



# THE MAGAZINE OF THE LAGONDA CLUB

Number 88 Summer 1975





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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: Fording a stream during the "Daffodil Run".



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## Out and About

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Since the Spring Magazine was published, the Annual Club Dinner and Prizegiving was held on the 1st March. A new venue was chosen, improbably the Zoological Gardens at Regents Park in London. Before anyone imagines that we were involved in the Chimps Tea Party, let me say that we dined in the Members' Restaurant. Some forty-five people sat down a well chosen meal of Soup, Filet of Sole, Chicken served Mexican style and vegetables, fruit cocktail, petit fours and coffee.

JAMES CROCKER and HERB SCHOFIELD welcomed members and their guests and after the prizegiving the draw was made for the temporary ownership of a fine action painting by MIKE GABER donated by him to help raise extra Club funds. The painting shows one of the V.12 sports racers at the 1939 24-Hour Race at Le Mans. The first name out of the hat was that of Mike's guest who sportingly waived her ticket and the re-draw saw the painting go to Valerie and Tony May. They will keep it until the next Annual Dinner when it will be raffled once more. Thanks Mike for the good work!

After the dinner, people circulated round

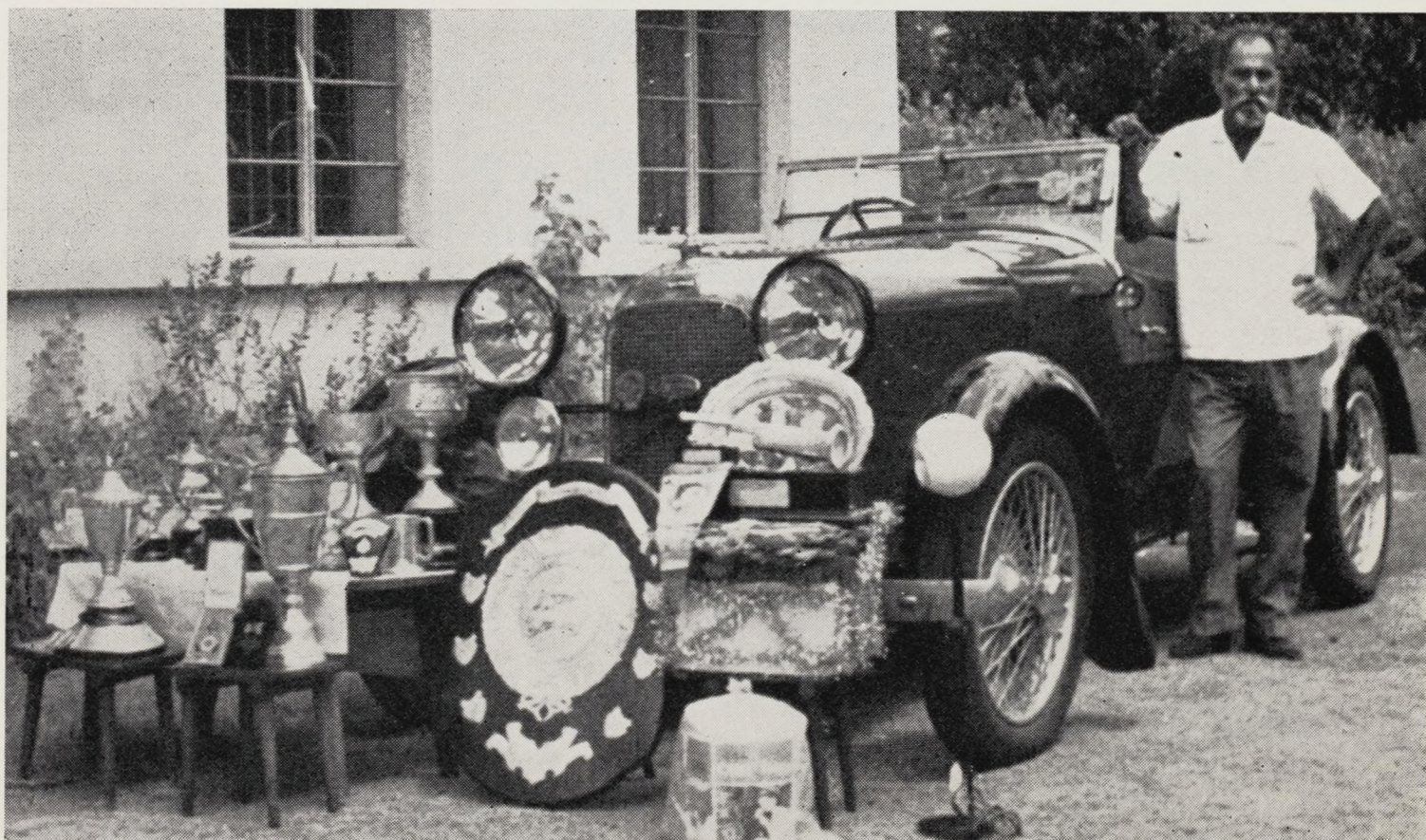
swapping stories of re-builds and making plans for the season ahead. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and a vote of thanks was enthusiastically given to ROBBY HEWITT and MIKE GABER who organised the evening so well.

\* \* \*

We were very sorry to hear that our stalwart member in India H. "BAN" BANERJI will not be able to realise his life's ambition to drive his 2-litre overland to England this summer. The restrictions imposed by the Indian government on his taking the car out of the country were proving difficult to overcome but the final blow came when the five special tyres and tubes Ban had ordered from Dunlop failed to turn up having been lost or stolen en route from the U.K. At the moment Ban is very disconsolate about the whole affair as it had taken him months of diplomatic negotiation to get an Import licence for the tyres and tubes. Let us hope that his luck changes and that his marathon journey will be possible in the future. Such determination should be rewarded by success. See photo below.

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It was gratifying to see that the plea for advertisers to take advertising space in the Magazine has been answered. Hopefully this will now start the ball rolling with other would-be advertisers. Advertising rates appear elsewhere in this issue.





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## Competition Notes

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WRITING THIS ARTICLE IN EARLY MAY, IT IS GOOD to think that the Competition Season has now arrived. With the London and Northern Dinners behind us and a successful Midland Area film show ably organised by Neil Frajbis, those of you who didn't attend, will I'm sure have noticed that V.S.C.C. Silverstone took place on Saturday, 19th April.

The event attracted 168 Competitors for a slightly revised programme when compared with a normal format. For example, the "Hour Blind" thanks to the price of oil, the cost of petrol at the pumps and other factors relating to Government, have together obliged the R.A.C. to cut this popular event to forty minutes.

Being the first important race meeting of the Vintage season it's heartening to see the usual excellent support at a time when rising costs threaten to erode people's enthusiasm for driving round in old motor cars with relatively inefficient and often large engines!

The Lagonda contingent provided the usual names although it was good to see Tony Bailey from Sonning, Berks, who had entered his splendid high chassis 2-litre car for the first time. The chassis, bodywork and general presentation of this vehicle is extremely good and it runs on the proper 21 inch wheels and tyres. It seems Tony bought his car some while ago as a non-runner at an appropriately attractive price—of course! All that was required to put it into good running condition was a few hours on the usual set of spanners and an academic exercise with the instruction book on the timing and adjustment of 2-litre cam shafts. Now the car is running well I hope it will be seen at many more meetings.

Nice to see John Abson with Elliott Elder's splendid single seater Rapier going so well, the Fletcher-Jones (Rapier Register members) with their beautiful, red special bodied Rapier and 4½-litre cars from Nigel Hall, Captain Barker (V.12), Alan Brown, Herb Schofield and "Wit" Wittridge. A total of eight cars, and one would have hoped for more, but we shall perhaps see the numbers build up later in the season. I should mention at this stage that now the "Woodbatt" Rapier has been sold the Competition Secretary is working extremely hard on completing preparation on his 4½ Special, and feels less guilty

than he should as he hopes to be competing later in the year!

Official results are not yet to hand and I must confess to spending some time in the bar talking to a number of Club members and friends who were along for the racing however, Jon Abson did well gaining a third place and Nigel Hall once again putting a spirited if not rather frightening display, particularly when going round Copse Corner amongst Bentleys, and other heavy metal at the front of the field in event nine.

The V.12 appeared to be going quite well in the hands of new owner Alistair Barker. It seems something will have to be done to the bodywork, Alistair being very much longer in the leg than the previous incumbent—and it is said that driving round in top gear is not really the way to go racing especially with a car whose engine revs so well!

Silverstone was an enjoyable event although it was sad to see the Fletcher-Jones Rapier after taking avoiding action at Woodcote clout the new Pits wall extremely hard. Front and rear springs were broken and the chassis looked somewhat out of line although there was no major damage that a good session on the spanners won't put right. Happily, the driver was O.K. although a little shocked. Although I didn't see the incident it seems another competitor cut across his line going out of Woodcote forcing the Rapier onto the grass on the outside of the track. The R.A.C. Steward was informed.

Talking of the new Pits, whilst the Press was saying how excellent is the new arrangement they must certainly have been talking about the facilities available to International drivers and entrants. Not one of the forty new garages was available to Vintage enthusiasts although there is more space now available in the Paddock for cars, their transporters or trailers and equipment. Most disappointing of all that enjoyable view of the Paddock from the Pits balcony with the view of Woodcote and the main straight in front of the Grandstand is now gone and one is only aware of a motor race when in the Paddock by the cars around you and noise coming from the track. To see anything worthwhile the long walk over the Dunlop Bridge must be taken to get to the Grandstands. I suppose this is progress and perhaps it will be good for the sport in the long run, but personally the old Pit and Paddock arrangement worked in well with the atmosphere at Vintage meetings at Silverstone.



Looking ahead at the calendar, entries have now closed for Curborough for 11th May and the next big meeting will be V.S.C.C. Oulton Park in June.

If any competing member needs any help of information I shall be delighted to help. Please telephone Ampthill 402935.

Finally, details and regulations, etc., will soon be available for Finmere which this year will include a Social evening on Saturday 26th July at a suitable Pub in the Finmere/Silverstone area and I hope all those members competing in the race on Saturday, and Spectators, will come along in the evening and hopefully support the driving test on Sunday, 27th July. Watch the monthly Newsletter for information.

JOHN BATT

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## The Northern Dinner

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THE NORTHERN RAVE-UP WAS HELD AS USUAL AT Monk Fryston Hotel on April 4th. Clothes were worn, though Alastair Barker (Highland "Barnsley" Knee Tremblers) wore Drag.

Nearly seventy folk turned up to make this the most successful yet, and we were able to welcome such far-flung members as Alastair Dick, the Colquhouns, and the Frajbis's from the Midlands; the Pipers and the Reisners from Durham; Geoff Moore and Madelaine Hall from London; committee members Duncan Westall and Mike Gaber, and John Batt; we also had a stray come in from the V.S.C.C., Jack McEwan and his wife.

We also were graced by the presence of both our Chairman and our Northern Secretary, who is certainly large enough for two. He came in his natty Instant Face Fungus Mk. IV to suit his new Senior Executive paunch—sorry—image. The young playboy look was also abandoned in his transportation. He arrived in a very beautiful V.12 Rapide. His speech to the nation too reflected the new, vital Schofield—strictly party political! This post-prandial tour-de-force was preceded by a curious rambling chat by Alan Brown, assisted by an extraordinary mechanical contraption which, since to the pure, all is pure, couldn't possibly have been a phallic symbol.

We were then treated to an historical monologue by David (Stan Holloway) Nine, with vocal refrain: "On 'is 'orse, wi' 'is 'awk in 'is 'and".

This done, prizes were presented by Viv Coates, most of them going to Alan Brown, the Chairman, the Northern Secretary and Herb Schofield! However, a now distinctly portly Ken Pape was deservedly given an ovation for his outstanding rebuild 2-litre which was pointedly parked outside the front entrance. The party reeled to an official halt around 0100 hrs., but as many of the revellers stayed the night, other situations no doubt arose.

JOROT

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## Rebirth of a 'Rapide'

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by A. Innes Dick

### PART II

I was also told by Peter that nothing should ever be thrown away as it could be used as a pattern for oneself or someone else. He was perfectly right with the result that I now have enough spares to justify a clearance sale.

I have now taken this saga up to the point at which the chassis has been photographed and sketched and each sub-assembly—such as engine, gear box, complete front and back axles, dashboard and so on—has been removed and put on one side for treatment. It was at this stage that I studied the "Good Book" (Morgan and Wheatley, of course) which had to be done before the restoration of each sub-assembly began. This book made it all sound so easy, but my description of the next stage of restoration of my Rapide may list some experiences from which others may profit!

The reaction to first seeing the bare chassis, with its 35 year accumulation of rust and dirt, was to sink back and read everything available about vintage cars and their innards. This is the right time at which to do this, as it is then that a detailed programme should be drawn up. If this is not done until later an unholy muddle will most certainly result and there could be regrets about having started such a venture at all.

The plan to which I tried to work was to review each sub-assembly and to decide what outside work was going to need doing on it. Any component the work upon which would take a considerable time was taken off and put out to the appropriate repairer. These parts would then be back home ready for the rest of the work to be



done on the assembly in the right order to fit the chassis assembly programme.

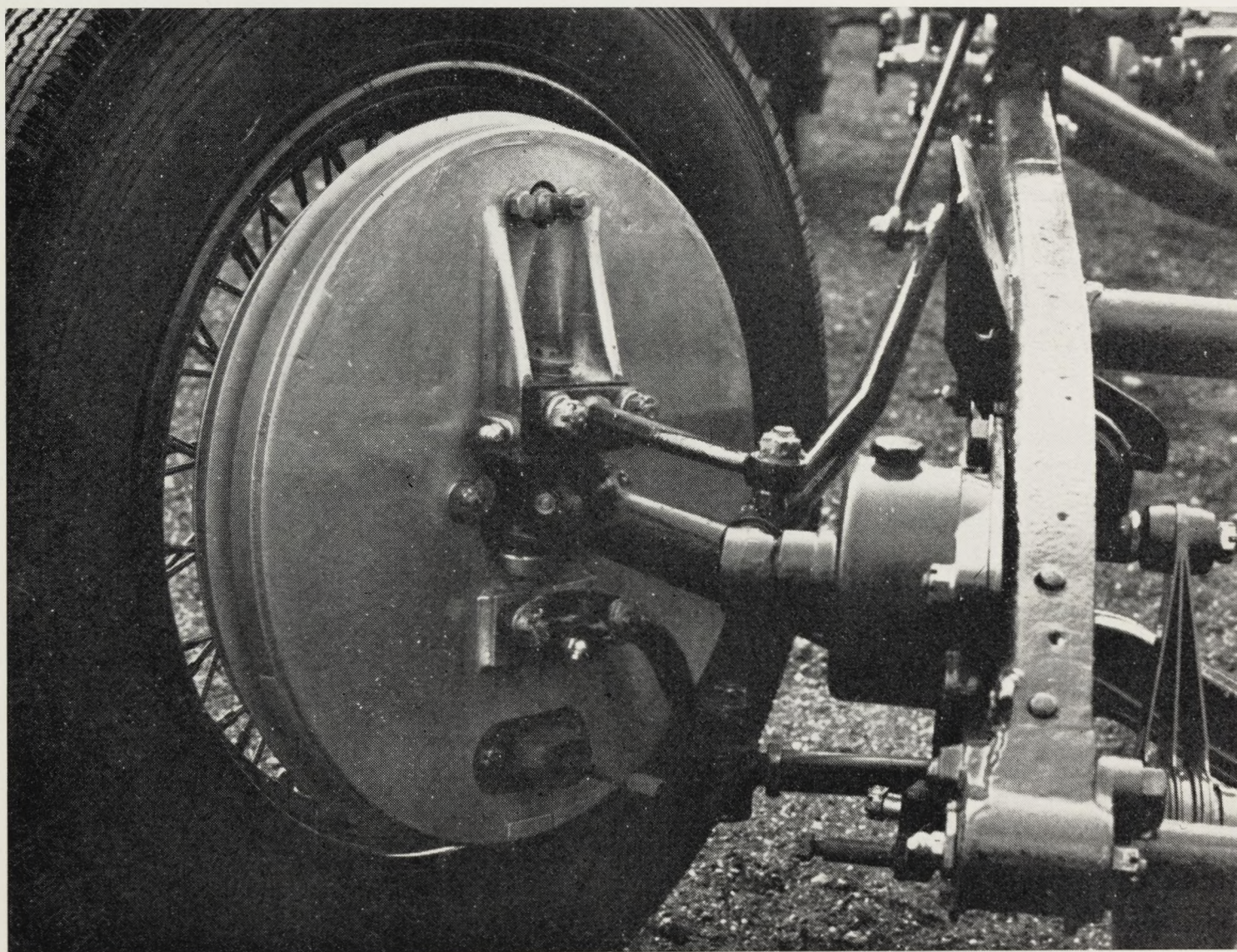
It is better that all "out work" should arrive back together, rather than completion of even one assembly should be delayed for months because of the non-arrival of a few bits, as can well happen. It is worth remembering that you should never tell a supplier that there is "no hurry" for something to be done as he's likely to take you at your word!

The frame, having been denuded of everything, was the first thing to be tackled by sending it away for shot-blasting. This sounded easy at the time but when a frame, which looks handleable enough when it is hung around with wheels, engine and so on, has to be manhandled onto a lorry, it ceases to be fun. Add to this that my shot-blaster had said it must be in by 7.30 a.m. before the boss should see it, and it will be realized what rigours have to be gone through if you are not the kind of vintage enthusiast who can afford to spray cheques all over the landscape!

Having got the frame back it had, of course, to be painted. My memories of the labour of this prompt me to advise a course of instruction on painting if one is going to be happy with the final result; I speak with feeling as there is so much that I'd like to do all over again.

One reads that each coat should be "rubbed down" and so on. But exactly *how* does one apply filler, rub down and choose types of paint? A few practical lessons from an expert will be worth hours of reading and listening to people, most of whom seem to tell one something different! Peter Densham was once advised by an ex-submariner to put Brasso in the sump to ease over-tight big end bearings! You can't be too careful to whom you listen and I shall doubtless hit trouble one day through asking all round until I find someone who agrees with me!

After its final coat, the frame looked better than it did, and the next job was to get it wheel-borne. The front axle was cleaned and painted and new king pins and bushes fitted. The brake







Rear axle (near side) during re-assembly

rods were replaced and new bushes and stainless clevis pins put in the linkage. The opportunity was taken to fit small grease nipples in every possible moving part of the brake mechanism as little provision had been made for lubrication by the makers.

It was noticed that the brake rod running to the compensator had been rubbing on the underside of the rear axle. This seems to have been a normal occurrence which is sometimes got over by bending the rod. It seemed to me to be better to weld an extension to the downward arm of the compensator so that the rod cleared the axle. This was discovered much later on and I only mention it here as we happen to be on the subject of brake rods.

The front back-plates were polished and the nuts holding them to the steering head were cadmium plated, surely an acceptable bit of smartening up. The drums were done in aluminium epoxy-resin, as were the wheels, a great improvement on ordinary paint.

Road springs came next because the body was going to be an aluminium Le Mans replica, much lighter than the original steel saloon. So Berrys were consulted as to what should be done with

the back springs the set of which was unsuitable for a light body. They removed one leaf and reset the remainder in a way which would be exactly right for the new body weight; another example of the value of consulting the expert at an early stage.

The back axle centre unit is a high ratio one which would be difficult to replace and it was deemed wise to get Ivan to do the overhaul of it.

By this time the brake and suspension overhauls and their painting and polishing having been done, the chassis was beginning to look like a car. I felt that to make a proper job of everything the gearbox should be rebuilt but expert examination decided that it was in perfect order and why look for trouble. As a gearbox can be removed for overhaul fairly easily I decided to let well alone. I did, however, find that there were two fine cracks across the middle of each front lug, in front of the rubber brush. These were welded up as a precaution. Those fitting a new oil seal to the front of a T8 box should remember that the slotted nut has a left hand thread!

An interesting, and possibly not unique fault was found in the steering. The ball of the drag



link front ball joint had been cut into quite deeply by the edge of the socket. A new one was made by ICI who stressed the vital necessity of using the right grade of steel and applying the right heat treatment to steering parts and king pins.

Long after the steering box had been re-assembled I found that there was a slight oil leak past the cross shaft. Worried enquiries about what I'd done wrong produced no sympathy at all; only casual comments from all that it was quite normal and they all did it. All except Nigel Hall of the "Northern Factory" who told me how to fit a polythene seal which cured the trouble completely.

This was only part of the advice to come from Herb Schofield and his collaborators. Another was from Alan Brown who voiced awful warnings about loose scale from a long unused block choking the radiator, certainly a likely thing to happen and a most welcome warning. He recommended running the engine with the top hose disconnected and a hose feeding water into the top of the radiator so that scaly water gets ejected from the top of the head by the pump. Iain Macdonald was also most helpful on how to cure what seems to be known as the "dreaded water gush" but both agree that if the radiator was clear there would be no cooling troubles. Does this mean that the radiator should be removed periodically, inverted and then blasted through with a high pressure hose? I must find out.

But we are onto cooling systems too early as the chassis still has to have much done to it and the engine is still in bits. The next thing was a mounting for the petrol tank over the back axle instead of it being slung from the rear cross members. Memories of my "Meccano" days helped here as did my welding friends in Oldbury. The tank hangs from its mounting, of course, and does not just sit on the frame where it would be subjected to flexing.

It was now that the wiring had to be fitted, a rather dreary job but done differently from the original in that it was made integral with the chassis prior to fitting the body. The dashboard was mounted on brackets from the bulkhead so that the chassis could be run with all its wiring and instruments in place.

While all this was going on the engine had been stripped and "outside" work done. This was extensive as it was decided to do everything

that needed doing while the engine was dismantled so as to avoid the risk of having to have the engine out after it had been installed. For this reason, such things as camshaft bearings—where oil pressure can be lost—were replaced as were pistons and all crankshaft bearings.

I had now reached the most interesting stage of reassembling the engine. This has yet to be done, as have several things such as body building. But what an exciting and worthwhile job it will be to look back on, not the least of the recollections being of the many interesting and kind friends made.

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## One Man's Season 1974

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THE 1973 SEASON ENDED FOR ME WITH A LONG TOW from the Llandow Circuit, where a broken piston put me out of the race at the VSCC meeting. The tow home, from South Wales to Welwyn Garden City, nearly cost me my marriage as my wife's Volkswagen dragged the broken Lagonda half way across England at the end of a rope that kept breaking. This fiasco also cost me a new clutch for the VW.

So the winter months were spent lugging the engine out of the chassis and stripping it down. The skirt of one of the pistons had entirely fallen away, tearing lumps out of the liner as it fell.

On the recommendations of a colleague the engine was rebuilt by Messrs. Johnson Roberts, Pembroke Works, Myddleton Road, High Street, Hornsey, N.8. They did an excellent job and I would thoroughly recommend their services to others in trouble.

Getting the engine back in the car was a whole order of magnitude more difficult as it was by now mostly reassembled and very heavy indeed. At last it was accomplished and no limbs broken.

While all this was going on I had two of the wheels rebuilt. The bumps at Llandow had proved too much and several spokes had worked loose. Some cracks had also appeared in the bodywork and these were dealt with by Gilbert & Rickard of Isleworth. Another firm I recommend.

All this takes much longer than planned and



by the time the car was on the road again much of the season had passed. However, I was just in time to enter for Prestcott, and I managed to get my entry accepted.

I had never entered for a hill climb before and really the heavy 4½-litre car is not the most suitable machine for the hill! It is, however, immense fun.

Prestcott is a two day affair—practice on the Saturday and the timed runs on the Sunday. The signing in is much the same as at a race meeting with the difference that each competitor has to “walk the hill” before he is allowed to practice. This is quite a novel experience as you walk up the twisting road, diving for the refuge of the marshalls’ “fox holes” as the other cars go past on their practice runs.

The road looks quite ordinary as you walk up and it is only when you get in the car on the hill you realize just how narrow and steep it really is. The bends come rushing at you and it feels that you have one wheel in each verge.

I managed three practice runs at 62, 61 and 60 seconds respectively, which was quite a lot slower than some of the 4½-litre Bentley and Alvis Specials who were getting up as fast as 48 seconds.

Many of the really quick cars have been fitted with pre-selector gear boxes which must be a great help in keeping the power on through the series of tight bends. Many of the cars are also running with very non standard tyres and wheel diameters to help their road holding and acceleration.

On the timed runs on the Sunday I managed a best time of 59.90 seconds and therefore had the great satisfaction of getting below the one minute on my first meeting. I also had the most delightful drive home in the Lagonda, passing many of the faster cars tucked up on trailers behind their owners’ limousines.

I was the only Lagonda to enter the Over 3,000 c.c. Sports Car class, in a mixed field which included Bentleys, Alvis’, Railtons and a Bugatti. How about another 4½ joining me in 1975—preferably one with a manual gearbox and we will try to get below 59.90 seconds.

ANDREW CHEYNE

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## ***Back to the Good Old Days of Rock n' Roll*** by Herb Schofield

EVERY VINTAGE ENTHUSIAST WILL TELL YOU THAT his first car was an Austin Seven. I'm different. My first machine was a 1946 J-type Vauxhall 14, one of the all time great cars.

The following is a vague account of some early motoring experiences back in the good old days of Bill Haley and Lonnie Donnegan, when Y-fronts came only in white and the girls wore proper stockings and suspenders. But back to the Vauxhall! I was of course joking about it being a classic car, but to me in those days it most certainly was. A lad's first car must be his favourite for it opens up a whole new world of independence and the open road, also unfortunately of coppers on motorbikes, coppers in cars, one-way streets, traffic jams and breakdowns. This rather well-built Vauxhall was a bit





like a scaled down late pre-war American Buick or Chrysler, it had leather seats, sunshine roof, and a 3-speed box casually actuated by a four foot long knitting needle which sprouted from the dark recesses under the dashboard.

I had the car about six months and during that time did over 12,000 miles, most of it unexciting and pleasurable—unexciting when on the move, and pleasurable when stationary in the back seat! During the time of my ownership we had the Suez crisis with petrol rationing and during the early days before black market coupons became available to everyone I used to run the car on dry cleaning fluid, the only drawback being fantastic 'pinking' and a tendency for the engine to continue running even though the ignition switch had been turned off.

My next car was really out of context because by some deal or other my father acquired and passed on to me a 1954 Sunbeam Alpine 2-seater—a lovely looking car (and still is to my mind) with louvred bonnet, nice tail and satisfying treatment of the wing line. In those days of course designers didn't quite know what to do with wings and the Sunbeam treatment compared most favourably with other cars.

The Alpine was spoilt by having a column gear change. Anyway modern sports cars then and now were not my particular cup of tea, so she was passed on.

At last the inevitable Austin 7 arrived on the scene which in this case was a tourer of 1934. I suppose it was what you would call a 'fun car' in a dangerous sort of way. You applied the brakes 500 yards before you had the accident. There was about  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. free play at the clutch so take off had to be planned most carefully otherwise you set off nodding at everybody in great leaps, or you didn't set off at all! The whole car needed great skill and you had to hang on to the steering wheel like grim death mainly because the steering was about half turn lock to lock.

People used to laugh at funny old cars, as of course they still do, so to help the feeling along a notice was placed on the back of the car bearing the words "Please pass—getting tired" and other witticisms. Anyway the whole joke wore off pretty quickly and as I desired a long and full life the Austin was sold for £40.

Another car which arrived about this time was a rather large Morris 'Oxford' or 'Isis' I forget which, of about 1934 vintage. It really was a well



built car and beautifully finished inside with wood veneers, leather seats, and a sort of silver vase on the dashboard for either carrying flowers or perhaps spitting in. She also had a sunshine roof and head cushions in the rear. It was very dark inside, but then all old cars were dark inside weren't they? The engine was a rather untidy looking side valve six "the silent six" as they called it. Performance wise the car was a bit of a disaster and the brake horsepower produced wouldn't have been sufficient to extract a wet match out of a dog's rectum. Small gradients were enough to reduce the car to second gear. I used to spend a lot of my time those days in North Wales and in that sort of country she was a bit of a bore. Eventually I sold her to a keen chap in Lincolnshire who had no problems with hills, and I believe she was still around a few years ago.

"1929 Sunbeam Weymann Saloon" said the advert in the *Manchester Evening News*. I went along to have a look. The car belonged to a budding Liberal candidate who presumably had come to the conclusion that a dowdy old motor car was bad for the swinging party image. However I thought the car had that 'something' that all old Sunbeams seem to have. She was large, in super condition and with a four light semi-sports body complete with dummy hood irons at the back. Compared with my previous machines this Sunbeam oozed quality everywhere, a massive water radiator cap which required about thirty turns to unscrew, and at the rear the petrol filler cap which also required about thirty turns, was a beautiful piece of brasswork. The engine was neat and well laid out—so typical of late Sunbeam practice. The interior had that beautiful old car smell—a mixture of top quality leather, pipe tobacco smoke, and linseed oil which was used on the body fabric. I bought her, I had to, I had fallen.

The engine was silken, the steering impeccable and the gearbox rewarding. The performance?—well certainly better than the old Morris. As I look back I particularly remember her brown body and small square rear window with a black and yellow window blind which I am sure must have been original.

About this time a very worrying and not unexpected letter arrived from the Ministry of Labour requesting one H. L. Schofield to attend for full medical examination. National Service time had arrived. The Sunbeam took me down

to Manchester on the appointed day, and together with a crowd of other lads we were herded into a long room, "herded" being the right word for we could have been cattle. "Right you lot tek all yer clothes off and I mean *all* yer clothes and hang 'em up on them pegs". This was obvious—I mean you wouldn't hang yourself up on a peg and leave your clothes on the floor would you? There was of course nothing else we could do and so fifty odd assorted chaps removed all wondering what to do with their hands.

"Right, fall in". The sight of a mixture of fat, thin, big and small men marching naked in line must be a very funny sight as we entered the room where the usual cough and bend down routine went on. I had led a sheltered life since leaving school and when one medical attendant offered me a small bottle I was confused. "What do I do with it" I inquired. The donor of the bottle who at that moment was exploring the interior of his nose in keen anticipation replied—"You pee in it lad!"

Summer 1957, the Sunbeam, a friend, and two lovely girls off to the Norfolk Broads for a week on a cabin cruiser. The 200 mile journey took all day, but so what. The car was going well and we made frequent stops at quiet country pubs drinking proper beer. You can't do it now for the quiet country pubs are quickly being changed to plastic palaces and the gassy beer in that part of the world is awful, whatever happened to "Lacons", "Steward and Pattersons", "Phipps", have they all gone, or been taken over by some large outfit?

Now when the old man talked cars and motor-ing he went on and on and on about 2-litre Lagondas. He had owned about five or six in his time, both before and after the war. So when a blown 2-litre (GO 4495) came up for sale in Leeds over we went to see it. I wanted her. Long and low she seemed, massive headlamps, stoneguard, narrow windscreen, bonnet strap, in fact all the goodies that immediately appealed to me. We went for a run, the noise of the copper exhaust, the crunch, crunch every time the gear was changed did something to me. I had to have her and so I did. At the same time I joined the Lagonda Club and thereby entered a grown-ups world of tweed jacketed, pipe smoking beer drinkers who talked of camshafts, crankshafts and Ivan Forshaw! I saw for the first time the big 4½-litre cars, the V.12's. My casual relationships with the old motor cars was over and life would never quite be the same again.





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## **Exit The Pigs or the Saga of EWF 99**

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### **CHAPTER 1**

Once upon a time a certain gentleman farmer, by name of Henry Coates, built upon a 14-60 Lagonda chassis a lorry body with a Sunbeam cab. This agricultural contraption was used from 1947 onwards and was well known in the East Riding as "The Pig Truck". After many years of valiant service transporting pigs to market, consistent use on and off the farm, not to mention carrying Henry to Lagonda dinners over the Pennines in the middle of winter, etc. it was decided to pension her off (circa 1960).

About this time two brothers, Colin and Kenneth Pape were devoid of Lagondas. Colin had sold his 2-litre and taken a wife instead and Ken had parted with his 4½ Rapide for no obvious reason. Having seen the heap of bits and pieces where Henry had dissected his "Swine Utility" to see what made it go, they decided they would like to build up a competition 2-litre. Some sort of deal was worked out and agreed upon, the exact nature of this being somewhat

obscure, but of course in those far off days vintage cars changed hands for a few pounds and a bit of chit-chat.

Work was put in hand on the engine. The crank being reground and the bearings remetalled. New pistons of slightly higher compression were fitted.

At this stage Colin decided to move house and so all the parts were dumped in a great heap in a spare garage at Ken's masonry works. Here they remained for approximately 10 years, a memorial to what might have been. Any inclination to carry on with the job having disappeared in the cut and thrust of everyday life. Running businesses, producing children, selling commercial vehicles, etc., etc., these had taken their toll of good intentions. The Pape brothers' competition 2-litre was relegated to just another bad joke amongst the Northern members of the Lagonda Club.

### **CHAPTER 2**

Having purchased an Airfix plastic model car kit, an Alfa-Romeo to be precise, brother Ken was engrossed in the building of this during a few winter evenings of 1970. This being duly completed, he then uttered an oath and stated that he



could not see any point in assembling a plastic vintage car when all the parts for a real car were lying in the garage.

A telephone call was made to brother Colin and an agreement was arranged whereby Ken would take over the bits lock, stock and barrel in return for a cheque that would not bounce. This agreement being ratified without delay. Ken was now in a position to resume work full of confidence and enthusiasm. Whatever happened to those lost years he asked himself over and over?

Work recommenced and the chassis frame was cleaned up and painted dark green. The front axle was in very good condition, the spring shackles and all steering connections appeared sound. These parts were all finished like the chassis in green and were ready for fitting.

A light rear axle was obtained along with the springs, for which new shackle pins had to be manufactured at a local engineering works. These were made 9/16 in. and bushes reamed accordingly. At the same time the rear brake operating mechanism was mostly remade with new camshafts and bushes. These items cost quite a bag of gold considering it was three years ago.

The axles and springs, along with many other parts, were fitted to the chassis. New rear brake cables were ordered and delivered in record time by Thomas Richfield and Son Ltd., and these along with the rest of the braking mechanism were screwed on to the chassis.

After a great deal of blood, sweat, time and trouble, the chassis was more or less complete, but standing on an ill assorted selection of wheels and tyres. This would have to be rectified and before long a visit would have to be made to Capt. Forshaw to try and persuade him to part with some 18 in. wheels, which, it was felt would suit the car better than the scarce 21 in. ones.

Attention was now transferred to the engine which had been lying in a somewhat sorry looking state for 10 years. However, the bores had been well protected with lashings of oil during the neglected years and were in remarkably good condition. On placing the cylinder head in position it was found that the special pistons came too high up the bores and were just touching the head. So, the pistons were removed and 1/16 in. removed from the top edges. John Beardow's tame model steam engineer executed this little job in exchange for a packet of fags.

After an extensive search of the garage it was realized that no clutch centre plate existed and likewise the spider. There were also other parts missing and so a holiday in the Bournemouth area was deemed a necessity. This was arranged and thanks to the help and assistance of Ivan the parts required were obtained.

The engine was now basically completed and after enlisting the help of fellow member John Broadbank who is renowned for his weight lifting capabilities, the engine and gearbox were dropped into the chassis. Bulkhead, radiator and 20 gal. petrol tank were added and the running chassis was complete. Ken now started to think in terms of what body to fit. That it would have to be made there was no doubt. The year was now 1972, the months having slipped past. For all the work and time there seemed to be precious little to see.

### CHAPTER 3

The next five months saw very little progress and seemed to be spent gathering information on bodywork. As many Club meetings as possible were attended and 2-litre Lagondas were viewed and measured from every quarter.

It was decided that, after much deliberation, the 2-litre team cars of 1929 gave the most desirable appearance, and so this design was to form the basis of the coachwork. The chassis was accurately drawn to scale and the lines of the body decided upon. A valuable asset was an original windscreen, purchased with grateful thanks from Martin Holloway. This would obviously decide the width and shape of the scuttle.

Squared paper was purchased and full sized drawings of front, rear and side elevations were made. This took a fair amount of time and patience, but being of an artistic disposition our intrepid designer feels it is better to make one's mistakes on paper. One great difficulty in trying to copy the Lagonda body construction is, that, one never sees the actual timber frame on other people's cars without removing the interior trim. So, a certain amount of guesswork is inevitable.

Having decided on the main construction details, a complete list was made of each item of timber required, with allowances for curvature and overlapping joints. This list was presented at the old established sawmills of J. Taylor and Sons Ltd., Driffield, Yorkshire. They were extremely helpful and willing to supply all that was required



cut to size in ash. They also offered to band saw any curved pieces if these were marked accordingly.

Delivery of the timber was made in August 1972 and work commenced with enthusiasm straight away. Having no machine tools available, other than an electric drill, it was obvious that this job was going to take some considerable time and patience. All the curved ribs, scuttle and rear quarters were carved out by hand with mainly a saw, chisel, mallet, set square and one invaluable type of plane called an Avon Trimmer Tool (no amateur coachbuilder should be without one). After all this hand work, the ribs were returned to the saw miller who removed the surplus timber from the inside of the curves in about 15 minutes with a band saw. Half lap joints were made and the whole framework screwed together on the chassis. After a good deal of further filing, chiselling and sandpapering, the frame was treated with preservative.

The next job to be tackled was panelling the framework in aluminium prior to covering with fabric. Again a list was made for convenience of each alloy panel required, and these were cut to size in 18 g. allowing for trimming. These panels were drilled and screwed with  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.  $\times$  4 in. countersunk screws into rebates chiselled by hand in the body frame.

The awkward pieces to fit the two rear quarters were made by first producing an "egg box" pattern of the shape and having the panels rolled professionally to the correct shape. All screw heads were filed flush and any imperfections filled and sandpapered smooth.

A squad of Lagonda Club members then lifted the body off the chassis and placed it on stools ready for the fabric covering. This presented no great problem. First a thin covering of plastic foam was stuck on with Bostic C, then followed a covering of black vinyl fabric, supplied very reasonably by our beloved Northern Secretary, Herb Schofield. Many happy hours were spent tin tacking this fabric into position and stretching it to avoid any unsightly creases. Black flexibead was used to trim the seams in the usual positions.

The two small doors were hung on hinges supplied by the "Complete Automobilst", together with handles and locks, etc. The body was then replaced on the chassis and bolted up. The sides of the interior was trimmed in green material again supplied by "Herb". Floorboards

were made in marine ply and the rear footwells in steel. All being finally trimmed in green car carpet.

The date was now August 1973, so one year had elapsed since the delivery of the timber, but the coachwork was beaten and Ken had the feeling he was going to come out on top at the end.

#### CHAPTER 4

Whilst the body was under construction, the "Northern Lagonda Factory" was commissioned to produce four alloy mudguards resembling the type fitted to the team cars. These were delivered in due course, and with the help of a tame blacksmith steel stays were made, and the mudguards bolted on after being stove enamelled. A dashboard was made to an original Lagonda pattern complete with Lagonda instruments and fittings. These in turn were wired up along with the rest of the car, and this presented no great problems. A slight modification was the fitting of a new control box and dynamo, a Jaguar dynamo can easily be fitted into the cradle by removing the front flanges.

Attention was now turned towards a suitable bonnet, this presented a slight difficulty for some time as there existed some bonnet panels, but these were in a deplorable state, and apart from the hinges, were not usable. However, some professional help was forthcoming and the top panels were rolled to shape and flanged, the sides being pressed with suitable louvres. Finishing off and clenching the hinges in were left for Ken to complete. The bonnet was eventually fitted on the car and held in place with a single leather strap as on the team cars. New bonnet boards were made and covered in aluminium. P 80 headlights along with side lights, rear lights and flashers were fixed in position. The two bucket seats were remade and then upholstered along with the back seat and squab in green leather cloth. The hood frame proved a headache for some time, but was eventually overcome by persistence and an aptitude for elementary geometry. There is a great deal of satisfaction to be had in producing something that even the great Messrs. Morgan and Wheatley recommend one not to attempt. This particular problem was solved by careful measuring and studying Ian North's 16-80 hood frame and then drawing full size the same design, altering it slightly where required to suit this particular 2-litre.



Running boards were carved in oak to the standard 2-litre pattern, the water grooves being gouged by hand. The aluminium trim was delivered by special motor cycle high speed delivery service the Club member Keith Murray, who felt an urgent desire to visit "Nellie's" here in Beverley. Steel support brackets were fabricated and the running boards bolted in position.

#### CHAPTER 5

After a certain amount of magneto trouble, which was eventually traced to a tracking distributor cap, the car was ready for the road. With trembling and trepidation, Ken drove "EWF 99 Lagonda Lorry: Farmer's Goods" down to member Don Hoggard's testing station for M.O.T. testing. Needless to say it passed with flying colours and within half an hour was to become "EWF Lagonda Car: Private". Date 15th August, 1974.

#### The End, or is it the beginning?

##### Author's footnote

To member L. D. Nichols. It is doubtful whether your 14 years rebuild is a record as it has taken this time to get EWF 99 back on the road, but if there is an award going then you can certainly have it as far as I am concerned.

To all the purists who are now leaping for their pens in order to decry my efforts and bawl desecration. There are still plenty of good original cars in the Club, some in excellent condition and others not so good. I have built something that gives me satisfaction and it has been no easy passage. I have gone through periods of despair, infuriation, utter frustration, particularly with the so called professionals, and finally a satisfying sense of achievement which you feel when you finally start her up and drive her through your local neighbourhood for the first time.

K. S. PAPE

(Many thanks, Ken—the car looks well worth the effort. Ed.)

### All organisers of club events

Please ensure you have an  
R.A.C. waiver of permit and  
official cancellation. If in  
doubt, contact your  
Competition Secretary:  
**JOHN BATT**

## MIDLAND NOTES

from Neil Frajbis

WELL!!! DID YOU ALL SPOT MY "DELIBERATE" mistake in the last notes? I did try to persuade Tony to do the only decent thing and get himself engaged. I even offered to let him scan through my little black address book, but he could not be bribed into taking the matrimonial step. So girls you can put him back on your eligible bachelor list.

My dreadful mistake came about through hastily reading the gossip notes in the February issue of the *Rapier Register News*. It would seem that one has to be a knowledgeable R.R. member to recognize which Editor is writing which piece and muggins here had to get it wrong. So it is one C. N. Wiblin who has to be congratulated on becoming engaged to a young lady called Pat.

However, I can reveal, and this I quote from Tony himself, that his Aunt is a supporter of Aston Villa F.C. and they have done well this season!!!

The opening event of the Midland Section has passed but by all accounts has not been forgotten. As I thought, a Film Show would be welcomed by Midland members, and we had no less than forty turn up on the night. Many of whom travelled something like eighty miles round trip in spite of the snow we had earlier in the day. The films were varied and, I trust, interesting. The first item on the programme was a new film just released by Shell called *Guide to Good Mileage*. It did tend to tell Grandpa how to suck eggs, nevertheless I am sure that each member of the audience has been guilty at one time or another, of the various examples cited that cause low m.p.g. The next film from Goodyear showed how tyres were manufactured but principally dealt with the test programmes tyres undergo to prove the design and reliability. To finish off the first half of the programme we saw the hardy annual Shell film *The Heroic Days*.

The interval gave people plenty of opportunity to replenish their glasses and also consume the marvellous supper provided by the staff of the "Gate Inn".

Two more Shell films were shown in the second half of the evening's proceedings. The first was *Titans* which dealt with the period 1930 to 1934



and the other was *The Champions* which brought us into the post war era of 1949 to 1951 and featured my hero, Fangio, and his first win of the World Championship.

During the interval we did have a mini prize award session. Since the Colquhouns were unable to attend the London Dinner and Prize-giving we had the notion to present the Densham Trophy to Robin on the night of the Film Show. Alas, I forgot to remind the person who was guarding this treasure to remove it from their vault (the outside loo in actual fact) before the time lock activated. So I had to ask Robin to accept the Trophy in spirit and would arrange for Securicor to deliver the goods in due course. I only hope he got the Trophy by the time he reads these notes. However, the Colquhouns did not go away empty-handed because they did win the prize for the best attendance at the Meriden Pub Meet over the past year. They were presented with a large Thermos flask which Tony Wood thought would be very useful on the Continental journeys they make each year.

The award for best attendance at the Osgathorpe Pub Meet went to Bill Wright. He received a book of Car Badges of the World.

In the previous notes I said that we would have another venue for 1976 Midland Film Show. The Gate Inn, however, did prove to be a very good venue for the following reasons. We had an excellent meal at a modest charge, we had a room capable of seating sixty, its own private bar, and finally, Osgathorpe is just about in the geographical centre of the Midland area. In spite of this, a number of members, particularly from the west of the area travelled a great distance and it would seem fair to move the venue a little further west provided we can find a suitable pub. By next November I must fix the date and venue for the next film show, so if anyone has any comments or suggestions to make speak now before you forget about it.

In one respect it was a pity we only had commercial films to show. Alas no-one came forward with any home movies of Club events. I am sure that such film does exist but no doubt the footage is small and forms part of general family scenes.

Therefore I have a suggestion to make to all members that possess their own cine camera. If, by prior arrangement, members would expose a few feet of film to record the highlights of the event they are attending by the end of the season we would have quite a number of short filmed

records of various Lagondas doing their bit in all sorts of events. Edit this lot together and we would have quite a unique film record of the season's activities. O.K., I agree, perhaps the final presentation may not be very professional, but does this really matter? I do not possess a cine camera but I would be prepared to be co-ordinator and with the help of another, who knows what he is doing, edit the contributions into a film for viewing at our two film shows. I certainly think it is worth a try so I would be pleased to hear from anyone who would be prepared to contribute a few minutes of film.

I am pleased to report that a number of "Midlanders" together with many from other points on the compass, made the pilgrimage to Monk Fryston to enjoy a jar or three with our Chairman and his Northern compatriots.

I am sure that a swig by swig account of this notable event will appear elsewhere in this issue so all I will say is "Thank you" to our Northern hosts for a most enjoyable and entertaining evening. We shall come again!

I also thank Herb for his complimentary comments about the Midland section. The proof of our success will be shown by the attendance we get for the Midland events listed in the Fixtures List. So I trust you have already marked the dates in your diary.

## **SOUTHERN SOCIAL AND PUB MEET**

MICELHAM PRIORY AT  
UPPER DICKER, NR. HAILSHAM,  
SUSSEX ON SUNDAY 17 AUGUST.  
COMMENCES AT 2 P.M.

PRECEDED BY PUB MEET  
AT THE GUN INN, NR. HORAM,  
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Drink with friends then visit the  
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Grounds 15p. Free entry to grounds  
for Lagondas.

*For details send S.A.E. to*  
Mr. G. Thyer, Lagonda,  
45 Wheatfield Way, Cranbrook, Kent






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## THE NATIONAL DAFFODIL RUN— 1975

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PREPARATIONS TO THE LAGONDA FOR THIS 'EPREUVE' were carried out prior to this event as long ago as the day before, involving the filling of the petrol tank, checking the oil, minutely examining the water level in the radiator, etc., etc. From this the discerning reader will realise the sheer thoroughness required before starting on such a taxing event. Following this an early night at 2.30 a.m. following a six course dinner and copious supplies of vintage port at a friend's.

At 5.30 a.m. I awoke. At 6.30 a.m. I awoke again, dashed out of the house at ten to seven to collect the first passenger en route for Maidenhead who as luck would have it was ready. We turned back after half a mile for his gloves. For me. We sauntered gently through the country lanes, the

noise in third gear reminding me vaguely of the parrot cage floor I had so cunningly disguised as the interior of my mouth. We spoke little, the mists gently rising off every heath as the little rabbits, pheasant, steamed up Minis, etc. scuttled off to their various abodes after a night of sport. Presently we arrived at Send where the remaining charges for the expedition were to be collected. Surprise, surprise, they were ready; although in the case of one Mr. Bruce I feel the dummy run of getting up at 6.30 a.m. the day before may well have helped. By ten to eight we were really on our way to Maidenhead for the off. After all Ripley really is a stupid place to set off for Bournemouth.

The Navigator managed very cleverly without anybody really noticing to give us a complete tour of Maidenhead and environs before arriving at the appointed starting place. As it turned out we were not the first to arrive nor even the last so a fruitful half hour or so was spent sizing up the opposition and having a cup of fortified coffee. At this point the prize for the most original form of conveyance was awarded by our goodselves to



what can only be described as a travelling lounge bar. This took the form of a circa 1955 Humber Imperial complete with division that had been suitably modified to accommodate four inverted bottles of spirits in their optics together with a draught beer tap below the offside rear window, the pipes from which trailed lazily behind the seat to the boot where lay the barrel and gas cylinder. Suffice it to say gin and tonics were being served at 8.30 a.m.!

As the clock ticked by towards 8.45 a.m. the time for the off, nervous drivers could be seen passing to and fro, some checking the security of their daffodil on the radiator, others showing signs of just sheer panic in the form of starting and stopping their engines in an aggressive manner. Prompt at 9.11 the first car moved off returning at 9.14 to collect the route instructions. At last it was our turn to move off complete with daffodil and instructions. Soon we were winding our way through beautiful country lanes and villages, en route for sunny Bournemouth.

Presently we came across a beautiful country mansion of which a photograph just had to be taken. Nervously we reversed down the drive to the front door, one of our members leaping out with the camera to record the event for posterity. Barely had the shutter clicked than the inevitable "OI" was heard emanating from an upstairs window. In a trice the photographer was back on board and with a burst of clutch slip we accelerated away from the scene of the crime.

How easily the miles slipped by in the pleasant morning sunlight, welcoming licensed premises looming into view in every hamlet through which we passed, the only draw back being it was still only 10 o'clock although it felt well past lunch-time. Anyway we still had all that to look forward to as we pulled into Stockbridge for a late breakfast/early lunch. We parked the Lagonda among several other vintagents in the wide main street and (sh) ambled off to seek succour. The first eating house advertised gammon rashers for a mere £1.85, the next a fried breakfast for 98p and further investigation revealed a small notice to the transport section behind the kitchens adjacent to the conveniences. A large plate of fried everything was consumed together with bread and butter and a cup of tea in this most pleasant "Greasy spoon" for 70p a head. Refreshed we returned to the car only to discover that some poor lady had been waiting patiently to open her car door for some forty minutes due to the

immediate proximity of the Lagonda. After profuse apologies from us and the standard "I knew someone who had a Bentley like that" from her friend we motored on towards the unknowns of the New Forest.

No competitive event, especially a vintage one, can be complete without some mishap and sure enough we were not to be denied this. We were quietly bumbling along in the pleasant company of a Morris Oxford and an elderly Singer down a narrow country road when not one hundred yards ahead there it was. A small Swift in a highly undignified position nose first in a ditch. Apparently some buffoon in a Morris 1000 travelling in the opposite direction at a pace too fast for the conditions prevailing had forced the unfortunate Swift to take avoiding action into his present predicament. Quickly we grasped the seriousness of the situation and orders were barked out to various bystanders. "Fetch a rope and attach it to the rear axle". One mighty heave by twenty-five men, women and children did the trick. In a flash we dusted down the driver, replaced him in the Swift and pointed him towards Bournemouth. We fought our way through adulations of the crowd to the Lagonda and continued on our way.

Shortly after this incident we passed beneath a small railway bridge only to find several people standing about looking hopefully for something to happen. A U.F.O. we thought or perhaps a rural stalker was about to make itself apparent. But no. A casual enquiry revealed the impending arrival of a real steam train on its way to Eastleigh. This we had to see. The photographer was despatched to the optimum vantage point while the rest of us stood all over the car waiting for the great moment. Within two minutes "Black Prince" was puffing gracefully by pulling seven or eight carriages filled to overflowing. Horns were sounded, waves exchanged and then all too quickly the moment of nostalgia had passed. I can't help feeling I noticed the odd handkerchief being taken out to remove the welling tear from one or two eyes after that.

At this point opening time was an established fact and as we entered the New Forest a definite craving had set in. Now I don't know if the fact that we were meant to arrive in Bournemouth at 2.30 p.m. had anything to do with it but I have yet to come across a greater distance between two public houses than on the route by which we were sent. It was only seventeen miles from Bournemouth that we found one and by then the time



was 1.15. Three or four pints were hurriedly consumed and the last leg of the journey was commenced.

Although we were one of the first to leave Maidenhead by some strange quirk of fate we were nearly the last to arrive at Bournemouth sea front. Various relatives and parents were met and a highly illegally overloaded Lagonda set off in the procession from the sea front to Bournemouth Pavilion for tea with the mayor; including two daft dalmations belonging to the writers brother. These actually behaved quite well during the tea but were taken rather by surprise when the gathering applauded the mayor's speech. However, they were quietened down in time for the next burst of applause when they did it all over again. Immediately after this the Mayor and Mayoress came striding across in a purposeful manner at which point I began to deny any knowledge of my brother and dogs when he benignly bent down to pat their heads and comment "I wish all my audiences were as appreciative".

We filed out and after several "Goodbyes" and "see you next year's" we adjourned to my fathers for a quick freshen up before the return journey.

This was uneventful until after leaving the Winchester By Pass when it was noticed that the side lights which also meant the tail lights, were not working. We pulled into the side of the road to remedy this detail but unfortunately the problem lay beneath the dashboard and no torch was immediately to hand. Matches were tried but kept going out; a rolled up sheet of the route of the way down was also ignited as a form of illumination but when this threatened to engulf not only the repairer but also the underside of the dashboard an alternative source of light had to be found. Fortunately a kindly motorist hove to and produced the very thing and moments later we were on our way.

A very pleasant couple of hours were spent in a delightful Inn just outside Alton where the trials and tribulations of the day were relived and we all vowed to do it again next year. We carried on home, the writer depositing the weary but happy travel stained and sunburnt companions at their various residences arriving finally at 1.00 a.m. and 300 miles later to an unbelievably welcome bed.

MIKE HALLOWES

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## Random Reflections

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IN HAVING A FAIRLY LARGE CLEAN DRY LOFT, ONE becomes very reluctant to discard old motoring magazines. One can always fight one's better inclinations by saying how valuable these books will be in future years. "Shouldn't throw them away old boy, worth their weight in gold" is just the sort of remark which drives out all those tidying-up resolutions.

I hasten to add, that the books are looked at from time to time and once opened they are very difficult to put down.

For example, 1953 as seen in the pages of *Motor Sport* for that year represents a now totally remote past era. Browsing through the "for Sale" columns opens one's eyes to the quantity and quality of cars available on the second-hand market. Even allowing for the increased value of the £ at that time, it was nevertheless remarkable how many desirable machines were on offer. No doubt they were in need of some further work on the mechanics of coachwork in some cases but even so let your mind boggle over some of the following miscellaneous selection:

BENTLEY 6½-litre 1929 with Gurney Nutting body. 24,000 miles, one owner. Winner at BDC Concours 1952/53 **£290.**

FRAZER NASH 1933 T.T. Replica. £150 overhaul. **£300.**

Ex-Goldie Gardner M.G. K3 MAGNETTE. Rebuilt 1950. **£275.**

Carefully restored 3-litre BENTLEY RED LABEL 1926. **£325.**

ISOTTA FRASCHINI 1929 45 h.p. Total mileage 15,000. Stored last 13 years. **£195.**

ASTON MARTIN 1932 1½-litre International tourer. **£165.**

ROLLS ROYCE 25 h.p. **£650.**

INVICTA 4½-litre 1931 100 m.p.h. model low chassis. Overhauled. **£275.**

CORD V.8. 1945. **£325.**

HRG 1937. Entrant Le Mans, Monte Carlo, Donnington. Specimen. **£350.**

LAGONDA 2-litre low chassis tourer. Kept in heated garage. **£170.**

ROLLS ROYCE Silver Ghost breakdown lorry. **£50.**

SS JAGUAR 100 sports. **£225.**

LAGONDA M.45. **£145.**



LAGONDA LG.45 Rapide with Gurney Nutting body. New engine two years ago. **£180.**

TALBOT 105. Reg. "GO 54" Team Car in excellent condition. **£200.**

BUGATTI Type 51. Perfect. **£475.** Also Type 40 in original condition. **£245.**

MASERATI 2.9-litre. Ex-Birkin. **£645.**

While a visit to a sports car establishment at Brentford would have been commonplace in those days, their then current in-stock selection is an embarrassment of riches:

Seven Berkleys, prices ranging from £195-£645.

Three Frazer Nashes, five Allards £295-£495.

Three Aston Martins from £295.

Two SS 100 Jaguars at £375.

Four Lagondas £195-£545.

Thirty-four (34) M.G.'s from £125.

Eight Rileys at various prices.

So we close the pages and reflect how times have changed. Perhaps I can force myself to look through some even earlier magazines sometime and report again while I can still get into the loft.

ONLOOKER

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## JEAN'S STORY or Supporting Roles

IT MAY BE IDLE COINCIDENCE BUT IT SURPRISED ME recently to find several pictures in the motoring magazines where a Lagonda was accidentally in the background. In a *Classic Car*, behind the special feature blue Delage II owned by the President of the VSCC and photographed in the paddock at Silverstone, there was a distant red car which proved on inspection to be "The Fire Engine", as our new Chairman has been pleased to call his Le Mans replica over the years. A second view of the Delage included the cream Bertelli Rapier belonging to our current club champion Brian Naylor. In *Motor Sport* the illustration advertising the VSCC's April Silverstone showed the car driven by their ex-president Kenneth Neve hub to hub and partially obscuring the thrustful Rapier just as regularly entered by our own Jim Crocker. As that Captain might say, the Top Brass of our respective clubs prefer to be In Action.

Flicking over the pages of *History of the Motor Car* (New English Library), which I considered too expensive for my purposes, my attention was arrested by the colour plate of the 328 BMW driven, I surmise, by Miss Betty Haig. There in hot pursuit was the LG.45 by H. L. Schofield in his young, blue, days. I try to spot Lagondas in books as I do on the road. When seen I have a feeling similar to that lately experienced on buying a record and finding that the sleeve notes were over the name of Cecil Clutton, not a Lagonda Club member but a kindred spirit having been a president of the VSCC. One can never tell where a Lagonda or a well-known motoring enthusiast will turn up.

In our magazine I always enjoy the photos and text under the heading 'Lagonda Days'. I hope now to introduce a new character into that series who cannot have been one of the stars, not having been previously mentioned, but must surely have played a character part in the strong supporting cast behind the Lagonda drama. But first, a personal note.

Way back in the mid-thirties I was in the same Boy Scout patrol as one John who went to



Cambridge during the war and has never lived in the north since. He went out to Abadan and when he returned to the U.K. he married Jean. They have lived mostly in Marseilles and Paris and also in South Wales and consequently I've never had the opportunity of a chat with Jean. Until earlier this year when I met her for twenty minutes during a rare visit to Hull. By now their silver wedding is way behind them. And so to her story.

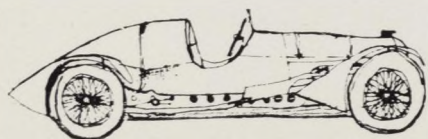
Before meeting John she had lived in Staines. When, by way of polite conversation, I said that my car had been made there, she immediately replied, "Then it must be a Lagonda. You are a lucky man." She laughed.

John was elsewhere, and I heard much of interest in the ensuing minutes. In Staines she had been friendly—and here's the coincidence—with a Lagonda test-driver, a most colourful personality. They had been so friendly they shared a flat. It is most surprising to me that none of the 'Lagonda Days' series has given any hint of this particular driver who must have been enjoying a life full of youthful adventure. The job had been offered because of motor-cycling successes in racing, scrambling, dirt-tracking at Wembley Stadium, and also in crossing the Sahara on a Norton. The father of Jean's flatmate was a professional archaeologist and especially an Egyptologist, so perhaps that had something to do with the desert trip. Jean continued with stories of new Lagondas fitted with old bodies to disguise them as nondescript everyday cars in which her friend would slip out at some unearthly hour and do a two hour test before returning for breakfast.

At this stage I must apologise that I'm unable to recall the driver's name but I feel almost sure that her initials were T.W. She was probably one of the earliest lady test-drivers and during the war brought her feminine touch to the driving of armoured cars and tanks for experimental purposes.

Finally I admit that I have hurriedly put pen to paper in the hope that memories of Lagonda employees will be jogged and the old brigade will be stimulated into offering their further recollections which, as always, will make interesting reading.

ROY PATERSON



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## Built to Last?

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ONCE UPON A TIME, NOT SO VERY LONG AGO, IN your father's or perhaps grandfather's lifetime, people who owned expensive equipment were encouraged to look after it so that it would last a long time. From the opening words used you must have guessed you were going to read a fairy story. That is exactly what this is: it *must* be, because the events in it completely defy any rational, sensibly commonsense explanation. They are part of an absurd world. Did you know some people today are trying to say that the absurd world of the irrational impulse is real and we live in it? That cannot be! They must be mistaken! Hear, hear!

To continue . . .

The manufacturer, too, did his best to see that the product he sold had less faults than its predecessors while doing better than before the job for which it was built. More often than not, sturdiness and economy were of great importance as selling points. It is an interesting question to ask whether things have changed much today. For our purposes, let us look at the motor car as an example.

On every hand car manufacturers today are underlining the motor as a machine for the masses. The two biggest selling points being pressed are, not surprisingly, still economy and durability. You notice that easy change from "sturdiness" to "durability". To a large extent these two terms should mean the same thing, and the motor companies would have you believe they do too. Do you believe it? Of course you do. How can you have durable machinery if it isn't also fairly sturdy?

This brings us to a perplexing paradox, or quibble of sorts. To most people among the car-buying public, the fact that the vehicle they are spending so much money on has proven dependability and rugged durability is a worthwhile and mind-easing thing. I say "fact", but is it? Or is it clever brainwashing? It seems odd to claim durability as an advertising slogan when every decade that passed the car is intended to last a shorter period than the previous one did. It is also strange that from time to time an experienced motor manufacturer can put out a new model with many faults which can supersede a well-proven, reasonably faultless model.



I stress the word "experienced".

How do we know the car today is intended to last a shorter time than previous models? One guide to answering this is the availability of spare parts. There are exceptions to every generalization as owners of some discontinued makes know: the closing of a factory due to financial problems, war, or mergers of some sort. I'm speaking not of these but of the models put out by big manufacturers who after a few years either stop producing spare parts or never produced even a reasonable number of such spares to begin with. This is not confined to cars produced in limited or low numbers. It includes vehicles mass-produced for mass consumption. To stop producing parts at such a time as to cause an owner to be totally unable to procure new pieces to repair even a four year old motor car is ludicrous if it occurs by accident but vicious if by intention or design. Once the owner of the motor car, or of any other machinery for that matter, was punished for carelessness by increased repair bills, etc. Today the owner who lovingly, albeit foolishly, maintains anything mechanical beyond the "usual" life-span for such a piece of equipment, is equally harshly punished for his carefulness. Therein lies the paradox. If the car is to be "durable", what is "durability"? It obviously cannot mean the same thing as "sturdiness" meant to the car makers of even 15 years ago, for the word "durable" cannot possibly be intended to mean anything longer in expected life than an average of three to four years! (It must surely be less than the time at which new parts, become unprocurable.) Durable no longer means "long-lasting". To some extent the modern car *is* much tougher than the more ancient examples of automotive transport in that it will accept long days of abuse and misuse by less-than-competent drivers, and, by means of various mechanical devices aimed at covering-up the worst mistakes, often come through fairly well. More than one of today's large car manufacturers turns to his successes in gruelling long-distance rally sport and says proudly "see how this car can take it". It is true that an older car would literally fold up under the stresses a well-made monocoque body-chassis unit can withstand. It is also true that Mr. Big Manufacturer's rally cars which are able to do wonders would also fold up under the stresses of these rallies if the gnomes at the factory hadn't been over the cars thoroughly, welding doubly

everything that might break—many times things which have proven weak already in previous "outings"—and fitting special thicker, harder, stronger go-faster pieces under all that glossy advertising.

If you think you're getting a car which could take you half-way across the world without trouble at rally speeds next time you change your wheels, forget it. Used in an average way for everyday transport, however, the more solidly built vehicle of even 20 years ago will continue to provide reliable driving within reasonable wear-rates for years more than the modern counterpart. This is not idle talk. It is a proven fact and to a large extent a result of more solid, less-careless construction in the older car. This refers to "economy cars" that anyone might own, not just the more expensive vehicle.

It is important to stress here that the older car should not be whitewashed completely and the modern car black-listed. Every vehicle has its faults but some have less faults than others. Even the most reputable coachbuilding firms putting expensive bodies on luxurious motor car chassis have been often guilty of oversight where it is hoped none will notice it. This is often the root of the rust problem in British cars. Tickfords, for example, did not wholly seal the bare metal surface of the bodywork beneath the rear seat of the VB.6J Lagondas. The result was severe rust beginning internally there. The modern Leyland Land Rover manufacturer, for example of the other extreme, makes an unsuccessful attempt at sealing the steelwork of cab-floor and scuttle in that product, with the result that rust often begins to pop through within a very short time of delivery to the owner. It is the unthinking acceptance of this sort of thing by an undiscerning public—a buyer which doesn't want to know the problems of the car he is purchasing because he won't keep the vehicle very long anyway—that breeds the continuation of this double standard: the claim that the best possible is being produced while every year less care has been lavished on the making of the product. Some vintage machinery was deplorably finished. These were the cheaper models only and certainly the best vintage machinery was beautifully detailed and crafted. Today in the fairy-tale irrationality of the motor market the most expensive vehicle may have the most monumental faults. ANDREW STEWART



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1936 LG.45

Dear Sir—I enclose an article written some time ago concerning certain modifications to my 1936 LG.45. A sketch and numbered photographs support the article which may make it of interest if you are short of copy. I also enclose a couple of other pictures of the same car which may be of interest.

May I congratulate you on the continued high standard of your Magazine which must be very difficult to Edit under present conditions. I trust that my small contribution will be of some assistance when you are running short of copy!

Having recently completed my Barson Special No. 12 and being currently occupied on building an ocean going 24 foot yacht my Lag. is waiting for a general overhaul! The first since a repaint and re-upholstery job in 1971 and the first mechanical overhaul since 1960. I do not expect to get down to the Lag. again until next year. In 1976 she will be tax-free as "Vintage" cars of 40 years of age or more are exempt from road tax (now R.36 for the Lag.) and Insurance is less too.

E. CHALENOR BARSON

South Africa

(The article referred to appeared in the Spring issue)

**AUTUMN MAGAZINE**  
**closing date for**  
**copy for the next issue**  
**is July 15 please**

**Northern Dinner**

Dear Sir—Having been invited to attend the Northern Dinner Dance, I was most delighted to accept the invitation, even though, I was assured that a young lady would be in good hands in what must be a male dominated circle.

Whilst I enjoyed the function very much indeed, I must very strongly object to Mr. Alan Brown, Esq., being whizzed round by a Gentleman

Medical Practitioner on the end of a pair of Gentleman's Trouser Supports, the results being that I was knocked flat on the floor whilst dancing with Mr. Herbert Schofield, Esq., and left trembling at the knees.

Yours, etc.,

Lady Guest.

P.S. Please invite me next year.

**News from Bob Crane**

Dear Sir—Well, I promised you a bit more info on the California trip. It was great, first because we had Lynn with us for the first two weeks. Then, Helen, who has never been there before, just loved it and finally, out of a month, we had just two brief showers. Every morning, we would wake up to bright sunshine. On the other hand, the lack of rain showed in the foliage where all the fields were just brown. They called it golden, but to me it was dried up brown. Also, while the weather, sunshinewise, was perfect, we learned that the beautiful sea never got really warm enough to enjoy. We are ocean people and love the breakers along the Jersey coast, but, to us, it would be awful to live with all the vast ocean and not be able to enjoy it without a wet suit on. Well, it is a good thing Helen still likes our Lake Mohawk for here we shall stay, I hope as long as we are able.

You probably know that our Rocky Mountains are just as beautiful and formidable as the European mountains. They are thrilling, but it still disappoints me that there are no old castles, churches, etc. on the top of each one.

Yosemite Valley was just as awesome this time as before. Imagine looking out your window and seeing a vertical wall of granite starting just 300 feet from you and going up vertically some 3,000 feet? Fantastic. Then, the way you feel when you see some people scanning the rock with field glasses, hoping to find the four men who have been climbing for three days, and while only half way up, are so small as to be almost invisible to glasses.

Then, too, the wine country was interesting to me. The vineyards are, of course, only some 100 years old, but they were started by old world vintners, who brought their vines and skill with them. Honestly, Louis Martin produced some Cream Sherry that almost met Sandemans and Harvey's Cream Sherry standards at \$1.99 instead of some \$6.00 per bottle.

Of course the big thrill was to see William



Harrah's (H.82) collection of cars. He has some 600 cars, most beautifully restored, on display, but it is reputed that he has hundreds more, stored to save space, standing on end. His V-12 Lagonda looked great, but when I was permitted to look inside, it needed a full mechanical restoration. On the other hand, Briggs Cunningham's (C.27) V-12 Rapide, was pristine with but 6,000 plus miles since new. It is said that he bought it in England in 1939 and had some modifications made while he drove it around and over the Continent. Then, upon bringing it home, he just let it stand. (Current licences, though.)

Then, while in L.A., after putting Lynn on her plane for home, we saw the Concorde take off. In the distance, but what a sight.

The biggest thrill, was our trip home. 3,000 miles in 4 $\frac{1}{4}$  hours. It seems there was a jet stream and we climbed to 51,000 feet and just flew.

ROBERT T. CRANE  
Sparta, N.J., U.S.A.

#### Retraction from the Midlands

Dear Sir—May I comment on the Midlands Notes in the Spring issue of the *Lagonda*

#### Magazine?

Come on, own up! Who laced Frajbis's gin at the February Midlands Pub Meet? He has one or two of his facts slightly wrong in the report of the Midlands happenings. For the record, I would like to put matters straight.

1. It *is* true that the "Woodbatt" Special has been bought by Roy Waldron.
2. It is *not* true that my Rapier is an Eagle two seater. It is a Randalah two seater.
3. It is *not* true that I own a Speed 25 Alvis, although I must say I would not say no to one!
4. It is *definitely not* true that I have fallen into the engagement trap.

Now to explain! At the Meriden Pub Meet in February, I let Neil have a copy of the latest *Rapier Register News*, in which appeared a piece written by my *assistant editor*, Chris Wiblin, to whom all the above non-truisms apply. Neil obviously thought I had written it. Ah, well we all make mistakes, and one would be a paragon journalist indeed if one didn't make the odd boob from time to time. One thing about it—it makes for some snappy correspondence in the following issue!

Now for something completely different.

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It is not often that I laugh before breakfast. Something to do with having to get up to go to work I imagine. However, the morning that the Spring issue of the Magazine arrived, I was rolling on the floor clutching the cornflakes packet. It was Tweedie Walker's hilarious letter describing his intrepid visit to the Wittridges' that did it! I know exactly what he means. However, I can assure him that after about the tenth time it becomes a matter of course to expect the unexpected. I wouldn't miss going there for anything, now!

It would be fine to have an annual prize for the most humorous letter to the Editor. Tweedie's would win hands down. How about it?

TONY WOOD,  
King's Heath,  
Birmingham.

### 3-litre Restoration in Durban

Dear Sir—My restoration programme is coming on quite nicely, but I only wish I had more time to devote to it. I guess this is a common complaint! Earlier this year whilst on one of my frequent business visits to the U.K., I took a trip down to the South to visit Captain Forshaw. What an education! It took nearly a whole day to buy some very much needed spare parts. But it was worth every minute of it.

Incidentally, you might be interested in some background to my car, and perhaps you will be able to fill in some of the missing details. I obtained my car as a swop for my 1929 Brooklands Riley. I really don't know why I was talked into this deal, but that is another story. Anyway, it is a DB 3-litre, four door sedan with British registration number ULU 600. Apparently this car was brought to South Africa by a Mr. C. F. Ferguson who was on holiday here. This must have been in 1968 or earlier. From documents found in the car, Mr. Ferguson had had the car serviced by Auburn Garage, 47 Coventry Road, Narborough, in 1966.

Anyway, Mr. Ferguson apparently landed at Cape Town and made his way north by road. Somewhere near Grahamstown he had the misfortune to experience a breakdown, and the car was towed into Grahamstown. As spares were naturally unobtainable, Mr. Ferguson hired another car and continued on his way. His parting words to the garage were that he would obtain the necessary spares and send them on to the garage so that the car could be repaired. This

he never did, and in fact the garage never saw him again.

After an unknown period, the garage applied to the Courts to have the car auctioned in lieu of storage charges. This was done, and apparently two people attended the auction. It was bought by a Port Elizabeth man who had the car repaired, and I obtained it from him about 18 months ago.

The questions that I would like answered are what happened to Mr. Ferguson and why did he just abandon the car? It was in fair condition and had recently been resprayed white, presumably in anticipation of his trip to Africa. Do you perhaps have any records of this car? I would very much appreciate it if you could throw some light onto the subject. Further information on my car is that the serial number is LB 290/1/186 and that it was originally delivered on 30th August 1957. I believe it is the only D.B. 3 in South Africa.

COLIN DOWNIE  
Durban,  
South Africa.

### To Race or Preserve?

Dear Sir—Having owned Lagondas and other vintage cars for some years now, enjoying more than 100,000 miles of touring, continental holidays and some racing (complete with blow-ups) may I add a final word to the recent correspondence in the Magazine. Surely the spirit and essence of vintage car ownership is the *use* and appreciation of fine machinery and the craftsmanship of a lost era. Perhaps it would be better for the "polishers" to buy static investments such as paintings, antiques and Kruger-rands. These would not necessitate such risky ventures as driving a vintage car.

Leave the others—those extrovert drivers the joys of the wind in one's hair, rorty exhaust noises, etc.

It is also possible that the collector-polishers have led to the escalating prices of the desirable makes. How many *young* new owners have we in the Club? Relatively few I should venture.

I hope the Club will not stagnate because of this.

Keep Lagondas going in as original condition as is practical—but let us enjoy driving them. It seems as if we've got little time left to do so!

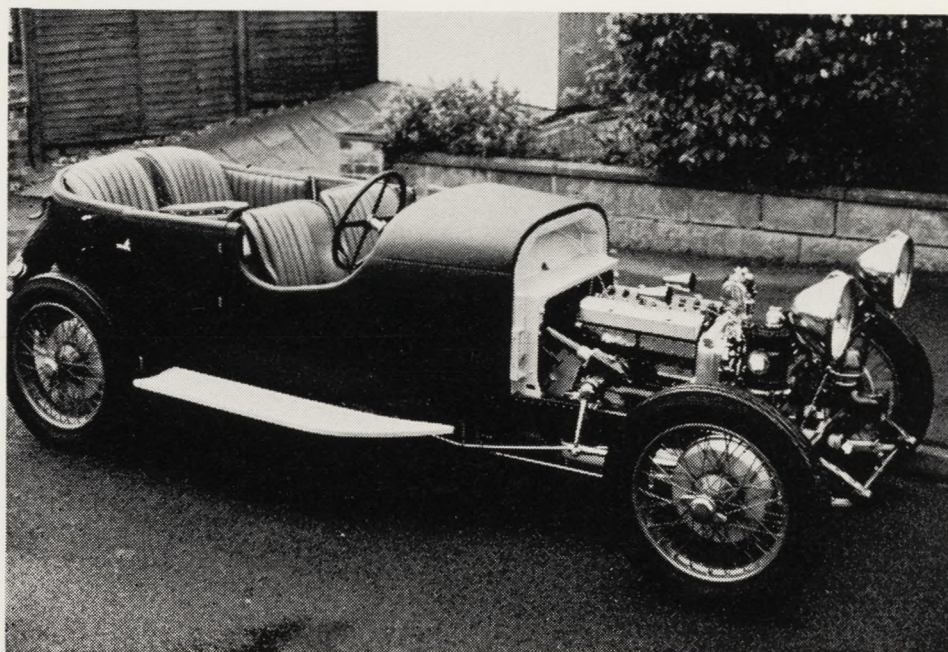
J. B. GUYATT  
Stanmore, Middx.

(This correspondence is now closed. Ed.)



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