



THE MAGAZINE OF THE LAGONDA CLUB

Number 106

Summer 1980



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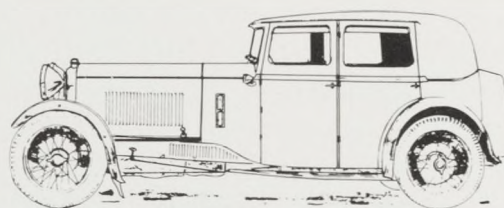
MAGAZINE

Issue No. 106

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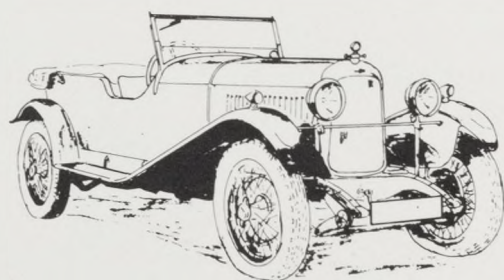
Published Quarterly

Editor: A. W. May, 68 Savill Road, Lindfield, nr. Haywards Heath, Sussex



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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. No responsibility is accepted for the efficacy of the technical advice offered.

FRONT COVER: The 1936 Ulster T.T. Fairfield in the LG.45R.

Photo: "The Motor"

Out and About

JOHN BATT'S thought-provoking articles in the Spring Newsletter and Magazine brought a good response of letters and those that arrived too late for publication then appear in this issue's correspondence columns. There would seem to be general agreement amongst those who have expressed an opinion that John's ideas are realistic and timely. It is interesting to see that the Bentley Drivers' Club are similarly concerned with the future support of certain sporting events and the problems of encouraging new blood in the way of younger people into their club. All the Lagonda Club committee ask is that you give all the support you can to the club's events and not to forget either the various regular pub meets that take place around the country. The pub meets do not just happen—in the background there is a hard-working local organiser, the Area Secretary, who deserves all the support and enthusiasm he can get.

★ ★ ★ ★

GORDON PREECE writes to recommend the restoration work on his Bullseye P.100's and side lamps carried out to a very high standard by J. Hopkins of Silver Firs, Sandy Lane,

Aylmerton, Norfolk. Not a fast service but well worth waiting for, says Gordon.

★ ★ ★ ★

ALEC DOWNIE would like to remind all London and Southern Area members of the monthly meeting which takes place on the second Wednesday of each month at approximately 8.30 p.m. at the Windlemere Golf Course Clubhouse. Situated at West End which is between Bisley and Lightwater on the A322, the entrance to the Clubhouse is just off the A319 Chobham Road near the junction with A322.

Ring Alec on Weybridge 46074 for further details.

★ ★ ★ ★

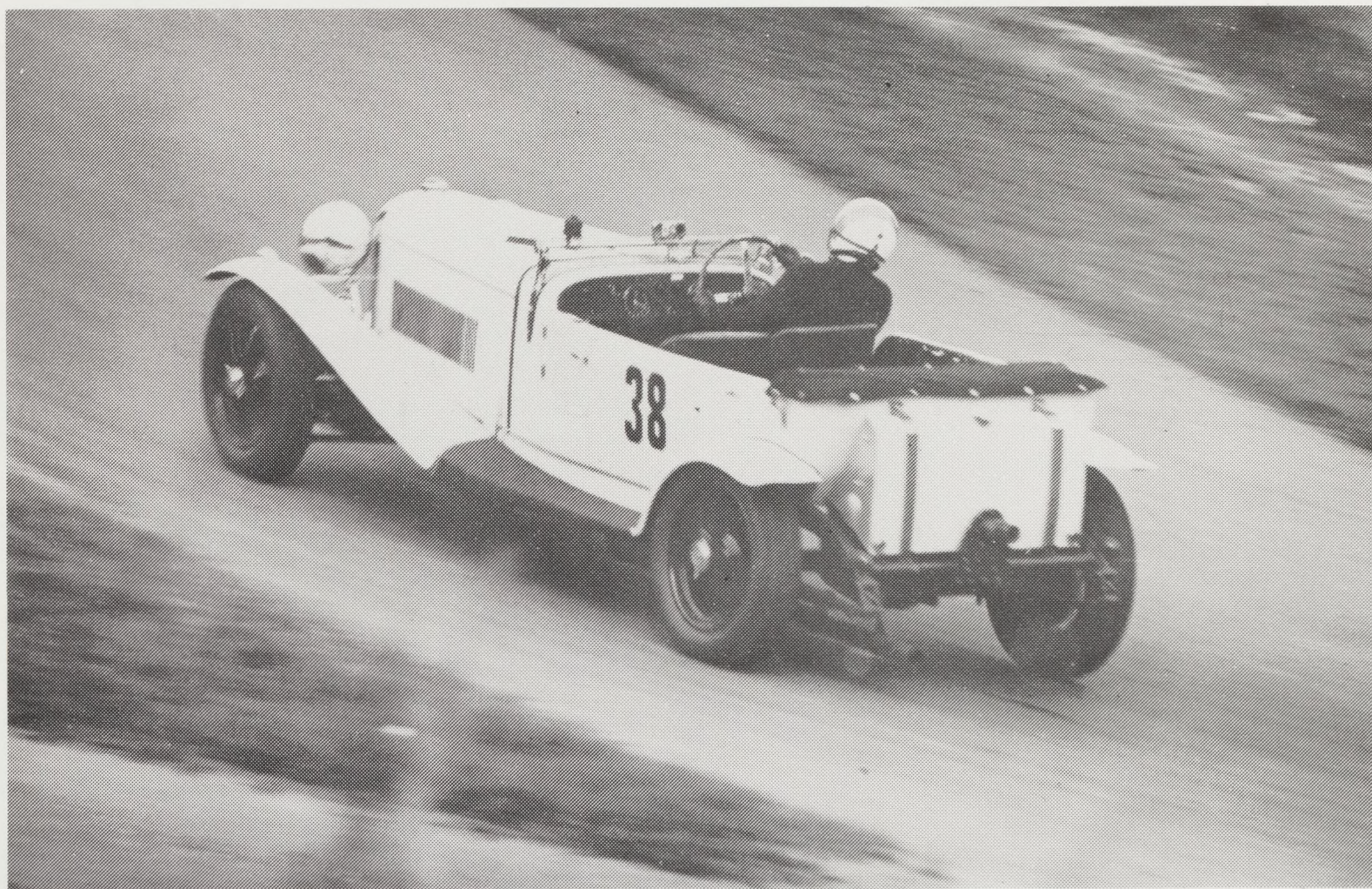
A trip down memory land. HERB SCHOFIELD sends in this photograph of a Northern pub meet held in the fifties. He asks:

Name the pub, the members present and the exact year? (The make of beer too, if you can!) The winning entry will be printed in the next magazine.



Getting the most out of a 4½-litre Lagonda

by David Hine



A LOT depends on how much you want to spend, some of the things I suggest cost nothing but time others require a heavy wallet.

Starting with basics, if you are having your crankshaft reground it is well worth having it dynamically balanced. All the cranks including M.45, LG.45 and LG.6 engines had to have surprisingly large chunks of metal cut off them to balance them. The clutch and damper have to be done at the same time. This process is only necessary if you intend to extract high performance from your engine as opposed to general touring. Laystalls in Manchester do ours via Roscoe Howard & Tickle the people we use for machining and bearings etc.

Again for maximum performance modification to the camshaft is necessary. Iain Macdonald had ours done and it gives more overlap of exhaust and inlet valves together with a better profile all to a secret formula. This stops the engine running out of steam after 3,500 r.p.m. which is normal with standard camshaft profile and does not seem to have any

adverse effect at lower revs.

Most engines have already been done but if not it is virtually standard practice to have 0.10" machined off the head to raise the compression ratio together with pistons that come flush with the top of the block. I use Morris commercial pistons but I understand Rover pistons are better and lighter.

Take care not to machine too much off the lead otherwise you will cut into the sparking plug holes and water jackets. If in doubt leave it alone, just make sure it is flat. Only ever skim the block enough to make it flat where previous brawny blokes have over-tightened the head studs. A torque of 65 lbs/ft is plenty enough for a flat-block and head with a new gasket.

Back to the crankshaft. Early experience of Col. L. S. Michael showed that the crankshafts will break at high revs if there is no damper fitted. My experience with LG.45 is that revs of up to 4,250 can be used with a balanced crankshaft and a very carefully assembled damper which works, i.e. friction linings nice

and clean and springs and slides as they should be but I issue no guarantees and try to keep my gear changes to maximum 4,000, LG.45 and 3,500, M.45.

These really are exceptionally reliable engines when correctly assembled and capable of withstanding great abuse. I suppose the fact that valve bounce occurs and cuts off the power at about 4,500 r.p.m. is an added safety feature.

Whether you have modified it or left it original the timing of the camshaft in a Meadows' engine is both a difficult job and has more effect on the performance of the engine than most people think. I have owned seven 4½-litre Lagondas and all of them had incorrect cam timing, my LG.45R was 20° out when I got it and wouldn't pull the skin off a workhouse rice pudding.

When timing the camshaft by checking the flywheel markings inlet valve opens 10° before and exhaust valve closes 15° after top dead centre. The latter e.v.c. mark may not be there and you should measure it and mark it in that case.

The head and valve gear must be in position and the rocker clearances set very accurately on valves 1, 2, 11 and 12 all to 8 thou. Adjust the timing sprocket on the end of the camshaft so that No. 2 valve push-rod becomes stiff as the 10° before t.d.c. mark lines up with the pointer. Then revolve the flywheel and see at which point the No. 1 valve push rod becomes slack which should be 15° after t.d.c. if you have a standard camshaft. If this is not the case and you appear to have more than 25° check and recheck your rocker/valve clearances, they must be the same on both valves.

If you are then sure you have more or less than 25 (I had considerably more after Iain Macdonald's modification) then adjust the opening and closing positions in the same ratio as Meadows' recommendations. I set the Macdonald cam to i.v.o. 12° before t.d.c. and e.v.c. 18° after t.d.c. To set a camshaft using the i.v.o. mark only is open to a lot of error because a wrong setting of the No. 2 valve clearance could throw the timing miles out with dramatic loss of engine performance. Cross-check 11 and 12 valves line up in the same way as 2 and 1.

When assembling LG engines as opposed to Meadows' standard heads it is important to stop oil getting down the head studs into the inlet manifold. I have now abandoned copper

washers and P.T.F.E. tape in favour of using Silicone R.T.V. instant gasket smeared round the studs before the rocker pedestals are lowered into place. This instant gasket is great stuff for use all over the engine as long as you let it set for a day or so to stop the spew coming loose and clogging filters etc.

I personally am not in favour of using bigger carburettors although it can't do any harm it just isn't necessary. The main thing is petrol supply—2 L.P. pumps both working is O.K. for most situations but for racing a H.P. pump fitted at the rear with gravity feed is required to supply the surge required. When Harry Ratcliffe (Littleborough, Lancs.) was tuning my engine he filed the tips of the K.T. needles to give a richer mixture at full throttle. His excellent tuning facilities indicated that the mixture was weak at high revs and full throttle but the carbs were quite big enough.

Flowed exhaust pipes are obviously a benefit but spoil the originality of a standard car and I don't think that the original manifold is all that bad from a flow point of view and as long as the bend down is smooth and the rest of the system free of kinks and bends I find this aspect less critical but I'm not an expert on exhaust systems and would welcome comments.

To add to the statistics which Arnold Davey gave us in the marvellous book he and Tony May wrote, my LG.45 showed 115 b.h.p. at the back wheels at 3,800 r.p.m. which must be approaching 130-140 b.h.p. at the engine.

What a fantastic work that book is, I am now reading it for the second time. The technical work and research is very thorough and the descriptions of racgs especially the 1935 Le Mans quite gripping.

Ignition timing becomes more important the higher state of tune your engine is. The lower compression ratio engines can stand quite an advanced spark at most times. I have found however that once the c.r. is raised and use is made of high revs the engines can sound very rough with standard ignition timing. On LG engines with Scintilla Vertex magnetos the book recommends 14° before t.d.c. stationary and the automatic advance built in to the magnetos looks after the rest. I don't know exactly what to advise here apart from trial and error but I race with the static timing at zero t.d.c. and tour with 5-6° advance maximum on high c.r. engine cars. My special is, I think, 7.5:1 and my Rapide according to Dr. "Quack" Young's log on the car 7.89:1.

The modern practices of the advance/retard system uses the vacuum in the manifold to advance the ignition and at full throttle the ignition is therefore retarded—we tend to forget that on M.45s there is only the hand adjustment and on LGs the position depends only upon the engine revs and, of course, the initial or hand setting which is worse.

All I can say is that the judicious retarding of ignition has vastly improved the smoothness of the engines therefore giving confidence to use their full potential and the results have been impressive even though I say it myself—A lap speed of less than 1 min. 24 secs. at Silverstone is fast in anybody's book and with full coachwork (32 cwt.) has been exhilarating and surprising. But there's more to racing than just a fast engine and no, I don't mean the driver, that's the least of the things that need sorting!

A cool engine is better for peace of mind and whilst most clogged up old radiators will do for touring once the power is turned on they boil and spray you with brown muck.

Have your radiator professionally flushed and re-cored if necessary (we use Milwards in Failsworth), then don't forget to use a nice new sock or high-quality stocking toe trapped in the inlet to the radiator to catch the vast quantity of shale and sand produced by these engines. Change this filter regularly or it will swell up like a cricket ball and block the pipe—or burst like mine did on the last rally near Coxwold. Fortunately I got away with it by fitting a new sock and recatching the muck second time round but this is not the norm!

Being a Meadows' fan I prefer the T.8 and G.10 gearboxes for road use, however for racing syncromesh on second is vital for a good start and double declutching is risky when hurtling into tight corners! I find the G.10 Lagonda box most cumbersome to use and complicated to fix if broken. I'm ashamed to admit that for racing I use an Alvis Speed 25 box—a beautiful piece of engineering.

As acceleration is more important than maximum top speed, I use a 12×44 rear axle with small tyres for racing 600×19—racing tyres are a very significant improvement but becoming prohibitively expensive—a bit of a dilemma because one or two good races ruin a set of road tyres and racing tyres last much better and corner better. For touring I use nice big 650/700×19s on the back (they're too big for the front though). When a car is not being used for racing the standard LG.45 ratios are

the best, i.e. axle 13×43 and 650×18 tyres. I find the "Rapide" high axle ratios are only an advantage on motorways.

Shock absorbers are critical on the race track. André telecontrol are good except mine lose pressure and drip brown water on my knees—does anyone know where to get replacement inners for the hand controls? After a lot of trials we have settled for André friction type 9"×6" and the biggest they make—and they must be really hard on for racing to stop roll and front axle tramp. and can be slackened for touring—used in conjunction with hydraulics set softer is a good combination.

Regular oil changing becomes vital when using these engines hard—of course M.45s only have a strainer to stop nuts and bolts and I change my oil every 2,000 miles. LG.45s can be left longer because of the filter but the cost of an oil change is a lot less than a tank full of petrol so why not indulge.

I have known cylinder blocks come loose at high revs so I use "Loctite" and so far never had any problem here.

For maximum performance remove fan belt, not a big job, and it all helps without affecting the looks of the car. I know it may seem odd but one can get slid across the car and find oneself in the passenger seat when cornering hard—some people fit elaborate dividing cushions, I simply sit on a damp wash leather and put up with the ribald comments after the event.

A final though for you. Last year my LG.45 developed a noisy valve, after much investigation I found that the valve cap was hitting the collets that retain the spring and I had to grind a bit off the cap. I subsequently found the same fault on my M.45 Saloon and the engine I'm doing up for the M.45 Tourer—do your valves clatter?

Good driving but don't blow up.

DAVID HINE

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Selling a Lagonda

by Peter Densham

FIRST-CAR ownership is one of the milestones in the life of our generation. Most people can look back to the event with extreme accuracy, recalling the exact date, the price paid and many other details which with cars purchased subsequently have been long forgotten.

As my first car was a Lagonda and the date was over 45 years ago you can imagine that the memories which assailed me as I drove my seventh (an M.45) for the last time would make strange telling in today's world—petrol at 5p a gallon to start with!

Selling my Lagonda was rather like my efforts at giving up smoking. I toyed with the idea for a long time, making feeble little attempts which were doomed to failure and in recent months spending quite a lot of money on advertisements which weren't really meant to sell the car at all.

One such spurious attempt (asking price £750) produced a potential buyer who amazed me by the utter stupidity of the questions he asked. However he seemed keen and said he would think it over. 'Oughtn't you to see the engine?' I enquired, as we had not yet lifted the bonnet. 'Why?' he asked in surprise 'It's got one hasn't it?'

Other highlights of this period included the late-night phone call from a drunk who drooled on endlessly about a 3-litre Sunbeam he had once owned—'A simply cracking old girl'. And worse, the bogus viscount who reversed the phone call and strung me along for 20 minutes, to the audible amusement of his mates. I only hope that one at least of them died of asphyxia in the phone box.

My real troubles started when I bought ten years ago an Aston Martin (DB.4 GT) to go with my M.45, and I offer this as a solemn warning to others. Very few people, living ordinary lives without the benefit of a garage business, can afford two cars of the vintage of classic type, and this has nothing to do with the merits of either car. Loyalties immediately became divided. Whichever car I was driving became the car I loved best, and I felt guilty about my neglect of the other.

The only final solution was to enter them both

in an auction sale and I record here as the absolute truth that as I drove each in turn to the sale I swore that that was the one which would carry a reserve high enough to prevent a sale. The auctioneers solved the problem by insisting on what they called a realistic reserve. I dropped by £4000 the figure I had in mind for the Lagonda and by £3000 the reserve I had mentally put on the Aston.

And so to the sale. There were about 50 cars, mostly Aston Martins and very beautiful they looked—more a concourse than a sale. The M.45 standing beside one of the latest Aston Martin/Lagondas proved as never before the value of breeding and I felt very proud of it.

Although I stood beside the Lagonda during the viewing period I kept an eye on the Aston and it seemed there was sufficient interest being taken. I never doubted that it would sell. At this point I knew that for practical and economic reasons one must be sold but I ask you to believe that I still didn't know which was the one I would prefer to drive home again. I had worked myself up into quite a state by the time the selling started.

It soon became obvious that buyers were in no hurry to open the bidding and the early lots



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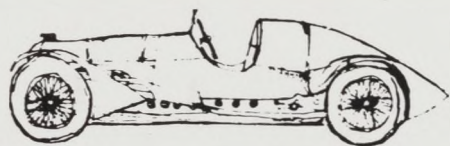
crept painfully slowly towards their estimated value. The Lagonda came up at last its estimated value in the catalogue was put at £20 to £24,000.

'Who will start me at £15,000 all right then ten. Start me at eight come on now, start me where you like. Do I hear... Six, six, six. Seven, eight, eight. Come on now. Nine, nine, nine, Nine thousand pounds. Nine only... Nine thousand five hundred. Ten, Ten....' And so on. Thirty seconds of agony until it was knocked down exactly at the reserve price. And I was down to my last Aston! (which failed by £500 to make its reserve).

The new owner of my M.45 Lagonda Tourer CGC 450 is the man I would have chosen from all those I had met before the sale and I have absolutely no regrets. I know that the car will be properly looked after and I can see no reason why it should not be on the road in another 50 years.

Driving home in the Aston I knew that fate had taken the right decision for me. This car, if not exactly practical transport, is far more so than the Lagonda had become in recent years. The so called vintage scene has changed so much since the 1950s, just after the war, that I have been increasingly aware that I no longer belong to it.

Perhaps the death blow was dealt last year. We came upon a couple of young men standing forlornly beside a beautiful Model A Ford which had run out of petrol. They shook their heads sadly when offered my spare can of 2-star. 'No good' they said, 'it's got a Lotus engine'.



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On the Road with a Lagonda

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THE FOUR-SEATER Lagonda may not be one of the prettiest cars on the road, but what it lacks in symmetry of outline it most decidedly makes up for in road performance. The four-seater body is comfortably upholstered, is as roomy as one could desire, and from the driver's point of view everything appears to be in the right place.

There are some cars in which central-control levers do not intrude to the extent of becoming an annoyance, and the Lagonda is one of them. There is, of course, a door on each side of the driving seat, and even with the all-weather equipment in position one can gain access to the driving seat without squeezing one's body through a small opening.

Our experiences with the Lagonda were, in a way, unique, for although four passengers were carried the whole time on two runs of 100 miles each, only on two occasions were we obliged to come down from top. Agreed that the engine is not one of the smallest of "fours"—its capacity being 1,420 c.c., but, even so, its ability to haul four adults, in addition to the 14 cwt. represented by the car itself, up really stiff hills on a top gear of 4.7 to 1 is most creditable.

WANTED

ARMSTRONG SIDDELEY. Anything usually purchased, particularly literature, new or good secondhand spares, mascots, photographs, etc. I am also most interested in details of vehicles in scrap-yards, or details of vehicles broken up in the past, or whereabouts of present vehicles. Anything at all "Armstrong Siddeley"—I am most interested.

Robert McCracken

**38 Bleasdale Road, Mossley Hill
Liverpool L18 5JB.**

**Phone: 051-734 0089
early evening.**

A Powerful Engine

Motorists using the main London-Oxford road will be fairly well acquainted with the long descent followed by the stiff climb into Aston Rowant. The Lagonda comfortably hummed its way to the top on second, one of the two changes previously referred to. On the homeward journey the longer hill of lesser gradient was taken comfortably on top.

With the sinking of the sun the air became distinctly chilly, and as the passengers in the back seats were anything but warm, we decided to erect the hood, and all-weather side screens. Certainly no coupé could be more comfortable than this all-weather Lagonda, and it has the distinct advantage of providing a perfectly uninterrupted outlook.

Early on the electric horn became inoperative, the needle of the ampmeter returning to zero in sympathy. A blown fuse accounted for this, the engine was speeded up, but not the slightest response from the needle was forthcoming. The dynamo drive and brushes were in order, so the floorboards were removed to disclose the accumulators. Although not at first apparent, it was discovered that the earth lead had become completely severed from the frame lug. This repaired, our electric installation was again perfect; at such times one *does* appreciate to the full just how dependent one is on even an electrical connection.

The seaside is not usually inviting at this time of the year, but, anyway, we decided to run down to Littlehampton—a 50-mile trip from our starting-point. That the Lagonda can maintain a respectable average over give-and-take roads, many of which were not conducive to even normal speeds, was evidenced by this run. Taking the road via Dorking, Horsham and Capel to within a few miles of Worthing, the turning to the right was taken over the South Downs. Here a change down was made for the second time in two days, although it is possible, had we appreciated earlier the nature of the climb, that top would have sufficed. The distance recorded was 50.7 miles, and the time taken 2 hrs. 10 mins.

One would not call the Lagonda a fast car,

although it can give a good account of itself should the occasion arise, but it *will* hang on to "32" or thereabouts just so long as may be desired without the slightest objection.

At very low speeds on top the Lagonda is inclined to be snatchy, but then we never troubled to change down in traffic unless we had to bring the road wheels to a stop.

The suspension, too, is good, whether solus or fully loaded, which is a point worthy of note. Of course, it is not quite so soft when running light, but there is not such a marked difference as one would naturally expect.

Some Appreciations

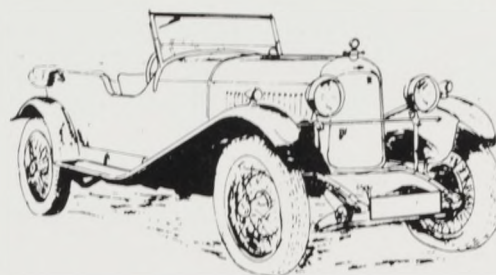
The Lagonda is a most reassuring car to drive—it holds the road well, its steering is beyond reproach, and the foot brake, which comes in for all the work, is really good. We mention the latter with some feeling, for when on the Thames Embankment, which is not too well lighted at the best and very poorly indeed in the neighbourhood of Battersea Bridge, a small party of children decided to run across the road a few feet ahead of our radiator. We have to thank the efficiency of the Lagonda brake for a happy issue to that which might have been a tragedy indeed.

The C.A.V. starter was found to be powerful and particularly silent in operation, and the beam of the headlights rendered night driving a pleasure. At the price of £325 this all-weather four-seater model Lagonda represents excellent value.

In Brief

Price (4-seater all-weather), £325; tax, £12.
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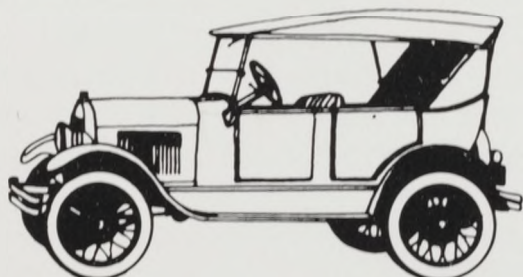
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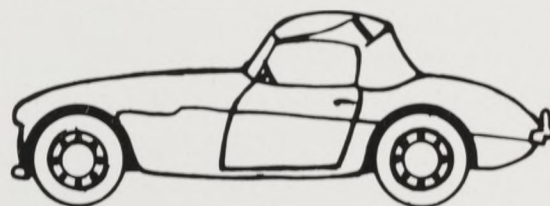
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KW 5743—A Golden Anniversary

Continued. Not realising that the hotel was locked at night we were surprised to see a recumbent figure asleep on a bar stool (?) awaiting our return. Nobody seemed to mind and having let us in and locked up again he resumed his slumbers in a more horizontal position in his own room.

The weather the next day was wet and grey and Christian Pol Roger had agreed to meet us at the hotel to accompany us to the official reception at L'Automobile Club du Champagne in Rheims. On arrival we were greeted enthusiastically by members of the club, one of whom had turned up with his vintage Amilcar for the occasion. I had previously visited these premises back in 1962 when I was assisting a friend to film the Formula One race at Rheims for Canadian Television and one of the reception committee that greeted us so heartily was the same person I had had a bit of a barney with over the issue of press tickets at that time. Luckily he did not recognise me and a warm speech of welcome was made by the president of the club followed by a halting reply in French made by the president of the club followed by a halting reply in French from me. I was made an honorary member of the club and presented with a badge for the car which now adorns the radiator. A Methusalem of Pol Roger was then

demolished by the assembled company with conversations and comparisons of vintage car ownership again in halting French.

Lunchtime was fast approaching and by this time we had been joined by the lovely Danielle so the five of us set forth for yet another gastronomie haven, this time a smaller establishment run by a family just outside Rheims. Again several courses and more sampling of Pol Roger products and again about three-and-a-half hours later we finished. I was definitely getting the hang of all this by now and had difficulty in reconciling myself to the fact that the next day we would be heading for home. We returned to the town via the old circuit of Rheims where the Dunlop bridge and the pits now look sadly delapidated. We drove the length of the course and it would still make a fabulous track today but unfortunately could not be made to meet the stringent safety standards now required without phenomenal expenditure.

The rest of the afternoon was spent at a pavement cafe with the Lagonda parked in the middle of the main street causing quite a stir amongst the natives of Rheims. After an hour or so we took our leave of Christian and Danielle, Christian saying that he would be at the hotel at 8.00 a.m. to see us off.

That evening we decided to dine at the hotel as we had an early start the next morning. This was the start of our undoing. We partook of cocktails at about 7.30 p.m. arriving at the dining room an hour later. Dinner lasted for about two hours after which we adjourned to the bar for brandy and liqueurs. By 11.30 p.m. most of the other guests had retired save for a young Swiss couple, the chef and the night porter. Then began the most almighty "hands across the sea" session that went on until at least 2.30 a.m., including all going outside for a photographic interlude in front of the Lagonda. We fell into our rooms to be greeted by noises of disapproval from the next door occupants. I should explain at this point that our rooms were in an annexe to the main hotel and we parked directly outside them.

By some miracle we were awake on time, had breakfast, and just before 8.00 a.m. Christian Pol Roger arrived as promised to see us on our way. He also presented us with a hamper containing two bottles of 1974 and the remaining bottle of 1929. We thanked him profusely for the marvellous time we had spent as their guests and set off with three hangovers for Calais.

Again the car ran faultlessly all the way stopping only for the same reasons as outward bound and arrived at Calais early. I was anxious

to arrive in England during the daylight hours because of the dynamo problem and although the battery was showing no signs of giving up in spite of hard use over the previous three days I wanted to spare it the headlights for as long as possible. On reaching the departure area we enquired with the girl at the gate whether we could catch an earlier flight. No, this was quite impossible as the weather was rough and the hovercraft were running behind schedule. Any amount of pleading was to no avail, but remembering we were V.I.P.'s of sorts we asked to see the terminal manager. I explained the dynamo and lights problem and that we had been travelling partially as guests of Hoverlloyd and could he possibly manage something. No problem and we were allowed to board the next flight to leave. We returned to the car, approached the same girl we had seen earlier and asked her if she had heard from the office that we were to be allowed to board. "No," she said, "and anyway your lights look big enough to me!"

While queueing to board we noticed a familiar Jaguar XJ.6 Coupe parked in the line up. It belonged to the people in the hotel room next to ours. We kept a low profile and luckily they were waiting for the following flight.

It was still daylight when we landed at Ramsgate and after a painless Immigration and



Customs inspection we headed for home arriving in Loxwood before closing time. During the whole trip, something approaching 700 miles, the old car had not given any cause for concern and had returned a pretty good fuel consumption. They don't build 'em like that anymore!

On reflection I cannot think of a better way to have celebrated the old thing's birthday and I

shall remember always the generosity and kindness we were shown by all parties connected with the expedition, especially that of Christian de Billy and Christian Pol Roger whose products I shall consume from now on. I have calculated that I shall be 87 when its 100th anniversary comes round and will be pleased to receive all sponsorship offers in the meantime.

MIKE HALLOWES

Northern Dinner-Dance

Monk Fryston—11th April 1980

IF YOU didn't come to the Northern Dinner, you missed a vintage edition of the best event in the Club's calendar. An excellent turnout and good weather, with a first-class meal and entertaining, albeit humorously rude, speeches made for the enjoyable evening out we have come to look forward to.

The Northern members were pleased by the number of people who had travelled long distances to join in. One should I suppose, list people alphabetically as Bill Boddy does, but from random recollection: Les Keeling came up from Ilford in his smart M.45 Tourer, and other Southern members to make the pilgrimage included Duncan Westall, Alec Downie, Phil Erhardt and Joe Harding in the splendid M.45 drophead, Fred Berker whose Talbot had again sprung a leak, Gordon Warren-Smith from Tunbridge Wells and John Batt from Bedford. There were many non-member guests; Barrie Morton of the J.D.C. came in an E-type from Ascot.

Northern members managed a good attendance of Lagondas, of which I recall Factory LG.45 Rapides and Tourers, Cliff Walmsley's M.45A Tourer, Bob Alexander's LG.45 Drophead and Dennis Clark's 2-litre Drophead, among others.

The creeping tendency to creature comforts was suggested by Roy Hatfield's Concours Austin-Healey and Nigel Hall's DB.5 Aston, but was made painfully apparent by the ballroom proportions of an ancient Rolls-Royce, used without any apparent embarrassment as a conveyance by Brian Dearden-Briggs.

As usual, many people were staying at the hotel, which the Club had block booked, and arrived early for afternoon tea. The main gathering was in the bar before dinner, and I

gather about seventy people turned up; most of the faces were familiar, and a great deal of chatter and pontificating about Lagondas went on.

The meal was good, but was followed by a kind of Presentation by Alan Brown, which so far as I could gather was connected with Herb Schofield having been Northern Secretary for twenty years (yes, 20!). Herb made his usual speech, which raised its usual share of hilarity and apoplexy, and David Hine of the Dark Brown Voice gave a rendering of The Battle of 'Astings, or something.

Herb asked for some indications of people's feelings on the venue for the Dinner, for while Monk Fryston is very popular, it is not cheap. The response was a kind of underwhelming 'don't know' in true Club style, but the balance of opinion seemed to be in favour of staying at Monk Fryston despite the management's rather inflexible approach to the question of special terms.

The handsome gavel and block presented in memory of Henry Coates by the Club was used for the first time, and will be used in future at all appropriate Club events.

Lots of trophies were presented, mainly to David Hine, and everyone retired to the bar while the room was prepared for, or protected against, dancing. Actually, there is never an enormous enthusiasm for dancing at the Northern Dinner, except by exponents of the art such as Doc Turner and Alan Brown. The latter was, not unusually, dressed in a ridiculous manner. The reason for this was in some way connected with the elaborate and puzzling preparations which Alan undertook for his presentation to Herb, mentioned above, of sundry awards which, if memory serves,

included a rather beautifully inscribed chamber-pot. Such diversions cannot adequately be described and require personal appraisal. Come next year.

The evening drew to a close in the usual way, with the overnighers keeping the bar open late, and huge volumes of coffee being consumed into the early hours.

Considering the festivities of the evening, breakfast was not unduly subdued, and many people took a constitutional round the hotel grounds which are very attractive, with various lakes and bridges. In all, it was an excellent event which lived up to our expectations, and it is strongly recommended.

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The White Triplex

by Alastair Innes Dick

UNTIL 1927 cars built for the Land Speed Record did not take advantage of any great degree of engineering expertise. They were usually based on the most powerful engine available, often an aeroplane or even airship, type with a chassis robust enough to carry it and bodywork which, hopefully, reduced wind resistance.

By 1927 the day of the amateur built special was just about over but in that year details became known of what was to be the last of this kind of world record holder. This was the Triplex, dreamed up by J. M. White, a wealthy cable maker of Philadelphia, and put together by his five mechanics. As an outsize and unbelievably horrifying "Shelsley Special" it must have been the most dangerous looking vehicle ever built, White's philosophy about an LSR car being simple—just brute force and plenty of it.

The Triplex was built behind closed doors and the only information about it which seems to have survived is in press articles. It is now difficult to be sure about mechanical details

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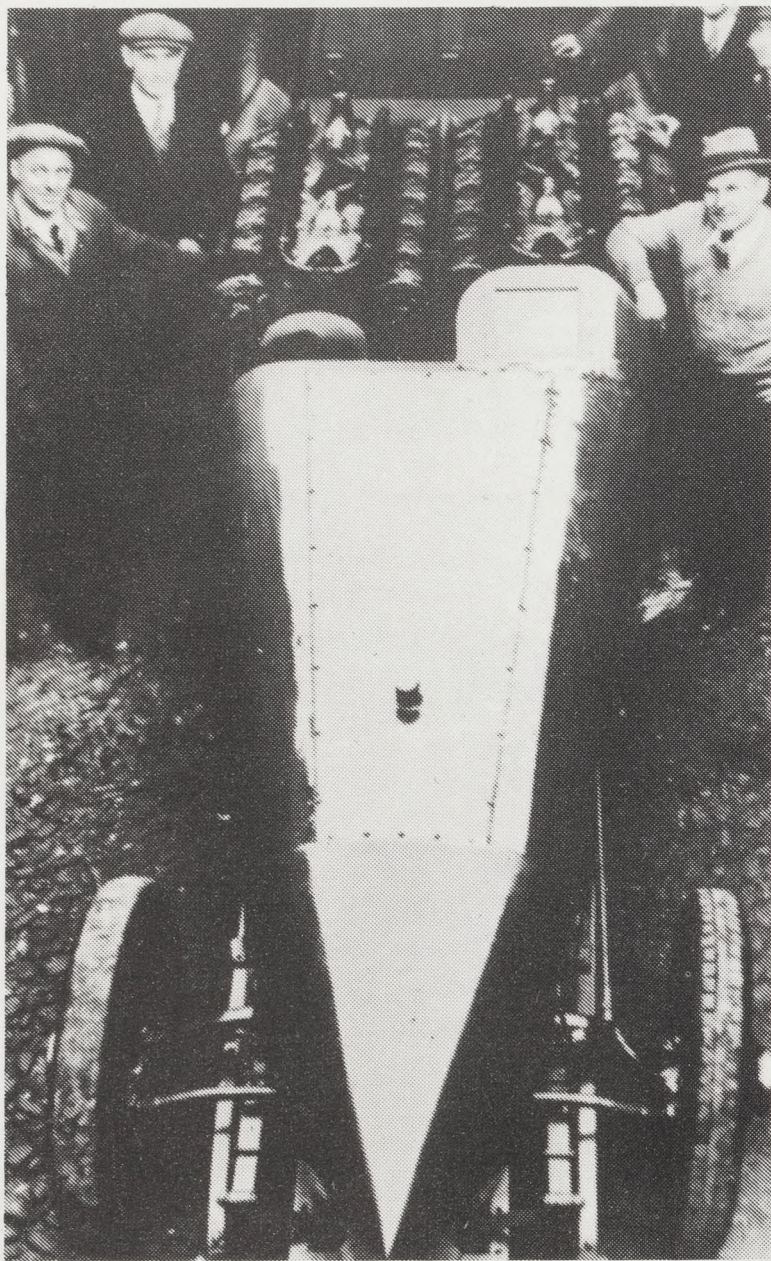
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even with the benefit of opinions expressed by present-day automotive historians.

Just about the only fact known about the Triplex is that the power supply came from three 400 h.p. Liberty aero engines left over from the War and similar to the one used by Parry Thomas in 'Babs'. White had been unable to persuade the U.S. Government to let him have any war-surplus engines, the sales of which were restricted because of the demand for them for use in high-speed boats used for 'rum running' in those gang ridden days of Prohibition. In fact, White obtained his from a boatyard specialising in marine conversions for use on the Great Lakes where running booze was a growth industry. They were in poor condition and were probably smugglers' rejects!

The chassis frame was said to have been taken from a heavy lorry and had side members 6¼" deep. A heavy cross-member was placed midway in the frame and running forward from it were two longitudinal members on which



BOOK REVIEW:

I was fortunate enough to receive a copy of the newly published "WORLD CARS 1980" from HERALD BOOKS and what a marvellous reference book it is. Over 1000 cars are included with photographs and technical descriptions. Apart from this there are features on the Formula One racing season, varied articles covering the motor industry in the major producing countries, electric passenger cars, indices to give you all the answers on motoring facts and a well illustrated section devoted to coachbuilders.

Trends and technical advances in engineering are also given space while discussion on the all-important question of fuel economies are not neglected. It's all here in 440 pages, size 9½"×11", hard-bound from leading booksellers or the publisher at £15.75. Highly recommended.

A.W.M.

was mounted the front engine. From the same cross-member two more members on which sat the rear engines ran aft to a heavily strengthened group of cross-members in front of the rear axle. The driver sat behind the front engine on the nearside. The pointed fairing covering the front engine ended beside the driver, everything behind him being out in the open. This followed White's conviction that it was only necessary to shove the air aside in front and that streamlining did not affect rear end drag.

We now come to the front axle which has been reliably described as of a standard type for a heavy touring car but inverted so that the underslung springs were bolted to the axle with the top of the main leaf up against the spring pad. Being inverted, the axle centre was high and the frame was suspended below it from the springs by long shackles. No explanation seems to exist as to how the right steering angle was achieved with an inverted axle; probably the axle was heated and bent.

Steel skids, like sledge runners, were fitted under the front axle to prevent the front end digging in if a tyre or wheel collapsed. This was normal practice on dirt-track cars but the idea of it hopefully being a safety measure on a 4 ton car doing over 200 m.p.h. on sand is a startling one.

A really remarkable part of the whole contraption was the transmission, in that there was no clutch nor gearbox and a drive-shaft ran from each engine to a bevel gear on the back

axle. As there were no rear springs the axle was bolted on to the frame so making unnecessary any mechanical frivolities like universal joints. Manhandling difficulties were overcome by fitting an auxiliary axle in front of the main one. This could be lowered by a hand-operated reduction gear until the main wheels were lifted off the ground. The auxiliary wheels were naturally removed for the record runs and probably the axle as well.

The construction of the rear axle was unusually ingenious. The axle itself was a tube of 2" bore and a diameter at its centre of 4", tapering to 3¼" at the hubs. It ran in six ball-and-roller bearings mounted in massive housings which were carried on the frame cross-members and, at the ends, on the side-members. The cross-members were sufficiently rigid to ensure the fore and aft rigidity called for by the thrust of the bevels.

The bevels were threaded internally and were screwed on to threaded steps cut in the tapered axle opposite each drive shaft. Each threaded step had four evenly spaced keyways cut into it so that the mesh of the bevels with their pinions could be adjusted by screwing the gear one way or the other and then fixing it by driving in the four keys. The axle was, unusually, geared up instead of down at 27 to 25.

There is no record of the existence of any bevel casings but as the pinion ends of the drive-shafts were mounted in bearings on the cross-members it seems to be mechanically possible to have dispensed with them. If they were not fitted it must be presumed that there was undershielding to protect the gears from sand.

The inversion of the front axle resulted in the track-rod being in front of it and the steering arm pointing upwards instead of down. The drop arm was half the normal length to increase the leverage on the steering, necessitated by the huge weight.

Like so much about the Triplex the method of cooling cannot be determined especially as it was probably one of the several unrecorded changes made between the two record attempts. The intention had first been to use aircraft radiators but there is no evidence even in the crash photograph to show that these were fitted and it is likely that the cooling system was a 40 gallon tank under the chassis, the cooling water being pumped through the engines.

The 20 gallon petrol tank was originally slung right aft but even here a query arises as Jerry Gebby, who knew Ray Keech, is of the opinion that this was latterly used for cooling water and the petrol was carried elsewhere.

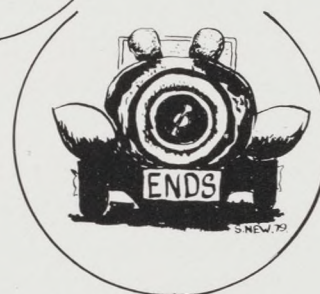
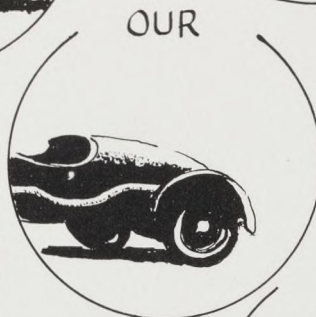
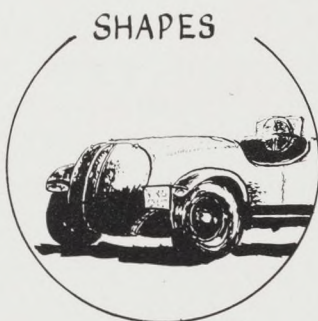
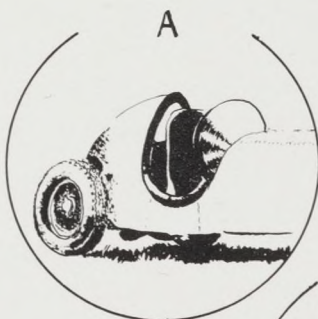
The brakes were also changed between the two attempts and were finally only band brakes on the rear drums. Keech said they were ineffective and one would have thought that 81 litres of compression would have given enough in the way of deceleration. Too much, in fact, as the future showed.

The final puzzle is one about which one can only guess. For the first attempt White airily presented the car without the required reverse gear to the scrutineers who, on seeing the car, were probably relieved at having a reason for failing it. However, White fitted a starter motor which pressed a roller on to one of the auxiliary wheels hoping so to reverse it enough to satisfy the rules. This did not work so he fitted a worm-driven reduction gear which was said to have been successful although statements were made that it was driven off the back of one of the engines. This does sound unlikely as it would mean that three Libertys were thrashing around with rear wheels spinning and the car moving backwards at 36 feet per minute. A knowledgeable view is that the scrutineers just let the car run without an effective reverse but would never admit it!

Ray Keech took the record in 1928 at 207.55 m.p.h. after having been badly scalded through a hose bursting on a test run and burnt on the run itself by a backfire. He said afterwards, in no uncertain terms, that he wouldn't touch the brute again.

In 1929 Lee Bible, one of White's mechanics, pleaded for the chance to drive it, no one else being willing to do so. For a mechanic suddenly to see the chance of becoming the fastest man on earth must have seemed like a miracle, even a forlorn one as he had Segrave's 231 m.p.h. to beat. But the miracle never happened. At the end of his first run Bible lifted off abruptly and the sudden braking of the huge engines instantly sent the car, a tangled wreck, into the sand dunes at over 200 m.p.h. killing Bible and a Pathé photographer. Perhaps not a surprising end for such a car.

(With acknowledgements to Society of Automotive Historian members and Cyril Posthumus (photo))



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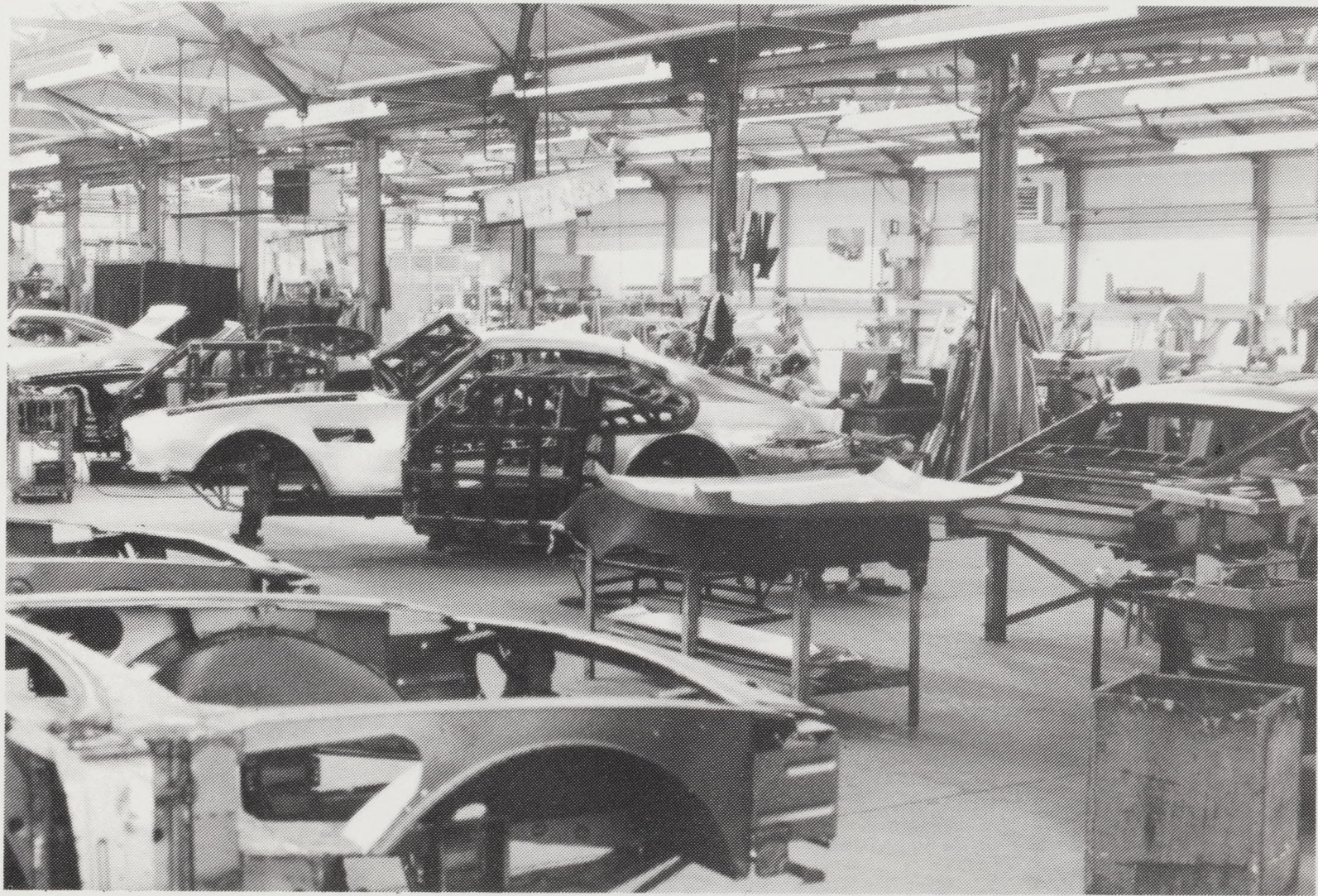
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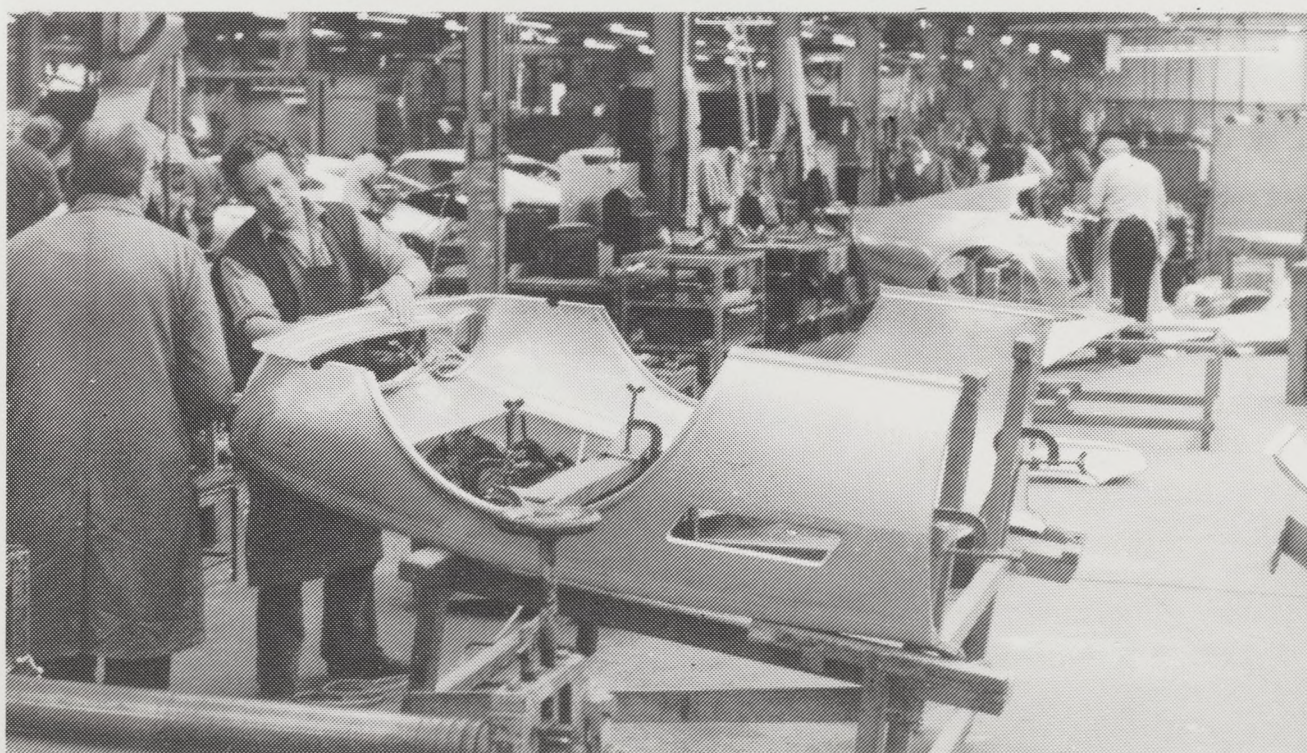
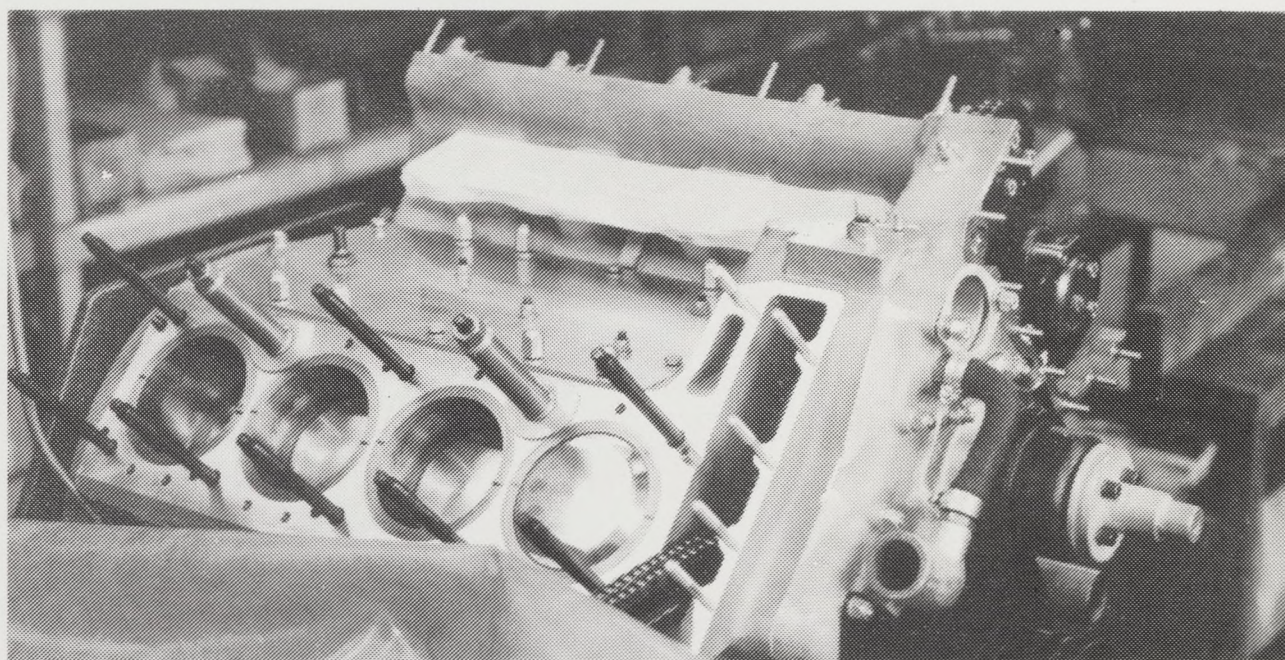
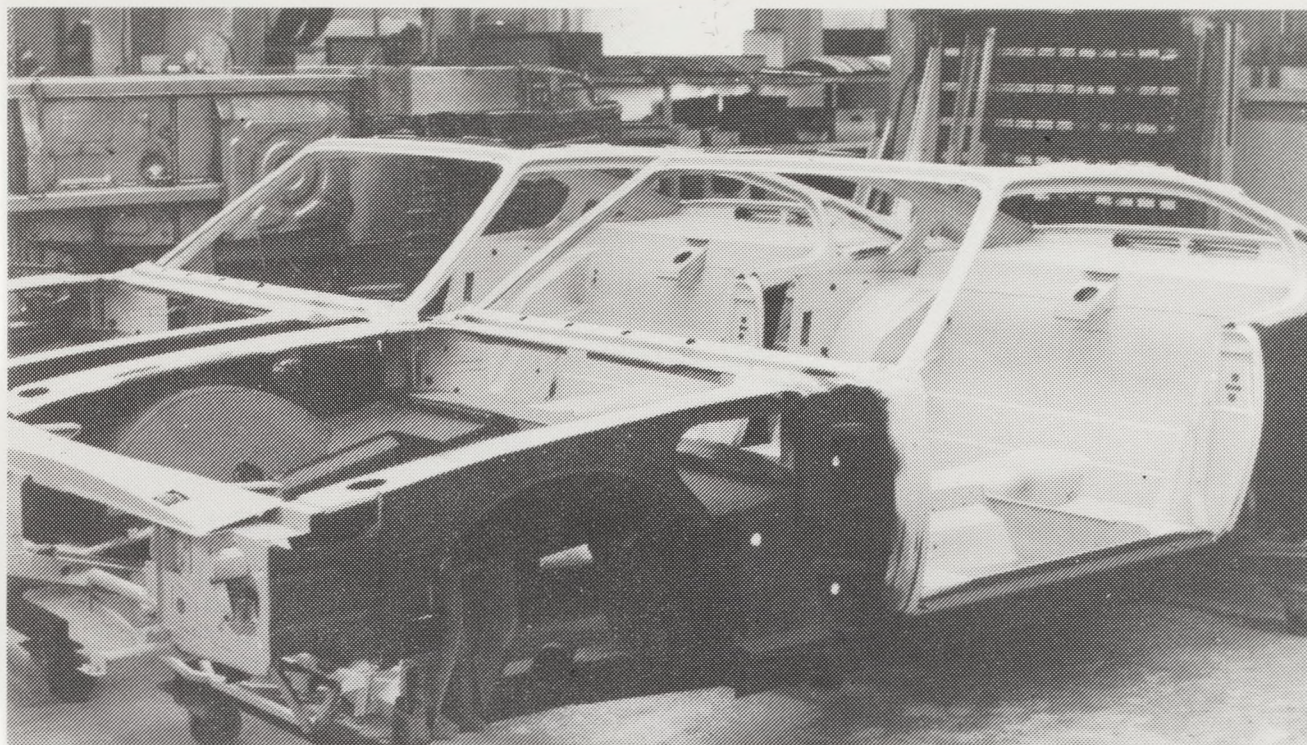
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CLUB DAY AT NEWPORT PAGNELL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEN JENNER





Letters to the Editor

Re: Club Insurance Scheme

Dear Sir—I was interested in Colin Bugler's letter on insurance in the Spring issue regarding the problems he has experienced in obtaining cover for his 21-year-old son under the Club Scheme.

Being as mean as most people, I never like to pay more than I have to for anything, insurance included. The rate must be competitive and, equally important, account must be taken of excesses, agreed values, rallying clauses, named drivers and the security and reputation of the underwriting company itself. I have obtained quotations from all the Vintage Car insurance specialists but have yet to find any company offering more competitive terms than the Club's brokers, Richardson Hick and Partners.

Out of interest, members may like to know the premiums I pay, through Lloyd's, for my three cars, all insured within the Central London area, all with maximum N.C.B.:

- a) 1929 3-litre Lagonda, agreed value £18,000.....£92.00
- b) 1930 4½-litre Bentley, agreed value £25,000.....£130.00

The provisions of both these policies are no excess, any driver over 25, club rallying included.

Richardson Hick and Partners also insure my 1963 Aston Martin DB.4 Drophead, agreed value £10,000 at the astonishing low premium of £97.00, even in Central London. For this potent car, the applied compulsory excess of £100 is not unreasonable but, a named driver aged 24½ at the policy's inception was included at no extra premium. Even with nil no-claims bonus, the insurance premium on a DB.4, 5 or 6 worth £5,000 would only be £143.00 today.

The last two cars may not be Lagondas but, the same underwriting principles would apply to any Lagondas or Aston Martin Lagonda, similar engine size or agreed value.

Richardson Hick and Partners advise me that under all their Vintage Car Schemes the low premiums can apply only if, and I know it might seem unjust to some, the young driver under 25 is excluded; the Scheme could be redesigned to include him but at the expense of the rest of us. Claims experience for any car insurance is poor for the under 25s, bad for the under 23s. However, cover for them can always be

obtained, at a premium, through certain underwriters.

Therefore, I personally would be against seeing our highly attractive Scheme prejudiced by the inclusion of young drivers.

R. D. BUSH (B.35)

London S.W.6.

Insurance

Dear Sir—I should like to reply to the comments made by Colin Bugler in the previous edition of the Club Magazine regarding the insurance scheme that we operate for Members/Owners aged 25 or over.

Colin Bugler expressed dissatisfaction with underwriters' refusal to cover his 21-year-old son and raises a question as to whether or not the insurance scheme should be redesigned.

May I explain that the scheme was designed for the majority of Club Members and affords greater cover than normal, together with a heavily discounted premium reflecting the limited exposure and special care that one associates with vehicles of this type.

Having created a special category of insurance outside the usual guidelines of conventional motor underwriting standards it would be a great pity to jeopardise this situation by including a minority of members under the age of 25. It is a statistical fact that persons in this age group account for an above average number of accidents which are all too often of a serious nature.

SIDNEY RICHARDSON,

Richardson, Hick and Partners (U.K.) Ltd.,
325-331 High Road,
Ilford, Essex IG1 1UJ.

Competition at the Crossroads

Dear Sir—With reference to your enclosure in the February Newsletter, reference "Competition at the Crossroads".

I am taking the liberty of putting pen to paper with reference to the above. The comments John made are not good news but they are, unfortunately, a fact of life with regard to the cost of running the sort of vehicles that we have. Whilst I cannot boast of being an over-active member, I can state that I do take a great deal of pleasure out of the Lagonda and the people with whom the car has brought me into contact with; indeed, without doubt a very agreeable bunch of people.

However, the fact remains that if I am to turn out in my car (which does approximately 15 gas lamps to the gallon), it must be a worthwhile gathering; and I would suggest combining driving tests, sprints, concours, dinner-dances, etc, with or without other marques, as a justifiable reason for making that little extra effort. I think a formation of such a gathering would tempt members who might not normally take an active part to put some sort of a show on.

For myself, and even more so for my car, I do not envisage doing anything too dramatic. I have attended and taken part in Sandtoft for the last 4 years, and I would always attend and take part in such a gathering, or indeed something a little more demanding. However, I cannot in all honesty see myself thumping my M.45 around Silverstone with all the incumbent risks of having my car immobilised for long periods.

I do hope you find the above comments constructive. I feel that perhaps something familiar to the above might well provide a nucleus of cars and drivers for more specialised events.

ROY HATFIELD,

(One of the younger members!)
Ecclesfield, Sheffield.

Dear Sir—I have read John Batt's "Crossroads" communication with much more interest than the television programme of that title inspires! At the A.G.M. I spoke with some deference on the subject of competition as I am myself a non-combatant and hence not well versed in all the problems and the same restraints apply as I now write to you.

The falling off of willingness to compete is I'm sure a manifestation of the economic malaise in which the country finds itself. If and when better times come along then I'm sure more people will be not only willing but able (financially) to enter competitive events. The cars will of course be getting older but age itself is not debilitating, condition is what counts.

In the meantime whilst waiting (and I hope working) for economic recovery we take heart that one-make clubs do survive without competition. The R.R.E.C. had I believe some 850 cars at Windsor in 1977 and a similar number at Duxford in 1979!, so perhaps events "display" orientated rather than competitive can keep the club together until the economic climate improves.

It has occurred to me that all members do benefit in a very real sense from the exploits of competition members. Surely the Lagonda is a proud possession not only because of the reputation it built in its youth but because it at least appears and (sometimes!) does well in V.S.C.C. events even *now*. If this is so then all members should feel morally obliged to support a Club Sponsoring Scheme. If all members paid £.X as a competition levy to the club to create a competition fund the club competition secretary (plus the committee or a special competition sub-committee) could decide to enter a Lagonda Club Team in certain events. Publicity emphasis should be on *Lagonda* not on the individual. The fund could cover entrance fees and some allowance towards licences, fuel, etc. The Club would also select which of any contenders should be the sponsored club team for any event. (This should promote competition between the younger enthusiasts to bring their cars and their driving prowess to maximum standard in the hope of being sponsored.) I do not think the club could in any way help out with the cost of any preparation of cars or damage thereto.

I have only given an outline of an idea but the members may like to "kick it around" in the Mag and see if it is viable. Even if it was only possible to sponsor one event per year that would be something. How much would the membership pay? How much would be needed? A count of heads in the 1979 members list shows 545 U.K. members and 186 overseas members. I personally would be willing to pay £1-£2 per year to such a fund if it would keep Lagonda on the track and hence preserve the value of my investment!

DOUGLAS BROWN,

Teignmouth, South Devon.

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