



**Number 280 Spring 2024**

**THE MAGAZINE OF  
THE LAGONDA CLUB**



# The Lagonda Club AGM 2024

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September

The Mercure Warwickshire Walton Hall Hotel & Spa

Walton, CV35 9HG, Warwickshire



The weekend offers the following:

**Saturday afternoon**

**Saturday evening**

**Sunday**

- ❖ To be announced
- ❖ Gala Dinner
- ❖ Display of Lagondas
- ❖ Featured model: The Lagonda Rapier and Rapier, celebrating the model's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- ❖ Lagonda Club AGM
- ❖ Buffet lunch
- ❖ Award presentations (each model, condition, distance, etc)

Accommodation can be booked for one, two or three nights at our agreed rates per room per night of £135.00 (double occupancy) £125.00 (single occupancy), incl. full English breakfast. To book, phone the hotel directly on 01789 842424, option 1, during office hours (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm), quoting “Lagonda Club Event”.

Tickets for Saturday's Gala Dinner and/or Sunday's buffet lunch will be available very shortly from the Club's website shop.

If you have any queries please contact Catherine Monnington, preferably by email: [events@lagondaclub.com](mailto:events@lagondaclub.com), or alternatively by phone: 07950 169684.

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## The Lagonda Magazine

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*Who was that masked man?...  
going completely sideways  
on a racetrack!*

*Just a bit of fun, so no prizes (sorry).  
The answer will be in the next issue.*

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# Editorial

## *Roland Bugler*

Here I am on lap two (my second magazine). I was very fortunate to have been given some great content and photos for the last issue. The cover and centre pages were a particular joy for me, having been a huge fan of Spitfires since my childhood. I even wrote a 'book' about Spitfires during secondary school (what a geek) so I'm looking forward to getting to this year's event on 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

You might spot that this magazine has four more pages than usual – 48. We've discovered that we can certainly squeeze one more sheet of paper in without crashing into the next postage bracket, so why not, and it gives me more scope for extra/larger photos, so that must be a good thing!

I'm pleased to say that we have contributions from Australia, Switzerland, and India this time, with an item from New South Wales, Urs Müller's lovely 3 litre on the cover, and a Concours d'Elegance win in India. Let's have more from all across the globe. What're you up to?

Looking ahead, you have hopefully digested Catherine's email about events this year. There are loads of events to keep us all out of mischief... or into mischief... your choice! Keep an eye on newsletters, emails and the website for more details.

August 17<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) will see the Lagonda Fête at Brooklands reborn. This is truly significant, harking back to the heady days of the Lagonda factory-organised events of the 20s and 30s. We're aiming for a huge display of Lagondas, covering all the models from the first tri-car to the last on the production line in 1990. The day will be packed with mini driving tests for the more adventurous drivers, including the Test Hill. Watch out for more details on the website.

Planning for the AGM is also in full swing and as the featured model this year is the Rapier, we have an article for you to remind and/or inform you about this unusual car, and hopefully to inspire all owners to dust off their Rapiers and line up in pride of place in September. From a Bugler family perspective, we aim to bring two! My Josephine (Abbott DHC) and an Abbott Tourer we're rebuilding which we hope to have ready in time. Fingers crossed!

Are you also enjoying our event posters? These A3 beauties have caused a bit of a stir, and we're often being asked how people can get hold of them. They're not available before the event, but you need only bring your Lagonda to the event and you'll be given one – it's that easy! For those that can't get to the event, any remaining stock will be put on the Club's online shop after the event, and we're also exploring making them available for digital download. ■

**Last date for copy for the summer magazine is Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2024.  
Please keep new articles, emails/letters & photos coming in.**





"I had everything—position, friends, fine house, charming wife, Zodiac Executive—then one day I had this mad impulse at Sotheby's Car Auction."



# CLUB SHOP

Welcome To The Lagonda Club Shop.

The Club are proud to offer a range of high quality 'Lagonda' branded goods, including:

Scarves, Travel Bags, Hats, Gilets and much more...

Visit the website to get your Personalised goodies!  
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[logothatpolo.co.uk/store/Lagonda](http://logothatpolo.co.uk/store/Lagonda)



# Ultimate Overland: The Americas (pt 1)

*by Richard Cunningham*



*The team, northern Argentina*

## **Part 1: No plan ever survives contact.**

A Scotsman, an Englishman and a Zimbabwean decide to drive their pre-war cars around the world, starting with a 20,000km drive from Ushuaia to New York. It sounds like the beginning of a poor joke but is in fact an adventure of a lifetime. The three cars are two Lagonda M45s and a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost and the drivers, Richard Cunningham, Nigel Gambier and Chris Evans all of whom met completing the 2010 Peking to Paris Rally.

My journey to this point started in 2008 and a radio interview with the father of modern long-distance rallying, Philip Young, who gave us all the opportunity to experience what is possible in these amazing old cars. He described the Peking to Paris Rally and by lunch time I had spoken to him, sent a cheque and was signed up to the 2010 event. I had never owned a classic car and never did more than fill the oil and change a tyre. I purchased my first Lagonda, did a few disastrous rallies in the UK and then seized the engine on the first day of the rally in China. To suggest that it was a baptism by fire is an understatement. Having rebuilt parts of the car on numerous occasions and some 16,000km later I reached Paris and my love of long distance, adventure rallying was firmly established. Nigel's Lagonda has been in his family since 1939 and he had already completed the

2007 Peking to Paris rally so had a lifetime of experience with Lagondas. Chris is a lifelong petrol head with an eclectic collection of cars. Only Chris would have thought it appropriate to bring 3 tons of car, designed in 1907, on a journey of 20,000km crossing the highest mountains in South America.

I had been extraordinarily lucky on the Peking to Paris rally to have been helped by one of the pre-eminent experts in Lagonda M45s, David Ayre. He had helped me to rebuild my engine in Ulan Bator, repair the brake servo in the Gobi Desert and a snapped oil pipe in Italy. Since then, he has advised and prepared my M45 for all its subsequent outings. He was totally up for the adventure and for preparing both Lagondas for the rally. In my case this involved more of the same but for Nigel it was considerably more complicated. Nigel's Lagonda was one of the first 30 M45s produced and not wanting to waste anything. Lagonda built them with their previous 3ltr engine, considerably heavier than the Meadows engine and producing much less power. Nigel and David set about upgrading his Lagonda with a 4.5ltr Meadows engine with all the necessary changes throughout the car. Both cars installed alternators to replace their somewhat inefficient dynamos. Suspensions were hardened and, in my case, although in normal circumstances within tolerance, the head gasket was replaced, reconditioned carburettors fitted and the valves resealed, all during the final week before shipping. Chris prepared his Silver Ghost which was designed in 1907, built in 1925 and is an extraordinary example of automotive engineering of its time. Autocar in 1907 called it "the best car in the world". Designed with reliability and long-distance motoring in mind in 1907 the model was famously run continuously for 15,000 miles over two weeks to demonstrate that it was indeed the most reliable car in the world.

The whole rally started badly. Our plan was to ship the cars to Ushuaia the most southerly town in South America, at Cape Horn. As the military saying



goes, "no plan ever survives contact" and so it proved. I arrived in Ushuaia on January 26<sup>th</sup> knowing that the MV Argentinio 2 had docked and that our cars were on its manifest.

*Richard Cunningham, Chris Evans and Nigel Gambier,  
Day 0, Buenos Aires, Argentina*



Unfortunately, being on a Maersk manifest doesn't mean that the cars are in fact on the boat. They were still in Buenos Aires and only two feeder boats a month resupply Ushuaia. It would be at least another two weeks or more before the cars could be delivered. The other two drivers and co-drivers had all arrived in Buenos Aires so that is where we assembled and from where our adventure eventually started, three weeks later. By that time our first cohort of co-drivers' time was up, and they returned to London without having ever had the opportunity to sit in a car.



*Broken brake shoes, Bolivia*

The containers were finally released from the port on 15<sup>th</sup> February. There followed an exciting, middle of the night, off-loading process in a truck park some 45 minutes outside the city and we finally departed Buenos Aires early the next morning. The story of how we finally managed to get the containers released warrants an entire article of its own, but we were on our way. Determined to miss the traffic we departed early on our way to Mendoza, 1057km away. For the following two days it was hot, it was flat, and the Silver Ghost wasn't

happy, running poorly and getting extremely hot. We had a very long way to go. Would the venerable old girl make it? We also had our first introduction to spurious South American police 'fines' which we refused to pay and after 10 minutes of not speaking Spanish, Chris was waved on his way. We were stopped by the police many, many times on our travels and most of the time they simply wanted photographs and as we always remained calm, polite, smiley, and enthusiastic these encounters were in the main, positive ones. The few times we were scammed we filed away in a locker labelled 'experience'.

Argentina is a truly beautiful country and despite concerns about historical bitterness towards Britain, we experienced nothing but extraordinary, friendly welcomes and kindness. We drove across the flat and hot Pampas from Buenos Aires to Mendoza then climbing up to the wind and kite surfing lake at Rodeo where we had one of the most memorable meals of our journey, the traditional asado. Huge amounts of fantastic beef, slowly roasted over a wood burning barbeque. Nigel's Lagonda hadn't been running well from the outset, struggling with some form



*Lagonda high in the Andes, Bolivia*

cover the miles before the sun got too hot. I worried about my Lagonda overheating and we tried various techniques to manage the temperature, ensuring plenty of air got through the engine bay. I found the right combination of speed and load and could manage the temperature to remain in the 90s (C). The Rolls was still struggling with its temperature which some had advised might be to do with the amount of ethanol in the fuel, but we needed to get to the cause of the problem, or it wouldn't make it to New York. David Ayre arrived in Salta to join me as my co-driver for a couple of weeks, which not only provided great company but proved invaluable in sorting out the Rolls and Nigel's Lagonda. In Mendoza Chris had found a problem with his carburettor which required delicate soldering, and a problem with his magneto which was repaired. These fixes were critical to the success of the Rolls for the rest of the rally and the cars ran smoothly to our final stay in Argentina. We had covered 2,600 km, and the cars were settling in. We still didn't seem to be able to get to the bottom of what the problem was with Nigel's Lagonda, it was still struggling to tick over properly and fouling plugs in minutes.

To cross a border successfully you need to "be a cat", namely sit quietly and let the process wash over you. One never knows how fast a border crossing will

of fuel deprivation which he simply couldn't fix and constantly fouling its plugs. Neither problem boded well for the high Andes where we were heading.

The road from Rodeo, to San Blas de Sauce, to Cafayete, to Salta and to Ticara was simply spectacular. We would start early to allow the cars to



*A pose familiar to us all*

be, must surrender the current countries Temporary Import Permit (TIP), do the required exit migration paperwork, and then move on to, in this case, Bolivian immigration and customs. After 2.5 hours we were into Bolivia and again on our way. One immediately noticed more indigenous people and a lower standard of living. It was blisteringly hot, and the sun beat down on the open cars remorselessly. We were climbing now into the high Andes and the carburettors were adjusted accordingly. The result was that the cars ran smoother but there was a noticeable loss of power. Both Lagondas were running very hot, and Nigel's was still struggling - we still hadn't got to the bottom of it. There was a constant debate about whether we could clean modern spark plugs and whether a good run on an open road would clean them. The speed at which his plugs were fouling meant that he had to clean them, we didn't have enough to keep changing them.



*The team, Rodeo, Argentina*

The road up to the salt flats (a World Heritage site) at Uyuni (3700m) is one of the most spectacular roads in the world. We were regularly summitting at over 4000m. The quality of the road is excellent as it twists and rises into the high Andes. There was almost no traffic and as we waited for the Rolls to arrive at the top of one climb we were greeted by a Condor, one of the world's largest birds, swooping around the cars. Uyuni was a rail head for the mining industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and once home to over 2000 British engineers but there is no fresh water source up there to sustain economic life and it is a desolate and filthy town. Apart from the astonishing salt flats there was nothing to stop us pushing on. ■



# BROOKLANDS

## LAGONDA FETÉ

17th August 2024



Relive the Lagonda Fêtes of old, by joining the largest gathering of Lagonda motor cars as all models take to the Finishing Straight for race-starts, driving tests and attempt the Test Hill Ascent Challenge. Tickets online £25 per person includes full museum & exhibit access. Gates open 9am. Campbell Entrance off Brooklands Rd. KT13 0QN

# Happy Birthday Rapier – 90 this year!

*Compiled by Roland Bugler with input and guidance by the Rapier Register*

2024 marks the 90th anniversary of the official 1934 launch of the Lagonda Rapier, previously heralded as ‘A thoroughbred car in miniature’... and awarded ‘Best Light Car of the Year’ by the motoring press following the prototype’s introduction at the 1933 Motor Show. This car was unusual for Lagonda in that they didn’t build any bodies and contracted out the engine build. The car was sold as a driveable chassis, to be delivered to coachbuilders. Rapiers also came with powerful Girling braking.



## **A Brief History** (based on extract from Ever Keen, with kind permission of the Rapier Register)

In the early 1930s, the Lagonda Company decided to diversify and proposed two new models, the 10hp Rapier and the 4.5 litre. It was in 1933 that the designs of the Rapier were first set down, Tim Ashcroft being responsible for the engine design, which was to be a sophisticated twin overhead camshaft 1,100cc unit. It was originally designed to be in aluminium, but cost precluded this. There wasn’t time to modify the drawings and the engine was built in cast iron with aluminium dimensions, which made it extremely heavy. The drive was transmitted via an ENV 75 preselector gearbox. Later, a single plate dry clutch was incorporated to stop the rapid wear of the first gear band.

The chassis was designed by Charles King and consisted of channel side members with tubular cross members, all bolted together. Two prototypes were exhibited at the 1933 Motor Show – a show chassis (registered APJ 988) and a complete car. The latter (later registered BPC 44) became Tim Ashcroft’s personal developmental transport. After a number of modifications had been made to the design, which included engine improvements and lengthening the chassis to accommodate true 4-seater bodywork, the car was at last available for sale in May 1934 with Abbott tourer and fixed-head coupe bodies, a drop-head body being introduced later. Other coachbuilders included Maltby, Corinthian, All-Weather, Whittingham & Mitchel and others. Warwick



*Martin Pollard's Abbott tourer*

Wright commissioned E J Newns' Eagle Coachworks to build eleven sports 2-seaters. Officially called the Warwick Wright Special Two-seater, these became known as Eagle 2-seaters. Newns also built three Eagle pillarless saloon bodies on Rapier chassis – one survives. It is not known exactly how many Rapiers were intended to be built, and although an initial order may have been for 500, evidence suggests around 400 units were delivered.

Dobson's & de Clifford Ltd. prepared ten de Clifford Special Rapiers with minor modifications, including reducing the capacity from 1104cc to 1087cc. Six of these were two-seaters bodied by John Charles (three survive), the rest were bodied by other coachbuilders. Lord de Clifford entered a modified Rapier (BMG 2) at Le Mans in 1934 and another (BMG 6) at the Monte Carlo Rally in Jan 1935. Both cars still exist.



*The de Clifford Monte Carlo Rally car*



*The Eccles car, driven by Marjorie Eccles, at the 1937 London Grand Prix at Crystal Palace.*

*The first woman to race at Crystal Palace*

An offset single seater Rapier, built for Roy Eccles in the summer of 1935, is now owned and raced by Tim Metcalfe, and was on The Antiques Roadshow at Crystal Palace recently.

Towards the end of 1935, when perhaps 300 or so Rapiers had been built, the Lagonda Company went into receivership. The remaining Rapier parts were sold off to Tim Ashcroft, Bill Oates (ex-Lagonda Company director), and Nevil Brockelbank, who set up Rapier Cars Ltd, to assemble the remaining parts as Rapiers.

The radiator sported a 'Rapier' badge, as distinct from Lagonda, though the mechanics were identical to Lagonda Rapiers.

Bodies were mostly by Ranalah and included 4-seater tourer, drop-head coupe and four light saloons. One 2-seater Ranalah was built. Bertelli put a 2-seater body on one chassis and there was also one Abbott tourer, plus a stylish magnesium alloy-bodied 2-seater tourer whose construction was overseen by Granville Grenfell.





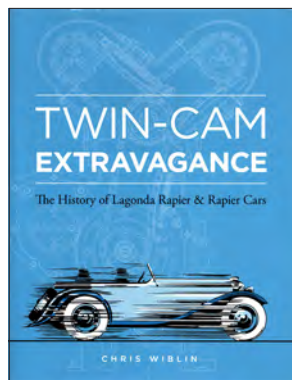
*Mike & Ann Pilgrim's Rannah DHC*

The first of the Rapiers was registered in November 1935 and production continued sporadically until 1938 by which time 46 had been built. The last Rapier chassis, with a supercharged engine, went to Ireland where it was fitted with a 2-seater body and raced in 1937. No further production took place after 1938 and the company was dissolved in August 1943.

## Twin-Cam Extravagance

For any reader who would like to delve more deeply, the Rapier Register published 'Twin-Cam Extravagance' in 2021, a candid and in-depth history of the conception, development, production, demise and legacy of the Rapier, all within the context of the problems afflicting Lagonda at the time.

The book is a must-read for anyone interested in Rapiers and has received only overwhelmingly positive reviews from all motoring magazines. It was also the recipient of a prestigious RAC Book of the Year award in 2022.



Copies of Twin-Cam Extravagance may be ordered direct from Peter Walby (pursang@doctors.org.uk) at £50 plus p&p, which is considerably cheaper than the £75-£80 being charged by specialist booksellers.

## 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

Rapier owners are served by the Rapier Register and the Lagonda Club. The Rapier Register provides an extensive spares scheme and has an active, loyal membership. This also means both clubs are celebrating the anniversary.

The Rapier Register's week of celebrations begin on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July, around Wellingborough. For more information or to explore attending, contact Chris Wiblin via [chriswiblin@outlook.com](mailto:chriswiblin@outlook.com).

For the Lagonda Club, the Rapier is this year's featured model at the Club's AGM on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, so we also hope to have a wonderful collection of Rapiers taking pride of place in the centre of the display of cars, basking in all the attention. ■

SATURDAY JUNE 22nd 2024

START: 11:00. SPITFIRE WALK AND TALK 13:00

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# Lagondas at le 24 Heures du Mans (pt 2)

*Compiled by Roland Bugler,  
reviewed by Arnold Davey*

Continuing our look back at the exploits of Lagondas at Le Mans in the lead-up to next year's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a Lagonda win, this time we explore the 1934 and 1937 races, skipping 1935, which we'll focus on at the end of this series.

## 1934 – The Rapier takes on Le Mans

Edward Southall Russell, the 27-year-old Lord de Clifford had been driving Lagondas since 1929, including a 3-litre special, and a supercharged 2-litre, in which he obtained 4<sup>th</sup> place at the Monte Carlo Rally, as well as other marques. With Charles Dobson (of Dobson Garage Ltd, Staines), they took delivery of an early Rapier (BMG 2) and assembled a Le Mans car. It was given a body created by Newns in British Racing Green, an oversized fuel tank, cycle wings, a short-throw crankshaft to reduce the capacity to bring it within the 1100cc class, plus a manual gearbox to replace the standard preselector gearbox.

The plan was to commercially produce de Clifford Special versions of the Rapier, so a good showing at Le Mans would be invaluable publicity.

De Clifford took the car to Brooklands for testing where it proved capable of 90mph. Charles Brackenbury, who previously raced for Bugatti and MG, was brought on board as de Clifford's co-driver, so all was looking good for the race.

It was a scorching day for the race, with tarmac melting in places, but the car ran well, even if it was no match for its class rivals, the



*Lord de Clifford in BMG 2 at Brooklands  
(photo: Solo Syndication)*



MGs and Rileys. Although in 25<sup>th</sup> place after the first hour, the steady progress plus the toll taken on other cars that retired helped see the car rise steadily to 14<sup>th</sup> place by 11am on the Sunday.

Things don't always go to plan though, and the endurance and strength of the drivers can be on trial just as much as of the cars. On Saturday evening, a stone shattered de Clifford's goggles. He managed the remainder of his shift, although with some pit stops to have his eye dressed!



*Race action: BMG 2 passing the pits. (photo: Motorsport Images)*

Unfortunately, more trouble arrived in the form of a bent or burnt valve (reports vary), seemingly due to a problem with the fuel made available from the race organisers. As a result, the car ran the last few hours of the race on three cylinders, and they eventually finished in 16<sup>th</sup> place out of 23 finishers. Demonstrating the endurance necessary for a new car to finish at all was a major feat in itself as 22 cars didn't finish, were disqualified or didn't start. 1,375 miles were raced at an average of 57.29mph over the 24 hours, including the stops.

It should also be noted that since the car was entered as a Lagonda, not a de Clifford Special, the Rapier's placing meant that Lagonda qualified for the Rudge-Whitworth Cup, allowing the company to compete for the cup in 1935 (and secure it, of course).

BMG2 is alive and well, and currently undergoing work with the intention of taking her over to Le Mans in 2025.

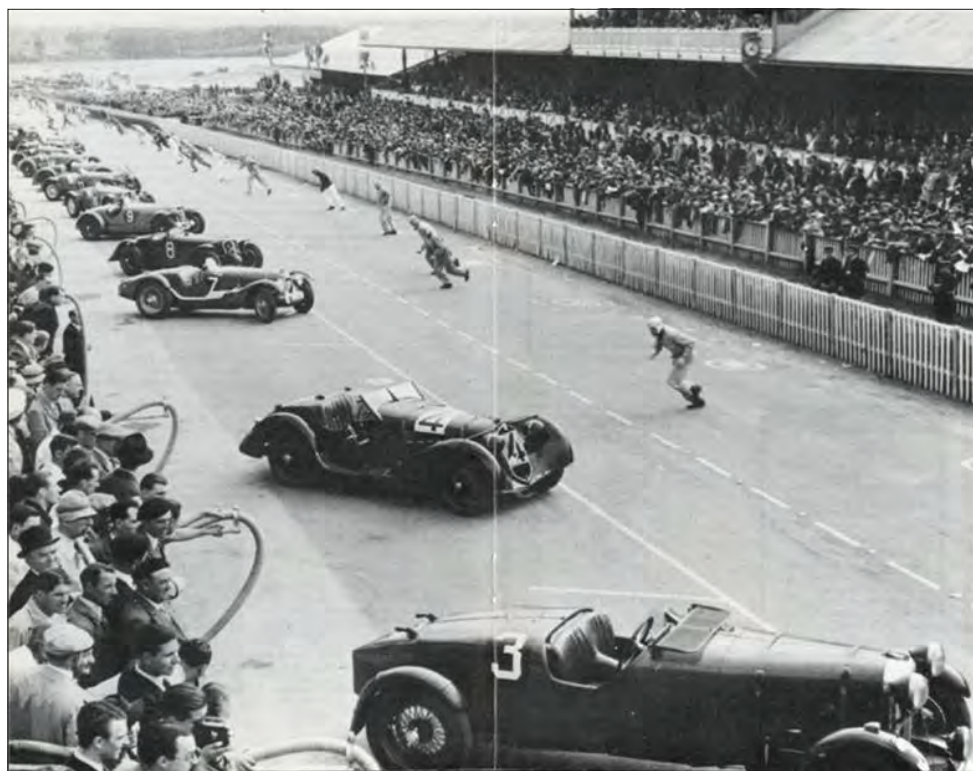
## 1936 – The Le Mans that never was

I add a mere mention of the 1936 race because although Lagonda prepared two LG45s for the 1936 Le Mans, entered them and were ready to go, strikes in France caused the 1936 Le Mans race to be cancelled. So that was that!

## 1937 – It's the turn of the LG45

One LG45 was prepared Le Mans race duty in 1937 (EPE 97), which was one of the 1936 team cars. It was based on the standard LG45 chassis and other than engine tuning, replacement exhaust and gearbox ratio changes, it is thought that very few changes were made from the production cars, though they had race bodies, of course. They were more powerful than the 1935 M45s, but they had serious competition in the shape of the new-generation French cars.

Drivers were 1935 winner Johnny Hindmarsh paired with Charles Brackenbury, who raced the Rapier in 1934. They made a good start, with the Lagonda, driven by Brackenbury, being the first car on the move, though team orders were to avoid the mad dash at the start, so they were soon overwhelmed by the



*The 1937 Le Mans start with EPE 97 in the foreground*

Bugatti 'tanks', Peugots and Adler Saloon, which were of such a new design, the Lagonda looked somewhat outdated.

One of Le Mans' most horrific crashes marred the early laps when Rene Kippeurt lost control of his Bugatti at over 80mph, which spun, slammed into the bank, and went airborne. Kippeurt was killed instantly, but it would get worse as one of the Frazer Nash BMWs, driven by Pat Fairfield, swerved to avoid another car, that was itself avoiding the Bugatti, and slammed into the Bugatti. 10 other cars were involved, and Fairfield died the next day of his injuries.



*Rounding turn one: Brackenbury driving with a Delahaye pursuing.*  
(photo: LAT Photographic)

Fortunately, the Lagonda was not involved in the crash, but the LG45 had its own problems when Johnny Hindmarsh was only a few laps into his first shift. A damaged valve crippled the engine and, after a number of pit stops, they were forced to retire by 10pm.

This was Johnny Hindmarsh's last Le Mans as he would be killed the following year when, as an RAF test pilot, he was testing a Hurricane and an aileron broke off in a power dive.

Next issue, we'll turn our attention to the team of iconic V12 cars at the 1939 Le Mans, on the eve of World War II. ■





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# John Ryder 1930-2024

*by Robin Balmain*

John Ryder was born in Wolverhampton and died in hospital after a short illness. He was educated as a boarder at Ludlow Grammer school and later at Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Colleges studying engineering. John's father Norman was the motoring correspondent of a local newspaper and sent car magazines to him at school which John would consume avidly, sometimes during chapel service. On one occasion when caught doing so the headmaster told him "If you carry on like this Ryder you will amount to nothing more than a garage mechanic".

Throughout his life John was passionate not only about engineering, but anything involving engines be it cars, motorbikes or aeroplanes (including model ones which he built and flew) and had a prodigious knowledge of such matters, especially anything pre-war. At



one time he journeyed to work in a Morgan three-wheeler and later campaigned in the Eccles offset single seater Rapier and then an Allard of which he described the handling as positively dangerous. However, the car with which he will be most associated is the 3 litre Lagonda AHP 13. John bought the car from a farmer in Wales when it was a wrecked saloon and over a number of years created at home the tourer by which the standard of all other 3 litres could be judged. By virtue of his experience, he realised that the valve timing was less than optimal and designed a revised camshaft which now benefits a number of 3 litre owners. He was an acknowledged expert on these engines and gave freely of his time, giving advice to anyone who asked. On one occasion he gave evidence in Court in support of a club member who sued a dealer for breach of contract in the sale of a 3½ litre. John was able to describe the problems clearly and with great authority to such an extent that at the end of his evidence the judge enquired quizzically "tell me Mr Ryder, do you work on Citroen cars?"

John had rebuilt this engine, at a time when he was awaiting a triple heart by-pass. When the member in question enquired if he was worried about the

operation he was told “No it’s only plumbing,” and then added “but you should be because your engine is in bits on my bench”.

John served on the VSCC committee often driving from home near Bridgenorth to the office, then in Newbury, in his 3 litre. He ran eligibility for many years with his friend Ian Hall, a member of the Rootes team, and was regularly seen at club events as a scrutineer or steward. He had a fund of anecdotes sometimes delivered in broad “black country” and was not afraid of telling stories against himself. He had a full head of grey hair and on one occasion while attending the northern Lagonda dinner he was introduced by Herb Schofield as being living proof that Grecian 2000 doesn’t work.

John is survived by his wife and partner of many years Veronika and his daughter Kate to whom we send our sympathy. When asked if she enjoyed the Lagonda world (she did) Veronika was heard to remark “Oh yes, I long ago ceased to regard the M45 as just another motorway”. John, your many friends will miss access to your huge field of knowledge, your anecdotes, and your unfailing willingness to help others. But most of all we will miss your company. ■

## Remembering Jeff Ody

You will have seen in the March newsletter that we’re also very sad to announce that Jeff passed away last month. Arnold Davey is preparing a full obituary which will appear in the next issue. Our thoughts are with Jeff’s wife, Gill, and children, Nancy and Katy.

In the meantime, Colin Bugler gives us a few words in memory of Jeff.

“I first met Jeff back in the 1960s when we were both competing in our 2 litres at Silverstone, Prescott etc. In 1985 Valerie and I enjoyed the first Club Rally to Le Mans during his time as Chairman.

In 1987 he invited me to join the Committee and 3 years later when Valerie May retired, he asked me to take over as Club Secretary.

Jeff’s business background was evident in many ways. He oversaw the Incorporation of the Club and re-organised the Board to be a more proactive team. At his suggestion the Club bought a computer to digitise the membership records and registered with a credit card company to make payments easier for members.

The Lagonda Club owes a large debt of gratitude to Jeff for his many years of dedicated and productive service.” ■



# Lagondas of the Maharajas (pt 3)

*By James Baxendale*

James concludes his fascinating research, in this last chapter focussing on Lagondas once owned by the maharajas and subsequently brought back to Great Britain.

The ban on importing cars to India post-Independence did not stop the maharajas from acquiring Lagondas, the V12 being their car of choice, although necessarily acquired second-hand.

## Chassis 14038

This 1938 V12 Drophead Coupe was originally purchased by Major Ian Fraser-Marshall of Kilbarchan, Scotland, from car dealers, Scott Brown & Co, in Glasgow. Fraser-Marshall was “*a prize-winning yachtsman, sports and rally car driver, military engineer, businessman and bon viveur*”. The bodywork was painted in Lanchester red, with black interior trim and white piping. The interior woodwork was black, inlaid with pewter. Fraser-Marshall had his crest painted on the doors (grey dove, green branch, grey and black pedestal). It had a Renfrewshire registration number, AHS 822.



*Lagonda factory photo after the 1951 renovation, taken at Great Fosters*

We cannot be certain when Fraser-Marshall sold Chassis 14038. But it appears that by 1950 it belonged to the **Maharaja of Jawhar**, Yashwantroa Martandrao Mukne. The Maharaja was partial to Lagondas, as he bought two others in the same period (Chassis 14088 and Chassis LAG/49/21).

An article in the March 1954 issue of the *American Cars* magazine says that Chassis 14038 was “*was built for Maharajah of Jawhar. Reconditioned, it is still in operation*”. (By 1974, the story had become rather muddled, the family who bought the car in 1962 conflating Fraser-Marshall with the “*Maharaja of Janhor*”) (Club Mag 84).

The Lagonda factory’s service records note that Chassis 14038 was completely reconditioned in early 1951 – from top to bottom – likely for the Maharaja. All the wings were reshaped and the running boards removed. The engine was completely rebuilt. The car was resprayed in two colours and the interior was retrimmed in fawn hide with special mohair rugs. Frank Feeley, who had

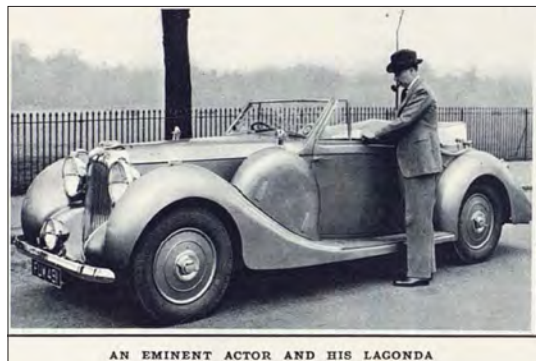
designed the V12 body, was still employed at Aston Martin Lagonda in 1951, and this may have been his last work on the V12. The factory took a widely disseminated photograph of the restored car at Great Fosters (the original is in the Club archives). The photograph appeared in the 1954 *Cars* magazine and Geoffrey Seaton's *Lagonda, An Illustrated History 1900-1950*, as well as on the cover of Club Mag 81 – each time noting the link to the Maharaja.

In 1952, shortly after the car's restoration, the car's registration number was changed to an Ayrshire number plate DSD 797. This indicates that Chassis 14038 was kept in the United Kingdom, rather than being exported to India. By 1960, the car had been sold to Stephen Gwyn James (formerly member J9), a solicitor who lived on the river Severn in Gloucestershire.

Gwyn James sold Chassis 14038 in 1962 to Jim Whitehead (formerly member W78), who exported the car to Sydney, Australia. Its registration number changed to Australian number plate ERF 452 (and latter EDI 528). It remained there, until 2001, under various owners, when it was re-exported back to England by the Club's then-chairman, John Sword (S26). John has undertaken a complete restoration of the car.



*Chassis 14038, photo taken in 2023*



*Ralph Richardson, 1939*



*Alan Heard &  
Michael Mackley, 1969*

## Chassis 14088

According to the Club's records (likely based on the car's logbook), the **Maharaja of Jawhar** owned Chassis 14088, a 1939 V12 Drophead Coupé, from 11 June 1951 to 29 January 1963. Chassis 14088 was originally owned by the actor, (Sir) Ralph Richardson. It had UK registration number FUW 491. Alan Heard (H13) owned the car for over thirty years from 1967 to 2001 and carried out a major restoration (Club mag 276). It was then acquired by John Sword (S26) and, subsequently, in 2008, by Eberhard Thiesen (T19) in Germany, who both did further work. The car is still very much in existence, although its current whereabouts is unknown. The car is featured in Geoffrey Seaton's *Lagonda, An Illustrated History 1900-1950*.



*Chassis 14088, 2001*

## Chassis 16015

Chassis 16015, a 1938 V12 medium chassis De Ville Saloon, belonged to the **Maharaja of Jodhpur**, Hanwant Singh, during his brief marriage to his Scottish wife, Alexandra McBride (Sundra Devi). He was its fifth owner. Hanwant Singh, of course, already owned a V12 in India, Chassis 14096. The marriage, which was tempestuous, only lasted from September 1948 to February 1950 and the Maharaja's ownership of the car, from 28 June 1948 to 16 May 1949, more or less coincided with their marriage. He gave his address as Claridge's, W1, which is where the couple stayed during their much reported 1949 visit to London.



*Maharaja of Jodhpur and his wife, Alexandra McBride, at Claridge's Hotel, London, August 1949, 2001*

The Club records note the owner as the "*Maharajah of Jaidhpur*". The Maharaja of Jaipur, Man Singh II, also had a large collection of cars, but no Lagondas, as far as is known.

Chassis 16015, registered as EXE 588, was first owned by Colonel Hugh Stobart of Middlethorpe Hall, a Yorkshire coal mine owner. It has had an adventurous life since the Maharaja sold the car. In 1957, it was bought by Donald Overy (formerly member O9) and completely rebodied as a red LG45 Rapide Special, featuring on the cover of



Club mag 34. Donald used it in the 1960s for VSCC hill climbs. He sold it in 1985 and under a new owner it was remodelled again as a green two-seater V12 Le Mans Replica, winning the class prize for LG6 and V12 cars at the Annual Gathering in 2014. It was sold at Bonhams in October 2020 and is currently owned by California member, Guido Rietdyk (R6).

## Lost Lagondas

Inevitably, a number of Lagondas have now been lost.

According to Manvendra Barwani in *The Automobiles of the Maharajas*, his late father, **Maharana of Barwani**, Devi Singh, was given a Lagonda 16/80 by the **Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar**, Sir Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja. (Gautam Sen, in *The Automobile: An Indian Love Affair*, believes that the Lagonda belonged to the father, Ranji, who was likely the first Indian to own an automobile in the early 1890s). Its current whereabouts is unknown.

Another maharaja who owned a Lagonda, whose whereabouts is currently unknown, was the **Maharaja of Kapurthala**, Jagatjit Singh. According to his grandson, Sukhji Singh (quoted in Charles Allen and Sharada Dwivedi's *Lives of the Indian Princes*), the Lagonda, painted in two colours, was one of the first cars that the Maharaja bought.

There is a photograph of a V12 in India, which does not appear to match the three V12s known to have been in India. It is labelled as a Kagal State car, although there is no further information to confirm this.



*Kagal State car*

Some Lagondas may have arrived – or been requisitioned – during the Second World War. Club Mag 187 has a picture of a 16/80 in northern India, submitted by John Anderson (formerly member A26), being driven by a Ghurkha called Deokharji. The car, which had been requisitioned, had come from under wraps in a shed in Peshawar (now in Pakistan). (It would be tempting to think that part of this car is linked to the one in the Sanghi collection!).



*16/80 in northern India in WW2*

“Ban” Banerjee also spoke of a 3 Litre: *“I managed to get one 3-litre Lagonda’s complete Differential Housing with Crown and Tail pinion and two back shafts plus two reams complete with hub and knock-off nuts for Rs.450/-. That particular 3-litre Lagonda belonged to A.K. Sarkar & Co. Calcutta. During war time that particular Lagonda was used as a lorry by that Company. I happened to visit that Company during 1943-44 and I pleaded them not to abuse a good make car like this. Then later on I came to know that 3-litre was completely smashed by a military lorry, eventually the whole car came to Mallick bazaar, and sold as scrap bit by bit, where I bought the complete differential housing”* (Club Mag 64).

## Visiting Lagondas

A couple of Lagondas have visited India. Most noteworthy is the 3 Litre of David Crow (C80), who drove PL 1239 (**Chassis 9698**) from London to New Delhi between March and June 1965 – a distance of 11,057 miles, without any serious breakdowns (see Club Mags 58 and 59 for his account of the trip). It was perhaps “Ban” Banerjee’s inspiration for his abortive trip. In India, David was invited by the Maharaja of Bharatpur for lunch at his palace (with bearers standing behind every seat). Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, who was visiting, was also there, photographing David’s Lagonda for the *Veteran & Vintage* magazine. During his time in India, David saw the two Lagondas then owned by the Nath brothers: the M45 Abbott (Chassis Z11159) and the V12 (Chassis 14096). Chassis 9698 is currently owned by Anthony Peake (P22).

In 2012 and again in 2016, Chris Hallett (H81) took his 1933 16/80 (**Chassis S10466**) to India for some amazing family holidays.



*David Crow in Chassis 9698 in front of the Maharaja of Bharatpur's palace*



*Chassis S10466 in Rajasthan*

# Jack's Lagonda (pt 1)

## *Fiona Reedy takes on a serious project*

So just what does a middle-aged woman do, faced with her dad's magnificent old Lagonda, stuck in a lock-up? She rescues it of course! With a great deal of help from her friends.

It is a 1934 3 litre with a T7 body, a reasonably rare combination I understand, as Lagonda was building mainly 4.5 litres at this point. By an extraordinary coincidence, my dad "Jack" and his Lagonda are practically twins, having been born/registered within nine days of each other. They both turned 90 this March.



He had bought it as a non-runner in 1960. At that time, he was a young journalist working on a local daily paper. Newspaper hours are anti-social often finishing in the early hours. As far as his landlady was concerned, he was out late at night when he should have been in, and, much worse, he was in during the day when he should have been out. Clearly a pastime was called for.

And so he bought an old car to tinker with. The previous owner had said that, "the engine had had it." Happily, the engine problem turned out to be a timing chain issue and fixable. Once that was sorted, my father drove his Lagonda as a daily drive for years. He was even a member of the Lagonda Club.

I don't for sure know why he took the car off the road. The absence of practicality, startling fuel consumption or the introduction of more stringent "winker" requirements by government spoilsports might all have been factors. I do know though that the last tax disc expired in 1966 and that the car has not driven since.



A severe stroke some years ago sadly ended any thoughts my dad might have had about getting the car back on the road himself, and so responsibility for its safekeeping has now fallen to me.

I am fortunate to have help from two good friends, Paul a lifelong professional mechanic, restorer and now expert trainer for a well-known component manufacturer, and Andrew, who like his father before him has worked with and on cars of this age all his life. Much of what will follow is possible only because of them.

But first, a rescue was required, and for that we needed help from an old friend of Paul's, Graham. Graham runs Graham Baker Motors of Much Markle in Herefordshire and specialises in vehicle recoveries. Recovering old cars with seized wheels from small lock ups is a very skilled business and I was grateful to Graham and Rich his son in law for giving up their spare time for a day to help.

It was exhilarating to see the car emerge after nearly 60 years. My Dad is well-known in the village and the old car that lived in garage no. 21 had become a part of local lore. A small group of on-lookers gathered to watch the recovery



and it was through chatting to them that I found out my Dad had apparently proposed to my mother in it.

Now that the Lagonda was out of the garage, we had our first chance to have a good look at it. Even to my untrained eye there were some obvious gaps; the bonnet, rear offside wing, spare wheel and rocker cover were all missing. Fortunately, after a

good root round I found all those in the cellar at home, along with the side windows.

One surprising discovery was that a kitchen tap had been fitted to the engine block, presumably for easy draining. Full marks for ingenuity for whoever did that!

More concerningly though, the spark plugs were out and there was reason to fear that the engine was seized. Although the lock-up was sound enough, the floor had been damp and so we were also worried about the state of the chassis. Still, the car was now safely out of the garage, on the trailer and on its way to a new home.

But first we had a stop to make. We needed a ramp to look at the chassis and for that we were grateful for more help, this time from Alan Aston Motor Engineers of Evesham and its proprietor, Paul's former business partner, Richard.



I watched nervously as Paul and Richard explored every inch of the chassis before finally announcing that it was sound. That was the first major question addressed. Of course, that's not to say there won't be work to do. There is surface rust to remove, and a lot of something unpleasant stuck to the bottom of the gear box. Straightforward tasks like that are my department, so getting all this off will be something for me to look forward to.

Although we now knew that the chassis was OK, we still had the engine to worry about. Alan Astons have a large workshop so by this point there was quite a crowd round the car. It's a pleasing feature of 1930s car design that there is plenty of room for everyone to get a good view.

There was no sign of any movement from the starting handle which I took to be a bad sign. But, I could see that everyone was focussed on the rockers. It's a six-cylinder engine so there are 12 of these all in a line. Patiently and gently each one was tapped free with liberal application of penetrating oil.



It was time to try the starting handle again and this time the engine turned. We were two for two, chassis sound and engine free. We could not have had a better start to our restoration adventure.

I have been filming everything we are doing with the car and by the time you read this I should have some video up on YouTube under "Reedy's Digest". (Ed. Smartphone users can use the QR code below for Fiona's YouTube channel)

I also hope to be able to provide further updates in future editions of the magazine. For now though, I had better get on with scraping all that nasty stuff off the gear box! ■



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# Spring Cleaning Your Hood/Tonneau

*Len Cozzolino shares how he brought a faded tonneau back to life*

Like many, I've lived with old and faded tonneaus and hoods on my cars for years. I didn't think much could be done to bring them back to life other than expensive new weather gear, until a retired upholster recommended Renovo Soft Top Reviver. I confess I was sceptical but a recommendation from an old expert is always worth listening to. I'm glad I did as the results were truly amazing. The photo below doesn't do Renovo justice as it only shows the result with one coat, but the improvement is evident. The second coat brought the tonneau to near new condition and a third finished it off excellently.



The process is simple and gives excellent results. Renovo recommend using their cleaner to thoroughly clean prior to applying Soft Top Reviver. Ensure that the fabric is free of grease, dirt and any previous waterproof coatings. Dampen and brush on the cleaner with a clean paint brush and leave for 30 minutes or so. Then with a brush or light scrubbing brush clean off the dirt and grease, rinse off and dry. Next, brush on the Renovo with a clean paint brush. Take care to make a streak free even coat. I applied 3 coats just to be sure and the results were staggering, even the edging piping was revived. There is an optional water-proofing liquid, but I don't think it needs it as the rain just beaded and ran off when I took my car out a week later.

The whole kit cost about £40. I bought mine from Amazon. Renovo's website is <https://www.renovointernational.com/car-care/soft-top-reviver.php>

Happy painting and getting your car ready for your Spring outings.

(Ed. I used the Renovo products on two hoods and agree it is excellent stuff.) ■

# Major Oates Crashed My Rapier!

*By Barry Stiff*

It's winter 1936. A Lagonda Rapier is travelling rather too quickly on an icy mountain road somewhere in the Alps. The man at the wheel, despite his long experience as Lagonda's racing driver, struggles for control as the car veers left then right before leaving the road and coming to rest among the trees. Maybe it didn't happen exactly like that, but it seems to be a fact that Major "Bill" Oates, the car's owner at that time, crashed Rapier BVK 839 while on holiday in Austria. I still have what are likely to be the original steering wheel and badly worn pedals (removed during the 1980s) and entertain myself with the notion that these were the very controls with which the good Major struggled as he – and the car – left the road.

Lagonda Rapier BVK 839 was despatched from E D Abbott coachbuilders as a four-seat tourer in May 1934 but not registered until May 1935. Aficionados of the model will know that this is why the car is fitted with the early wider front wings and straight-topped passenger door, rather than the 1935 types – narrower wings and cut-away passenger door. After use as a demonstrator the car became Major Oates'



*What stories these controls could tell!*

*Barry and Jan Stiff's 1934/1935 Rapier*

personal transport, eventually passing into his full ownership. In 1935, after Lagonda went into receivership he, along with Tim Ashcroft and Nevil Brockelbank, formed Rapier Cars Ltd and resumed Rapier production using components purchased from Lagonda's successors, L. G. Motors (Staines) Ltd. It was during this period that BVK 839 had its unfortunate Austrian adventure. I have Oates' list of the accident repair work and the original Rapier Cars Ltd

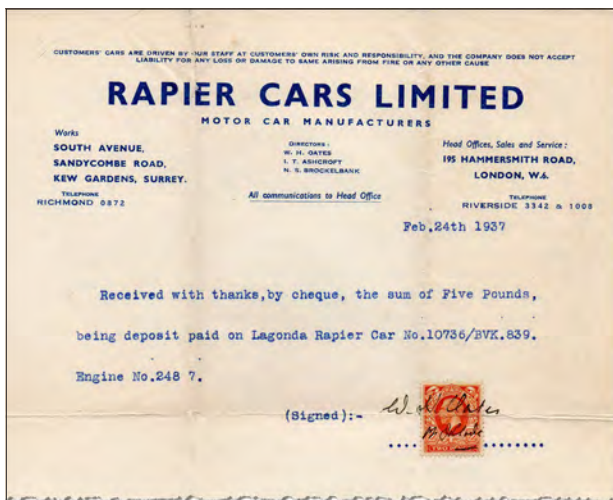
receipt, dated 24 February 1937 and carrying the Major's signature, for the £5.00 purchase deposit paid by the next owner; The Post Office Service Station, Blindley Heath, Surrey.

It seems The Post Office Service Station turned over their stock very quickly because in the same month, February 1937, ownership passed to a Malcolm Ellsley, in whose family the Rapier would remain for the next

eighty years until 2017 when Jan and I took over the reins from Rapier Register member Gavin Rowe. Gavin is a talented artist and book illustrator (search Google Images – “Gavin Rowe Illustrator” to see some of his lovely children’s book covers) and is responsible for immortalising BVK 839 by placing her in his charming garage workshop illustrations for Roald Dahl’s Danny, The Champion of the World, a 1980s BBC Jackanory production with Joss Ackland as storyteller.

Jan and I had no idea of our Rapier’s interesting history until we discovered that it appears in Richard Bird’s book Lagonda Heritage along with mention of the Major Oates connection.

The car was beautifully and correctly restored by Tony Metcalfe in the early 1980s and thereafter cherished and lovingly maintained by Gavin. My job is to continue his good work and, unlike Major Oates, keep BVK 839 on the road and out of the trees. ■



*A £5 deposit secures the purchase of BVK 839*



*Screenshot from Jackanory. BBC copyright content reproduced courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation. All rights reserved.*



# A Tale of Two Owners (pt 2)

*By Brian Cook and Rob Bettigole*

*Rob concludes with his part in the story of this car, continued from last issue.*

Thank you, Brian. I will be forever grateful for your trust in me as the next keeper of PH8728. More importantly (dare I say in an article for the Club magazine), it brought us together, and our friendship has been an important part of my life.

Following Brian's example, I'll back up a bit. My first memory of a motor vehicle was a Series II Land Rover in a film at a drive-in theatre in the late 1950s/early 1960s. So British vehicles were an early influence. That changed temporarily when I was a pre-teen, culminating with my father bravely taking me and a few friends to the drag races for my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. But within a year or so, my mother's cousin took me for a ride in his Sunbeam Tiger, and sports cars became my passion.

But family cars were a Ford station wagon (estate) and a VW Beetle, until my father bought a Volvo and my mother a 1969 Mustang, which became my first car. That was followed by an odd assortment of vehicles. Fortunately, Barbara married me despite the five cars I owned at the time: 1972 SAAB 99, 1968 Austin America, 1973 TR-6, 1958 Alfa Giulietta, and a 1972 Lotus Elan +2S130. The TR-6 was my daily drive, though the Austin was the most reliable of the bunch (the bar was low).

I started what we call "vintage" racing in the US in 1990 with a 1959 Elva Courier but was introduced to Lagondas by a fellow VSCCA member, Dan Ghose, a few years later. Dan kindly let me run a few laps at Lime Rock Park in his M45 at an Aston Martin Owners Club meeting, and then started sending me auction details by fax whenever a two litre would come up for sale. He'd call me and say I'm going to conference in Arnold Davey or Colin Bugler. Barbara and I visited with Colin and Valerie on a trip to England around that time.

After some time, Colin wrote to me to say that he'd mentioned my (apparent) interest in Two Litres to Brian Cook, who was considering finding a new home for PH8728. Brian responded to my subsequent letter with a detailed description of his Two Litre, saying "I haven't enclosed a photo of the car because it is exactly as shown on page 200 (plate 9) of Davey and May's book."

Some months later, Barbara and I planned a trip to see old friends in Edinburgh, and somehow the return trip I booked took us through Gatwick with a one day layover. Brian met us at the airport gate and we walked out to the car park together. Brian opened the boot of his immaculate BMW, revealing that the carpet had been covered by a protective layer of newspaper. I knew then that I would have to purchase his Lagonda, though I hadn't even seen a photograph of it!

We had a delightful stay with Brian and his wife, Barbara. The Two Litre wasn't licensed, so we didn't go out for a drive, but from the condition of the car, the careful attention that Brian had paid over the years, and how well we got along



as two engineers married to Barbaras, we both knew we'd found a good match. Brian waited patiently for a number of months while I sold the Elva Courier, and certain business matters worked out well enough.

PH8728 was waiting for shipping to be arranged at the time of the Centenary, so Barbara and I attended without a Lagonda. I met many people and examined every Two Litre closely.

Many members will remember how unbearably hot it was at the event, and poor Barbara was pretty miserable, reading a book in a bit of shade while I looked with astonishment at the incredible array of Lagondas present.

Two months later, a 40 foot container was being unloaded in our dirt driveway in Lakeville, Connecticut. After waiting for months for the agent to find another car to ship to the US with Lucy, I discovered that a friend who lived two towns away from us was similarly waiting – with the same agent! Her Aston Martin was unloaded first, and then the Two Litre. Susan and her Alfa Romeo specialist husband couldn't get the Aston started, but following Brian's emailed instructions, Lucy (so named by Brian's daughter, Ann, when she was a girl) started right up with a wonderful song. She has been part of our family for close to 24 years now.

Brian and Barbara (who died in 2000) and later Brian and Tineke visited us a number of times and it was humbling to see how beautifully Brian handled the car, with perfect, silent shifts. Colin and Valerie also came to visit several times, joining us in a VSCCA non-TSD rally (in which we finished first). Colin also helped me prepare the Lagonda for the track and served as pit crew on two occasions. We still have his Lagonda-badged coveralls hanging on a hook, awaiting his return.

I raced PH8728 in VSCCA speed events and hill climbs for a number of years, with much enjoyment. But in the US, pre-war fields are quite mixed, with cars ranging from grand prix Bugattis to Packards, to Indy cars to a few less racy MGTCs. The Two Litre did well on the track, but there was really no one to play

with. Lucy outhandled a number of cars, but 60 HP and 3100 pounds does not readily permit passing cars with much higher torque and power. One memorable race had me desperately trying to get around a large Packard, which was much slower on the turns, but too big to get around. On the main straight, it had far more power than the Lagonda.



So finally, I stayed right on his tail on the downhill turn which leads onto the off camber turn onto the main straight (always nerve-wracking) and stayed there, drafting the big Packard all the way down to the beginning of the braking zone. As he touched his brakes, I pulled out to the left and outbraked him into Big Bend. It was very satisfying for Lucy and me, but must have seemed a slow motion movie to spectators.



The VSCCA does not name winners or give prizes or trophies for speed events (it is supposed to be 9/10ths racing), but the annual Nutmeg Rallye is different, and Lucy has managed a first place finish a number of times. On one rally, Dan Ghose generously let us take EPE 97 out for a spin. It was quite surprisingly to see how similar it handled to PH8728, albeit traveling a bit more briskly.

Brian had assembled quite a collection of NOS and remanufactured spares, but I have been fortunate to manage well without resorting to the spares much. It was nice, though, to have a spare Bendix



spring in stock when the old one broke during a VSCCA rally weekend. There were plenty of people around to push start the car when I didn't remember to park on downward-sloping ground. I may have started the engine on the handle, but memory fails me. Doing so works well when no one is around, but Lucy seems to take pleasure in refusing to start on the handle if I have an audience. Lessons in humility at no extra cost.

One key spare from Brian was a cylinder head over which David Ayre waved a magic wand before shipping it to me in Connecticut in 1999, along with a bronze-bodied SU. I know others have been successful with the original Zenith Triple Confuser, but mine performs best mounted on the wall of my garage.

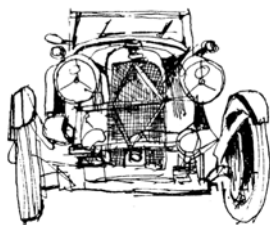
Four generations of my family enjoy rides in the Two Litre. My 93 year old mother happily joins us for a drive when she visits, and I have jury-rigged anchors for child seats for our grandchildren several times. Our older son, Charlie, and his wife had a long weekend adventure in PH8728 for their 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, and is likely to be the next keeper after me. I am on the lookout for a Lagonda pickup for our artist/carpenter son. Something will turn up (just don't tell Barbara).



*Charlie and Minna enjoying their anniversary*

Our longest drive to date was 400 miles. First to Royalston, Massachusetts to help Damon Bundschuh get his father's Two Litre Continental back on the road and take his mother for a drive. (Werner's Continental was the first Two Litre I drove.) From Royalston, we travelled over the White Mountains to Woodstock, VT, where Lucy was a static prop for photography at the wedding of the daughter of one of my partners. And from thence, home.

Lucy will be 100 years old in April, 2028, and should the stars align, she'll be back in England for a thorough fettling and refresh, and then a Continental holiday. I have yet to attend Le Mans, so a visit there with Lucy seems a reasonable (to me – let's not ask Barb) five year goal. ■



# The “Vane” hope...

*...of finding a suitable retirement present for the Chairman, by Len Cozzolino*

Jeff Ody, a past Chairman whom many of you will remember, laid down the rule that a Club Chairman should serve a 3-year term. If both the Club and the Chairman were happy this could be extended for a second term, but not a 3<sup>rd</sup>. His reasoning, I am told, was to save a Chairman becoming stale, the Club wondering how to get rid of him/her politely, or simply too old for the job. John Sword, our recently retired Chairman, managed just short of 4 terms, 10+ years. This is a record for the Club and it was for this reason that special thought had to go into John's retirement present.

The Board started thinking of what John would most like. We went through the usual things, engraved glass decanter, a tabletop memento etc but none seemed to hit the mark. Collectively we agreed a weathervane with a Lagonda as the figure was probably the best and so I was tasked with getting one made, which you will have seen being presented to John in the last issue of this magazine.

Fortunately for me I am blessed to live in a small village overpopulated with craftsmen. We have Nick, a Rolls Royce trained sprayer (now unfortunately retired but always willing to help out for a pint), Vince, a brilliant wood worker, Nicolas Mee, an Aston Martin Specialist, and an old-fashioned blacksmith, Robin, at Mill Green Forge, directly opposite our house.

Mill Green Forge is a small, family run business of two master blacksmiths with 60 years combined experience. While Robin and his team are old fashioned blacksmiths, they have moved with the times and has such things as computer controlled (CNC) cutters together with the obligatory original forge, a compulsory anvil and the usual million-and-one tongs, hammers and dies each shaped for a particular function.

All I had to do to start work on John's weather vane was to pop across the road and chat to Robin. Picking the right Lagonda for the figure was easy as John has often said that his beloved 3ltr tourer would be the last car he would sell should ever the need arise. Unfortunately, our archives don't have any photos of his 3ltr; a travesty for the Chairman not to send us recent photos but, sadly, he is not alone.



*The forge in all its glory*

I searched our files for a suitable side view of a 3ltr tourer and converted it for Robin to use in his computer. We spent some time getting it just right so that we could see that it was definitely a 3ltr Lagonda, and was structurally continuous so that bits didn't just fall off. This took some time but once we were happy he loaded the CNC cutter with the 3mm plate, pressed the button and I watched as, 3 minutes later, there it was.



*The business end of the process*

With the hard part done, I had only to select the style of the N, S, W and E and they built the rest of the weathervane with no input from me.

Robin and his team will happily make the same or other weathervanes for our members. Simply call or email him and chat over your requirements. He will happily make any Lagonda silhouette you want once you provide a suitable photo, virtually any size, within reason, and whatever style of letters you want. Robin's contact details are:

**Tel: +44 1707 271 141,**

**Email: [millgreenforge@sky.com](mailto:millgreenforge@sky.com)**

**Website: <http://www.millgreenforge.co.uk/home.html>** ■



*In situ – and what a fine-looking thing it is too.*



# Out and About

## *An M45 meets the Governor of New South Wales (Graham Lawrence)*

26<sup>th</sup> January is Australia Day, right in the middle of our summer, and peak holiday season. Sydney Harbour gets packed with thousands of people enjoying the various activities, including the ferry boat race.

My 1935 T7 M45 complete with a Rapide engine was requested to be on display at the NSW Government House, adjacent to the Botanical Garden on the foreshore of Sydney Harbour. Accompanying my car was a handful of Rolls-Royces. The request had come from the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, who had previously seen a display of cars at the same venue to mark the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Automobile Club of Australia just a few months ago. Her office contacted the club to put on a smaller display, and there were six cars in all.



It was about 38 degrees in the shade under one of the giant fig trees in the ground. A lot hotter in the sun, and also very humid.

After the official morning ceremonies, the gates to the NSW Government House Grounds and House were opened to the public at 11am. A Scout troop supplied



sausage rolls and cold drinks, but I must admit that I didn't stay until the end of the day. My humour got lost in the heat and endless requests to people not to touch the Lagonda, and not to stand on the running boards. One teenager even climbed into the cabin of a Rolls-Royce 20/25 and sat behind the steering wheel. I impolitely told him it was not a fairground.

There was one other car that was not a R-R and that was a Bean 14 that was on display outside the house. In 1927 Francis Birtles drove a Bean overland from England to Australia, the first person to do so. A re-enactment will take place this year beginning from the Festival of Speed, with Warren Brown at the wheel of his Bean, travelling across the planet which must be a dangerous journey these days.

There are only a few Lagondas in Australia so there were the inevitable questions about where it was made etc. But it was good to have the honour and to have a Lagonda featured alongside the Rolls-Royces.

### **The Concours d'Elegance, Udaipur, India (James Baxendale)**

I was in Udaipur, India in February for the prestigious Oberoi Concours d'Elegance. Curated by HH Manvendra Singh Barwani, India's leading automotive historian, the concours (previously sponsored by Cartier) showcased many of the most magnificent cars in India.

My wife and I were wonderfully hosted for the weekend by Jyotsana Sanghi (S17), owner of the magnificent 1934 Lagonda M45 Rapide Abbott Sports Tourer (chassis Z11159), which had featured at the previous edition of the Cartier Concours d'Elegance in 2019 (and at Pebble Beach in 2018).

Best in show (and best in class) was none other than a 1939 Lagonda V12 (chassis 14116; now TXS 676). The car, which had spent its life in the USA, latterly at the Tupelo Automobile Museum, prior to being purchased in 2019 by Nishant Dossa (ex-D8) and Keith Bowley (B13), has been meticulously restored by Keith's Ashton Keynes Vintage Restorations. Nishant is the son of Nitin Dossa, the chairman of the Vintage & Classic Car Club of India, who was also there in support. I hope that the car's restoration will be the subject of an article in the magazine, so I will not comment in more detail here, except to say that it was a well-deserved win, among very strong competition.

Whilst in India, I took the opportunity to meet all our Indian members, both past and present, and to visit in person a number of the Lagondas that have been the topic of recent articles.

In Delhi, I met Awini Ambuj Shanker (S21), who owns the 1939 V12 Rapide Coupe (chassis 14096), originally owned by Alan Good and sold in 1940 to the Maharaja of Jodhpur. Preserved in its unrestored state, it still retains its original registration number, "Jodhpur 7", which Awini found under the current plate.

In Delhi, I also visited Sudhir Choudhrie (C33)'s collection of 37 vintage cars, which are all admirably looked after by Julia Williamson. Sudhir has two Lagondas, a beautifully restored 1913 11.1 (chassis 1215) and a 1934 M45 Drophead Coupé (chassis Z10662). The latter, a rather garish orange, had originally been a saloon. In Ahmedabad, we visited the largest vintage car collection in India, owned



*Chassis 14116. Best in Show at Udaipur, 2024*

by the late Pranlal Bhogilal (1937-2011) – now the Auto World museum. The collection – which houses 150 of Pranlal's 200 plus car collection (the rest are kept in Mumbai) – has no less than three Lagondas: the Maharaja of Baroda's 1940 V12 Drophead Coupé (chassis 14097); a 1938 LG6 De Ville Saloon (chassis 12514); and a 1930 2 Litre Tourer (chassis OH 9730). Despite the magnificence and importance of the collection, a number of the cars looked somewhat forlorn, kept in sheds that are open to the elements – though I understand that the cars are slowly being restored. I felt particularly sorry for the 2 Litre, which had been owned by H "Ban" Banerjee, and in which he told the Club in 1967 that he had driven over 300,000 miles. It cried out to be driven again.

At Udaipur, I had the pleasure of meeting Marespand Dadachanji (D3), who had initially put me onto the trail of Lagondas in India; Yashvardhan Ruia (ex-R37), who imported a 2 Litre (chassis OH 10057) into India a few years ago; and Kashyap Patel, Pranlal Bhogilal's nephew, who is now guiding the restoration of the Bhogilal collection. Marespand said that his 3½ Litre (chassis Z11164) was still awaiting restoration – he hoped in 2026.

It was a particular pleasure to meet Karl Bhote, who had provided me with a good deal of information for the article on Lagondas in India. He has since tracked down a couple more photographs of the Lagondas in the Bhogilal collection. ■



## Letters & Emails

Martin did Rodney proud in his obituary (Winter 2023-24) but in the interests of the accuracy that was so dear to Rodney's heart I'll correct one detail, which will lead inevitably to a few more words about one of the club's most clubbable characters, whose loss will be felt for a very long time.

I didn't step into the breach with the organisation of the Pyrenees Tour when Nigel Walder passed away so sadly, because the three of us had been an organisational triumvirate for several years by that time, with biennial tours to Burgundy, the Dordogne, and Galway already under our collective belts.

This all came about over dinner when the three of us were seated together during Tim Gresty's first Northern Tour. Tim had just announced that he would be placing these tours on a biennial footing, and I suggested to Rodney and Nigel that we might organise trips a bit further afield in the intervening years. They were both enthusiastic and I asked that we keep it under our hats until we had more of a plan. I should have known that although he sometimes wore a hat, as in the photo accompanying Martin's piece, he seldom kept anything under it for long. By the end of dinner, Rodney had "worked the room" and our first tour was already fully subscribed!

My friendship with Rodney and Nigel had been cemented on previous trips, and I was particularly grateful for Rodney's booming voice and aplomb on a Le Mans extended to the Dordogne where we had a wild boar roast at my house with members of the local old car club. The French expect a speech from the host, but I was under the weather and had lost my voice. Without hesitation Rodney spoke with panache on my behalf.

I got to know and appreciate both Rodney and Nigel much better when planning that first Burgundy tour. They were very different characters but an excellent combination; Rodney a more extrovert, great communicator who brought his skills as a former project manager, and Nigel as a quiet and calming influence with an engineer's attention to detail.

Rodney's organisational skill proved itself at the start of the Burgundy tour. He insisted the three of us arrive a day early and check our contacts at each place we had booked to visit. Nigel and I both felt this was overkill,



*Rodney speaking on my behalf,  
Dordogne 2010*

but Rodney was adamant. How right he was! One of the highlights of the tour was to be the visit to the winery of Olivier Lafflaive, with a vineyard tour followed by lunch and a cellar visit with explanation from Olivier himself. We arrived only to be told they had no record of our booking. We said that was impossible and that in two days 25 Lagondas and their crews would be turning up at their door filled with anticipation. The general manager told us that no booking had been made as they hadn't received our deposit. We pointed out that we had made the booking on our recce trip and no deposit had been requested. She couldn't produce any email sent asking for a deposit and I noticed on the diary on the receptionist's desk that our pencilled booking that had been rubbed out. It was quickly reinstated, disaster averted and Rodney's insistence fully vindicated.

What proved to be our last recce together as a triumvirate was to the Pyrenees in November 2019 for the tour planned for 2020. At first we had great difficulty finding a suitable hotel, one of the biggest challenges on all the tours. We initially dismissed the Monasterio de Leyre as being too remote, but as all the other hotels we visited were unsuitable for one reason or another, we decided to look at it, and were delighted with what we found. Another problem was that several roads were blocked by snow, so our route planning was largely guesswork.

Covid prevented the tour from taking place in 2020 and then Nigel died, but once the worst of the pandemic passed, Rodney and I decided to press ahead.

As so much time had passed, we felt a second recce was needed, which we did in the spring of 2022, so we were able to finalise the routes with greater confidence although we both missed Nigel's steadying influence.

Rodney asked to travel with Merav and me on the tour itself, so I took our M45 saloon, thinking Rodney would like to do some of the driving. He was so familiar with Nigel's car, and although very differently bodied, I thought he would be comfortable with that. When we set off, Rodney made it clear he didn't want to drive, which was the first indication to me that something might be amiss, although he remained very much the life & soul of the party throughout the trip.

He was great company, a good guy, and a valued friend.

Jonathan Oppenheimer ■



*Rodney & Nigel on our snowy  
Pyrenees recce, November*



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