. That was typical of how things work, he explained. Tall, good looking, bilingual and obviously intelligent, I felt sorry for him. I hope he is successful in obtaining a visa.

Day 7, Shkoder to Lake Ohrid (Macedonia)

No rain, but another route choice. The rally route included some 30km of a "road damaged by heavy trucks." Our Dutch friends had inside knowledge - "don't take that road" they advised. And so it was that we spent a pleasant sunny day with the five Dutch crews, arriving at our Lake Ohrid hotel mid-afternoon after a decent lunch. It was a wise choice - several of the Bentleys abandoned the damaged road and turned back. Only about 12 crews travelled the entire route, including the tiny supercharged MG PA of Tim Luffingham and Clare, which came through with relative ease, although they did admit that we had made the right choice. Lake Ohrid is described as "one of Europe's oldest and deepest lakes with a unique ecosystem". Surrounded by mountains the views are spectacular.

Day 8, Lake Ohrid to Meteora (Greece)

Day 8 started with a spectacular drive along the eastern shore of Lake Ohrid. At Terpjca our route turned east across the Galichica National Park. There followed 25km of excellent tarmac totally free from traffic. Climbing up across the mountain between Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa we had some fantastic views of both lakes. A truly memorable drive. And so we drove south to our final destination at Meteora Greece. There was ,of course, an end of rally dinner at a taverna at which everybody won an award of some sort, followed by an in impromptu party

at the hotel. After an early lunch at the hotel we drove to the ferry port of Igoumentisa to catch the overnight ferry to a rainy Ancona. From there it was a tedious drive to Bologna. It was dark when we arrived at our hotel where were greeted by a farewell burst of the biblical rain that had dogged us throughout the entire trip.

The following morning we flew back to London. Joe Coleman collected our cars from the hotel and delivered them safely to the UK a few days later.

Lasting Impressions

Driving south, inland from the touristic affluence of the Dalmatian coast, people become noticeably more dour, even a little humourless. To borrow a phrase I heard elsewhere, their smiles are "like the brass plate on a coffin". The groups of young men who crowded around the cars were very friendly and we never felt intimidated, but at the same time you could sense a certain edge, especially in Serbian Bosnia. Not surprising, given their recent (and not so recent) history.

The scenery, especially in Montenegro and Albania, can be spectacular and outside the towns the traffic is very light. There are excellent hotels. Food is generally very acceptable, but it is no gourmet's paradise! We were, perhaps, unlucky with the weather, but it is mountainous terrain so uncertain conditions are to be expected. Did we enjoy it and would we return? Absolutely!

One unanswered question - why are there modern petrol stations about every two kilometres on the main roads in Albania? Must be a scam there somewhere... ■

Memories of John Batt

Lagonda expert, talented engineer, and good friend to many



John in the WoodBatt special at Thruxton in 1971

I FIRST MET John at an Oulton Park event in the early 1960s. He was competing in the WoodBatt Rapier special and I had previously owned, and competed in, the Eccles Brooklands Rapier. It proved interesting to compare notes. Subsequent discussions revealed that we had each been involved in providing technical assistance both to Club members and Spares Section officers since the late John Oliver's time.

As is now widely known, John's advice and assistance developed worldwide, with prolific involvement in Lagonda/VSCC events. We had established that our engineering backgrounds were very similar and, as an added benefit, we shared a dislike of bureaucracy and suspicion of politicians. We firmly believed that accountants should be barred

from sensible Quality Standards discussions. This proved a sound basis for a long and enjoyable relationship.

Following John's retirement and return from the USA we engaged in a wide variety of projects for Lagondas, giving advice and assistance to many Club members.

A combination of John's down-to-earth directness and my 'Black Country' approach led to some lively discussions, but we never had any serious disagreements. Mutual trust and a commitment to getting a job done up to correct standards, not down to the lowest price, underpinned our activities. It is significant that no formal agreement between 'Shropshire Car & Engine Co' and 'Reynard House Workshops' was ever considered necessary. His unfailing cheerfulness and dedication will be sorely missed

as will his reply to my 'phone calls:-
'It is I, Horatio'!

James Crocker (former Club Chairman, and VSCC President), after consulting with John about a troublesome Rapier, said – *'Do you know he (John) went to endless trouble to solve the problems, knows precisely what he is talking about, and is an absolutely first-class chap.'*

He was, indeed, exactly that.

JDR

WE GOT TO know John and Susie many years ago, probably in the days of the WoodBatt Special. They originally introduced us to the Hollow Bottom pub in Guiting Power as a suitable place to stay for Prescott. We have lost count of the number of times we have been going there. His 2 litre (much cleaner than mine) was a feature of events there.

They are only 35 miles from us and we stayed with them one year and went to both of their children's weddings.

John went to the USA as boss of a UK based Refractory supplier (the heat-resisting bricks used to line blast furnaces). I well remember John loading up a container with his Lagondas before he went.

The Americans bought the UK Company and closed it only to discover that John had a Contract of Employment. These are uncommon in USA but well known in Britain. The upshot was that it cost them a great deal of money!

CD

JOHN AND SUSIE live near us and it wasn't long after I acquired our 14/60 in 2012 that I was seeking his advice. The car had been sadly neglected and

needed a lot of TLC and replacement parts to bring it back to its reliable touring condition, including brakes, shock absorbers, magneto, autovac, water pump, exhaust and rear axle.

John was unfailingly helpful, frequently frustrated by my incompetence but always cheerful, optimistic that a solution could be found and usually willing to pitch in and give practical assistance. It often went like this:- I would ring him with a problem, he would diagnose a solution over the phone but realise that some of it was beyond my capability, or even comprehension, and then offer to come over and take charge. There were times when I felt like the enthusiastic apprentice to a bluff but kindly Yorkshire industrialist, like when he took his powerful blowtorch to free the exhaust manifold studs and I stood nervously close to my garage fire extinguisher! So having built up our confidence in the car, we have happy memories of touring abroad with John and Susie, and the occasional moments of rescue - damp starts in the Loire, water leaks in Ireland. I have no doubt that our Lagonda would not be on the road if it was not for his kindly help and we will miss him.

BH

TWENTY YEARS AGO it was John Batt who encouraged and supported this Lagonda novice. Knowing I had no experience, John invited me to his house and talked me through 2 Litre mechanics. My car had not been driven for 35 years and had major problems. John helped me through numerous crises and in finding missing parts. He always answered my questions clearly and often challenged me to undertake jobs myself, talking me through the

stages of the work. He insisted we rebuilt the engine together - the experience was invaluable.

A highlight of John's year was the VSCC Prescott weekend and ensuring a large number of Lagondas were displayed together in The Orchard. This was not easy but his organisation skills always succeeded. I would get a call: "*Sunday morning 8:45 at the Royal Oak Gretton - be ready for us*"! At the said time a long line of Lagondas would arrive and we would be ushered into a convoy. John had chatted up the steward in charge of parking in The Orchard and as we arrived he facilitated our display. He then used his new friend to get later arrivals to join - reaching 20 cars. Once assembled, the gathering became a magnet for Club members, old friends and those attracted by the spectacle of all these Lagondas parked together. A large shared picnic always took place at lunchtime. Long may this tradition continue!

John was a driven person always looking for his next Lagonda project whether it was cars or camshafts. He could be very direct, but was always supportive of those who sought his advice or help. His experience and knowledge across the pre war model range was second to none. John was the most committed and knowledgeable Lagonda Club member I have met in my twenty years of Club membership. He will be missed but never forgotten.

MY

HAVING KNOWN JOHN and Susie for over 50 years I was privileged to have had John as a friend, technical engineer and great travelling companion. Others will have commented on his

knowledge and assistance given to all who knew him. I will therefore concentrate on the social side as over the years I accompanied John and Susie on many trips, tours, holidays and social events both in the UK and all over continental Europe. John selected the most appropriate car for each event and over the years we covered thousands of miles with virtually no breakdowns or incidents, a true sign of the pride he took in preparing his cars for regular use and reliability. On the very odd occasions when we did encounter a problem it did not take John's brain long to formulate a repair or "work around".

In my mind I have always thought of John & Susie as "Team Batt". They were totally supportive of each other and this really showed whilst on events as they each had their own duties enabling us to have many fabulous times. John liked routine whilst away which consisted of a good breakfast, a leisurely drive to a coffee stop, more driving to a lunch stop followed by a drive to our B&B or hotel arriving by 17.00 where he would pronounce it was time to "Stop Engines" and proceed to the bar!

Writing this has made me really realise how much Susie, their family and the rest of us will miss our multi talented friend.

RMH

JOHN WAS ENTHUSED for Rapiers by "The Sheffield Gang", who had founded the Rapier Register in 1953, and joined as member No. 472 in October 1962. He bought BLA920 for £12 and quickly converted the tatty Abbott Tourer to a sporty cycle-winged two-seater incorporating the

aluminium tail from a Connaught racing car. With this daily transport he also began his VSCC competition career, toured Europe including Le Mans, and attended the Italian GP at Monza, suffering a stripped fibre timing gear on the way home. Then he sold it in 1966 to fund Susie's engagement ring !

He soon teamed up with Tony Wood and during winter 1967-68 they built the offset single seater Woodbatt Special, ACA145. Tony contributed the car and John the large Wade supercharger, which soon showed its propensity for burning holes through piston crowns. New Rapier pistons then being unavailable, John fitted Ford 100E items, turning down the crowns to suit. In 1971 he won a race at Thruxton, beating James Crocker in AHN730, Paul Morgan in his Eccles Replica, and Tim Blishen in his fast Rapier Special. Successes continued, and in 1975 John was awarded the Register's Ashcroft trophy for sporting achievements.

Ann and I first met John and Susie when we bought our first Rapier in 1968. We lived in Cardiff, and they in Cowbridge, where we both attended the VSCC monthly noggin. Licensing laws were stricter in those days, the bell rang, and we were all discharged into the car park promptly at 11.10pm. I remember an occasion when Roger Collings had come in his vast 1903 60hp Grand Prix Mercedes. John went out to the car park to see Roger at the starting handle of the monster. Ever helpful, John said *"Oh, let me give you a hand with that, Roger"*. Roger stood aside, and John commenced to swing the handle of the mighty beast. Sweat appeared on his brow, and 'ere

long he had to admit defeat. *"Oh, it won't go for me"* he cried. *"Ah"*, said Roger, *"did you want to start it? I was just giving it a couple of turns prior to switching on. I'll switch it on now"*. Collapse of spectating party!

Having welcomed us into the Register, John was forever trying to persuade us to join the Lagonda Club. His efforts finally bore success, when we bought our M45 in 1986.

John served as Register Secretary from 1969-1981, and for voluntary services to the Register received the Baily Trophy in 1969 and the Elder Trophy in 1984. He contributed some technical articles to the Rapier News, and arranged manufacture of stainless-steel four-branch exhaust systems. Latterly he has lavished care and attention on WS776, the smart Abbott FHC in which he and Susie travelled substantial distances on club events. His Lagonda interests covered several of the larger models too. The 1932 Supercharged 2-Litre Tourer was a wedding gift from Susie's parents, the motor-house also housing a 1929 2-Litre "Honeymoon Coupé" and several 4½-litre models from time to time. He maintained all the cars in immaculate condition. For 2-Litre owners he arranged a supply of new con-rods by Arrow Engineering, and also supplied special free-flowing exhaust manifolds for the low-chassis cars.

A strong supporter of club events, he attended the Suffolk dinner on 22 occasions, seldom missing one after his return from America.

John was a positive outgoing person, never at a loss for words, always with an opinion to offer on any topic, and you certainly heard him coming. He

was a very good friend, and we shall miss him greatly. How sad we shall never greet him at our back door again.

M&A P

JOHN CALLED ME the first time after I had started the Lagonda forum on the internet in 2007. I think he was curious who this German person is. Soon John and Susie visited us on a trip to skiing in Switzerland and my wife Gudrun and I enjoyed their company very much. Such visit was repeated with much joy. We stayed in contact, exchanged hundreds of emails, called from time to time, received Christmas cards. John was always active - some examples:- "Yes we are back from a great trip to the Antipodes and Thailand but perhaps away for rather too long!" – "On our return home we only had a few days to sort the post and change bags before leaving for the Lagonda Devon Rally" - "We are safely back from the Club rally to the Shetland / Orkney Isles. The '29 saloon covered 1604 miles without a problem."

When we first met I had only the V12 saloon but digging into Lagonda matters I soon admired the 2 and 3ltr LC tourers. Finally in 2014 I spotted a nice 2 ltr on the Internet. John of course knew the car (he had done some repair on it in the past). I knew it had some engine problems but otherwise it was very nice and I bought it based on the photos and John's advice. It was not very far from his home. He went and brought the car to his workshop, examined it, took off the cylinder head, had it completely repaired including the spare head, and put it back. Some of you probably know his progress reports, simply perfect, every hour spent and every detail what he found

and how he corrected it is written down. If the professional workshops would be as thorough as he was ! When the car was almost finished, I went to Maulden, stayed a very enjoyable time with John and Susie and we finished the car together. John could train me that way on the 2ltr and finally gave me driving lessons (crash box) around Maulden. I admired his perfect workshop, just one example was the blackboard where he had written down what was next to do on my 2ltr.

And of course we met John and Susie on a number of Lagonda Continental Rallies over the years. One of them was in England where we first visited John and Susie and then drove together to the event. The last time we met was on the Continental Rally last August. My oil pressure was quite low and when I was back home asked John for advice. I took the oil pump apart and found much play. He told me that just removing the axial play should solve the problem, which it did!

Apart from having lost a very good and always cheerful friend, I would say my Lagonda-father, it is a tremendous loss of practical knowledge and competence in all matters Lagonda. He knew all the details, most time out of his head: valve gap depending on which camshaft you have, torque of head screws "but be careful with the outer ones".. when I go through his emails, how full of activity and advice. We will not forget John."

Dr PS

MY FIRST MEETING with John was at the VSCC Prescott Hill Climb in 1964. Tony Wood and I were in the queue awaiting our respective practice runs when three enthusiastic spectators approached us, the obvious leader of

the group introducing himself as John Batt. From this initial meeting there began a long friendship, the outcome of this first encounter was that they all stayed at my home near Stroud over the weekend - fortunately my long suffering parents approved of my new found acquaintances! This gathering was the first of many such "invasions" to our home, usually in conjunction with a Prescott meeting. However John and Susie became regular visitors at other times, especially during the period they were based in South Wales.

Shortly after this first encounter, his employers moved John to London. Upon his arrival in the capital he quickly joined forces with Tony Wood, the result of which was the construction of the "Woodbatt Special". This evolved from a dismantled Rapier that Tony had acquired and was keen to restore, whilst John was the custodian of a large Wade supercharger which was mated to an original Rapier blower drive assembly. During the period that the car was under construction, John was moved yet again by his company - this time to South Wales. Being located midway between the two protagonists, I became something of a staging post for the "Woodbatt", which seemed to spend much time in my garage. This was most apparent during the Summer of 1968. At the car's first appearance at Prescott it expired amid a cloud of blue smoke and many expensive noises! At the time one of my Rapiers was undergoing body repairs, whilst its engine was sitting on the workshop floor in full working order. Realising that the "Woodbatt" would be out of action for some time, I offered the use

of this engine - but on the proviso that it was kept in unsupercharged form. This was because the engine was a high compression unit unsuitable for use with any supercharger, let alone John's large Wade blower!

Within a short time the engine swap had been achieved and John and I took the car to a convenient disused airfield for some very spirited test runs, which were most encouraging. The net result was that John recorded his first racing success at the VSCC Thruxton meeting where he won a 5 lap handicap with great abandon. It is perhaps ironic that, with his passion for supercharging, John's first success was with an unblown engine!

Another memory was when I persuaded John to navigate for me in the VSCC Measham Rally early in 1966. All went well during the first half of the event, but in the early hours, somewhere in the Welsh borders, John announced that a right hand bend was being approached. This bend was much sharper than it appeared on the map and due to the slippery road conditions we skidded onto the grass undergrowth. During this excursion the passenger door flew open and the maps landed on the ground. Having collected everything we re-joined the road and proceeded towards the next check point, thinking that all was well. We then realised that the sealed box containing my watch set at "rally time" was missing! The marshalls reset our road book to BBC time and we finished the rally, but without any prizes! The following week I had to buy a new watch - it must have been a good investment as I still have it and is in full working order.

There are so many other incidents that I could recall about John, he was

one of a kind and will be sorely missed by everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him.

JO

ONE OF OUR HIGH points each year has been to join The Batt Lagonda Colony as it sweeps into VSCC Prescott, before coming triumphally home to roost in the Orchard. For me it's well nigh impossible to separate John and wife Susie from their extended family of like-minded friends. John, Susie and family will be there every year for as long as we are, and those of us who have been fortunate to visit them at Reynard House, where Susie rules their hospitable home and John designed and built a superbly equipped garage-workshop, have yet more inspirational memories. Can you walk round each of your cars and pull a half shaft without moving it? In such settings one came to appreciate John for the man he was, his energy and dedication to all things Lagonda, and the sheer depth and breadth of his knowledge and achievements. One also realised what a dauntlessly energetic and original engineer he was, and how much solid advice and help he has given so many of us over the years. John's Lagonda legacy includes spare parts he introduced to the Club range, notably Marles steering box parts and camshafts of improved design for the 2 and 3 litre cars, in collaboration with John Ryder. It also includes some very fine cars - two beautifully prepared and finely developed supercharged ones: a low chassis 2 litre and a most elegant LG6 special, a true work of art in its own right. In all, a fitting legacy of labour and love for a fine man, who will be sorely missed even though his

achievements endure.

MN

JOHN BATT WAS A bluff no-nonsense Yorkshireman from Sheffield with a great sense of humour. After all you have to have a sense of humour if connected with Lagondas! I first met him sometime in 1964 when we were both living in London but I didn't get to know him well until he started attending the London Register pub meets, after one of which he had to tow me back home behind his 2 litre, when the head gasket blew on my Rapier. We went about London in our respective Rapiers together with another good friend, Mike Baily. Mike was a quick driver and we swore he didn't go round corners but changed direction abruptly at 90 degrees. Several Register members and I attended John's wedding to Susie in October 1966 and a good time was had by all!

In the following January John entered his 2 litre Lagonda in the VSCC Measham Trophy Rally which was held overnight in mid-Wales. John's long-time friend John Woollett navigated whilst I was in the back helping with the timekeeping. Just before the halfway point, the car overturned on ice - the car landed back on its wheels and was still driveable. John was in no way responsible for the accident.

At about this time I was dating Susie's sister Anna, who also lived in London and we made foursomes on numerous occasions, mainly to VSCC and other motoring events, usually in the Rapiers. It was sometime in 1967 that John had been seen at pub meets "hiding a ginormous great supercharger under his coat" with nothing to attach it to. Susie, in her wisdom, suggested

to him that "*Tony Wood has a spare chassis*". So began the building up of ACA 145 into the Woodbatt Special. Difficulties arose when, just as we were about to get the car finished, John was transferred to Cardiff! The Woodbatt made its debut at VSCC Oulton Park in June 1968 but we had fuel problems and it did not start.

John and Susie then moved back to Sheffield and I moved to the West Midlands, which helped the logistics problems and we campaigned the Woodbatt for about 6 years with reasonable success. Then, as we both needed the money we sold it.

Just after the sale I got married and John and Susie attended. They then moved to Maulden and asked me to do the drawings for alterations to the property, not forgetting the Motor House!

John and Susie were the concours judges at the Register AGM in 2010 and they chose my Rapier, BRL 379. I was surprised but the consensus was that it was the car they would most like to take home. I didn't let them of course!

I will always remember John as a very good friend and a person who was generous with his time and advice. He will be very much missed.

JAW

OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES go to Susie, Julian, Sally, and their families. The 100 or so people at John's memorial service at Maulden really said it all, far more powerfully than we could.

As we all know, John and Susie were pretty well a perfectly matched couple and a team when together. And over the years, very much the central part of the Cambridge Area Lagonda social gatherings. I first met

John at Silverstone in July 1979. In those days John had a very nice 3½ litre tourer, which he had fully restored, as well as the blown 2 litre. John and I spent over 25 memorable years serving on the Lagonda Club Committee (now the Board), and often I would pick him up from his home in Maulden, and we would travel down the M1 together to club meetings in London. These were held monthly in those days, and inevitably we got to know each other very well indeed. Over the years it became routine to receive a Saturday morning call from John around 9-30, for an update on what was happening, or to discuss some technical details he was working on.

Even during John and Susie's years in America, he kept in touch with us to find out what had been happening this side of the water.

We jointly organised many social events, mostly in the Cambridge area, whilst John was Competition Secretary for the Club, a duty he also carried out for many years. One early event stands out in my memory. We had organised a gymkhana event, held jointly with the Alvis Club at Duxford Airfield, and in the days when you could park on the grass not far from the runway, with lunch at the Red Lion. On this occasion our then President James Crocker attended, with his Rapier. I also remember Clive and Shirley Dalton joining us for the first time, as their Continental 2 litre was still under reconstruction, and Clive drove my M45 Saloon. Also our inaugural Lagonda Club Area meeting held in Kings Lynn, on Kings Staithe Square where, in those days, we just had lunch in a cafe around the corner. John and Susie were there in their 2 litre,

as was the late Dr Tom Catnash with his blown 2 litre, David Wall with a v12 saloon, Ken Hill - 16/80 Tony Longmate - 3 litre and Brian Hyatt 3½ litre. Other particularly enjoyable memories are the 1985 and 1995 Le Mans trips, with John and Susie present.

Finally when acquiring my LG6 years ago, John insisted on coming along to help identify all of the missing parts scattered on the barn floor after the owner had semi-dismantled it all.

Looking back over the years, what a super friend John has been for us,

always ready to help, advise, exchange information, or meet up for a natter, with never a harsh word

ever spoken between us since we first met. As we all know, John was highly knowledgeable on all things Lagonda, and was always ready to help fellow members of the Club, particularly if they were in trouble with their car, no matter what the occasion.

We always admired his great energy and particular capacity to remember nearly every detail of anything technical regarding Lagonda.

I really don't think we will see the like of John Batt again in the club, as he was one of a kind, and the life and soul of the party at any gathering. We really will miss him.

J & R S



John's magnificent transformation of a derelict LG6 saloon

Letters & emails ... Letters & emails

Dear Roger,

I attach a picture of my recently acquired ex Brian Savill 1933 16/80 Saloon along with another PVT of similar age!

The 16/80 is a credit to Brian, runs magnificently and is not slow!
Kind regards,

Mike Hollowes



Dear Roger,

On the back page of Magazine 260 you invited me to date the two historic photos on page 42, which I am happy to do. The upper photo is one of a set taken in 1921/22, which covered the whole factory. Individual shots or whole sets were then sold to employees and, later, tiny panoramas of the whole lot reduced to postcard size. What is depicted here was

labelled “Final Assembly” and shows the point at which all the big lumps of 11.9 HP cars were bolted together; the engine/gearbox lump and the axles all inserted into the body-shell. Bert Hammond is the kneeling man in a collar and tie. The Heritage Trust has a bound set of these photos, mounted on thick card.

Letters & emails ... Letters & emails

The lower photo must have been taken in 1920. It shows the company football team lined up outside the factory on the Thorpe Road corner. Dating is accurate because 1920 was the only year in which the company produced both 11.1s and 11.9s, as shown here.

The team was pretty successful, as you can see their various trophies propped up in front of the players. I doubt that the men in suits had anything to do with football but just turned up when a camera appeared.

Regards,
Arnold

Dear Roger,

Barry Stiff's letter in the Spring issue of the Magazine reminds me that I have to get my 14/60 Two Litre polished up to lead the Wool Carnival procession later this month (June). I convey the Wool Carnival Princess and her attendants in some state and style to the Fete on the recreation ground; the car remains there on display for the rest of the day. The annual Carnival and Fete are, of course, to provide some fun for residents and visitors and raise funds for local good causes. GE189

has performed this small duty and privilege every year bar one since 2012. Early in June 2012 she was on parade in her white livery with a red Morgan and a blue AC Cobra (all at that time resident in Church Lane) for the Jubilee celebrations in Wool. The organisers of the impending Carnival spotted the old girl and said "We want you!"

The only decent picture which I have is from the 2012 Carnival, and I attach it in case it is of interest.

Best regards,
Arthur Brend





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