

# THE *Lagonda*

No. 67

Autumn 1969



THE MAGAZINE OF THE LAGONDA CLUB



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## MAGAZINE

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Contributions do not necessarily represent the views of the Committee nor of the Editor, and expressed opinions are personal to contributors.

FRONT COVER: Jon Abson in the 1½ litre Rapier Special at speed. *Photo: Tony Wood.*

## NOTES, NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Committee are pleased to announce that MIKE WILBY has agreed to accept the office of President made vacant on ARTHUR FOX becoming a Patron of the Club. The Committee feel that Mike's vast experience of Club administration and affairs can be put to good use in this new capacity, in other words they can still make him do some work!

\* \* \* \*

As this issue was going to press the Club's Annual General Meeting was held at the Angler's Hotel, Staines. A great turn-out of members and their Lagondas resulted, thanks mainly to the fine weather. Some 70 Lagondas were on parade on the greensward in front of the hotel and this alone attracted a great many passers-by to come and look at what was going on. A full report with photos will appear in the next issue.

\* \* \* \*

JOHN BATT and his 2-litre were placed first in a Concours held recently at the Golso '69 Gower Pageant. George Stevens' M.45 tourer was given third.

\* \* \* \*

Readers will be sad to learn that GEOFFREY ALLEN will not be able to contribute any further cartoons for the magazine owing to pressure of his commitments prior to his emigration to Australia. Geoffrey's adept skill lay in his reproducing pictorially and accurately those moments of frustrating, agonising and sometimes maddening situations which beset so frequently Lagonda owners (or indeed any owner of vintage transport). His style, delightfully reminiscent of earlier days, was disarmingly casual yet, as close scrutiny of the drawing proved, a great deal of painstaking draughtmanship went into each cartoon. Geoffrey's clever use of lights and shadows was just right for the printed medium.

Our thanks go to Geoffrey for his contributions, which were always so welcome and our best wishes for his future.

\* \* \* \*

Do my eyes deceive me but wasn't that Charles Green's LG.45 Rapide tourer (ex-Crocker) pictured in the September *Motor Sport* as an exhibit at the Pembrokeshire Motor Museum???

PETER DENSHAM reports on a convivial event which he recently organised:

"In spite of an afternoon of gathering cloud and occasional drizzle the evening of 10th September remained dry and warm. Just as well, because 1,100 people had been invited to bring their number one cars to 'The Dell', Catherine de Barnes, Solihull—the home of the Midland Secretary.

"In fact 56 people arrived. There were seven Lagondas, 15 Aston Martins and 20 other interesting cars. A 1926 20/60 Sunbeam towering above even Brian Minshull's massive 4½-litre saloon. Les Buckton brought his latest discovery, a V.12 saloon, Bill Nash his much cherished 2-litre. Wittridge came in a very light and sportive M.45. A car which he drives daily and which he enters for competitive motoring; an example to be followed. The 'Banana Split' was to be seen lurking in the shadows cast by the bonfire. A horse-box, suitably furnished, made an excellent bar in which seven gallons of beer were consumed. A kitty of 5/- per car almost exactly squared the drink bill and a good time was had by all."

\* \* \* \*

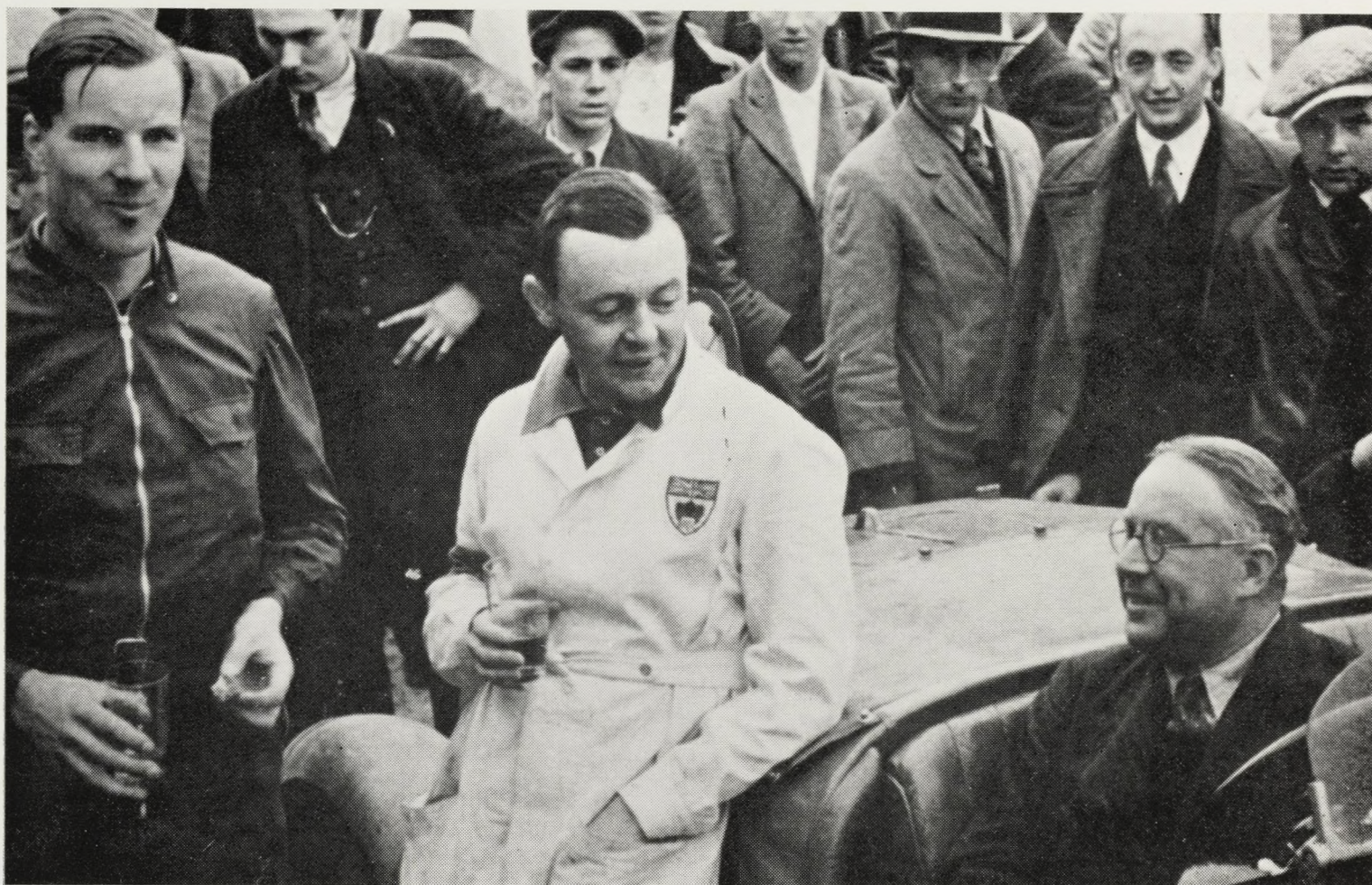
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*Mr. D. H. Leyshon-James, a Lagonda Club member with many years experience of coachbuilding has recently started his own coachbuilding and repairing business.*

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### *Arthur W. Fox—our new Patron*

The Committee have much pleasure in announcing that ARTHUR W. FOX has consented to become a Patron of the Club.

Well known as our President, Arthur Fox did so much to further the name Lagonda in racing circles in the years before the war. He entered 2 litre and 3 litre cars in most of the long distance sports car races in the late 1920s and then after a spell using Talbots, Arthur returned to Lagonda in the twilight of genuine sports car racing in the latter half of the 1930s with the M.45R cars which apart from winning the 1935 Le Mans race finished high in the results in the T.T. races of 1934 and 1935. For 1936 and 1937 the 2 and 4 seater LG.45 cars were used and the most notable success came with the third place in the 1936 500 mile race at Brooklands.

In recognition of these achievements it was felt that Arthur Fox properly belonged amongst our Patrons. Unfortunately his continued ill health will mean that we shall not see him in a very active capacity but the good wishes of all the members must surely go to him to mark the occasion.

Arthur had many successes with the various Lagondas he entered in sports car races and of course the Fox Trophy which he presented to the Club was originally awarded to him as the team prize in the B.A.R.C. 6-Hour race run at Brooklands in 1929. The team of 2 litres seem to have held together better than most of the rivals, tribute perhaps to Arthur Fox's careful preparation.

*Photo: Our new Patron in happy mood. Arthur Fox sitting in the four seater LG.45R looks well pleased with its win in the Over 4-litre class in the 1936 Spa 24-Hour race. The drivers Richard Seaman (dark overalls) and Freddie Clifford talk the race over with the entrant.*

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## NORTHERN NOTES

### Herb Schofield

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#### NORTHERN GYMKHANA (DRIVING TESTS) JULY 5th, 1969 SANDTOFT

I GET RATHER NOSTALGIC WHENEVER I VISIT Sandtoft, for one thing it was the venue where I first competed in the Lagonda Club (in a blown 2-litre), secondly it was ten years ago exactly. How well I remember that very hot summer's day in 1959. The tests were organised by the then Northern Secretary Brian Dearden-Briggs who afterwards became perhaps my closest friend. I also remember a spectating V.12 saloon in perfect condition, this car became a standard to which I always aimed.

By coincidence the number of entrants in 1959 exactly matched the 1969 total but how different the tests were. In 1959 competition was taken very seriously and the meeting also attracted a large number of Southern members. The winner in 1959 was Capt. (now Major) Lock driving an M.45 tourer. Lock was a very active competitor in those days, he is still in the Club of course, but not quite so active.

The premier award winner this year was Alan Ogden in his M.45 tourer (is this the most useful Lagonda model?) The tests nowadays are now rather gentle, more in keeping perhaps with the undoubted higher standard of turnout of our cars today. The term 'concours condition' could be applied to a number of cars present, and in particular to Martin Holloway's superb 1932 3-litre tourer. Martin, a newish Northern competitor did extremely well and I hope enjoyed himself. Another new member Nigel Hall appeared in the Alan Brown LG.45 special now sporting a black finish, but dripping oil and looking just a little unkempt,—very fast, however, as a number of members who sampled it found out. David Hine's Rapide was not going as well as normal owing to faulty valve timing, but it now looks very tidy under the bonnet. Surprisingly fast was John Beardow's massive coachbuilt M.45 tourer, complete with Brooks trunk and rear screen. The Northern Secretary now getting soft, lounged around in his LG.6 tart trap. Joe Unsworth was there as usual in the blown 2-litre and that other 2-litre expert Alan Brown was driving his special which now looks like a cut down 4½-litre, but without the urge—a very useful sort

of car for driving tests however, as he came third. Other stalwarts competing included Doc Rider, M45R, and Ted Townsley, LG. 45 tourer, now happily cured of its boiling problems.

Of the other makes Broadbank was quickest in a pretty little Viva followed by Ken Pape in a modern 'S' type Jaguar (a very unhappy looking design) and Doc Turner in his Citroen DS19.

Quickest in Test 1 (a beer drinking contest and sprint) was Doc Rider, M45R. Two of the tests consisted of general knowledge and car photograph identification which showed Alan Ogden (M.45) to be the greatest expert. Test 3—A timed speed test round the outside of a large circle was best performed by Nigel Hall (LG.45). Test 5—A blindfold test produced the best marks from Alan Brown (2-litre)—perhaps he's used to groping in the dark! Best time in the Le Mans start to a flying finish was produced by Nigel Hall (LG.45), but as he incurred penalties top marks went to John Broadbank (Viva).

#### SOUTHERN DRIVING TESTS JULY 27th, 1969

For some unaccountable reason the Northern Secretary was persuaded down south to be Clerk of the Course at the Bentley/Lagonda Driving Test Meeting. Clerk of the Course is a high-sounding title for whitewash mixer, Lav. attendant and test layer-outer.

One cannot help but be impressed at the total number of competitors, ranging from Freda Roberts 11.9 Lagonda through to the post-war Bentley Mk. 6 specials which are horribly foul but impressively fast. A large number of "spectating only" cars turned up notable of which was Martin's lovely LG.6 Drophead which is always a delight to the eye, equally delightful was Valentine's near perfect V.12 drophead who was having a go in the tests.

Generally speaking the Bentley drivers take their sport much more seriously than we do and again generally speaking have evolved in many instances specialised machinery for competition work, so it shouldn't worry us too much that about the first seven places in the final results were occupied by 'them'.

Northern members competing included Alan Brown (2-litre), Nigel Hall (LG.45), Ian North (16-80), Peter Schofield (LG.45), and David Hine (LG.45R), whose wife Jill very kindly supplied the Northerners with food and drink—thanks very much Jill!

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## B.D.C. SILVERSTONE

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DON'T WHATEVER YOU DO, GO INTO THE PADDOCK Bar before the first race if Ody Sahib is there. In exchange for a drink he will press you into writing a report of the day's proceedings. "I'd do it myself, old boy, in my new capacity of Assistant Editor, but I've got to fill my radiator . . . so good of you!" Still, I guess that's what Assistant Editors are for.

The first four races of the day were two confined to Bentleys and two 10 lap allcomers. Unfortunately there was no direct Lagonda interest in the latter as Maurice Leo was in trouble with the cylinder head sealing rings pouring water. After working on them all Friday night he found exactly the same thing happening in practice so he wisely wheeled the Le Mans V.12 away. Maurice must hold the Club record for major rebuilds during meetings with the V.12. Last year he changed a half shaft between the morning and afternoon runs at the Finmere Driving Tests. Also absent was Iain Macdonald's LG.45 tourer. Friends had replaced his head gasket without goo and didn't tighten it sufficiently so it promptly distorted the new gasket. However, Iain and Beryl came down to watch the Lagondas, but one suspects they also paid passing interest to son John who has forsaken his Rapier for a Morgan. All this left us time to watch the racing, and among the more noteworthy performances was Bob Gooda flinging father's S.3 Continental round corners with great concentration but considerable roll and a nasty twitch as the suspension levelled after Woodcote each lap. Eventually the inevitable happened and he had a monumental spin at Woodcote, fortunately with no one else around, but he continued on his way apparently not one whit abashed.

Next was the race of the day—the Lagonda five-lap handicap. Unfortunately for the first time ever, due to a paucity of entries, our race was merged with an Aston Martin race, and in the process the handicaps were well and truly mangled by the organisers. Verbal protests have been followed up by more official written ones—not so much to object to what actually happened, as to ensure that, in future, things are run on a proper basis. Fifteen Lagondas had entered, with non starters Maurice Leo and Iain Macdonald. Freda Roberts, with 3 laps and one

minute start in a model K, immediately stood out, on scanning the programme, as a likely contender, and the cognoscenti wondered about David Johnson's large 14/60 Saloon, on 2 laps plus one minute twenty, and a gaggle of 2 litres including new boy Alan Elliott, with a lap and a minute or so start. Other very welcome newcomers were Evelyn Matthews with an M.35 Rapide, bought in March in conjunction with her brother Richard; John Bradley with a nice M.45 (incidentally John has lots of 4, 6 and V.8 cylinder B.T.H. magneto spares); and Witt Witteridge with another M.45.

Limit man David Johnson set off gently along the pit straight with two credit laps already under his belt, but with the nagging thought that the wind was against him down the Woodcote straight. Fifteen seconds later, as David neared the Motor bridge, Bob Alexander kept pace with a DB.2, and Colin Bugler, Jeff Ody and Alan Elliott set off in line abreast. Five seconds later the commentator's nightmare began as Herb Schofield, in the LG.45 Team Car Replica with no credit laps, an Aston Ulster, Alan Brown with one credit lap, and Freda Roberts with three credit laps set off together. There was then a long gap until Witt Witteridge and Evelyn Matthews set off with Judy Hogg and a modern Aston. Finally the scratch men—Ron Kerridge, John Bradley, a Le Mans Aston, and John Batt, all with a credit lap, and a DB.4.GT on genuine scratch set off together. John's Rapier is now running on 80 petrol, 15 alcohol and 5 benzene and obviously likes it, as it outdragged, even if only temporarily, the DB.4.GT of Butcher who was perhaps scared by the sight of Fowler's Le Mans Aston approaching Woodcote fast towards the end of his first lap.

Ignoring the Astons and the credit laps Bob Alexander came round first, no doubt inspired by the Vampire aircraft nose which does service as the special's tail and its ex-Donald Campbell V.8 Delage E.N.V. box; closely pursued by Herb Schofield, Alan Brown who was already clearly beating the handicappers, Colin Bugler and Jeff Ody. Oddly enough both the leading Lagondas were in trouble before the race—Alexander's M.45 trying to part block from crankcase in practice—Alan Brown's Team Car Replica LG.45 driven by Herb boiling furiously at any speed over 45 m.p.h.

While Jeff Ody, complete with one new piston, was leading Colin Bugler for the first time ever,

and John Batt was keeping Ron Kerridge at bay, everyone missed Freda Roberts starting her last lap and Witt Witteridge moving quietly and efficiently up the field to 8th on lap 3 and 5th on lap 4. A couple of minutes later a slow moving object in the far distance near Becketts was assumed to be Freda, but excitement in the commentators' box mounted as a second and then a third slow moving object were seen on the horizon, all slowly converging. The first proved eventually to be Jeff Ody whose car expired enveloping Jeff and several marshalls, not to mention the odd competitor, in a vast white smoke cloud—out of which emerged David Johnson in the 14/60 saloon followed at a respectable distance by Freda. Even though she was giving away nearly a litre and several years of design to David she slowly caught him up, and we were treated to the sight of the 11.9 taking the 14/60 on the outside at Woodcote, while several 2 litres, M.45s and DB Astons squeezed by outside them.

So the oldest Lagonda won the race, followed by the oldest Aston Martin, driven by another lady, to win the Aston Martin handicap, before Alan Brown, Witt Witteridge and Colin Bugler came in to finish second, third and fourth in the Lagonda Handicap.

The time-keepers did a fine job issuing almost immediately afterwards the best lap time of each competitor and also some times taken through a speed trap situated, unfortunately, about the top of the hill on the Woodcote straight. This is far from being the fastest part of the course but the speeds make interesting reading.

	<i>Best Lap</i>	<i>Lap Speed</i>	<i>Speed on the Straight</i>
		<i>m.p.h.</i>	<i>m.p.h.</i>
Alexander	1' 29.8"	64½	
Batt	1' 29.2"	65	78.1
Bradley	1' 41.8"	56¾	68.9
Brown	1' 42.0"	56¾	67.1
Bugler	1' 46.0"	54½	62.1
Elliott	1' 51.4"	52	
Johnson	2' 50.6"	34	35.5
Kerridge	1' 33.8"	61¾	78.7
Matthews	1' 40.3"	57¾	70.9
Ody	1' 56.2"	49¾	49.0
Roberts	2' 39.6"	36	
Schofield	1' 35.0"	61	77.5
Witteridge	1' 32.4"	62½	83.3

Obviously it wasn't possible to take maximum speed readings for each car on each lap, which

accounts for some of the blanks. For instance, presumably Jeff Ody was timed on the lap when he was in the process of blowing up, and the quoted speeds depend on how hard each driver was trying on that lap.

Between the races various people of note were circulating quietly on demonstration laps, and it was a pleasant compliment that the designer of the pre-war V.12 was taken round in one of those Bentleys immediately after the Lagonda race.

Race 6 was the special invitation 10 lap handicap for the S.T.P. Trophy. Entries ranged from the very exotic to the slightly less exotic—D type Jaguars, DB.4.GT Zagatos, Morgan Plus 8's, Betty Haig in the Le Mans Frazer-Nash and our man Bob Alexander in his M.45. Herb Schofield was entered in Alan Brown's LG.45 Replica but the car or Herb or Alan took fright beforehand. Suffice it to say that Bob was fifth on the first lap but gradually fell back and stopped twice at the pits for water. The timekeepers must have been confused by all this as they forgot to tell the man with the flag when the 10 laps were up and it continued for about 10½s.

Lastly Tony Wood in the Woodbatt Rapier, Bob Alexander who seemed to have cured his boiling, Alan Brown, and Colin Bugler disputed the V.S.C.C. members handicap. Tony was unfortunate in running into fuel feed troubles after the one minute signal and was finally pushed off the grid to a push start after the rest of the field had departed. Bob Alexander improved steadily to eighth place and Colin and Alan came home in the middle of the field.

And so we all went home, but none so slowly as Jeff Ody who was observed about noon the next day proceeding very gently along the A.5 in the 2 litre complete with wife, family and a relaxed holiday mood whilst James Woollard, complete with wife, family and a worried car in his 2-litre towed Jeff Londonwards.

J.D.A.

#### MAGAZINE COPY

Please note that all contributions for the WINTER issue should be submitted by NOVEMBER 15th. Copy for the SPRING 1970 issue to be in by JANUARY 15th, 1970.

## WEST LONDON NEWS

LOOKING BACK OVER 1969 OUR GROUP HAS HAD A busy time, besides our monthly visit to the Anglers at Egham the stalwarts meet all other Wednesdays at the Ship at Mortlake. Oddly enough, though we take in Middlesex, both our meetings are in Surrey, but only just, in each case we are just the other side of the river; if any members south of London find their meeting too far away they can be sure of a welcome from us.

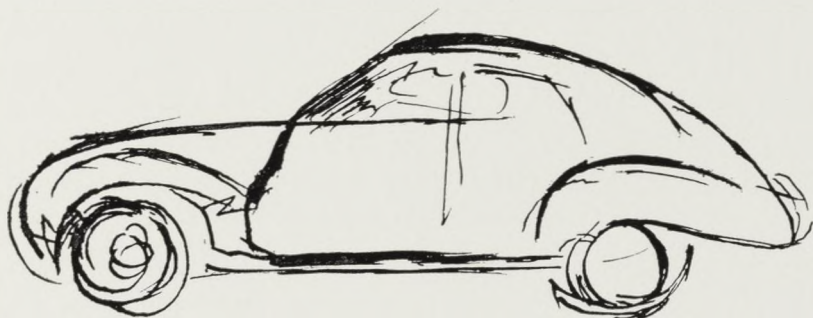
Over the months parties have gone to Oulton Park, both the Silverstone Meetings, Ford, Prescott and a combined descent is about to be made on the Auto Jumble at Beaulieu; the last despite their ghastly adventures suffered on the way home last year due to the floods. One who shall be nameless hit a deep flood at 60 m.p.h., it must have been quite a sight and the occupants of the car were soaked to the skin in a flash—so was the magneto. I am happy to report that our attendances are good, we had thirteen at the last Ship meet but I did not think it worth while mentioning the fact at the time; of these four were wives or girl friends, bless their hearts. They all got a welcome with open arms especially new member Robby Hewitt who arrived conducting the ex-Vokes 3 litre. (I must remember to ask her why she was wearing slacks). We only saw beneath the bonnet in the dark but even so the engine appeared to be just as Mr. Vokes had seen it for the last time; there appeared to be interesting examples of the work's expertise in filter work.

Another welcome visitor has been Dennis Jenkinson of *Motor Sport* during what must be one of his rare visits to this country; those who read the August number may remember that a certain 3 litre disgraced itself in Northern France by shedding a timing chain. Robby was lucky in having the right man aboard. A few weeks back we had another visitor from afar, Mr. John Whiting from Berkeley, California, don't anyone tell me they have never heard of that place. Well way back home he has DFG 698, a 1929 2 litre which has a boat-tailed body reputed to have been put on very soon after the car was built, from a photograph it looked rather like our Herbs' special.

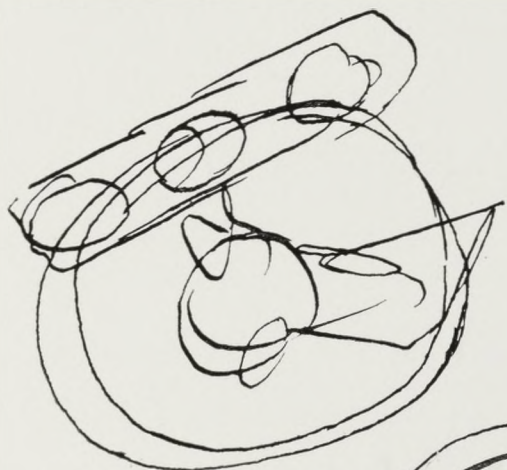
While we had "Jenks" with us we got quite a

lot of news about the recent Frazer-Nash raid to the Alps; subsequently I have managed to read the *Chain Gang Gazette* and of the detailed planning which had to be done before the trip took place. The August number of *The Rapier Register News* also came my way which contained John Organ's wonderful write up of the event as one of the participants. Just to get you full of anticipation, the magazine has been passed on to Editor Tony May in the hope he will get permission to print the article. Full marks to the Chain-Gangers and to reporter John Organ. If you have never had a ride in one of these cars it is an experience to be obtained at the first opportunity, I can think of nothing quite like it, when I day dream of the big barn I would like to own one of the cars which went inside after the 2 litre Lagonda would be a Frazer-Nash. There is one I even have in mind, a Colmore, the last one of these cars to be built in 1938 or 1939. It belongs to a man who runs a high chassis 2 litre; how lucky he is and what impeccable taste.

I have often wondered how the old factory called itself Staines, Middlesex, what was good enough for them is my reason for claiming it in our area; especially as we have two feet inside what is now the Petter Factory. The two feet belong to member Tony Brandon and thanks to him we had some interesting company at our September meeting at the Anglers. I spent an engrossed evening with Mr. Feeley the bodywork designer and my notebook. I might mention that nothing was written in it but Mr. Feeley's pencil was producing details of his designs at lightning speed. My favourite car of any make is the 1937 4½ litre Rapide; the Director, Mr. A. P. Goode decided that they needed a fast, light and attractive sports car and our friend was told to produce a design, he did so and was told to make it; 25 in all were produced. Next time you see one of these cars look for some of his own ideas which he incorporated; for the first time the windscreen supports were not bolted on outside the bodywork but were concealed very neatly inside. There was also a new design for clamping the hood on to the top of the windscreen; he also said he got away with using upturned sweeps on the front mudguards and downturned on the rear. Mr. Vickers who was with us mentioned that Mr. Goode had his own personal Rapide CAR 733 and he told the story how he was driving this car back from Eastbourne at some 90-95 m.p.h. when Earl Howe passed him in his Bugatti; Mr. Vickers



*Mr. Feeley's sketches show an idea for a radial engined car and also the development of the design for the front end of Lagonda from pre-war to post-war*



knew a short cut round a congested area and it was a very surprised Earl Howe who overtook the Rapide for the second time.

One of my bar parlour stories about the Jaguar engine being a crib of the Rapier one got knocked on the head, evidently the get-together of the two companies had gone some way and the Jaguar people had seen everything including the plans for the 2.6, collapse of Rapier story. Sometime I hope to get the story of the 2.6 from Mr. Feeley. One other gem of information which came my way was that up to 1940 when war work intervened they had been working on a five

cylinder flat radial engined car with the body in one piece and the engine and bonnet added on. This one never came to life again but when the war looked like ending the design team spent their own time at weekends preparing their post-war project and I hope that we will learn all about it. One last tit-bit, when the pre-war V.12 was produced the designer had visualised a front end treatment something like the XK.120 but tradition won the day.

One day during the winter I hope to go and visit Mr. Feeley when I will take two notebooks.

HARRY GOSTLING

## THE FIRST ASIAN HIGHWAY MOTOR RALLY

### (Or How to Successfully Rally in a Lag)

THUMP! . . . I TURNED TO MY CO-PILOT AND navigator to find out why she had clouted me on the head only to discover a shoe lying between us. As we drove on through the town lined with thousands of people, I thought that this was a peculiar way to cheer us on at two o'clock in the morning!

The First Asian Highway Motor Rally was underway and we were on the second leg of the rally route from Nongkhai in north Thailand down to Bangkok, a distance of 386 miles. So far, we were still quite fresh and the tension was high as we now felt that we might be able to keep up the pace and make most of the time controls . . . at least until we reached the mountains in south Thailand. Then we'd see if our 1934 Lagonda would show her breeding and keep up with those new-fangled four-wheeled conveyances with their fancy names.

We were in high spirits as dawn broke and we passed through Nakorn Rajsima. We had made the first three time controls either on time or a few minutes earlier than required. The road was straight and the night chill had gone. After one more day and night of open cockpit rallying, we were to envy the comfort of those in their Holdens, Toyotas, Volvos, etc. It gets uncomfortably hot rolling along in the mid-day sun and surprisingly chilly about three o'clock in the morning. But we'll know better NEXT TIME!

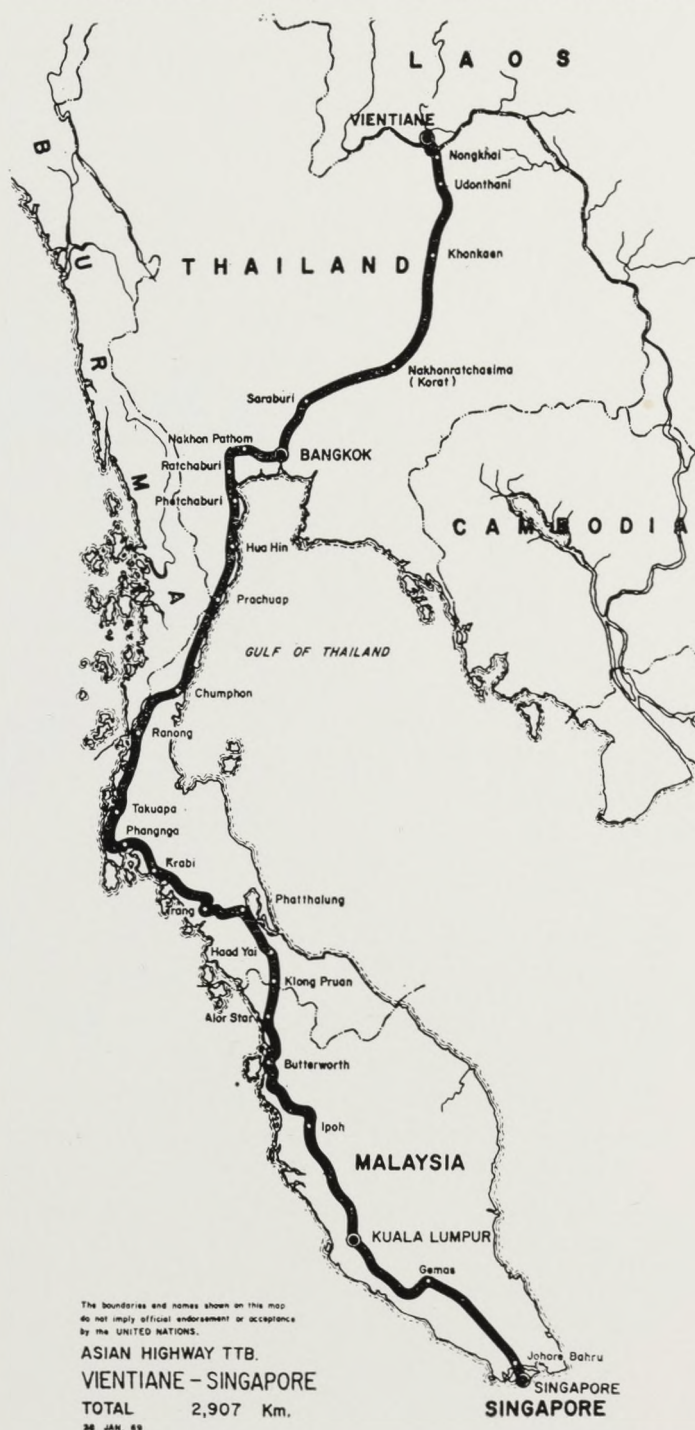
#### The Rally Route

To go back a bit in time, Marianne and I had begun talking of participating in the First Asian Highway Motor Rally shortly after its announcement back in January. But with the Singapore Grand Prix coming up one week before the rally, we doubted somewhat that there would be enough time in between the two events to get the car up to Vientiane, Laos, where the rally would commence. The rally route ran from Vientiane down to the Mekong River ferry crossing, a distance of only 14 miles. After crossing the river

via a car ferry, the vehicles would re-group at Nongkhai, on the Thailand side of the Mekong River. Then, starting off in one minute intervals at midnight, Wednesday 16th April the cars would run down Friendship Highway in north Thailand to Bangkok. Here, a four hour stopover was scheduled in a closed park adjacent to Throne Hall.

Starting off again after lunch on Thursday 17th April, the cars had to drive steadily south throughout the afternoon and evening. Reaching the south Thailand mountains at night, the cars had to spend the greater part of it negotiating hairpin curves.

Arriving at the Thai-Malaysia border at mid-morning, there was an hour's break scheduled for



customs, immigration, a wash and a drink. Then off again down through Alor Star, Ipoh and into Kuala Lumpur's Merdeka Stadium for Time Control No. 14. On down through Seremban, Segamat and finally through the Malaysian-Singapore border at Johore Bahru.

The Singapore leg was an easy one coursing out into the Jurong Industrial Estate on the western side of the island before coming into the city proper and arriving at the finish at Empress Place. **The Preparation** (*Or how not to prepare for a 3,700 mile trip*)

For those who were far afield from the Singapore Grand Prix weekend activities perhaps it would be best to fill you in on the BEFORE and AFTER as it has a bearing on the story of how a 1934 Lagonda showed a hundred and sixty modern cars (and thousands of rally spectators in four countries) how they made cars at Wilbur Gunn's automotive works in Staines back in the "good olde days".

Our M.45 Lagonda's restoration was long overdue. Having run in three Grand Prix vintage events in the two years we had owned it, procrastination had to give way to drastic action. So, Ken Painter was commissioned to bring back vital parts from the Lagonda Club's Technical Advisor, Capt. Ivan Forshaw during Ken's Christmas visit to the U.K. Meanwhile, the search for a body maker was made and the style of body decided on. It would be a 1935 Le Mans-winning replica (with modifications).

The work started on the engine overhaul and the new body on 8th February . . . with the engine in Wing Seng's hands and the body hammered out of aluminium by Ah Sam (a former Freddy Pope man). In the meantime, we signed up for the vintage event in the Singapore Grand Prix on 5th April and the First Asian Highway Rally on 15th April.

The work progressed rapidly but the schedule was extremely tight. Finally, with only one day left before scrutineering, the car was finished but unpainted. Instead of running it around for the next 24 hours, however, I simply stood and soaked in its beauty. I decided to run it in its unpainted condition and on the morning of the trial run, I motored out the 10 miles to the Thompson Road circuit.

Off we went in the trial run. Halfway around she was running beautifully . . . the new standard size Hepolite pistons giving fine compression at 3,000 r.p.m. But the beginning of a long hard

weekend was only one minute away.

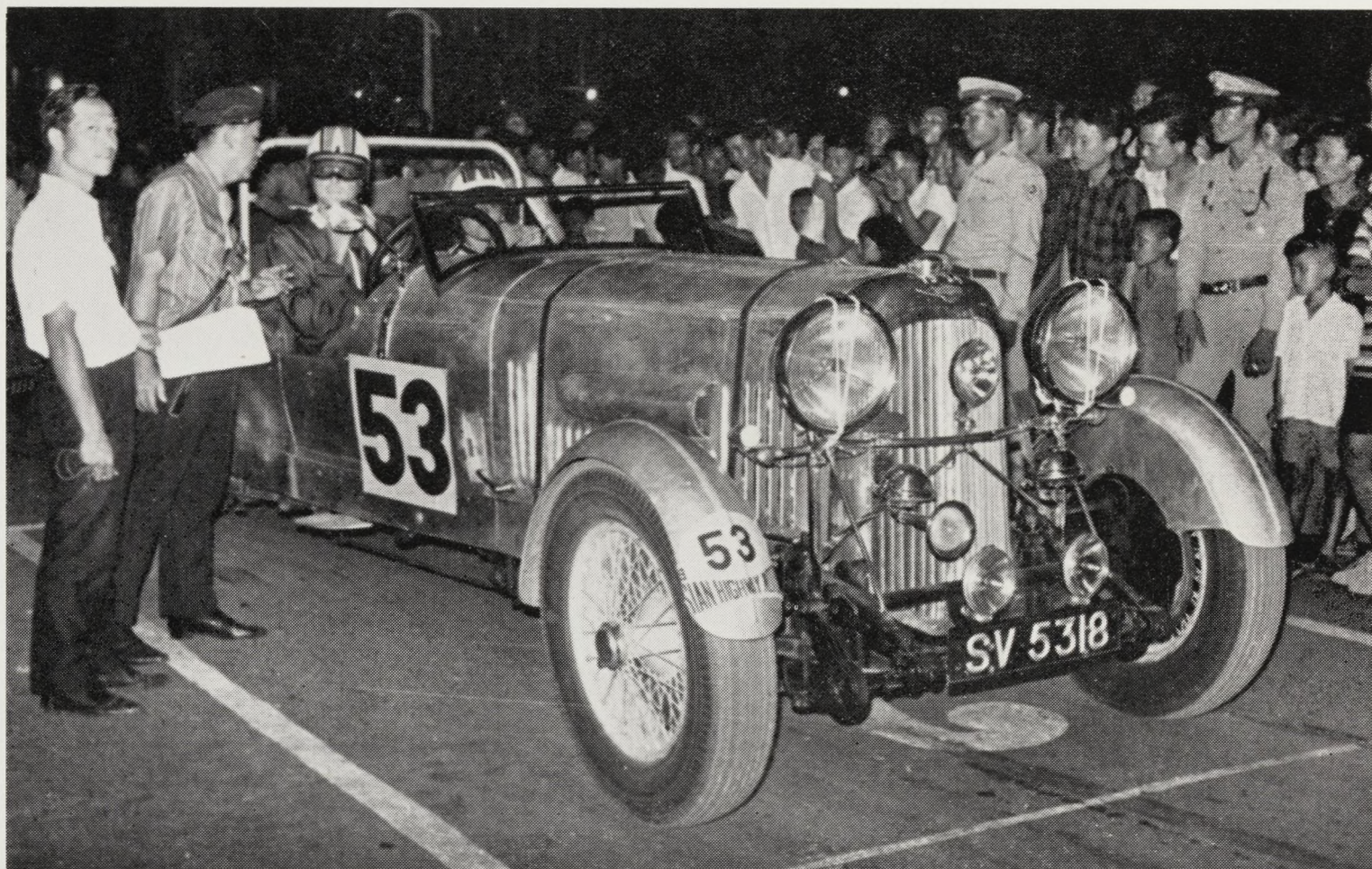
Sliding through Devil's Bend, I decided it was time to move along at a faster clip. Coming around Peak Bend at high speed, I geared down to third. Halfway down the slope towards Range Hairpin, I realised I was going much too fast and quickly geared down into second. The newly installed gears sung as I took the turn and, with my foot down hard, I began to accelerate along the Thompson mile straight-away. A sickening groan, an immediate sluggishness and a rapid loss of power brought me to the side of the road. Not knowing just what the problem was, I tinkered for about five minutes and, lo and behold, it started and off we went. I traversed the circuit one and a half times more before the sluggishness set in again and I finally retired to the paddock to sort things out.

Preliminary diagnosis seemed to lead to the pistons and forthwith the car was taken to Wing Seng's garage. Off came the head and sump and out came the two seized pistons. All afternoon, evening and night we wrestled with the damaged pistons and rings until at four o'clock in the morning, I was bellying the sump cover back on with old Mr. Yue and his four sons working like an Indianapolis pit crew. At 5 a.m. we drove out to Changi and back and it sounded healthy again.

Race day had already arrived, so home for a two hour snooze and out again to the circuit. Off we went and I tried to behave myself on the first lap despite the fact that we have provided greater piston and tappet clearances for running at higher revs. On the Thompson mile I decided to give it "a go" and move it up to 85 m.p.h. Taking the turn at Sembawang Circus, old No. 34 decided that this pace was not for her and she seized again. Well, at least I had a good vantage point from which to see the rest of the vintage car race. As I stood by the side of the car, I wondered if I had been dreaming when I mailed the US\$25 entry fee off to Bangkok for the First Asian Highway Motor Rally. What optimism!

#### **Major Surgery at 2 a.m. in Wing Seng's Garage, Singapore**

Needless to say, the Wing Seng family and I were of the same mind . . . let's try! Off came the head and sump, out came the pistons and on went the work. The scored cylinder sleeves were rebored to + 60 thou (these had been installed to accept the new standard pistons) and the old over-sized pistons with Mercedes rings were re-installed. We worked half-way through



Checking in at Control

Saturday night before retiring. Early Sunday morning we were back at it again. And so it went, on through the day, until at twelve midnight, the old was back together. We decided that no test run would be made—we knew this engine well by this time. So bidding Mr. Yue and his four sons goodbye, I returned home in the Avenger. Needless to say when Marianne awoke on Monday morning, her first question was “Are we still going?” And you know the answer! We packed our touring and rallying equipment and, after kissing the three children goodbye, we set out for points north.

#### **Enroute to Bangkok**

Obviously, we set a strict rule on speed as we started out as the pistons and rings simply had to be treated right this time or we’d be OUT before we reached Johore. Forty m.p.h. for the first hundred miles, 45-50 m.p.h. for the second hundred and 50-55 m.p.h. for the third hundred miles. Excepting for a short stop at Ah Fong’s in Seremban, we travelled North through Kuala Lumpur and reached Ipoh late on Monday evening with the only trouble being tyre rub on the rear wings. Thirty cents of wire and a bit of wing-bending reduced the bothersome noise to an occasional squeal when we hit a decent hole in

the road.

The Station Hotel in Ipoh requires no advertising and, after a frustrating night there, we won’t bother to do so. Tuesday morning, we motored up through to Alor Star stopping off there for lunch. Then north to the Malaysia-Thai border towns of Changlun and Sadao, respectively. We reached Krabi in south Thailand on Tuesday evening after driving through the first mountainous section of the route. The road was under repair in many places and care had to be taken on the hairpins because of loose gravel and laterite (as well as large lorries and buses who behaved themselves quite well, by the way).

The hotel at Krabi was non-descript and it will stay that way! As the next leg was 480 miles, we started early on the morning of Wednesday 9th April, and took on the second sector of south Thailand mountains during the morning hours. Little did we realise that we would be speeding through these hairpins at two o’clock in the morning trying to average 50 m.p.h. in the week ahead.

Finally, Hua Hin appeared on the evening horizon (we were now in the flat country south of Bangkok) and we were delighted to find a new hotel with fine amenities and good food. Thursday

morning we motored leisurely up to Bangkok and booked into the Victory Hotel at noon. It was rather significant, we thought. "Victory" it has been . . . we reached our first goal: Bangkok! (Back in Singapore, we had decided that this must be our primary goal. After Bangkok . . . well, we'd see!)

After a wash and lunch, Marianne went off to procure rally auto insurance and Laotian visas (we were to discover later that we wasted US\$10 as rally entrants were given free visas at the Laotian border!). I went to the Volvo garage to change the oil, re-design the rear-wing brackets and install new windscreen brackets as one had broken and the other cracked on the trip up. Following a good night's rest, we were ready for the road again on Friday morning. So far, we were right on the schedule set down by Marianne nearly one month ago.

#### **North to Vientiane**

The drive along Friendship Highway north through Nakorn Rajasima was uninteresting—except for the delicious watermelons we bought enroute. The heat was becoming a bit too much and the second layer of nose skin was very tender by this time. We wore our racing helmets, sunglasses, towels across our mouths and windbreakers throughout the trip, by the way. But the wind parched our throats and Marianne's invention of sucking from a long plastic tube inserted into a cold water thermos jug behind the seat provided only momentary relief. A tip in future open-cockpit Lagonda ralliers (in tropical countries, that is!): buy a watermelon and hold the pulp and seeds in your mouth for some time. It's better than glucose and water!

We arrived at Khonkaen in the late afternoon and booked into the Kosa Hotel. The accommodation was very nice and there was a good variety of food. An evening stroll to the adjacent bowling alley and an early turn-in finished the day nicely. (The bowling alley and the Coca-Cola bottling plant on the outskirts of town surprised us initially until we learned that one of the biggest U.S. Army Air Force airfields and bases in Thailand was nearby).

The drive from Khonkaen to Nongkhai at the edge of the Mekong River is only 107 miles, so we arrived before noon and spent the next four hours going through Thai exit customs and immigration and waiting for the car ferry. The ferry pilot and crew stopped one hour for lunch on the Lao side of the river—so we waited. At

this point, we must mention that we made the acquaintance of the TV crew from TV Malaysia who were very nice gals and guys and we commiserated together. Actually, they were full of rally particulars and it was at this time that we received our first book and other data on the rally. (Upon our return to Singapore after **finishing** the rally, we found two large brown envelopes under registered post from ECAFE headquarters in Bangkok. They contained all the rally information!)

The Mekong River was low and we understand that not only did the ferry have to go downstream some distance, then back up the other side to find deep water—but areas had to be dredged to accommodate the high volume of vehicles connected with the rally. The ferry will carry 18 cars but we were surprised at the large number of oil trucks crossing over with fuel to supply the "silent war" vehicles and planes in Laos.

Customs and immigration for the rally entrants was well planned for on the Laotian side of the river, so no undue delay occurred.

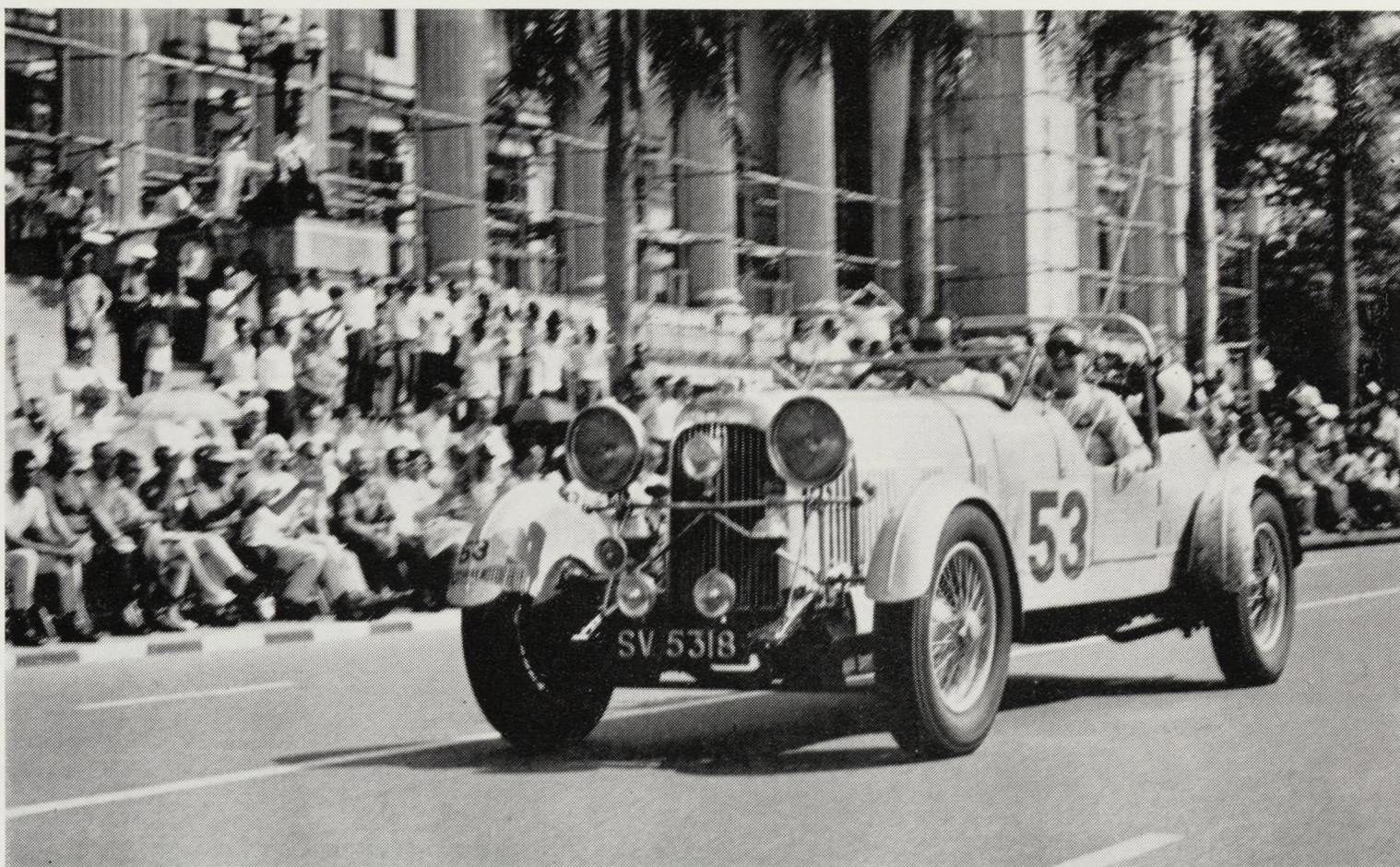
#### **Arrival in Vientiane**

The outskirts of Vientiane are no different than any of the rice growing districts of Thailand or Malaysia. The city itself however, has the look of "no hope". Suffice it to say, the roads, buildings, communications and commerce have a long way to go to equal even the average Malaysian town.

We booked into a rather poor hotel the first night but shifted to the Seetha Palace Hotel on the second day. The "Tiger Brewery boys" (as they were to become known) advised us that it was the best place in town but unfortunately it was all booked. We drove over for breakfast after scrutineering on Sunday morning and when we drove up, the young American proprietor took one look at the Lagonda and decided it should be parked in front of his hotel for the next few days. Needless to say, a booked room was ours immediately. (We never did find out what happened to the late arrivals who had booked the room in advance!).

#### **The Sojourn in Vientiane**

After our arrival, some rear wing work was required late Saturday afternoon as scrutineering for the first 80 cars was scheduled for Sunday morning. Arriving at the appointed place adjacent to the renowned That Luang Temple at 8 a.m., we discovered that being punctual at scrutineering was not a prerequisite. After considerable delay



Large crowds encouraged competitors on their way.

and confusion, we were checked, passed—and told to come back the following day for other documents. Ah well, we really did have a fair bit of work to do on the car to put it in rally shape so we adjourned to the Citroen Garage for lunch.

It was on the way over to the garage that we experienced one of the joyous customs of the Laotian New Year holidays which occurred on Sunday and Monday. Rounding a corner, we ran into a huge shower of water. Through dripping eyelids, we saw the street before us lined with children and adults all armed with buckets of water and hoses. There was little we could do defensively but drive on, cursing both our vulnerable open cockpit and their New Year's custom of dousing one and all with water.

We worked for the rest of that day and part of Monday adjusting a slipping clutch, pedal linkage, changing oil, re-gasketing the headlamp covers, soldering a pin hole leak in the radiator, installing another long beam head lamp and heightening the rear wings above the tyres. Sunday evening, we dined out with the Citroen Garage owner, Mr. Shing Wai Lau. He had entered a newly arrived Citroen Mehari, a two cylinder, 750 c.c. opposed firing, aircooled, fibreglass bodied version of a Mini-Moke. His

chief mechanic and cousin were the drivers (and drive it they did—all the way to Singapore arriving with us at the finish line!)

Aside from picking up more rally documents and attending to the afore-mentioned repairs, Monday was uneventful—until evening, that is! A rally briefing was scheduled for all entrants at the large Lane Xang Hotel at 5 p.m. This was to be followed by a garden party for the competitors, officials and government representatives.

As the "water war" was still on, we decided to have our hotel station wagon convey us to the other hotel for the briefing and party. With all windows closed, we managed to negotiate through the greater part of the route untouched. However, with less than a block to go, the window on the driver's side dropped down—and, at that precise moment, the contents of a large bucket of water flew through the window and . . . well, have you ever seen mascara trickling down a cleavage? I was wet but Marianne was soaked and ripping mad! Happy New Year!

At the briefing, a number of important questions were raised that had a bearing on the outcome of the rally as many of the protesters know. Nevertheless, either because we were wet and angry, or because we couldn't hear what was

being said, we adjourned to the bar with Philip Seow and Dickie Arblaster to wet the inside a bit.

The garden reception was quite nice and, if you were quick, you could get an odd bit of the hors d'oeuvres to eat or belly up to the huge bar for drinks. A floor show of Lao dancing and music was also presented.

### **Stage One—The Start**

On Tuesday morning, 15th April, we arose early and drove out to the starting area adjacent to the That Luang Temple. After appropriate speeches, the single entry bus and the two trucks roared off a few minutes after 8 a.m. The cars were then sent off at one minute intervals. After a short TV Singapore interview by Dickie Arblaster, we started off on the signal and began the rally. Second goal accomplished: **TO START IN THE RALLY.**

The 14.4 mile run down to the car ferry at the Mekong River crossing required a 24 m.p.h. average speed. Despite the fact that Marianne stood by the clock a Time Control No. 1 at the ferry landing awaiting the minute hand to pass 12, we found our timecard stamped one minute before the time required. Oh well, only ten points penalty.

We boarded the ferry with seventeen other cars and, twenty minutes later, we landed on the Thai side of the Mekong River. After checking in with Customs and Immigration, we drove to the closed car park near the centre of Nongkhai. As dead time prevailed after the first Time Control, there was little to do until all 160 plus cars had been transported across the river.

The plan called for an overnight lay-over in Nongkhai and an all day wait until Wednesday night. Although many stayed in Nongkhai in uncomfortable accommodations, we went back across the river by small passenger boat and returned to Vientiane. At least we'd have a comfortable night and good food before we started the serious part of the rally.

### **Stage Two—The Night Run**

Returning to the closed car park late Wednesday afternoon, we had dinner in Nongkhai and then waited for the midnight start. First off at 12.01 a.m. was the Bangkok Holden followed by the honeymooning Schneiders and friend in their Mazda. Two Swedes, Eric Dohlen and Bjorn Ljungstrand were third off in a well-equipped Fiat 2300. Bjorn, by the way, is an MSVCR member and owner of Ingham's Alvis—which he later sold to Marianne at the rally finish in Singapore.

But that's another story!

We went off in due time at 12.49 a.m. amidst a huge crowd of Nongkhai residents and were immediately relieved to find that the extra beam light we had installed in Vientiane helped to brighten our way considerably. P-100 headlamps help to date a car but are quite inadequate travelling at high speed down an unfamiliar road in the dark of night.

After the shoe-throwing incident at Udorn, we travelled on south 107 miles to the Time Control at a filling station in Khonkaen with little bother other than the chilly night air. We arrived a few minutes early, punched in and topped up the petrol tank. We had planned to top up after every run over 100 miles and, as most of the time control stops in Thailand were at filling stations, we soon had the system worked out. As we drove up to the Time Control, one of us would jump out and punch in as the other rolled the car up to the petrol pump. We would hold up a 100 Baht note and the attendant would get the message. This allowed us to top off the water, check the oil, tyres, lights, etc. Then we were off again.

On the 119 mile run down to Nakorn Rajsima, we began to feel the cold even more. Although our average speed was calculated to be 47 m.p.h., we were pushing 60 m.p.h. to make up for a few slow spots where road repairs were in progress. We clocked in one minute ahead of time, topped up, checked all around and pushed on for Bangkok. It was now 5.40 a.m.

This stretch of road is first class and the average speed for the 163 mile trip to Bangkok was calculated to be 50 m.p.h. But, knowing that we were losing minutes during topping up with petrol and realising that Bangkok morning traffic may cut our average down considerably, we kept the speedometer needle at 60-65 m.p.h. for most of the way. It was well that we did as we arrived right on time—except in punching in, we discovered we had punched the card in one minute later than the calculated time. Small loss . . . we had made Bangkok and were quite pleased with the Lag's performance.

After parking, we took a taxi to a nearby hotel for a good wash-up and breakfast. We were back in a few hours to work on the car a bit before the after-lunch restart south. The rear wings were dropping as a result of loose or snapped bracket bolts. The left rear wheel had to be removed to get at the balky loose bolt and nut and that nice shower I had taken earlier was wasted. We had

experienced a bit of boil-over in the last sector and suspected that the stop-leak powder had partially plugged the cooling system. We had put in it at Vientiane after fixing the radiator leak as a bit of insurance in case the solder didn't hold up well. Although the temperature gauge now registered 160 degrees F versus the 140 degrees F on our northward trip, it was not truly a boil-over but rather an eruption, perhaps, of pockets of localised overheating everytime we slowed down. The radiator cap had popped open one time as we pulled up to a Time Control and the old lady promptly relieved herself all over the time control officials and on-lookers! After draining the water several times, we crossed our fingers as the next stage was to be a tough one.

### **Stage Three—South Thailand**

We departed from Bangkok at 1.25 p.m. and despite official attempts to clear the road as much as possible, we found it slow going getting out of the city. The run to Hua Hin was 143 miles with an average calculated speed of 45 m.p.h. Despite a growing concern over the water temperature and a possible further blockage, we managed to arrive a few minutes ahead of time at Hua Hin. We had stopped for petrol outside of Bangkok so again our running speed was around 60 m.p.h.

The 170 mile highway from Hua Hin down to Chumphon edges along the eastern coast line and, coincidentally, lies in the same latitude as Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Saigon, South Vietnam. While on the subject of geography, I was surprised to learn that we had been north of the Vietnam Demilitarised Zone, latitudinally speaking, when we were in Vientiane, Laos.

About halfway down this 3 hour 25 minute run, we began to experience sporadic boil-overs. This necessitated several stops to top up the radiator and, at one filling station stop, we drained the radiator completely. Of course, we began to drop far back of many of the other cars and we became somewhat disheartened at this point. Putting in the stop-leak powder had seemed like such a good idea—now it appeared to be our undoing! Additionally, the piston on one of the twin SU carburettors began to stick causing poor firing in the three front cylinders. A long stop to rectify this and to drain the radiator again was required. We finally pressed on, however, arriving at Time Control No. 6 in Chumphon 53 minutes late.

It was now 8.53 p.m. and, as we filled up with petrol, we once again took time to partially drain

the radiator. Back on the road again, we continued south on the 178 miles run to Takuapa. Here again, sporadic boil-overs plagued us. But we simply stopped, topped up and carried on. An interim stop-off for petrol and a radiator flush brought us into the Takuapa Time Control 53 minutes late and far back in the pack by this time.

The rumours were beginning to circulate now concerning our fate. As vintagents the world over know, old cars (and their drivers) win admirers as easily as friendly dogs or cute babies. Such was the camaraderie that had built up among many of the rally drivers and us that concern for us was now openly apparent. Our 1.06 a.m. arrival in Takuapa was lustily cheered and it was here that we learned of the reports now circulating of our apparent drop-out. This concern and the crowd's spirited reception rekindled our enthusiasm and must have **unblocked** part of the cooling system! On the next leg southwards, the boil-overs became more infrequent and we were back in the rally, racing against the clock again.

The South Thailand roads thus far had been quite good and fairly straight. The 76.4 mile stretch, however, from Takuapa to Time Control No. 8 at Phangnga became a bit narrower and rougher with many turns. In fact, after travelling south for 40 miles, the roads turn north-east. A bit disheartening when you really want to keep going south.

### **A Night in the Mountains**

We arrived in Phangnga about 15 minutes late. The time was now 2.53 a.m., and though the strain of open-cockpit driving and the second night without sleep was beginning to set in, we knew that our biggest test lay before us: the south Thailand mountains.

The sector between Phangnga and Krabi is only 56.6 miles long and the time period was listed as 1 hour 8 minutes. Knowing that the hairpin curves had to be taken at high speed in order to maintain the 50 m.p.h. average speed required for the run, we put the Lagonda to the test. We must add here that in all fairness to many of the others behind us, we gave way numerous times to allow the faster more manouverable cars a chance to pass. Despite this, we kept up the pace quite well and arrived at the Krabi Time Control only nine minutes behind schedule. We were pleased and, after a time-delaying filling of petrol and water, we sped on southwards (or downwards as Marianne recalls it).

Between Krabi and Trang, a distance of 86.6 miles, there were several good stretches of road. The average speed of this sector was calculated to be 55 m.p.h.—the highest average for any one of the seventeen sectors. We were careful on the narrow bits and, as dawn was breaking, the lorry and bus traffic began to take up a major portion of the road. The water temperature was now at a controllable level—about 160 degrees F—and, aside from the numbness that had set in from the early morning cold air, we felt relieved that the night was over.

Most of the populace of Trang was up and waiting as we pulled into the Time Control and again we were roundly cheered as the fact that we were still in the rally had not caught up with the rumour that we had dropped out. It was here that we met the drivers of a Saab who had the unfortunate experience of making every time control thus far and then rolling their car on a straightway just outside of Trang. We offered then a lift down to the border but they refused on the grounds that we would be disqualified . . . quite sporting of them, I must say, as we felt we were not competing for any prize.

(Back in March, the organising committee had requested additional details of this strange entry that we elected to use in the rally. We sent a picture and an explanation that the original Lagonda drophead tourer body had been replaced by a stark open tourer . . . which we had recently replaced by an aluminium-bodied version of the 1934 Lagonda prepared for the 1935 Le Mans race. [A Lagonda won the race outright at 77.85 m.p.h.—the first British outright win since 1930 and the last for another sixteen years]. Our body had been modified somewhat from the Le Mans version so it was far from being a standard production model. However, we were permitted to enter in Category B, Group 5—Special touring cars (no minimum production) and we were quite pleased to be allowed to participate).

The 39.1 mile road from Trang to Phatthalung has enough hairpins to set the most stylish of modern coiffures. We started out on this leg at 6.04 a.m. and covered the section in 48 minutes . . . only two minutes behind the required time. The sections under repair and the loose laterite made the cornering a bit hairy in places. Although we had only travelled 125 miles since the last fill, we topped up with petrol at Phattalung and knocked in the left rear brake cam with a hammer.

I must explain here that the business of the brake cam working its way out about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch from the drum started early on in our trip up to Vientiane. However, removing the innards of the wheel to replace what apparently was a broken circlip seemed just too much of a task. And as it wouldn't move out further from the drum, we simply tapped on the outside brake lever to re-insert the cam. It did cause a bit of amusement at each stop . . . the co-driver jumping out the other side with a hammer! Of course, the curious also had to crawl under to see just what you had to hit with a hammer to make the old crock go!

The drive down to the Thai border town of Sadao brought our spirits up as we felt that from here on we could keep the pace. All of the 50 plus m.p.h. sectors and mountains were behind us and now, with the cooling system acting more reasonably, the only question left was . . . would we hold up?

We arrived at Sadao after 8.30 a.m., punched in and passed through Customs and Immigration. As we were now in dead time, we filled up with petrol, water and a quart of oil. We then motored over the border and down into the Malaysian Customs and Immigration check point at Changlun a distance of seven miles. Here we were directed to a closed car park and allowed about a one hour stopover. After a wash-up behind the Methodist Church, some cool drinks and a final check of vehicle internals and externals, we got in line for the departure.

#### **Stage four—Malaysia**

As we headed down to Ipoh, the mid-day sun forced us to take frequent sips of water through the plastic tube from the water jug. Since leaving Bangkok twenty-four hours before, we had eaten only two oranges and glucose tablets. However, we felt no particular need for food. The small bottles and tablets of glucose given out at the Bangkok departure line by a Thai company plus large quantities of water seemed to satisfy us for the most part.

We pulled into the Ipoh Club driveway 184 miles and 4 hours and 4 minutes later—right on time. After the usual addition of petrol and water, we headed southwards to Kuala Lumpur, a distance of 129 miles. We were only a few miles out of Ipoh when we ran into the first rain of our twelve day trip. Rather than stop and put on rain jackets, we drove on until we ran out of rain down in Kampar. After a quick clothing change in a filling station, we proceeded on—only to get

soaked to the skin in a cloud burst south of Kampar. We drove on at reduced speed and finally, we became so chilled as the afternoon sun descended, that we stopped and dug out the rain jackets from the rear storage. After putting the jackets on over our wet shirts, we were somewhat relieved but still sat in pants that were soaking wet. The time lost on this account had to be made up, so with pedal depressed (and spirits likewise), we sped into Kuala Lumpur only to become entangled with the evening traffic. Despite it all we were only a few minutes late at Time Control No. 14 and the huge crowd at Merdeka Stadium helped to cheer us up. A quick fill-up of both tank and radiator and out again into the evening traffic southwards.

As we were both quite tired by this time, we took turns at the wheel nearly every 1-2 hours. On the Thailand sectors, we had driven about three hours at a stretch. The high beams of the lorries and buses began to bother us also and we found ourselves dropping down in speed almost unconsciously.

As we pulled into the time control at Segamat at 9.30 p.m., who should loom up in the glare of our P-100s but Roger Gillbanks! A long time MSVCR member, past president and M.45 Lagonda owner, he was a welcome sight. Roger had come over from Muar especially to see us and the new Lag body and was concerned when he heard from earlier arrivals that we may have dropped out.

On the 116 mile run down to Johore Bahru, we were again plagued by on-coming high beams and slowed down considerably in many places. Fortunately, the run was timed for 3 hours requiring an average speed of 38.8 m.p.h., so we were able to keep the average up on the straight-aways. The fact that we tried to talk ourselves into believing that this was essentially the end of the rally may have given us the extra energy to carry on. Both of us could hardly keep our eyes focused on the road for more than half an hour at a time, so we changed seats more frequently as we neared Johore Bahru.

As we checked into Time Control No. 16 in front of the Johore Bahru General Post Office, our still wet clothing was a reminder that seven months ago, we had skidded around that same Post Office in the pouring rain. That was the September Johore G. P.—Vintage and P.V.T. car event and we were in competing (?) cars at that time: Marianne in her 1926 Austin 7 and

yours truly in the same Lag but clothed in the old Malacca-made open tourer body.

Dead time prevailed crossing the causeway over to the island republic of Singapore and, after a brief customs and immigration check, our time card was punched and we were on the last leg of a great adventure.

#### **Stage Five—Singapore and the Finish**

Having lived on the island for four years, we had no need for maps or road book to find our way to the finish line. In fact, we could have continued straight into the city rather than by the route described in the road book. But, as we suspected, a Secret Check Point had been established out in the western side of the island and we were glad we had decided not to short-cut the route. We might add here that there were also secret check points in Thailand and Malaysia, both of which we checked into enroute.

It was now 1 a.m. and the city traffic was negligible as we took a circuitous route downtown. Passing along the seafront, we turned around at Collyer Quay and, returning over Anderson Bridge, we turned into Empress Place in front of Victoria Hall AND CROSSED THE FINISHED LINE!

#### **Post-Finish**

The reception that greeted us plus the fact that we had finished within the allowable time picked up our spirits greatly. And among the greeters was our unofficial cheer leader, Dickie Arblaster, who had consumed a rather large quantity of Tiger beer and was in rare form.

We placed the car in the closed park and stood by while the scrutineers checked the car over for penalty points. As far as we could see (at 1.30 a.m. and with flashlights), one rear wing bracket bolt was missing as well as a plastic cover from a rear signal lamp. Not bad, we thought, as we looked around at twenty-odd battered and bruised cars out of the 132 finishers.

After talking with other finishers, officials, etc. for an hour or two, our adrenalin gave out and we simply had to call it quits. As we were required to leave our cars in the closed park until Sunday morning's scheduled parade, we loaded our baggage into a taxi, brought along our two Laotian friends (who had driven down in the little two cylinder Citroen Mehari mentioned earlier) and went home to bed. Time—4 a.m.! We had been three days and three nights on the go! As I have said often since . . . "it was as much a test of us as the Lag!"



Some idea of the varying road conditions can be obtained from this shot

### The Boos and Cheers

Never having been able to sleep in the daytime, I awoke at 8 a.m. Saturday morning and after breakfast drove down to the Empress Place finish line to see the posted results on Rothman's big board.

As the results were being posted, many of the competitors immediately protested and, for a while, the organising committee had their hands full trying to handle the complaints. The protesting continued on into Saturday afternoon and evening and finally, Sunday morning, the committee had decided on the winners. There was much ill-will over the manner in which penalty points were awarded as well as the attitude of the committee towards the protesters. However, we had so many penalty points against us for the two high penalty sectors in Thailand that we had no particular concern over the problem that had arisen. We were sorry, however, that it happened in Singapore as we are proud of the fine way things are usually done here. Especially as the 25th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East was meeting in Singapore at this time, a successful rally was most important.

### All's well that ends well

The pre-parade entertainment in front of City Hall on Sunday morning was enjoyable. The girl pipers, the lion dance and the accuracy of the

RAF sky-divers in landing on the "X" on the padang were memorable sights. The 132 finishing vehicles were paraded, single file, before the ECAFE dignitaries and Government officials seated in front of City Hall to conclude the last act in the 1969 First Asian Highway Motor Rally.

### Amen

Would we do it again? Well, let's say—perhaps not that way! That Holden with its airconditioning and stereo-tape deck looked like the way to go! But then again, we'd have no story to tell and that fine bit of machinery known as Lagonda would have one less record in its book of accomplishments.

### Acknowledgements

First, to Ken Painter: a fine friend, advisor and the fellow who unwittingly got the whole thing started with his Christmas trip to England. Secondly, to the Wing Seng Garage and specially to Mr. Yeu and his sons, Ah Wah, Ah Hong and Stephen without whose expertise and dedication such a trip would not have been possible. Thirdly, to my co-driver/navigator (and wife), Marianne, who was put to the test and performed above and beyond my expectations. Additionally, to our body maker, Ah Sam; the Lagonda Club's Technical Advisor and spare parts provider, Capt. Ivan Forshaw and others along the way who have made vintaging, racing and rallying in a 1934 Lagonda a memorable experience. H.J.R.

## The Restoration of JBG492

### PART 2

I DECIDED THAT BEFORE I FINALLY FITTED THE BACK shock absorbers I would compress the road springs down to their normally loaded position thus taking the load off the damper rubber bushes which was likely to distort them over the period of the rebuild. The problem was how to exert the load necessary onto the springs in order to flatten them and this was finally solved very simply by putting two hydraulic jacks on top of the frame above either end of the axle casing. Loops of 2 in. wide balata belt were then made up passing over the top of the jacks and under the axle. Then by jacking up the loops on either side the springs were raised to their correct position. Two more loops of belting were then passed round the tubular cross-member and the axle tube and fastened at the correct length to keep the springs compressed and the jacks were then removed. This is well worth the trouble because the frame will now stand level throughout the rebuild instead of being on a permanent slope. I assumed that the correct loaded position of the springs was  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in. under the bump stops.

The back dampers were then fitted and all the internals put into the axle. I had taken a careful note of the various shims for adjusting the crown wheel and pinion meshing. The crown wheel is adjustable sideways but the pinion is not adjustable, having shims purely to get the correct setting of the taper roller bearings. I replaced the crown wheel shims exactly as they came out but in the pinion pack there was one .003 in. brass shim which looked unlikely to be original as all the others were steel and I left this out and still achieved no end play with everything assembled dry. I may have cause to regret this later but will wait to see if the axle is noisy when hot.

The axle shaft end play is adjusted by shims behind the brake back plates and again, without the guidance of a service manual, I presumed that one had to achieve a position of equal projection of the shafts at either end and as near as possible no end play when dry. The original shims gave this condition even though all the bearings were new which just shows how accurately taper roller bearings are made. I happened to meet W. O. Bentley while involved in this part of the job and I asked him why he chose an American axle for the V.12 to which he replied that it was half the

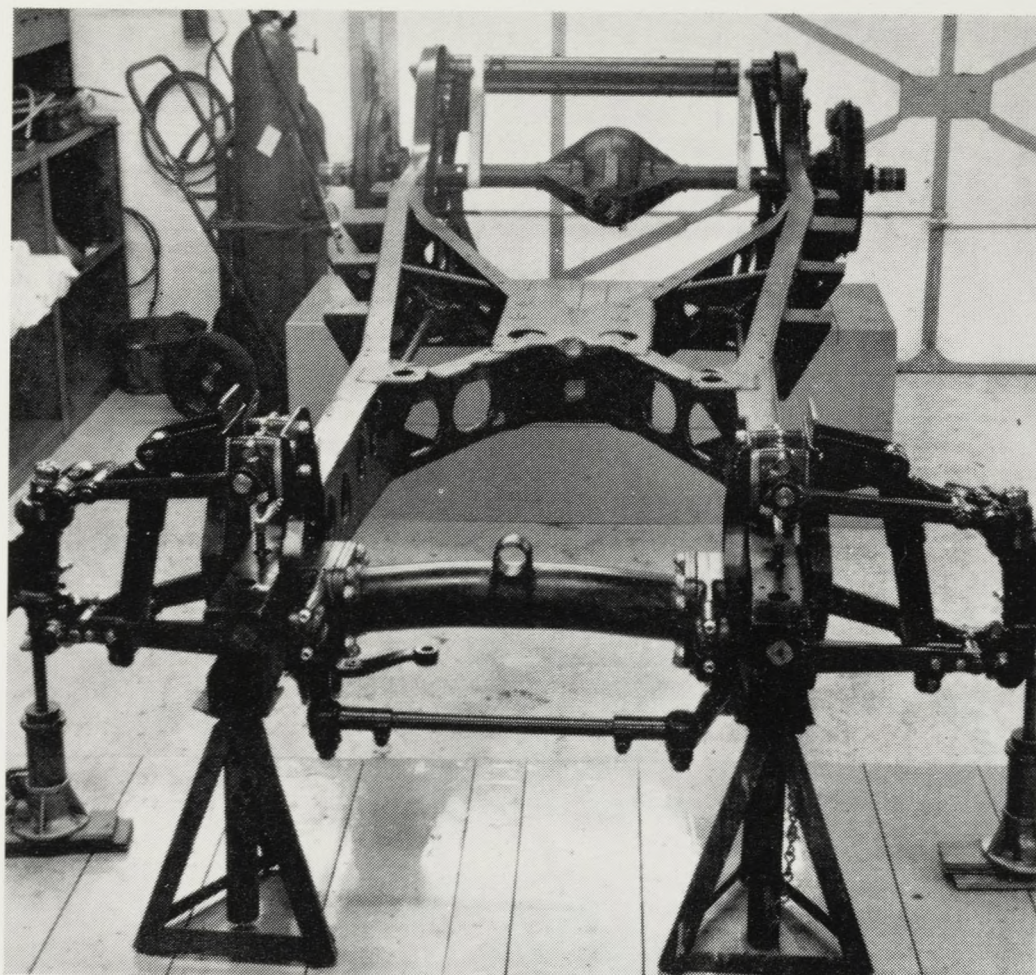
weight of anything that he could buy in England at the time. The brakes, of course are Lagonda and not Salisbury.

Turning now to the brakes, the back plates were originally fitted with large air intakes which had become very mangled over the years and I completely remade these in brass sheet as I cannot weld aluminium and could silver solder the brass very easily. I used 20 mesh brass gauze behind these to stop large chunks of grit going into the drums. The hand-brake cam-shafts are beautifully made and run on needle rollers and ball bearings which were still perfect. New oil seals were fitted. The hydraulic cylinders were returned to Automotive Products Limited at Banbury who honed out the bores and fitted new rubbers, the cylinders being now obsolete. At the same time I sent the tandem master cylinder and received a brand new one as a so-called service replacement and I must say that they were very co-operative over the whole affair. Finally the shoes were relined and the back cover was put on the differential case and the axle filled with oil. In passing I should mention that I have given up the use of paper gaskets entirely and always use Hylomar jointing compound instead. This is a great time saver but the jointing faces must be thoroughly degreased before applying the Hylomar.

The brake drums were perfect but I drilled four equally spaced  $3/32$  in. holes radially into the undercut at the closed end of the working surface as these are invaluable for letting out water and brake lining dust and I cannot think why this is not done on all brake drums.

I must mention that I had to remake one of the large castle nuts for the axle shaft ends as some butcher had chisled the old one into an indescribable shape. I purposely timed myself on this job which took exactly four hours what with it being an American hexagon and a special thread and so having to be milled from round bar and screw cut. Pity the professional restorer who presumably would have to ask his customer at least £6 for just this one nut.

I now turned to the front end of the chassis. Despite all the rubber seals having perished all the front suspension pivots were in perfect condition and I half regret having decided to scrap the chassis lubrication system. However, the thought of remaking all that pipework is rather daunting. All bearings are case-hardened steel rubbing on a similar material. All the wishbone forgings had



*The V.12 chassis—  
restoration  
complete*

been fettled and polished before painting and so they cleaned up very easily. The mountings for the upper wishbones on the tops of the king-posts were extraordinarily tight on their tapers and I was forced to make a very powerful extractor to get them off.

It is essential to put into the front box portion of the frame the tubular distant pieces through which pass the bulkhead mounting bolts and the steering column bolts before putting in the torsion bars otherwise you will have to take the whole front suspension off again to do so at a later stage. This also applies to the front engine mountings and vibration dampers. Before doing any painting I slipped the main elements of the front suspension into place and made up the brackets for the Koni dampers which are centrally located between the wishbones. I used the old bump stop bolt holes in the bottom wishbones for the lower mountings and welded up brackets which also combine into them one of the body mounting brackets to support the upper ends of the dampers. I was careful to set the suspension at the recommended position of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  in. off the old bump stops as the normal static loaded position and arranged that the new bump stops

in the dampers came into play at the same position as the old. I tack welded the various parts in situ then removed the lot to complete the job. I am pleased with the neat appearance of the new set-up but it remains to be seen how it works on the road.

The stub-axle bearings on the king post are phosphor bronze at the bottom end and cup and cone ball races at the top which, of course, support the weight of the car. Inside the ball race housing is a rubber moulding which will promptly set fire if you try warming the housing to get it off its taper which I did before making the aforementioned extractor. Luckily Maurice Leo has new ones in stock. All the other rubber seals-cum-buffers in the wishbone pivots are of cylindrical section and I had these made from 65 Shore hardness Nitrile Synthetic by a rubber manufacturer who turned them from the bar. The dimensions are as follows:

	o/d	i/d	Length	Number
Torsion bar pivot				
	1.15/16 in.	1.7/16 in.	5/8 in.	4
Top wishbone pivot				
	1.9/16 in.	1 in.	9/16 in.	4

#### Outer wishbone pivot

1.7/6 in.    7/8 in.    13/32 in.    8

The square-section circular seal at the bottom of the king post can be replaced by a standard O-ring  $1\frac{7}{8}$  in. o/d  $\times$   $1\frac{5}{8}$  in. o/d  $\times$   $\frac{1}{8}$  in. section.

I had been unable to remove the countersunk head set screws which hold the end caps into the wishbone pivot housings and so I drilled through the heads and then removed the stubs. Unfortunately for me they have a 60° countersink instead of the standard 90° and so I had to set to work and make them all myself. One grease nipple (for oil) into the already tapped hole in the stub-axle body will lubricate top and bottom king post bearings and their adjacent wishbone pivots but it is necessary to leave a hole open at the highest point to let the air out and to block up the hole from the bottom wishbone pivot. I am using one type of grease nipple for oil on plain bearings and another type for grease on ball or rubber bearings to stop confusion in servicing.

All the Thompson self adjusting steering joints except one looked as good as new. The rubber protectors are still available from Automotive Products Limited and so were all renewed. The worn out ball joints had no protector and were on the near side track rod end next to the wheel. I did not particularly want to make a complete new track rod but the ball joints are spot welded and brazed into place. However, I dismantled the ball joint in question by filing off the peening and found that the body itself was in good condition. I bought a new joint, did the same operation and used the new parts in the old body. To seal it up again I soft-soldered a steel disc where the peening had been and as this joint is upside down on the car even should this disc fall off there would be no danger of the rest of the joint disintegrating so it is quite safe. If any replacements for the steering joints are contemplated it is important to realise that those on the centre portion of the track rod are a low-angle type with felt oil seals and that all the others are high-angle type with rubber gaiters. The two types are not interchangeable and if the low angle type are fitted on the outer track rods you will have a disaster.

The knock-on wheel nuts were in reasonable condition but had been re-polished several times and so I machined out all that remained of the lettering and had them re-engraved, filling the letters with black cellulose. It is very important to make a note of the thickness of all the shims

in the front suspension assembly when dismantling it in order to save yourself a lot of time when putting it together again and this also applies to those shims inside the wishbone pivot bearings and between the wishbone arms as these affect the castor and camber angles.

The front brake mechanisms were dealt with in exactly the same way as those on the back axle with the addition of unriveting the snail cam-adjusters for cleaning and zinc plating which involved making new hexagon headed spindles in order to be able to rivet over the ends, the old ones having to be filed off to dismantle them. The Alfin front drums were in excellent condition and were vapour blasted to clean the corrosion out of the fins before painting with Hot Paint.

Both front and back brakes have peculiar fulcrum ends to the shoes which I do not really understand but to the uninitiated like myself it is as well to take a note of which is the leading and trailing shoe and also the order of assembly on the fulcrum pin of a whole stack of washers and springs which no doubt play some part in the ultimate good working of the brakes.

The front hubs have a brass grease trap soldered onto the inboard end and these were loose due to poor soldering or perhaps the solder melting. I have risked it and re-soft soldered them as I did not want to heat the hub unduly. It took me some time to realise that this is to trap any grease which gets past the felt seal and then allows it to get out through six small holes in the face of the drum. I gather from this that the front hubs get very hot and was glad to see that the bearings are an inner ball race which locates the hub and a plain roller race outboard which allows for expansion which seems to me a far better design than the usual taper roller races which have to be left loose when cold.

The steering rods were finally attached and the toe-in set off the back plates and if only I could get hold of the 600/650  $\times$  18 tyres which have now been on order for several months I could have the chassis on four wheels, these already being respoked and stove enamelled. The photograph shows progress during this phase and now I can start on one of the more interesting parts such as the gearbox. Old hands will no doubt laugh but as I have never seen the inside of a Lagonda before I am longing to know why the gearbox has an oil pump. All will soon be revealed.

BRIAN MORGAN



Three of the 2-litres—Woollard's, Batt's and Wright's Concours Winner

## THE WESTON MANOR WEEKEND OR SATURDAY- NIGHT-AND-SUNDAY- MORNING—6th-7th September

THE COMBINED DINNER-DANCE AND CONCOURS meeting held at the Weston Manor Hotel, near Oxford, turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable affair despite our fears that its rather belated publicity would cause its cancellation. Twenty members and friends turned up at the Dinner Dance on the Saturday despite an unseasonable chill in the air that night, and the Concours the following afternoon attracted a dozen Lagondas, as well as David Johnson's Frazer-Nash and Gordon Preece's Morgan three-wheeler for variety.

**SATURDAY NIGHT.** In view of the sudden "cold" spell it was perhaps reasonable that only twelve of the evening revellers could manage to come in Lagondas to the dance, but no-one seemed to mind and the management at Weston Manor catered splendidly for all, even to the extent of setting aside a private room off the main dance

floor for the Club party. This may, in fact, have been sound tactics on their part, as by 10.30 the Lagonda group had the floor to themselves.

In an evening remarkably full of good clean fun, highlights were notable mainly by their absence. Arnold Davey maintained his record of avoiding wasting good drinking time in flippety-jibbetting on the dance-floor, James Woollard continued his social survey of all the ladies in sight leaving certain others to dance with his wife (it was the only decent thing I could do), Duncan Westall didn't feel the need to tell the band what they were doing wrong (which shows how good they were), Ben Martin and his wife couldn't eat with the rest because of the dog, the Witteridge family pushed off once the food had disappeared, very reasonably as his is one of the draughtier M.45's lately observed (Mrs. Witteridge thereby missing Woollard's social survey by a narrow margin—better luck next time), David Johnson produced *yet another* knockout dolly for the occasion (oh, where do the discarded ones go?) and Alan Brown most definitely did not take his trousers off (reason: he was in Matley Moor that night). (He may of course have taken them off

there, but your reporter has no evidence of this).

The band was "lively" as they say, and in no time at all they announced that it was well past midnight and that they had beds to go home to even if we hadn't. Although it had been planned that members wishing to avoid driving after the excitement of the evening should be able to stay the night at the Hotel, no-one seems to take such precautions seriously any more and we all took our chance on the long road home.

**SUNDAY MORNING.** Actually, nothing really happened till around opening time, which made it possible to face lunch. The Concours-Official-style had obviously frightened the life out of all but a couple of members, although as one had suspected, there was a sufficiency of others turning up on the day to look at the poor blokes who had gone to the trouble of entering. Recalling a similar occasion when the Ford Sprint was cancelled for lack of entries, only to be attended by hordes of irate spectator-members subsequently demanding the brush of the Hon. Comp. Sec., those responsible this time took the precaution of running the event as if nothing had

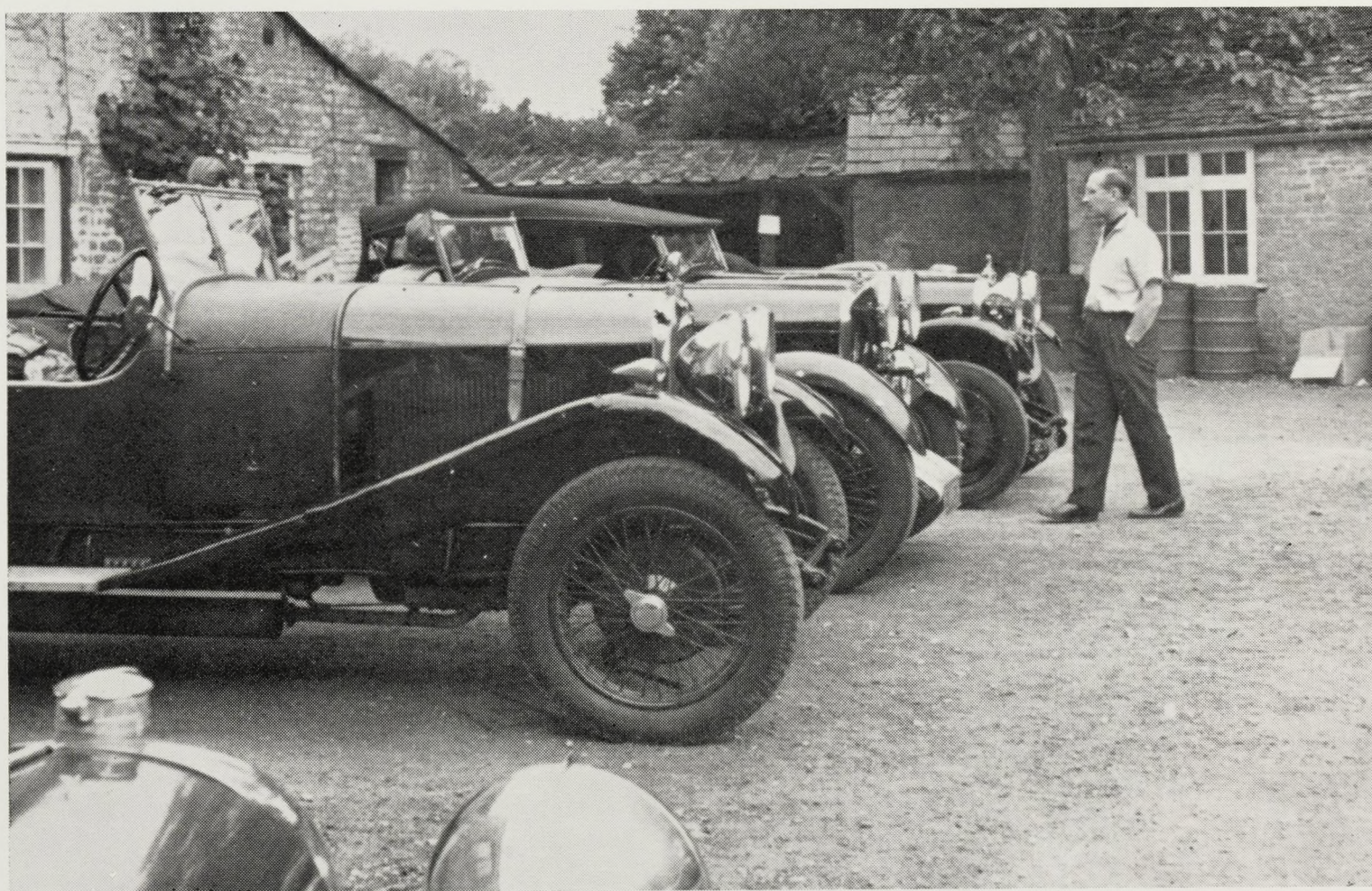
happened. Result: about forty people turned up and their cars were lined up for a concours anyway.

On the official side the winner was Jack Wright, who had driven his newly-rebuilt 2 litre from County Durham for the occasion. Quite apart from having come further than anyone else, his was far and away the best prepared car present and it took judges Gordon Preece and Jim Whitehead a very short time to award it Outright Winner. That settled, it enabled the assembled company to pay the bar the respect it deserved.

On the social side a great deal of pleasure was derived from looking around the varied selection of cars, some of which were not familiar ones. Wing Commander Misselbrook's LG.45 sedanca was looking most impressive in its grey and black finish after some considerable restoration work this car is interesting in that it has Mayfair coachwork on the standard chassis with a very pleasing line to the "hard-top" over the rear seats.

John Batt turned up from Wales in his 2 litre after some doubt about his attendance: the Competition Secretary spent some time dis-

A line-up of front-ends interests Duncan Westall



mantling its rear trim to satisfy his new-found interest in 2 litre back-axle ratios (any advance on 10/42, 10/44 or 9/43?) but seemed to get it together again without too much wrath on the part of the owner. Maurice Leo brought the only pre-war V.12 left in his collection—the nice 2 seat Rapide with inoffensively modified headlamps built into the wings, Sprite-style, whilst Mr. Lyster kept it company with his own V.12R which had previously also been owned by Maurice.

The way these cars go round a limited number of owners (or used to—I'm not so sure that many escape the export-agents nowadays) was demonstrated by P. Densham, who drifted wistfully from one 2 litre to another murmuring things like Oh yes—I had that just after the Labour Government; or was it just before? He even claimed in one particularly proprietorial moment to have owned the Comp. Sec's. high-chassis, which everyone knows the latter has had since 1935, when he was 21.

## A COLONIAL'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE VSCC SILVERSTONE MEETING AND THE FINMERE DRIVING TESTS

26th and 27th July

*By Mark Whitehead*

THE TWO EVENTS FORMING THE SUBJECT OF THIS article were of special interest to myself as, having recently arrived from the balmy yet culturally barren shores of the most far flung Dominion, this weekend would see my first attendance at a "real" vintage car event, and I was eager to cast my eyes for the first time upon the exotica which is so successfully hidden for most days of the year from the laymans' sight.

Coming from what could be called a respectable Lagonda (and Alvis) background and upbringing, represented by models spanning thirty-six years of the marque, it was of Lagondas that I had the most knowledge and in which I was principally interested.

Nor was I to be disappointed, as I feel the Club can be proud of the number and condition the of make present at the two events, both competing and spectating (numerically over-shadowed as we are by those green gorgantican giants!).

To most Britons the weather was commendably favourable, the events held as they were under an almost—Australian summer sky and a collection

Meanwhile the Comp. Sec. was learning to drive with a hand-throttle in Gordon Preece's Morgan whilst simultaneously "demonstrating" it (the Morgan) to any attractive young bit of frippet willing to risk it (the Morgan). (One did.) Ignoring such frivolous activities the Chairman and yours truly were trying to get David Johnson's 6 cylinder Frazer-Nash over 50 down the A.43 whilst changing gear outside in the wind and still keeping the whole lethal device on the road. Rapiers were represented by Tony Wood, who took his usual selection of very professional photographs.

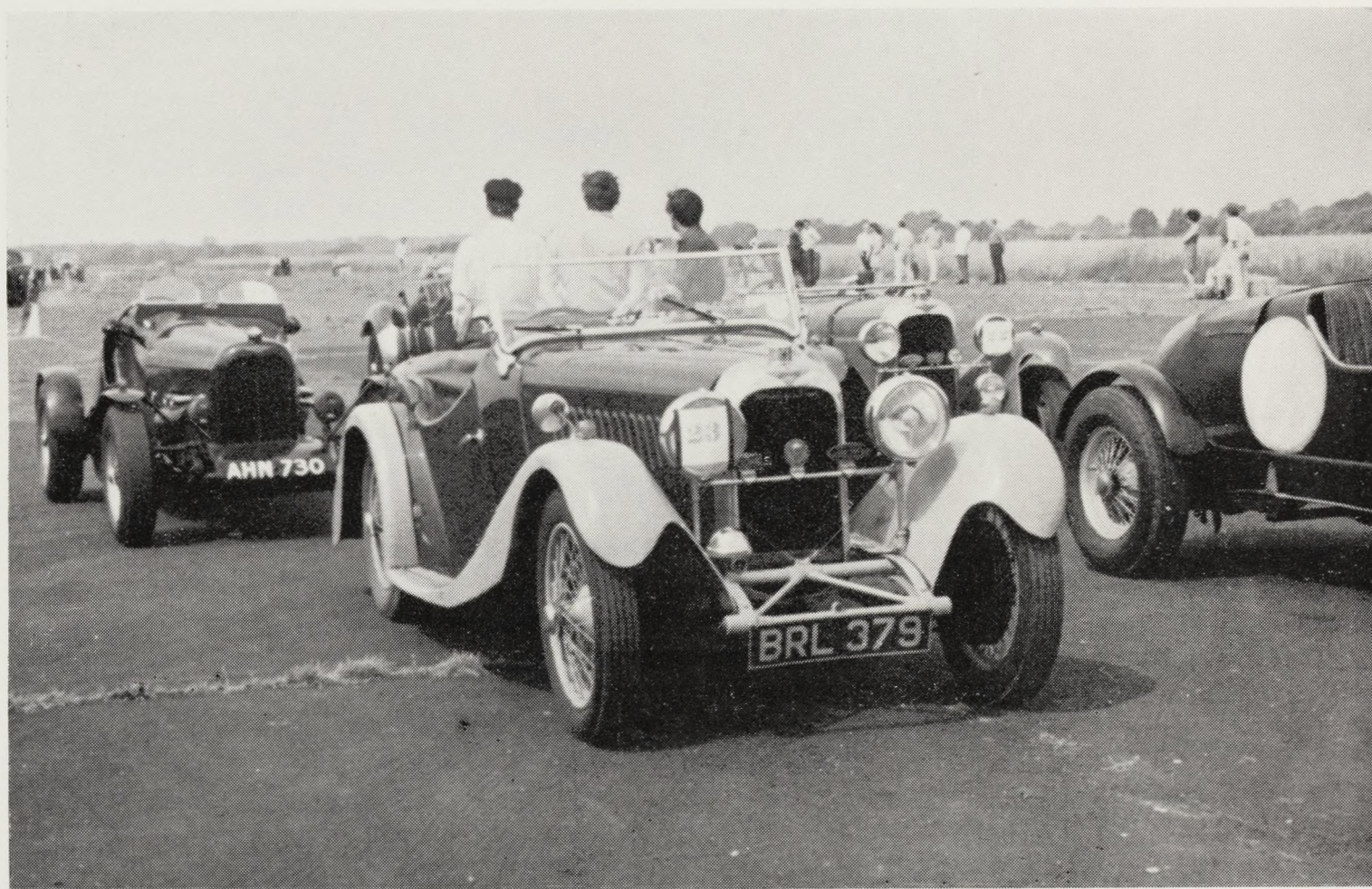
By and by tea was served in the Hotel (very good value at 5s. a head) in a Lounge overlooking their most attractive gardens. Eventually the air of glorious escapism evaporated, tomorrow was remembered to be Monday morning and the assembly went their separate ways in the last of the day's sunshine.

*Report and photos: Jeff Ody and Arnold Davey*

of cars on parade that could be assembled in no other country, their variety, quality and character making them uniquely English. Perhaps it was the clement weather that had drawn them out, and to my own good fortune I am led to believe that the attendances were the best for a good many years.

A stroll through the vintage area behind the Grandstands at Silverstone I feel sure must have still stirred the interest of even the oldest and most ardent supporters; thus can be imagined the pleasure aroused in a novice. Of the Lag's present I found especially interesting the two LG.45 Rapides and the V.12 and LG.45 dropheads, their condition being such as would do credit to any stable; the fine and varied collection of 2 and 3 litres, and some very nice Rapiers. The magnificent assembly of so many Bentleys, painstakingly restored to such high standards, alone would have made the meeting worthwhile. (Indeed at home we would probably have been prepared to traverse the country for such a spectacle.) The might and majesty of the 6 and 8 litre tourers must surely have established the yardstick by which all sportscars are measured. After much debate, we have decided that for us "that other make" should henceforth be referred to as "the other make".

As if these splendours were not sufficient, to also see so many names I had hardly heard of, yet alone seen, such as Straker Squire, Bean, Lord, Salmons . . .



Rapier line-up at Finmere

*Tony Wood*

Next, to the paddock area to inspect the array of racing machinery. Although probably of equal merit to the tourers outside the track, they did not hold the same attraction for me, especially as no genuine Lagonda racing cars were present, our fraternity being made up in the main by specials. Yet the sight of a Le Mans blown Bentley must always excite the imagination; and twin-cylindered G.N.'s, with exposed chain drive (and what appeared to be deposits of coke or wood ash under the rear axle) inspire a fascination, only to be heightened by the ingenuity with which the task of supercharging Rapiers is approached. Speaking of blown Rapiers, one marvelled at the variety of ways in which the job is tackled, as indeed one marvelled in particular at that one whose system must have been designed by an artist and executed by a precision craftsman. No plumber, drainer or blacksmith had fouled up this exquisite piece of engineering!

And so to the first race—the one-hour thrash as I think it is referred to in the trade. The diligent reader will excuse me, on the grounds of innocent ignorance, in revealing that I thought I

was about to witness an eight-act comedy, or was it to be scenes from the Keystone Cops, or Laurel and Hardy? Having seen the British Grand Prix the week before, I thought it farcical and hilarious to see vintage tourers, of innumerable horsepower, emerge from Woodcote in the most impossible of situations, accompanied by buckets of opposite-lock and leaving behind erratic trails of valuable Dunlop Racing compound from their tyres of immeasurable section! However, I soon got into the mood of the movement (mostly sideways as it turned out!), realising that this was a great part of the fun and enjoyment, and subsequent races proved that vintage motor racing can be an entertaining and quite exciting spectacle. In fact it is probably only at this level that track racing today can be indulged in and enjoyed by amateurs.

Let us now move on to the next day, the venue being Finmere Aerodrome and the event the combined Lagonda-Bentley driving tests. The great preponderance of cars present to my mind could loosely but rather accurately be summed up as abortions, though some of our number more expediently term them “specials”. However I

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am glad to add that nearly all of them were members of "the" other camp. Coming from a country where fine vintage cars are in such short supply, we tend to cherish all the original and even semi-original examples as being very valuable, not so much from an pecuniary aspect but purely that we might always have them, and thus it is grieving to see every part of such vehicles driven to the point of destruction in events such as this.

Fortunately, the few originals participating were making up the entry rather than adding to the spectacle of vigorous competition, thus being treated in a manner respectful of their age and historic value.

The tests themselves I found rather pointless: yet who am I to criticise whilst merely a novice spectator? I'm sure that for the entrants they provided sufficient satisfaction: for me as a stranger the mere pleasure of seeing the cars was sufficient. In short; a good day was had by all.

Something that did not pass without notice was the excellent organisation that enabled both events to run so smoothly. This is something at which the English seem to excell, as while everything goes off punctually and as planned, yet there is absent the irritating trait of petty-officialdom. The organisers have, thank goodness, kept in mind the fact that competitors and spectators alike attend these events to enjoy themselves rather than be impressed by an officious bureaucracy.

While on the subject, I would like to mention the friendliness and generosity that we have met with everywhere in England. That this country has problems at the moment is evident to the visitor, and based on general comment and the press, one could believe that the penalty in this instance for the innocent has been hard Labour. However, the traditional tolerance and good humour of the English remains—never more obvious than among the vintage club fraternity—and I trust will cause the reader to forgive any impertinances in this article.

This weekend has been an education for me, which I anticipate will be furthered by attending future events of this club and other vintage organisations as the season progresses. So I see that we shall be taking home, apart from at least one Lagonda and parts thereof, fond memories of the cars and characters that combine to make up the traditions of this Club.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Finmere Driving Tests

Dear Sir—I would like to thank and congratulate all those who put in so much hard work to make the Finmere Driving Tests on 27th July such an enjoyable and memorable day's entertainment. It was certainly the best "Finmere" yet and the splendid turnout of Lagondas and Bentleys fully justified the organisers' efforts.

Many thanks to all concerned.

TONY WOOD

Wolverhampton, Staffs.

### Lagonda Hybrid?

Dear Sir—I was interested to see Tony Wood's letter in the Summer issue regarding Bud Habersin's Rapier.

Like Tony I have often wondered about the body on this car and agree that it looks "different". Having seen a number of photographs of it my guess is that it is a body from a 1½ litre Singer of the same period.

The body on the Rapier has many points in common with the Singer body, the windscreen brackets are the same although the screen itself is a different shape. The three louvres in the scuttle and the position of the door hinges are identical on both bodies, and the shape of the wind cowles are alike. The Singer body was intended for a 7 ft. 8 in. wheelbase chassis which may account for the extra fairing behind the tank on the Rapier to allow the spare wheels to finish up in the right place.

The wings certainly are not Singer, they could be by Whittingham & Mitchell who made the body on the prototype, but whatever one thinks the whole effect is good and like Tony I agree it is a fine rebuild.

If anyone wants to study the 1½ litre Singer look on page 117 of *British Sports Cars* or page 201 of the March 1935 issue of *Motor Sport*.

MIKE WILBY

London, N.W.3.

P.S. I see that there is also a bulge on the off side of the bonnet side, about where a blower would go although I see the car has a "Lagonda" radiator badge and not a "Rapier" one who of course produced the supercharged cars. All in all this car should cause plenty of speculation!

### Experiences with post-war Lagondas

Sir—I am loathe to write letters of any kind, but have been stirred by the recent correspondence on DB Lagondas.

Since 1962 I have owned seven 3-litre saloons, three 3-litre Dropheads, two 2.6-litre saloons and one 2.6-litre drophead. On the credit side the main item for commendation was the rack and pinion steering. Brakes on all models (except the 3-litre drophead fitted, by previous owner with auxiliary "Invalid Carriage" servo unit were poor. Four of the cars suffered from 'rear end' trouble—differentials and hubs. I can still hear the scream of derisive laughter from the stores at Newport Pagnell when I enquired about a replacement rear hub! The 2 star differential fitted to the 2.6-litre was still utilised on the heavier bodied 3-litre and gave trouble after 30,000 miles. The so called 4 star differential was available at really too late a date and at what a price! I was never too happy about quality of materials used in the rear suspension of this expensive car. I had several parts which had failed chemically analysed and they were vitally deficient in nickel for instance, which is essential for hardness. The percentage being far lower than the specification on the drawings! On a less important scale but more obvious was the very poor chrome on the brass trim strips. It was a major operation to remove, for instance, the centre piece on the bonnet.

On enquiry (I never owned a DB 3-litre under 40,000 miles) I discovered that gear stick chatter was supplied at no extra cost when new.

As regards the appearance of the 3-litre series I and II I think the rear and side views were handsome. The front view simply ugly.

In general, from experience the DB Lags. are a form of 4 wheeled masochism.

Happy was the man who got rid of one. I haven't mentioned the oil pressure fixation or that crude rear torsion bar bracket which is notorious for collapsing and looks as if it has been made by a ham-fisted apprentice.

The interiors of these cars are luxurious. The handling heavy and 'pre-war'. The clutch pedal and operation surely designed by a diesel fanatic.

It is only recently that I have discovered the vast superiority of the pre-war (and true) Lagonda over the DB and think that the DB organisation was correct to cease production. (I've still to try a DB Rapide and I probably will!)

H. J. COLLINS Tynemouth, Lancs.

### Nuts and Cranks

Dear Sir—In the process of renovating a LG.45 chassis it was found that  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. U.N.F. nuts fitted both the U bolt thread and the thread of the bolts used to hold on the front stub axles. Although I do not know any other places that U.N.F. nuts fit it is worth noting that U.N.F. threads correspond directly to pre-war S.A.E. threads and may well be worth trying if the usual B.S.F. thread is not used.

I would like now to refer to  $4\frac{1}{2}$ -litre six cylinder engines as a result of observations made while rebuilding one of these engines with a view to increasing performance.

To do this it was decided to lighten the fly wheel considerably and it was thought that it would be best to have this balanced. As this was being balanced the whole crank was also sent in for balancing and much to my surprise the crank was considerably out of balance so much so that at one time it looked as though balance weights may have been necessary, this however, was fortunately avoided.

This observation poses several questions in view of the so called weakness of  $4\frac{1}{2}$ -litre crank shafts:

1. Did Lagondas ever balance their crank shafts, if so was it only on certain models. This particular one was from an SI.

2. If the crank shaft and all components are dynamically balanced do you still need a vibration damper.

3. If the fly wheel has been lightened should the damper be lightened in sympathy.

It is the last one that I am particularly interested in and would appreciate any members' comments, via the editor, particularly as to whether there is a formula for working out the weight, shape, size, etc. of a vibration damper or a suggestion to literature that may be helpful on this subject.

Hopeful that several members, nay very many members, will help to shed some light on this subject I shall look forward with considerable interest to the next magazine.

ALAN BROWN (B.99)  
Hyde, Cheshire.

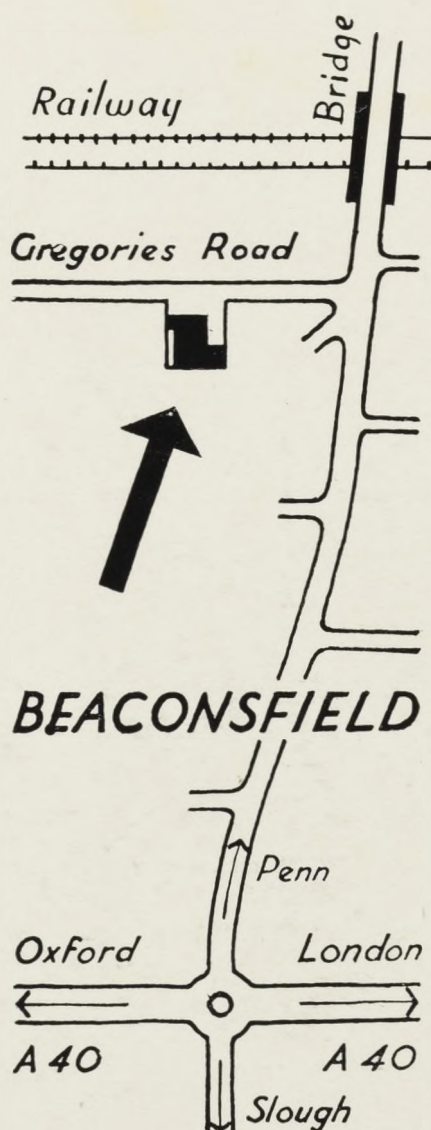
P.S.—Any member with cramp in his writing arm is welcome to argue these points with me at our Pub Meet or Northern "do".

# REGIONALISATION

Below are listed the names and addresses of local representatives and the meeting place:

Area No.		Monthly Meetings, 8/8.30 p.m.		
1	N. Ireland	J. Longridge, "Rockville", 22 Warren Road, Donaghadee, County Down	North Down House, Comber, Co. Down. 1st Tuesday	
			The Globe Tavern, Joy's Entry, off High St., Belfast. Lunch each Friday for any- one in Belfast on business.	
2	Eire	L. C. Thorn, 5 Grange Road, Rathfarnham	West Country Hotel, Chapelizon, Dublin. 1st Monday	
3	Scotland	J. McKellar-Cairns, 22 Rullion Road, Penicuik, Midlothian	Edinburgh & Dist. Motor Club's 'place', Nelson St. Edinburgh. 1st Thursday	
4	Border country	I. G. Macdonald, 37 Oaklands, Gosforth, Newcastle-on-Tyne	Red Bar, Ridley Arms, Stannington, Northumberland. Last Wednesday	
5	N. & E. Ridings	D. H. Coates, Hill Farm, Swine, Nr. Hull	Duke of York, Skirlaugh—on A165 and about 9 miles N.N.E. of Hull. Last Tuesday	
6	W. Riding, Notts, and Lincs	Dr. J. G. Rider, The Range, Hatfield, Doncaster	The Hatfield Chace, Hatfield—on A18. 2nd Thursday	
7	Lancs, Cheshire, N. Staffs & Derbys	H. L. Schofield, Foxhill Stables, 271 Mottram Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire	West Towers Country Club, Church Lane, Marple, Cheshire. 2nd Thursday	
8	South Wales	John Batt, 7 Grays Walk, Druids Green, Cowbridge	Bear Hotel, Cowbridge, Glam. 1st Thursday V.S.C.C.	
9	Gloucestershire, Bristol, N. Somerset & S. Worcester	J. Organ, 'Onaway', Chalford Hill, Stroud, Glos.	The Compass Inn, Tormarton, Glos. 4th Friday	
	and for the Northern part of this area	J. Organ	The Royal William Hotel, Cranham, Glos. 3rd Thursday	
9a	Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, N. Wales	D. P. Crow, 181 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Salop.	White Horse Inn, Wenlock Road, Shrewsbury. 2nd Friday	
10	Warwicks, S. Staffs & Leics	C. H. Nolten, 29 Hollyhurst Road, Banners Gate Sutton Coldfield	Malt Shovel Hotel, Stonebridge-junction —off A45 and A452. 2nd Tuesday	
11	Essex & East Anglia	J. D. Abson, 11 Highfield Green, Bury Lane, Epping	The Old King's Head, Stock (S.W. of on B1007, Essex. 8.30 p.m. 1st Wednesday	
12	Bucks & W. Herts & Bedfordshire	D. D. Overy, The Old Cottage, Bourne End, Boxmoor, Herts.		
13	Berks & Oxon	M. B. Jones, 4 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading	The Bull, Sonning. 3rd Friday	
14	W. Home Counties, Middx & W. London	A. H. Gostling, 8 Ridgeway Road, Isleworth, Middx.	Anglers Hotel, Staines. 2nd Wednesday	
15	Kent	L. N. Buck, 21 Willow Walk, Culverstone, Meopham	Park Gate Inn, Hollingbourne, Kent. On A20, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from M20. 2nd Wednesday Sir Jeffrey Amherst, between Sevenoaks and Plaxtol on A25. 3rd Thursday	
16	Surrey & Sussex	N. T. Walder, Old Park House, Ifield, Crawley	Star Inn, Rusper, Nr. Horsham. Last Friday	
17	Wiltshire, Dorset & Hampshire	D. J. Palmer, North Carolina, Quibo Lane, Weymouth	Hambro Arms, Milton Abbas, Dorset. 2nd Friday	
18	Devon, Cornwall & Somerset	J. C. Bugler, 3 Springfield Close, Elburton, Plymstock, Devon	To be arranged	
19	London		Coach & Horses, Hill St., W.1. 1st Thursday	

# LAGONDA SERVICE



We have a large stock of useful spare parts for Lagonda cars still available. Although the demand for parts has diminished over the last few years and prices have increased considerably, we can still assist Lagonda owners with the majority of parts required for re-building and servicing the numerous pre-war Lagonda Models.

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