



THE MAGAZINE OF THE LAGONDA CLUB



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November 3, 1948.



Lagonda

FOR THE CONNOISSEUR

STAND 138
INTERNATIONAL MOTOR EXHIBITION

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The Lagonda Magazine

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COVER: From the Snowdonia Tour June 2019

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BETTER LATE THAN NEVER ...

Toby Bruce

I MUST START by offering my apologies for the rather tardy publication of this issue – perhaps due to the lengthy lockdown, there has not been much Lagonda activity over the last six months, and this lack of activity bred a lack of articles!

Many thanks to those who did submit articles, and things are looking up now – with the lifting of restrictions, I have noticed that some Club members have been able to have local meets with their cars. In addition, motorsports activities have restarted, so those who like to put their Lagondas to the ultimate test should have a fruitful summer ahead.

Speaking of motorsports, one of my few excursions in the last few months was to the VSCC Autosolo at Silverstone. The sole Lagonda

competing in that rather tricky test of manoeuvrability was Tim Parker's 2-litre drophead. Hard work, I'd imagine, as it also was for me in the Bean 18/50, but although large cars such as these aren't really suited to such events, it's great to see a variety of manufacturers represented. Since we're on the topic of unsuitable vehicles... I have (perhaps daftly) entered the Lea-Francis J-Type into the Light Car Race the VSCC is holding at Oulton Park. Also on the entry list is an early 20s Lagonda light car – I'd imagine the first time in many years one of those has graced the race track! That race is not exactly going to have the Formula 1 bosses quaking in their boots in terms of speeds achieved, but it should be an interesting occasion. And more overtaking than Monaco.. ■



Tim Parker's 2-litre comes to a halt

***Last date for copy for the SUMMER Magazine is
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Please send to editor - toby.bruce@cantab.net***



MEMORIES OF CAMBRIDGE

By Neale Edwards

I WAS FIRST A member of the Lagonda Club in 1957 when up at Cambridge. I was lucky enough to own the Low Chassis Speed Model 2 litre GO 5480, known as Peepers, and though illegal without the Motors and Aircraft Proctor's permission, I never bothered with that little formality. I drove it everywhere whenever I needed to and even parked it at Trinity Great Gate in the Fellows' Car Park. I once drove it back from a hooley at some huge pile near Trumpington in full bear's costume, complete with head. That was all right, because even as a bear,

I did wear a gown. The Trinity Porters would sometimes tell me to move it out of the Fellows' Car Park, and then they would as often as not relent with the comment that it looked lovely and raised the tone. I used to drive down to 1st and 3rd Trinity Boat house, to lectures, and most importantly out to André Kenny at Alpheaton Mill at weekends for wonderful Sunday lunch provided by Mrs André. In his workshop, I did an engine and various other overhauls under his expert and freely given guidance. I remember using Morris Commercial 72 mm

pistons in the 2 litre. André had about six or seven Lagondas, (one a high chassis 2 litre which had belonged to Sir William Gladstone who became Chief Scout and had also taught me at my school) André's favourite mount being the M45 saloon which Arnold Davey owned later. He ran that on Castrol R which he poured into a demi-john every time he came back from a trip, even just to the supermarket. He would stand the huge glass vessel on the back of the Aga to keep the oil warm, then pour it back into the engine on the next trip. André's claim to fame was that he had been in RAF Photographic Reconnaissance under Constance Babington-Smith (whose brother was a housemaster at my school) and had spotted the V1 launch sites. They made a film about this and André was inordinately delighted that a matinée idol took the part of Flt-Lt André Kenny. André was a loveable friend with a great deal of patience and full of pure goodwill, particularly to us Lagonda owners, including Clive Dalton, Shaun de Salis, and Bill Summers. André had been a Classical Scholar at Trinity and referred to his cellar as a hypergeum. Rather unfortunately for him, his hypergeum, and his six or seven workshops were prone to flooding.

I made the great mistake of reading economics and law. The first of these

subjects was merely a language for the expression of platitudes to others who understood the language and the second was at that level no more than a memory test and mildly amusing. Particularly when it came to criminal law and such cases as the one about the Norfolk farmer and his relationship with a duck. Jurisprudence was quite interesting as there was room for ill-informed personal quirkiness, and International law, to a certain degree no more than notional, had its moments under the late great Sir Eli Lauterpacht. For criminal law, my tutor was the unequalled Henry Barnes, who still had the 3 litre Bentley he had when he was up. His claim to fame was that he had once been President of Mexico. He was advising the government on law, a subject little understood by his clients at that time. A coup occurred rather unexpectedly while he was having his Hispanic siesta and the entire government had fled leaving him as the sole representative of what had till then been the norm. Henry blarneyed his way out of this uncomfortable conundrum and returned to Cambridge and a peaceful life. His tutorials took place with him being armed with a teapot at his side. This innocuous teapot contained nothing but good strong Irish whiskey.

My passing escapade with economics gave rise to Edwards' First Law.

‘The length of the arm tends to be inversely proportional to the depth of the pocket’.

One thing I learnt and to which I partly owe my Masters’ Degree is the fact that one never makes an assertion, only the mildest suggestion that a feature may tend to do or not do something or other. The clever thing to do was to ensure that nothing was said which could actually pin one down. This piece of wisdom was well worth the boredom of the rest of that subject, and vital knowledge for the rest of life.


I am now sadly Lagondaleless. The absence of such a creation underlines for me just how good they are. I am at this moment having a Bentley Mk VI chassis which I have had fully restored, clad with a body to my own design. It is a two seat two door fastback coupe and is my homage to the great French coachbuilders. As a sculptor, it is the largest sculpture that I have ever made. After eleven years, it will be finished later on this year and it is turning out to be spectacular. So it should be, the cost is a vast row of noughts disappearing over the horizon. Stablemates are a Citroen Traction Avant, and a British Racing Green XK 150 S drophead, plus a few other treasures.

Here’s a little puff for my lockdown efforts. I have five novels on Amazon available as paperbacks and also for

Kindle. The first three are a family trilogy about a father soldiering in the Cavalry in the First War, his daughter in devastated Germany at the end of the Second War as a nurse, and her son’s post war adventures in England and in America. Collectively they run from 1915–2008. The other two are free standing, a German family in wartime England, and a futuristic story of an IT genius from humble beginnings to major success in England and America. If you go to the Amazon books website and put in Neale Edwards, you can inspect every bit of all of them. You could even buy them. Happy reading and happy downlocking.

Neale Edwards ■

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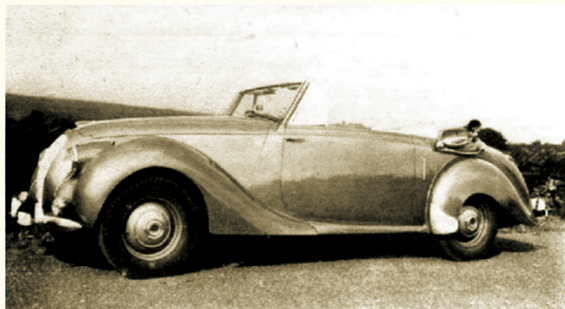


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LAGONDA

The 2 1/2 litre Lagonda, for the design of which W. O. Bentley was responsible, has a very fine twin o.h.c. engine, and is a very comfortable car by reason of independent bsuspension of front and rear wheels.

ASTON-Martin

A fffavourite with enthusiasts from its inception twenty-seven years ago, the latest Aston-Martin is a two seater with a short-stroke, push-rod 2-litre engine, and coil spring i.f.s. giving an excellent combination of comfort and roadholding. A "Spa Replica" model is made to special order, the basic price of which is £1,998.



*see Mark Whitehead's
article on page 10*

AWAKE!

After a combined 87 years in hibernation *By Mark Whitehead*

MY LIFE HAS been full of good fortune as it has always included Lagonda and Alvis motor cars. When I was born in 1949 our family car was a 4.3 Alvis, which was retired to the shed when the first DB Lagondas arrived in Australia. (I am currently preparing this Alvis for the Sydney Harbour Concours.)

The 2.6 drophead featured was the 1950 Sydney Motor Show exhibit and my father bought it for my mother from the showroom floor. I have fond memories of driving in it around the picturesque Northern Beaches of Sydney where we lived. In the mid 50s it was involved in an accident and by the time parts arrived from England

Mum was also driving a 2.6 saloon. When the repairs were completed it was also consigned to our shed – a delightful habit Dad continued for the next 50 years for which I have been very grateful.

In the early 70s my best friend, who was practically a family member, convinced Jim to let him have the 2.6 drophead and together they worked on it over many week-ends to make it once more roadworthy. He used it in Sydney for about ten years before selling it to Clarrie, who drove it just the once, to his home, before embarking on a 33 year body-off restoration. By 2016, realising that age



and failing health were getting on top of him, he offered it to me in a part-assembled state so it could return to its original family.

In 1959 my parents travelled to the UK for the first time and purchased the 3 litre saloon in as new condition. They toured Europe and the British Isles before bringing it home to become our family car. On their next trip in 1962 they took the 3 litre back to England, intending to trade it in on the new Rapide: however AML General Manager John Wyer would not permit a model, so early in production, be sold to go so far away. So once again they toured Europe in the 3 litre and brought it home. In 1966, with 220 thousand miles on the clock and the bottom end having never been touched, Dad thought it was time to retire it to the shed and a Bristol 406 became his daily drive. On the next European trip he finally got a DB Rapide (a car he did not enjoy owning or driving nearly as much as the 3 litre). I got a 3litre drophead on

that trip; both these models we drove for about ten years before they too were sent... guess where?

One of the last jobs I did with Dad before he died in 2011 was a complete re-build of our two three litre engines and running gear. Over the last 70 years fourteen Lagondas have passed through our hands all of which, apart from the s/c 2 litre, we totally restored mechanically.

POSTSCRIPT

On an almost daily basis for decades my mother berated Jim for having given away her beautiful drophead. When it returned "home" I did not tell her as it was my cunning plan, having completed the restoration, to surprise her on Christmas morning when I picked her up from her retirement home in it and drove her to my farm for our traditional festive lunch. You would think I was old enough to have learnt never to tempt fate: she died, peacefully and suddenly, six days before Christmas. ■



A DB 2.6 Litre Turns Up – Former Owner Finds His Lost Lagonda

By Chris Moseley

WHEN I READ in the Newsletter of the Lagonda Australia Group's tour of the NSW New England region, it brought misty-eyed memories back to their far-flung fan and subscriber here in the UK. Lyndon Hardman's garage in Armidale was the temporary home of my own 2.6-litre back in 1971, when it required attention on the drive up from Sydney! At that time I was an impecunious student at the University of New England, and I had owned the car for less than a year.

I fell in love with the 2.6 late 1970. It was being sold by Stephen Skinner, and he was selling it to finance his trip to the UK, ironical in view of where I'm writing this now. I begged my father to buy it for me. I was just 20, and in no position to afford it myself.

Stephen Skinner also encouraged me to join a Car Club. There was no Lagonda Club in Australia so I soon joined the British one, and I've been a member of that continuously ever since.

The car carried its original Victorian registration, XR 370 at that time, first registered in March 1952 to Mrs. Judith Hirsch of North Balwyn, Vic. It also carried its original paint, grey and metallic grey, which was starting to get a bit tarnished.

I had the car tested and registered in NSW and it soon carried the NSW registration AIH 057 and was ready to take up to Armidale. The journey began

with a flat tyre, just as I was picking up my girl-friend on the Central Coast! The rest of the trip was uneventful, until we commenced the climb onto the tablelands near Tamworth, when the engine commenced overheating and losing power. This was a young lad's first experience of a 'blown head gasket'. We struggled into Armidale with a boiling radiator, and left the car with Hardman's Garage who were experienced with British makes.

The car then proved to be mechanically reliable and gave me many miles of enjoyable motoring. But there was cosmetic work to be done. I re-varnished the dashboard and door cappings, and attended to the torn upholstery whilst keeping it original. My parents had become a bit disenchanted with the running costs, so the car was put up for sale through Les Miller, a Sydney enthusiast while I was in my last year at UNE. I was more than glad that there were no takers, as I had become very attached to the Lag and didn't want to sell.

When I graduated from U.N.E in 1972, I used the car regularly in Sydney. My father had just died, and I was living at home with my mother.

To my great surprise I discovered another DB Lagonda in my own street, in Warriewood on the northern beaches. This was a 3-litre belonging to Don Newport who was renting

a shed in which a ship's chandler named George Broadfoot was doing a complete body and mechanical restoration. George encouraged me to bring my car in for a bit of rejuvenation as well, so it spent a few months in his shed keeping the 3-litre company. George offered to give the car a re-spray in a colour closer to the original grey. This was done, in a different and rather attractive shade of silver-grey.

By now, 1974, I had decided to move to England, so the time had come to reluctantly part with the Lagonda.

In those last hectic weeks before I left Sydney, a small crisis struck. One day while I was driving through Manly, a half-shaft broke. A new half-shaft and a replacement crown-wheel and pinion were needed at short notice, and I got them thanks to the good offices of the late Jim Whitehead. So just before I left, the car was repaired and made mobile again, and put back in my mother's garage in Collaroy, to be sold.

The buyer, in 1975, was Mr Bill Bunting of Continental Cars, the Citroen dealers in Punchbowl. In the years that followed, on my occasional visits home, I would call in at Continental Cars' yard in the Canterbury Road to look over the old dear; it was lying mouldering in a corner of their yard neglected and gathering dust. Finally, in around 2000, I got in touch with them and asked if they'd sell it back to me and I could re-import it to England. It was for sale, but before the deal could be struck and transport arranged, it was sold, as I found out on my next visit home, to Brian Harrison, somewhere in Sydney. The Buntings

told me he worked for Fujitsu in Sydney, but my inquiries drew a blank. The trail went cold. One of my hopes when I joined the Lagonda Australian Group, as soon as it was formed, was that just maybe, somewhere in New South Wales, a Lagonda DB 2.6 saloon, chassis number LAG/50/354, engine number LB6A/50/397, still existed, and was complete and well cared for, as it deserved!

Nothing more happened for several years. Then, when I saw a photograph of a cache of derelict cars in the Mittagong area published in 'The Automobile' over here in the UK in December 2018, I had a hunch that the Lagonda in the group was the car I had owned. I tried to contact John Bado, who was captioned as photographing the cars. Later in 2019, at the time of the Richmond meeting, Peter Henson of the Lagonda Australia Group took the trouble to drive to Mittagong and check out the rumours, and was put in touch with the owner, who runs a car salvage yard there. He photographed what he saw, met the father of the owner, sent me the pictures and confirmed that my hunch was right!

In December 2019 my wife and I had the chance to go home to Australia. As we were visiting some old family friends in Bowral just nearby, I had a chance to possibly see it for myself - though I had no expectations, as Peter had warned me it would make me weep to see it, after 45 years of neglect. I rang John Bado anyway on the off-chance while I was there, and to cut a long story short, he took me straight to it! Yes, it was enough to make a grown man weep. But it was complete.

No, we didn't meet the owner, and I still don't know the owner's identity; he apparently discouraged visitors. I clambered over it with a camera, among the other neglected thoroughbreds standing there in the sun.

A couple of weeks later, on my way up to Queensland with my wife and sister, we were offered hospitality

with Peter and Bev at Numulgi - we had a lovely time there, and for me of course a chance to play around with a 2.6 again!

The sadness of seeing my precious old motor-car fallen on such hard times was compensated for by the pleasure of making some lovely new friends. I hope this isn't the end of the story for this poor old thoroughbred. ■



Sydney NSW December 1970



Mittagong NSW December 2019

CYL 106

An examination of the build sheets & service records & the first owner

By Peter Walby

THIS 1936 LG45 Sanction 2 pillarless saloon (12074) was ordered in March 1936 and delivered and registered in June 1936. My father Leonard Walby related the story of his acquisition of the car from Davies Motors Ltd. in 1949 in the Lagonda Magazine (1995, No. 167). After a long period of ownership by me it is now owned by my nephew Daniel McVicker.

Although a continuation old buff log-book dated 1946 named the former owner we did not know if this was the original purchaser of the car from new. It was only in 2008 that I obtained the build sheets and service history records from Maurice Leo which

identified that the original owner who had purchased the car in 1936 did indeed keep it until 1948.

My initial interest in these records was noting that the main problems with the car had been to do with the pillarless Silent Travel door catches which seemed to need repeated adjustments, and the windscreen kept leaking. Both these issues have continued to bedevil the car to date but I suspect the warranty will now have lapsed! Then there were the returns to the works for attention to the reversing and tail lights. It seems the pork-pie lamps were used as a rear bumper not infrequently. The



gearbox synchromesh gave quite a lot of trouble and ended up with eventual replacement of the gearbox. There were reports of minor repairs to mudguards, and many other items which needed attending to over the years. The service sheets note that decarbonising was done every 10,000 miles along with other routine servicing.

I thought I had gleaned all that was of real import until recently with the 75th anniversary of VE Day in the air I was thinking about the wartime use of civilian motor cars and I remembered that the Lagonda service history recorded the mileage each time the car returned to the service department. Maurice Leo had originally written to me saying that “the records are on aged paper in spidery pen and ink hand writing and are not easy to decipher” but I found the copies he sent were very clear to read and so I tabulated the mileage recorded against each date the car was back at the factory and made annual totals.

The mileage at delivery was recorded as 501 miles which suggests quite a lot of road testing before handing over to the customer and the use of the car was as follows:

1936 (3834 miles) (6 months use from June)

1937 (15083 miles)

1938 (17793 miles)

1939 (5000 miles - quite by chance a round number)

1940 – 1945 (13353 miles)

The first record by the service department after war was declared was on 27.10.39 [at mileage 39314], then 7.3.40 [routine servicing – at mileage 41602] and a long gap until after the war ended 3.7.45 [at mileage 52268]. This makes a total of 12954 miles travelled during the second world war.

What on earth was a privately owned 4½ litre Lagonda doing driving about during the war with its severe petrol rationing? There are a couple of clues to the status of the owner in the Lagonda records. Firstly when the car was ordered in 1936 in the handwritten delivery order it was specified particularly that a Philips 246B wireless set was to be fitted. The company build sheets have no provision for radios in the printed listing of components and so the owner stands out in specifying this esoteric item. (It was to be 1937 before the Lagonda catalogue would advertise a radio as an available extra according to Davey and May). A photograph of this type of radio shows it was a large item and quite where it was stowed in the car is not obvious. The only trace



remaining is a large empty cannister mounted externally on the back wall of the rear right passenger footwell with perforations internally in the carpet with a small leather trimmed hole presumably for a switch. I believe this is where the loudspeaker was fitted.

Next, the reason for the return to the service department on 29.10.39 was detailed as "Remove petrol filler caps, drill and fit locks and refit filler caps". Clearly there was an expectation of permission for continued use of the car in wartime and with 20 gallons of petrol on board it would have been a tempting prize for surreptitious siphoners. So who was this privileged person?

The order sheet names Charles O. Stanley Esq. with an address at Africa House, Kingsway, WC2. (the London office of Pye radio), later in the service record amended to Pye Radio Ltd., Cambridge. The building now houses the firm of leading solicitors Mishcon de Reya.

A little research provided biographical details which gave to me eye-opening answers as to why Charles Orr Stanley would have been granted permission to use his car so much.

He was born in Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, Ireland in

1899 but the family moved to England and he joined the newly formed Royal Air Force in 1918 becoming a radio operator. He graduated in Civil Engineering and founded an agency for several manufacturers but concentrated on the radio industry. The Mullard Radio Valve Co. opened an account, and in 1924 he encouraged the instrument making firm W.G. Pye of Cambridge to develop their manufacture of radios and Stanley was employed to run the radio division. In 1926 he developed wireless sets in kit form and promoted home construction of radios using a Mullard valve in place of the earlier crystal sets. In 1928 he purchased the Pye Radio Company and in 1936 at the age of 36 he bought this Lagonda, becoming MD of the by then public company Pye Radio Ltd. in 1937.



Stanley (who was always referred to by his initials as CO which apparently also matched his normal demeanour) was quite a businessman and a pioneer in the development of television from 1928 onwards, having sets available when the BBC first broadcast in 1936. The company name was then changed to the all embracing Pye Ltd which better covered the television aspects of the business.

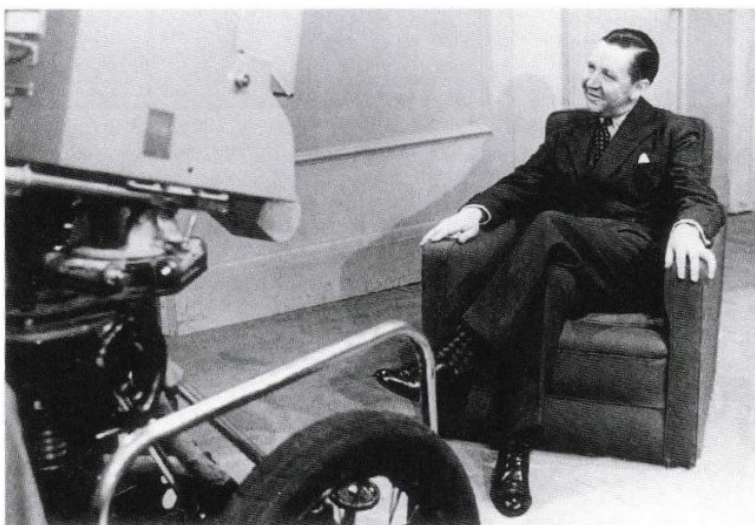
As they developed their television further Pye's engineers specified the need for a new high-performance valve which Mullard eventually produced for them from the Philips factory in Eindhoven, Holland but with the Mullard name stamped on it. They required some further modification by Pye but when five of these EF50 pentode valves topped with their red-capped spun metal jackets were mounted on the television chassis it became known as the 'Pye strip'. This latest model 915 television set was demonstrated at the August 1939 Radio Show at Olympia. The show was to be cut short by the approach of war and so not a single 915 Pye television set had been sold by the time the BBC suspended television broadcasts on 1 September 1939.

The Lagonda alas does not feature visibly in CO Stanley's wartime activities and while it now transpires that he played a vital part in the secret war this LG45 was his transport before, throughout the conflict, and beyond.

But eighty years on we can now take up the story from the Philips

archival history of the development of the EF50 radio tube written by Ronald Dekker.

'The radio valve factory of Philips in Eindhoven Holland was the scene of unusual tension and activity in the evening of the 9th May 1940. The Germans had been building up an enormous armed force near the Dutch-German border, and the people in Holland realized it was only a matter of time before the Germans would invade their country. This threat was in itself enough to give the nice spring evening an almost unreal and unearthly atmosphere. On top of that, for the past two months the factory had been working frantically to produce an enormous amount of radio valve components for an unknown end customer with an unknown application. Duplicates of special machines to make these components had been hurriedly put together and all these components and machines were now loaded into a truck that that same evening left for the Dutch coast with England as destination. When the truck left the gate of the Philips plant nobody knew that hours later, at 5.30am the Germans would indeed invade Holland. Certainly nobody of those workers, who as the sun set waved the truck good-bye, could have imagined that that truck was actually carrying components which were vital to their liberation five years later! As by miracle the truck made it to England although the ferry which carried it was bombarded by German airplanes.



C.O. Stanley in his capacity as chairman of the Television Development Committee of the Radio Manufacturer's Association, being interviewed on television about their plans for Radiolympia, 1939.

These dramatic events marked the start of the life of the radio tube that, not only would play an important part in the outcome of the upcoming war, but that also would be the mother of all modern all-glass radio tubes.'

The customer was Charles Stanley for Pye Ltd. on behalf of the British Government but the reason these valves were so important is not a mystery now. The development of airborne radar followed closely behind this. Sir Henry Tizard who chaired the Air Defence Committee which promoted the successful radar system now wanted development of a miniature system that could be installed in night fighters in order for them to detect another aircraft at 4 to 5 miles range down to 300m when visual contact could be made. This required

the use of much shorter wavelength equipment than the ground based system, with the transmitter on the ground and a small light receiver in the aircraft. This proved a problem for Bowen as although tests were successful using a tuned radio frequency (TRF) receiver (designed by EMI for their projected television service from Alexandra Palace but seemingly obtained "through the back door") only this one 45 MHz receiver chassis was available and no further supplies could be obtained. There was some kind of restraint in dealing with EMI (reading between the lines I think this was probably because as EMI were using American made valves their use for radar receivers would have been too secret to disclose). Cossor who had built the receivers for the Home

Chain system tried but failed to produce a suitable light receiver with the required sensitivity.

In July 1939 by chance Bowen, who had completed his original doctorate under Edward Appleton, now Physics Professor at Cambridge, heard in conversation with him that the Pye company preparing for the television industry in Britain had set up production of their own 45MHz chassis. Bowen immediately hot-footed it to Pye where he found that they had numbers of this ideal TRF chassis on the shelf using their new pentode tube EF50 valves.

This tube was revolutionary in that it used an all-glass technique to enclose the valve. Although Pye had stocks of the valve to build their receivers, supplies came through Mullard by then a subsidiary of Philips and were manufactured solely in Eindhoven. CO (who was delighted at last to have found a niche in the war effort) received a large contract order for the receivers but realised that despite his stock, supplies of the valve from Holland were precarious and he lobbied to have the valves and their manufacturing process moved to England.

According to Dennis Fuller of Pye's research team when CO discovered that the Dutch had large stocks in Eindhoven "he turned into...a demon. He was desperate to convince the government that they must send a ship to collect the entire stocks of EF50 as soon as possible.

They wouldn't listen, or if they did they didn't seem able to find a ship.... but CO wouldn't stop. He rang and pestered everybody he could think of... and then started sending people in the ministries letters and telegrams. He finally told some General... that if they didn't collect the valves immediately he personally would send two lorries to Harwich... hire a boat... go and collect the valves himself".

This eventually in March 1940 stimulated the request officially to Philips but no indication was given as to the purpose of the valves. Thus 25,000 EF50 valves and their duplicated equipment to make them arrived in England and secured availability of the large numbers of these vital Pye receivers which were then fitted to defence fighter aircraft.

On the night of 22/23 July 1940 a radar-equipped Blenheim made the first night time kill of a German Dornier.

This was just the start of CO's wartime activities in that Pye Ltd. continued with research and wartime contracts, but I think I have related enough to maybe substantiate that Mr. Stanley had earned his quota of petrol rationing coupons.

I acknowledge much of the above information has been obtained from CO Stanley's biography 'Radio Man' by Mark Frankland, published by the Institution of Electrical Engineers (2002). ■

The Life & Times of a Lagonda 11.9

By Mark Yeomans

THE VILLAGE OF CHAGFORD in Devon is to say the least ‘off the beaten track’. The village centre looks much the same today as it did on 6th July 1923. It was on this day that Martin Spiller celebrated his 21st birthday. His birthday present from his parents was a car, a brand new Lagonda 11.9 Model KK All Weather Tourer with Double Dickey Seat. Perhaps his parents chose this model having been impressed by Lagonda’s advertisements appearing in the motoring press. These showed the 11.9 obtaining numerous gold medal awards driven mainly by Major W H Oates in the sporting trials that were so common at the time.

TA6980 was delivered by Lagonda agents Motor Macs (Exeter) Ltd of Sidwell Street, Exeter, and the sale would almost certainly have included a driving lesson. Indeed, only one lesson would have been needed as the 11.9 was noted as an easy car to drive with straightforward gear changing.

Martin Spiller, known to everyone as ‘Bunny’, was born and lived all his life in Chagford. His family home was a large rambling Victorian house called ‘Eaglehurst’ on Mill Street that looked out across the valley to the west of the village. At a young age Bunny was sent away to boarding school near

Hartley Wintney in Hampshire (a most interesting link to Lagonda and VSCC history of later years). The hardship of boarding school did nothing to stunt his growth as he was 6’ 7” tall, and of thin, wiry build. He grew up heavily involved in country life, enjoyed his fishing and kept hounds, following a family tradition. His father was for many years Master of the Mid Devon Hunt.



Bunny immediately put his Lagonda 11.9 to good use attending dances in Exeter some 10 miles from Chagford. However, he soon encountered a problem when the

when the Exeter Constabulary told him he must display a parking light in the evenings when parking on the street. This was difficult as the car had no sidelights and Bunny found using the 'dim' headlight switch (the early 1920s option to expensive headlight dipping systems) flattened the battery. He came up with a simple solution, fitting two P&H oil lamps and brackets from an earlier 11.1 model. They remain on the car today. Bunny and his Lagonda were very well known in Chagford and the surrounding villages of Dartmoor. Being so tall he stood out in the crowd and always wore gaiters and in the winter a full-length army great coat, which due to his height almost looked like a jacket!

A collection of tax discs that remain with TA6980 show that Bunny used his Lagonda regularly

up to 1960 when it was taken off the road. However, he allowed the car to be driven by a friend, Mr Ian Kemp, to local Car Rallies in 1970 and 1971. Then in summer 1972, after nearly 50 years of ownership, Bunny put TA6980 up for sale. It was purchased by a Michael Underwood of Patcham, Sussex. Bunny wrote to Michael Underwood to enclose the cardboard log book, the original factory handbook 'Hints on the Management of Lagonda Cars', the Zenith Carburettor handbook and the factory brake drum puller. In his letter he also confirmed he was the original owner from new. Mr Underwood didn't keep the car long because within weeks it was for sale via Performance Cars of Chiswick. It was sold to David Blunden of Grange Road, Ealing, W5, who set about refurbishing the body and trim and re-



metalling the engine bearings. At this time the car showed approximately 46000 miles from new. David owned the car for 10 years covering only 600 miles. He commenced trying to sell the car via Performance Cars of Chiswick in August 1976. Club member Colin Mallet seeing the advert paid a visit and photographed the car in their showroom. It appeared in Performance Cars advertisements in Motorsport from August 1976 to Feb 1977 without finding a buyer. The car was returned to David Blunden who eventually traded the car in with Performance Cars against a Jaguar in June 1982. This time they sold it quickly to a London property company who wanted to display it in their office reception but it proved too large and was returned to the dealer within weeks. It was then advertised again in July and August 1982 when it was purchased by Bob Henson of Ashford, Middlesex, and TA6980 moved to within 5 miles of its birth place in Staines. Bob Henson visited Bunny Spiller in the summer of 1983 and Bunny was most pleased to talk about the car he had owned for all those years. He told the story of the oil lamps and advised Bob to always get in from the passenger side and this certainly is easier for tall owners. Sixty years since he received his 21st birthday present, Bunny confided in Bob Henson that he would have preferred a Bullnose Morris! In

conversation, Bob discovered Bunny had been meticulous in how he looked after the car and this perhaps explains its survival in such an unmolested condition. Bunny looked in the garage and found some old and new spark plugs he had kept, still in their original tins. These he gave to Bob and they are still with the car. Bunny was a well known character in Chagford, famous for driving his old Landrover around the Devon lanes at no more than 15mph, a speed he had perhaps become used to after years of driving his Lagonda! He never married and lived at Eaglehurst until his death in his mid 90s.

In 2014 Bob Henson advised Ken Painter that he wanted to sell TA6980 after 32 years of ownership, during which he estimated he had covered just 150 miles. Ken, knowing I was looking for an 11.9, passed on Bob's number and TA6980 started another chapter in its life. To date the car shows just over 48000 miles and has been through some interesting times in the past seven years but that is a story for another day!

I am indebted to Chris Chapman for permission to reproduce the image of Bunny Spiller © Chris Chapman 1983. His images of Devon rural life are a wonderful record of a bygone age. www.chrischapmanphotography.co.uk ■

Journey to Lagonda Ownership

By Nick Bacon

AS A SCHOOLBOY I always dreamt of having a Jaguar. I used to be taken to school in a Jaguar MK VII and as an eight-year-old enjoyed lounging in the back on the wide leather seats and playing with the picnic trays, to the frustration of Canon Barnard, whose son Jonathan was a good friend and class mate.

I was absolutely transfixed one day when the car spluttered and stalled and ran out of petrol, only for our chauffeur to flick a switch engage the auxiliary petrol supply and on we went.

Come the evenings, and after the dreaded Prep, I was collected in another Jaguar. This time a brand-new MK 2. Gun Metal Grey, with red interior. Same leather seats and picnic tables. This time a slightly more nerve racking drive home as my friend's Dad turned out, very sadly, to be an alcoholic who would stop at the Tigers Head Pub for a swift double scotch before weaving his way home and delivering me shaken but not stirred to my teetotal home.

I just had to own one of these beautiful examples of British engineering and so



it was that I somewhat naively bought the wreckage of a 1936 Daimler Light 15 Tickford from the pages of Exchange & Mart for the princely sum of £600 in 1982. My search for the finest British car ever built had begun....

Fortunately, the CCF at my boarding school was connected to the REME barracks at Chatham and so I had been taught the joys of the Otto Four Stroke Cycle by Sgt Gilbey and knew a little about how to fettle a Landrover.

In the event it took me thirty-four years to complete the restoration of "Mary" but we still managed to take our daughter in law to church in the car when she married our son in 2013. The Daimler is smooth as with its fluid flywheel and Wilson's Epicyclic Pre-Engaged gear box ...but it is woefully underpowered and so slow. I just had to go faster!

I eventually got to own my first Jaguar in 1996. The bank account would not stretch to a car in even half decent condition, so I bought "George". A 1956 Jaguar XK 140. Fixed Head Coupe. The car had 94,000 miles on the clock and was just about legal to drive.

Over the next ten years my patient wife and I rebuilt the car from stem to stern with a lot of help from marque specialists Twyford Moors and engine

experts Sigma Engineering. By 2006 the car was ready for some serious motoring and we hit the road. The next ten years saw us cover over thirty-five thousand miles with trips to St Petersburg, Istanbul, Dubrovnik, the Arctic Circle, the Sahara Desert, Portugal, and Corsica along with most of Europe and even Colditz Castle.

The fixed head has been a source of many happy memories and we can rightly claim to have broken down in most of the counties of continental Europe. But I eventually realised that I was not getting the rush of the wind in my decreasing head of hair.

I had to have a convertible!

So it was that I purchased the E type..... Tommy is a 1968 Series 1. 4.2 litre Roadster. This car is a dream to drive. Smooth, fast, and endless fun. More miles on the clock, this time to drive the route of the Targa Florio in Sicily. Another epic journey and more breakdowns to keep us on our toes. A split hydraulic fluid reservoir bottle lead to a hairy moment when we were ragging the car around Mount Etna, only to run out of brakes at a little in excess of the speed limit. And a bit of a nightmare on the ferry when the crew had moved the deck levels and we ripped the low-slung exhaust out of the car as we moved off. In fact, Stena were

very good and paid for the work, but I began to realise that perhaps it was time to slow down and grow up a bit.

And so it was that I finally discovered the very best example of British Engineering my Lagonda Endless style and grace, reasonable speed, fantastic engineering, and head turning looks. All I have to do is master the gear changes and we will be set for the next chapter of our motoring adventures.

HX 9246 is our much loved 1930 Lagonda. The car was a factory

demonstrator in 1930 then sold by Dobson Bridge Garage in Staines in 1931. The car was the subject of a meticulous eight year restoration by Charles Hobbins before we were fortunate enough to buy the car in 2017.

We had a great trip out on Sunday to commemorate the best of British and to reflect on the life of the Duke of Edinburgh. The picture shows us on Priddy Green in the heart of the Mendip Hills not far from Cheddar Gorge. ■



Wiscombe in the Wet

By Mark Hayward

Photo by Nigel Cole

HAVING BEEN STARVED of motoring events for too long I have entered everything I can. Although I prefer racing, hill climbs are a totally different discipline which allows the driver to really work with the car to get the best out of both - or the worst if you cock it up.

Driving a Lagonda up a narrow tarmac road with 3 hair pin corners would not have been the choice of most entrants. The field was dominated by short wheel base cars Austin7s, Riley's, MGs, Fraser Nash which did not require a 3 point turn. In fact the only other fool hardy 'larger car' entrants were an Alvis Speed 20 and a Bentley 3/4.5 so I did not feel such a lemon.

Now when David Hine built my car he very cleverly arranged the front headlamp/mudguard assembly could be easily removed in 5 minutes by undoing 4 nuts. I have never undertaken this but felt it prudent just in case I went straight on anywhere as P100s cost a three figure sum to repair. Unfortunately this took me from Class 6 to Class 14 Racing Cars.

You can imagine rocking up to the single seater Racing Car paddock in a 4 seater sports car did raise a few eyebrows. I was with the big boys - ERA, Bugatti type 51 etc, good for the ego not so good for the result sheet.

I had driven to the hill though not been trailered as the rest of my class, which definitely gave me a bit more respect.

When I bought FPK696 it was for touring and fitted a windscreen wiper to try and convince my wife that this LG45 was really a tourer. She remained unconvinced, but it came in handy en-route to Wiscombe as April showers were still in force during mid May.

Practice started a little late and fortunately the rain had stopped and the early classes dried up the hill.

The paddock however resembled more of a trials section and trails of mud were transported to the start. Most of the hill is shrouded by trees and the owners take action to ensure moss does not grow over the winter months.

Launch from the start, over a bridge, to the first left hand hair pin was a bit challenging to get 200bhp to bite into the tarmac. Then change up to second, but where is the gear lever as my right hand searched the space-wrong car, it is on the left. By this time the valves were bouncing, second engaged then 3rd as the gateway approached, down to second again through the gate without hitting anything. Felt good. A flick to the



left and then we are under the trees. A series of yumps combined with left and right hand twitches were very exciting in trying to keep the car on the road, the backend breaking away under each acceleration. Then down to first (thank goodness for the Alvis box) for the right hand hairpin. Try not to hit the bank coming out so a heavy right foot got the rear wheels spinning and sliding so we made it round. Back off to get some grip then full blast to the final hairpin left where it is down from third to first again. More wheel spin and fighting for grip to the line.

First time ever on this hill 63.9 seconds and my handicap was 63 secs.

Now I knew where the gear lever was

I hoped to improve on this. Second practice was 63.4 then lunch and the real test in the afternoon. Guess what, it started to rain again.

The first competitive runs were slower. For some 2 to 4 secs slower. Mine 65.87. The final run was delayed as someone had pumped oil onto the braking area on the last hairpin. This and the general greasiness affected everyone. I tried starting in 2nd to reduce wheel spin but this was not a good idea resulting in 69 secs. Time to go home.

The final result though Bugatti type 51 54.39 but guess what Lagonda LG45 1st Handicap with 65.87 what a surprise and not a 3 point turn undertaken. ■

The Story of Nigel Walder's M45

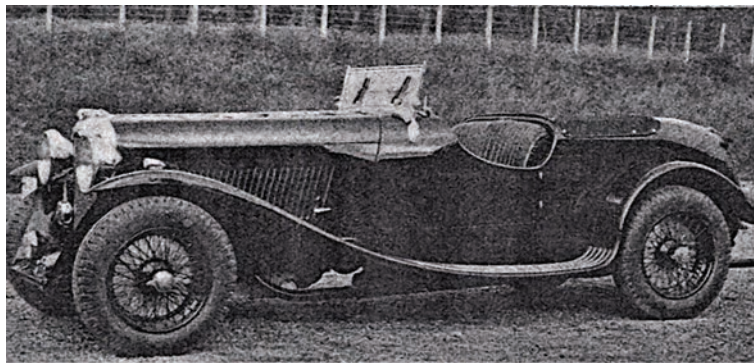
By Rodney Saunders

AT NUMEROUS VINTAGE motoring events since the turn of the century, the red M45 tourer, AXK 786, belonging to the late Nigel Walder has often been seen racing, sprinting, hill climbing and touring both in the UK and abroad, and has been much admired. He had been attracted by a photograph of an M45 Lagonda which appeared on the stand of Abbotts of Farnham at the 1934 Olympia Motor Show, see picture 1 (right - Abbott's TT Replica).

This car, described as a TT Replica, was a copy of the three specially bodied M45 cars designed and built by Arthur Fox (Fox & Nicholls) for the 1934 Ulster TT which, under regulations governing the race, had to be four-seaters. Although the cars finished only fourth, fifth and eighth in the TT, an epic dual with a Derby Bentley attracted wide publicity. However, it was one of these cars that went on to win the Le Mans 24 Hour Race the following year.

Abbott's TT Replica, although modified to make it slightly more user friendly than the racing cars

on which it was based, was still somewhat spartan. In consequence the car-buying public were not attracted to it, and it is believed that the car displayed at the Motor Show was the only one that Abbotts built. It is understood that this car was sold off the stand and exported to India, but attempts to discover whether it still exists in that country have to



date been unsuccessful.

In 2000, having sold his low chassis 2 Litre to Tim Gresty, Nigel commissioned the late Peter Whenman to build a similar TT Replica for him based on the photograph of the one built by Abbotts. Initially all went well. The rolling chassis was assembled, and the body largely constructed, see picture 2 (page 27 top - AXK 786 work in progress). Then suddenly and without warning Peter Whenman disappeared, leaving Nigel's and all his other current

projects unfinished. With the cooperation of Peter's wife Hilary, Nigel took possession of the partly assembled car, together with most of the unattached parts needed to complete it. He completed the assembly, wired, trimmed, and otherwise finished the car himself, all to the high standard to be expected of a first-class engineer. The completed car, photographed in 2004, is shown in picture 3. *(centre right - AXK 786 completed).*

In 2005 the organisers of the Le Mans 24 Hour Race invited the Lagonda Club to send as many Lagondas as possible to the circuit for the race weekend to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the famous victory in 1935. One of the original team cars that was present is shown in picture 4. *(bottom - one of the team cars).*

Nigel decided to take his car and he asked me if I would like to accompany him, sharing the driving and the cost of petrol! At that time, I had had little experience of driving a vintage car, but I soon discovered the pleasure to be had driving a 4.5



litre engined car on a motorway at around the speed limit. The view of the Le Mans grandstands, taken from the passenger's seat during the parade lap, is shown in picture 5 (*right - Le Mans in 2005*). It was on the Mulsanne Straight during this so-called "parade lap", with an Australian couple who had requested a ride occupying the back seats, that I noticed that the reading on the speedometer had passed well into the three-figure range. The following year Nigel took the car to Angoulême in central France, and picture 6 (*page 29 - AXK 786 at Angoulême*) shows "le pilote" (Nigel) negotiating a bend on Le Circuit des Ramparts.

Thereafter we undertook numerous tours together in AXK 786. Several Fourgères Rallies, on one of which a medical condition prevented Nigel from doing any driving, Northern tours, including those to the Orkney & Shetland Islands, Northumbria, Cheshire, and the Lake District (where an incident while I was driving resulted in some expensive front-end bodywork repairs). More recently tours that we and Jonathan Oppenheimer have organised to Burgundy, Dordogne, and the Galway in Ireland. In 2020 we had intended to take the car on a tour of the Pyrenees,



until the dreaded virus intervened.

Over the past 20 years and many thousands of miles the only significant problem with Nigel's car occurred when an odour of products of combustion was apparent when the radiator cap was removed. Replacing the head gasket did not solve the problem and after much head scratching it was discovered that one of the bores fitted with a liner, and that this had moved slightly such that on the compression stroke in that cylinder exhaust gases escaped over the top of the liner into the cooling system. The problem was solved by fitting a new block from LMB.

AXK 786 is now offered for sale by Nigel's executors, and anyone interested in acquiring this fine car is invited to contact me; email - rodneysaunders@clara.net tel: 01444 811598 ■



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Letters to the Editor ... Letters to the Editor

Dear Toby,

In the dark days of lockdown something happened which brightened up my day.

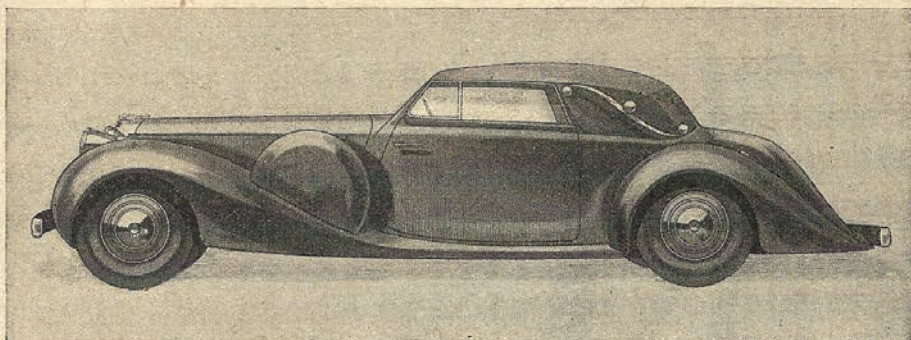
The story starts way back in 1949 when a Mr Franks of Cheam South London, who owned the 2 litre I now have, GP 793, joined the Lagonda Register. This was a Club mainly for 2 litre owners separate from (but since amalgamated with) The Lagonda Club. He purchased a Register car badge numbered 201. In 1950 he sold the car on to a Mr Sheer of West Wickham complete with badge.

Mr Sheer in turn sold the car on to a Mr Messenger who, when he came to sell it, removed the badge and fitted it, somewhat inappropriately, to his MG. I acquired the Lagonda

in 1959, knowing nothing of the missing badge. In due course the MG was disposed of but Mr Messenger kept the badge. It has remained with the Messenger family for the past 60 years gathering dust in a drawer. Mr Messenger died in 1977 and recently Mr Messenger's grandson decided he ought to see if anyone was interested in the old badge and joined the Lagonda Facebook page. His message was spotted by my good friend Richard Jones who connected the number 201 with GP 793 and myself. He put me in touch with Mr Messenger and the badge is now back on the car after an absence of 66 years. A good day indeed.

Yours sincerely,
Tim Wadsworth





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Spain 2018, a view of the Galician mountains over the long bonnet of a supercharged 2-litre. The lure of the open road is even stronger after a year or more of lockdowns... *Toby*



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