



THE MAGAZINE OF THE
LAGONDA CLUB

Number 118

Summer 1983



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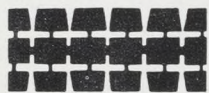
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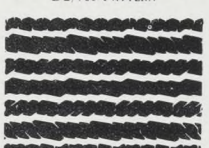
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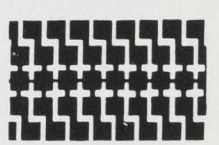
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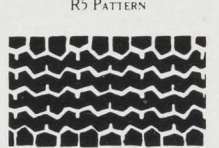
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MAGAZINE

Issue No. 118

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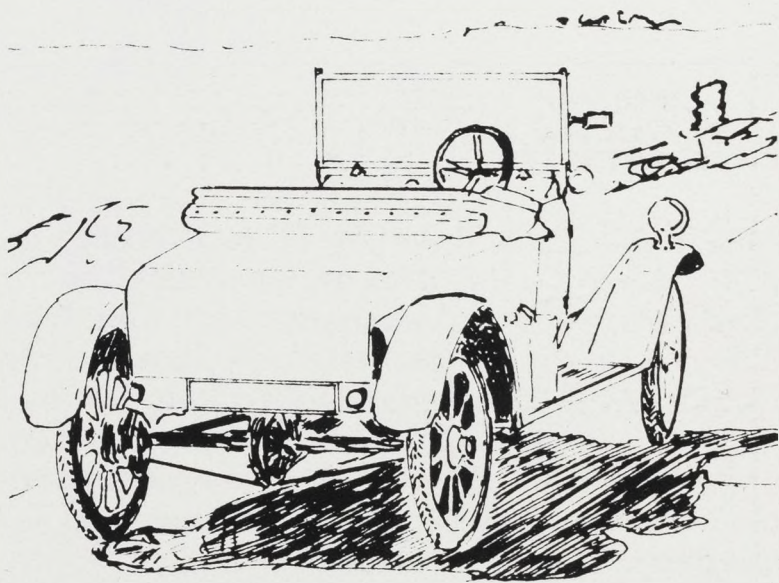
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CONTENTS

Out and About	4
GF 772	5
Beating the "Trindles"	6
EPE 97	9
Plasticiser Migration or The Glue Sniffers Paradise	12
"La Lagonda"	14
V.12 Team Cars — A Detective Story	16
Oils and Lagondas	21
Lagondas I Have Owned	22
Letters to the Editor	24

FRONT COVER: Peter Jacobs with GF 772 after the rebuild. Photo: P. Jacobs.



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.

COPY FOR AUTUMN 'LAGONDA' URGENTLY REQUIRED. Submit to Editor by 15th August please.

Out and About

ALL TRUE LOVERS of fine machinery will recognise the symptoms, immediately. First the clocks go forward by one hour. Off come the winter wraps. Open wide the garage doors, press the starter button, engage first, or reverse, let the clutch pedal slowly up. Then it all happens.

The heavens open. A sure sign that the sporting season has begun.

Spring(?) means the Northern Dinner, the time to meet friends and see decent cars again. Jane and I attended for the first time and had a truly memorable evening. So much so that I/we feel it should be a monthly event.

After the "Dinner" the competition season really begins. Happily Lagondas have been well represented, and rewarded. This is the way it should be. Lagondas entertaining people on the track as well as the highway.

V.12 owners who have done well, Northern Dinner, Curborough Sprint and Silverstone should not be disheartened by the remark of Earl Howe, quoted in *Motor Sport* that his V.12 Lagonda was an "old-ladies car". They must have been nice old-ladies. (*He's our Patron, too!*).

PUB MEETS

Midlands: Third Thursday in each month at the "Gate Inn", Osgathorpe, Leicestershire.

Southern: Second Wednesday each month at 8.30 p.m. at the Windlemere Golf Course Club House, West End, near Lightwater, Surrey. (Near the junction of the A319 Chobham Road and A322. Exit at Junction 3 if approaching on the M3.) Alec Downie is the organiser.

Northern: First Sunday lunchtime each month at the "Floating Light", Standedge, near Marsden, W. Yorks.

London: Jointly with the B.D.C. on the third Tuesday each month at the "Bishop's Finger" in Smithfield. Easy parking.

North East: First Wednesday in each month at the Cave Castle Hotel, South Cave, N. Humberside. With V.S.C.C.

Dorset: First Thursday each month at Hambros Arms, Milton Abbas for a "Noggin and Natter".

As Oulton Park will have happened whilst this edition of the magazine is with the printer, it is to be hoped that Lagondas had a good day.

* * * *

The main non-speed event of the Lagonda calendar is, of course, the Lagonda day out (A.G.M.). This is again to be held at Oatlands Park Hotel, the date being 17th September.

This is the chance to bump into both lots of other Lagondas and their "keepers". There are places to buy new bits of Lagonda to replace those that you have bumped into.

Hopefully I will manage to get the 2-litre there this year. Aim for the near-side as this is the area most in need of attention. Anybody having difficulty hitting the car, please let me know and I will willingly move it for them.

* * * *

It is also your chance to volunteer to write that article on "matters Lagonda" that you have been meaning to do for so long. It will be eagerly received, even before you put pen to paper. Just let me know the number of pages you will require.

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MEMBERS SHOULD be interested in another Lagonda rebuild completed last year — one week after the A.G.M.! This is GF 772, a 2-litre — the first Lagonda owned by Captain Forshaw.

Originally bought by the Farquarson family of Dorset, it was bought by Captain Forshaw in 1936 and owned by him until after the war. It then passed through the hands of several owners, one of whom, Mr. Martin Harvey, called to see the car in mid-restoration. In 1955 it became the property of the late David Harvey, Kendleshire near Bristol.

I first heard of GF 772 whilst on holiday in the Pyrenees in 1978. I was asked if I would be interested in taking on a complete rebuild. David Harvey had died, the car was totally dismantled, including bodywork. Challenge overcame reason. I took on the job putting the, then current, Aston DB2/4 rebuild "on ice".

It took a while to find whether all the car was there amongst the many boxes and tins, pipes, bundles of wood, shreds of fabric, carpet, etc. In fact, more than one car contributed. It took some time to sort out as I had not taken the car apart. The whole took up so much floor

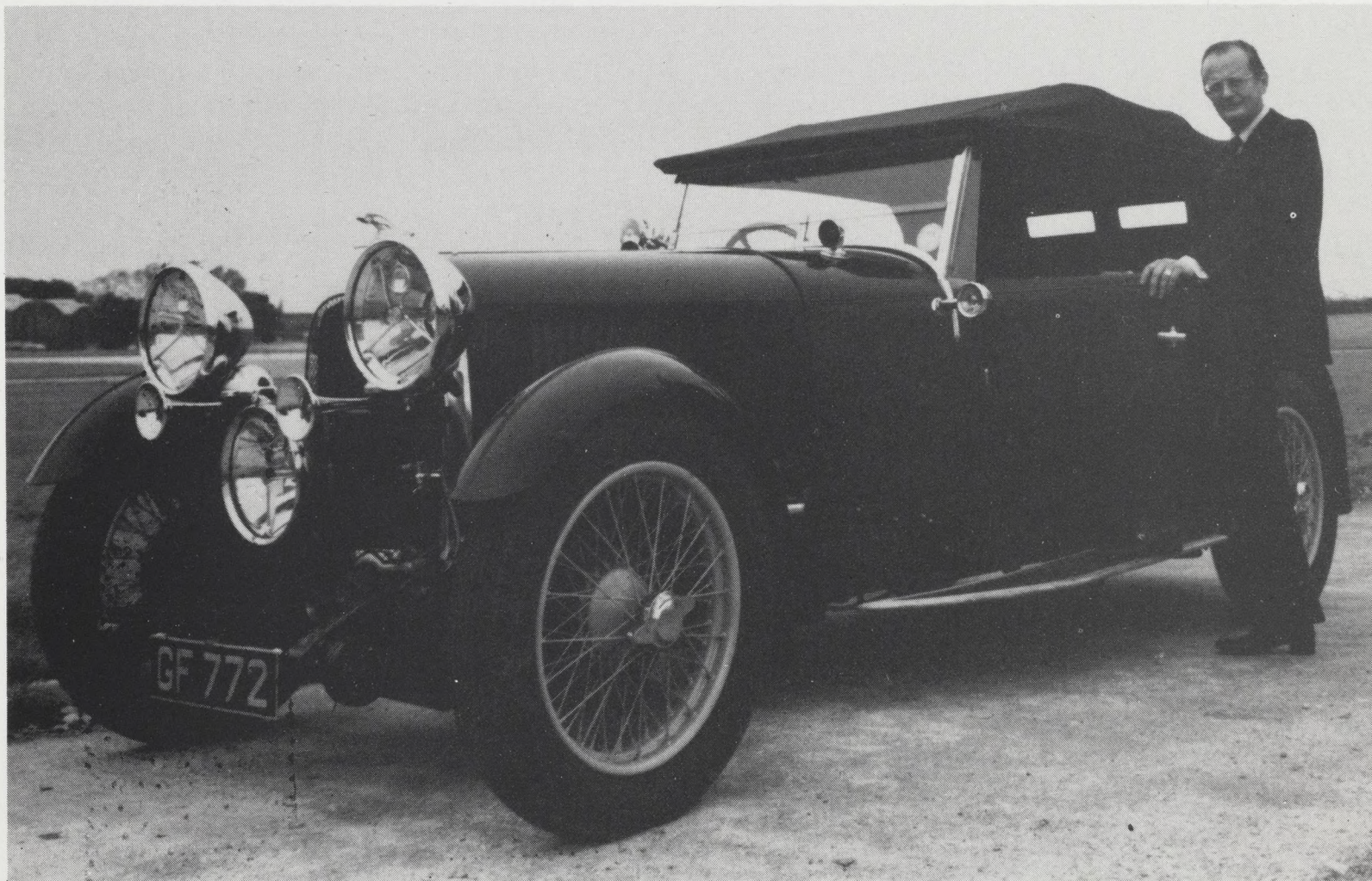
space, first priority was to make a rolling chassis and then adorn it with all the rest as it was refurbished.

The engine rebuild was straightforward, but ancillaries needed more ingenuity. In particular the water pump, Autovac, and twin Zeniths. The OCJ2 regulator was restored, from first principles, no original data being available, and a collection of odd bits re-assembled with some repair, into the petrol tank unit. The P100 lamp spiders carrying the bulls-eyes had to be pinned, and the missing focussing "bottle tops" replaced in Dural. The original thermostat used a bi-metal strip, which I hoped to replace, but time overtook.

Replacement bonnet catches were made to pattern from originals lent by a member. I have the wooden pattern, and new springs, should anyone be interested.

The dashboard was re-made in mahogany with the original instrument arrangements. Rewiring was carried out, in armoured cable, using original runs as far as possible. A relay was used for the twin horns.

Two leaks in the radiator were repaired using



Well suited — man and machine.

Photo: P. Jacobs

thin wall copper tube (model makers') swaged to suit over small hex. bar at one end, and soldered in. The holes had been caused by loose stone guard mounting bolts.

The car is now upholstered in grey Connolly hide, with grey Wilton carpeting. The outside is covered with dark blue PVC hooding over 1/4" foam. Royal blue cellulose on wings, bonnet and tank is matched by the same coloured coach paint on chassis and ironwork. The arctic blue of the stoved wheels is echoed by a blue bead running around the top edge of the body. The hood is black double-duck, with an original alloy framed pair of windows in the rear. I think the hood bag took me longer to

make than the hood, a really detailed tailoring job.

My aim was to leave the car in its pre-war "cherished" condition — hence the central Marchal headlamp, scuttle ventilators, and trumpet horns. Not necessarily my cup of tea, but nevertheless a phase of "thirties" motoring which should be remembered.

The car has now returned to her owners in Poole. After all the work I had put into GF 772 I was somewhat sad to see it go. If I can help anyone with advice on "how to do it/where to get it", etc. I would be only too pleased to do so.

PETER JACOBS

Beating the "Trundles"

I OWN a 1954 3-litre D.H.C. Lagonda (65 HYM) and enjoy motoring in it, but what I find frustrating, and I wonder if fellow owners feel the same, is the cruising speed on a motorway.

While it may be excusable for a pre-war Lagonda to trundle on a motorway at 50 m.p.h. for hours on end, a modernish post-war Lagonda doing 50 m.p.h.+ at 4,000 revs is, to say the least, tedious. I like that word trundle — . . .***!

One can do 70 m.p.h.+ at 4,000 revs of course but with an engine roar like "The ride of the Valkyries" after 10 minutes one thinks of expensive rebuilds, let alone the cost of the "jungle juice".

I have made a modification to my car for that fifth gear as I had become fed up being overtaken by fully laden articulated lorries, having to breathe their diesel fumes, instead of driving up front with the "Jaguar Boys" — breathing Porsche exhaust fumes.

The trouble was the back axle, or rather hypoid differential unit, ratio being 4.56 : 1. The ratio could be changed to 3.6 : 1 or whatever. However, cutting any new crown wheel and pinion and setting up, even if possible, could well be expensive. Would changing the unit for another, like the Rover 2000 with inboard disc brakes, work? To the point, was it desirable? The permanent change of ratio, together with the ratios of the David Brown gearbox, would have made a heavy car like the Lagonda, fully loaded with passengers, slog up hills in second if not first gear and as for reverse, it would have made it unmanageable.

Who wants wheel spin reversing out of a garage at tick over? What was needed for any motorway was, of course, an overdrive unit.

Overdrives are usually found behind gearboxes. A new gearbox with overdrive could have been fitted to the engine, precision measurement being needed though, for fitment, or clutch problems would arise like judder and premature wear. Anyway there is no way that the engine, gearbox and overdrive would fit in the space available, without considerable butchery to the cruciform chassis. Untold damage could result to the car — and I did not want all that work.

There was a solution though, it was a separate overdrive unit mounted just in front of the hypoid unit, replacing the torque tube extension.

Being an experimental project I used second-hand components to find the right combinations, besides, the components were cheap. There was a temptation to bolt the overdrive unit flange to flange to the hypoid unit after removing the torque tube, but in travelling the units would vibrate and twist and could misalign. A chewed-up final drive and tears could result!

To handle the power and torque, a large overdrive was needed, as found on Jaguars, etc. I used a Laycock type A unit, this happened to come from a big Humber. I also needed the gearbox, or at least part of it. The rear end of the gearbox to hold the bearing for the third motion shaft, of the said gearbox, which enters the overdrive. The third motion

shaft was cut off and a prop shaft flange pressed on and welded then trued up in a lathe. A housing was made to carry an oil seal to fit the third motion shaft, and fitted to the outside of the gearbox bearing, to keep the oil in the overdrive.

The overdrive unit needed to be supported on very stiff rubber supports, front and back, then bolted to the chassis, the new flange bolts to the centro short sliding prop shaft. I removed the flanges that supported the old rubber mounting for the torque tube. Incidentally they were easy to remove as they were cracked, so were the flanges of another Lagonda I own. Perhaps owners should check these flanges and reweld if necessary. I must stress that the overdrive unit has to be rigidly fixed to the car because the engine must drive through the unit to the road wheels. If the unit is flexible it will turn with the prop shaft and vibrate.

A very short sliding prop shaft was needed between the overdrive unit and the hypoid unit. This was made by using two prop shafts, as found on Jaguars, etc. The two female parts of the props and one spline are used. Taking one female part of the prop shafts, I cut off the splined tube leaving approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ ". I cut off the splined part of the male section and placed it into the shortened female part and welded them. The other female part of the prop shafts was cut to length – 2". This was

then put on to the new male section. This short sliding prop shaft ($9\frac{3}{4}$ ") was then fitted.

The front of the hypoid unit had to be supported. This being done by bolting a $\frac{3}{8}$ " flat metal plate against the hypoid unit (eight bolts), with a hole in the centre so that the hypoid spline and flange protruded.

Two angle iron arms were welded to the plate and braced by two shorter pieces of flat iron, these radiating to the chassis and mounted on rubbers under the back of the overdrive unit. Although there is an oil seal in the hypoid unit at the front, I put a large oil seal in the flat plate sealing on to the hypoid units flange.

Wiring was straightforward with a panel switch, or in my case a steering column flick switch, which operates the relay to engage the overdrive. With the David Brown gearbox all four forward gears operate with overdrive. The overdrive should NOT be operated in reverse gear. I have not bothered, but a relay in the reverse light circuit could operate, when reverse is selected, to isolate the overdrive operating circuit.

The speedo cable should be disconnected from the gearbox and a longer cable connected to the rear of the overdrive for correct speed registration.

I filled the overdrive unit with oil through the breather port (2 pints approx.). A flexible steel strip was used as a dipstick. I made a little access hole in the car floor to the breather port for oil replenishment – similar to the hole and flap for the brake master cylinder. The oil replenishment hole surfaces under the carpet at the rear passenger's feet.

Methods of construction can always vary, but this method, with the diagram, shows the general construction I have used, which has proved very successful. The beauty of this system is that the car is not permanently changed in any way. The overdrive unit and hypoid unit support can be replaced by the old torque tube, back to original, in less than one hour. In fact I fitted this project one week before the 1980 Lagonda A.G.M., and not sure it would work, I took along the old torque tube and some tools! My wife and I travelled up from Cornwall to Burnham Beeches with no trouble at all.

With overdrive selected 3,000 revs has brought back 70 m.p.h., 3,500 revs – 80+ m.p.h. Needless to say, m.p.g. has also improved. Figures are hard to quote, depend-

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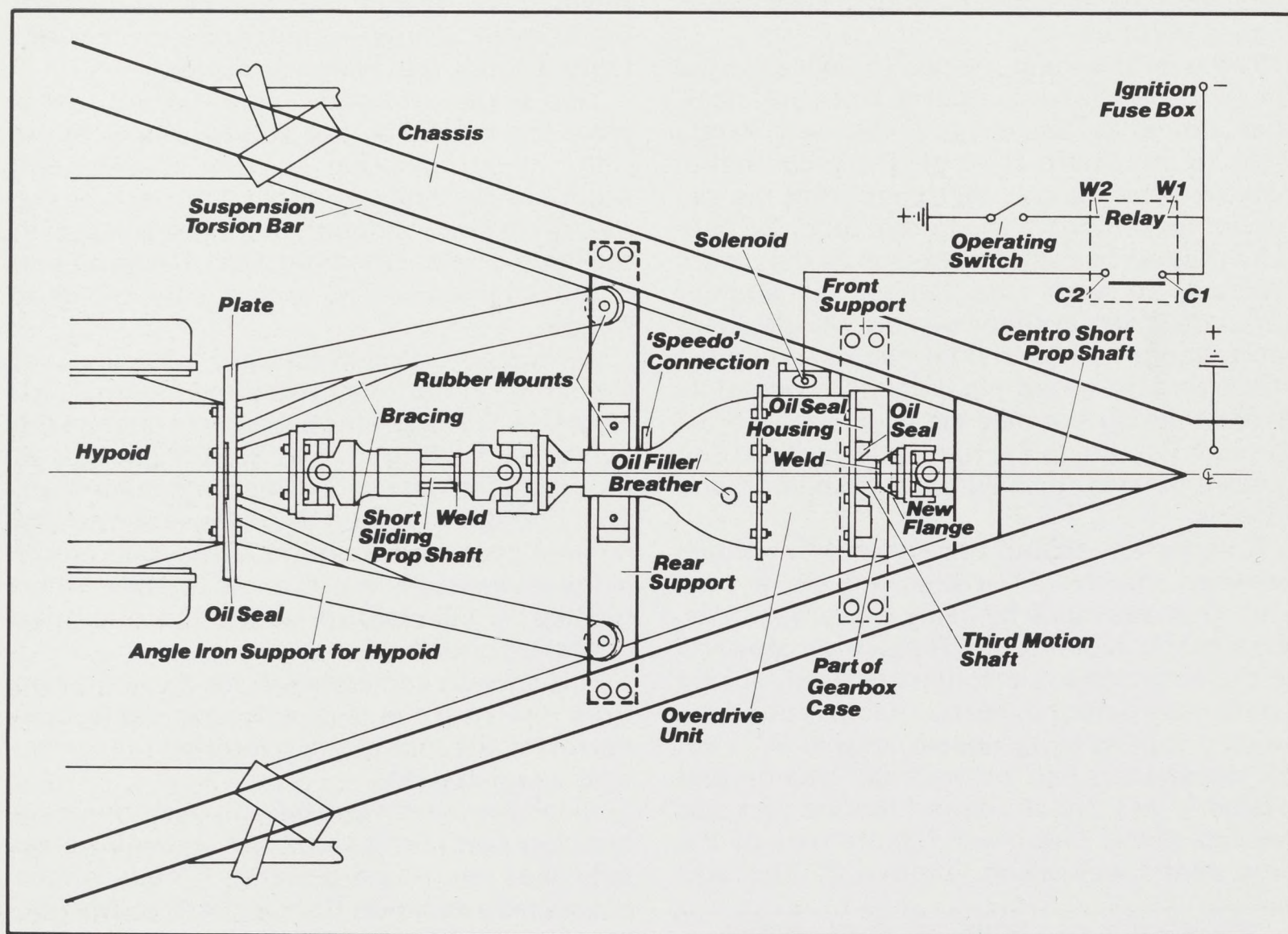
ing on the driver, but we are now in the mid-to-late-20's on a motorway.

Since construction, the unit has been totally reliable, requiring no adjustment or mainten-

ance. So, after a good trial period from 1980, I thought I'd tell somebody about it!

Happy Motoring.

PHILIP STEPHENS



WANTED!

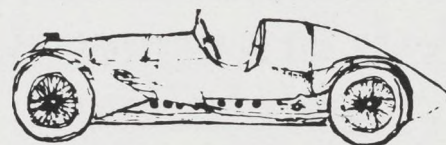
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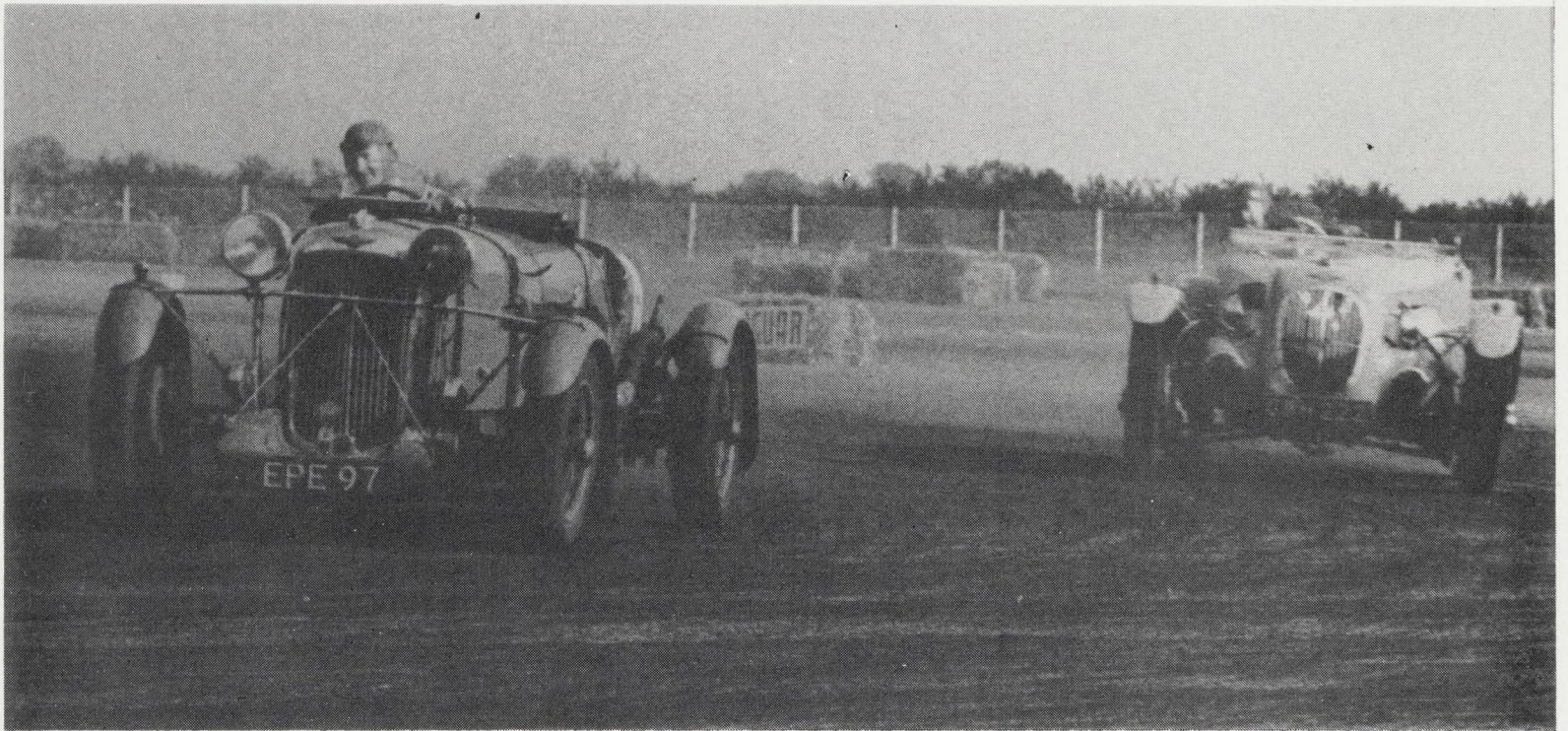
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Evenings — Weekends



EPE 97 providing laughs for Joe Goodhew, Silverstone 1950.

Photo: Guy Griffiths

I BOUGHT the car in 1944, part exchanging a 2.3 blown Bugatti, and left it as I bought it for two years.

The car was then sent to the Lagonda works at Staines for a complete overhaul. Upon collection I found that I was £100 worse off, but concede that every part that had needed renewing had been renewed.

On starting competition work although the car seemed mighty fast on the road up against everyday vehicles, on the track, oh dear, it was a back runner. So during the winter we took the engine to bits and polished the head and removed $\frac{1}{16}$ ". Using the same flat topped pistons I looked forward to the 1949 season with a bit more hope. Alas, where we had found an extra knot or two, other people seemed to have found half a dozen or so. Therefore 1949, not so good. So during the winter, in preparation for 1950, we had the engine apart, re-sleeved and fitted with high compression, domed-top pistons.

The 1950 season was trouble free and I picked up several awards at both Goodwood and Silverstone. Quite encouraging.

I had often thought that the body could be lowered to give the car a better line, gaining less wind resistance, less weight and less roll on the corners.

Having stripped all the aluminium panels off the frame I worked out how much we could cut down the robust bulkhead. We decided that

$6\frac{1}{2}$ " off the base of each wooden rib would do, with 7" off the base of the radiator, with an extra core section built on to take care of the cooling. This seemed right as the car has never boiled and has never used a fan.

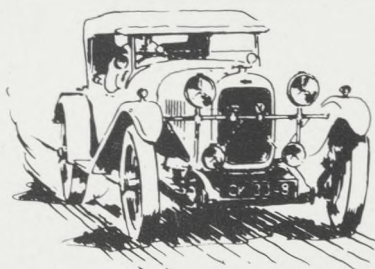
The stout aluminium bulkhead was cut off at the top and the cut part was reduced $6\frac{1}{2}$ ", then bolted back on leaving the same line for the engine cover to connect up to.

Having got the ribs secured, stayed and much stronger than previously, the aluminium panels were put back, having pared $6\frac{1}{2}$ " from the base.

The 30-gallon fuel tank had to be reduced to a 20-gallon capacity. The body details are rather sparse, but I think anyone who has this body style could perform the same modifications. Personally we met very few snags as everything seemed to tie up well. The engine was left pretty alone, apart from removing of a further $\frac{1}{32}$ " from the head. The only time a head gasket blew was at Goodwood when the water pump drive packed up.

The gearbox has had to put up with a deal of punishment. During the process three new sets of third speed gears have been fitted and a new set of other gears. The third speed gears now fitted are of a little wider section tooth and should last longer, I hope.

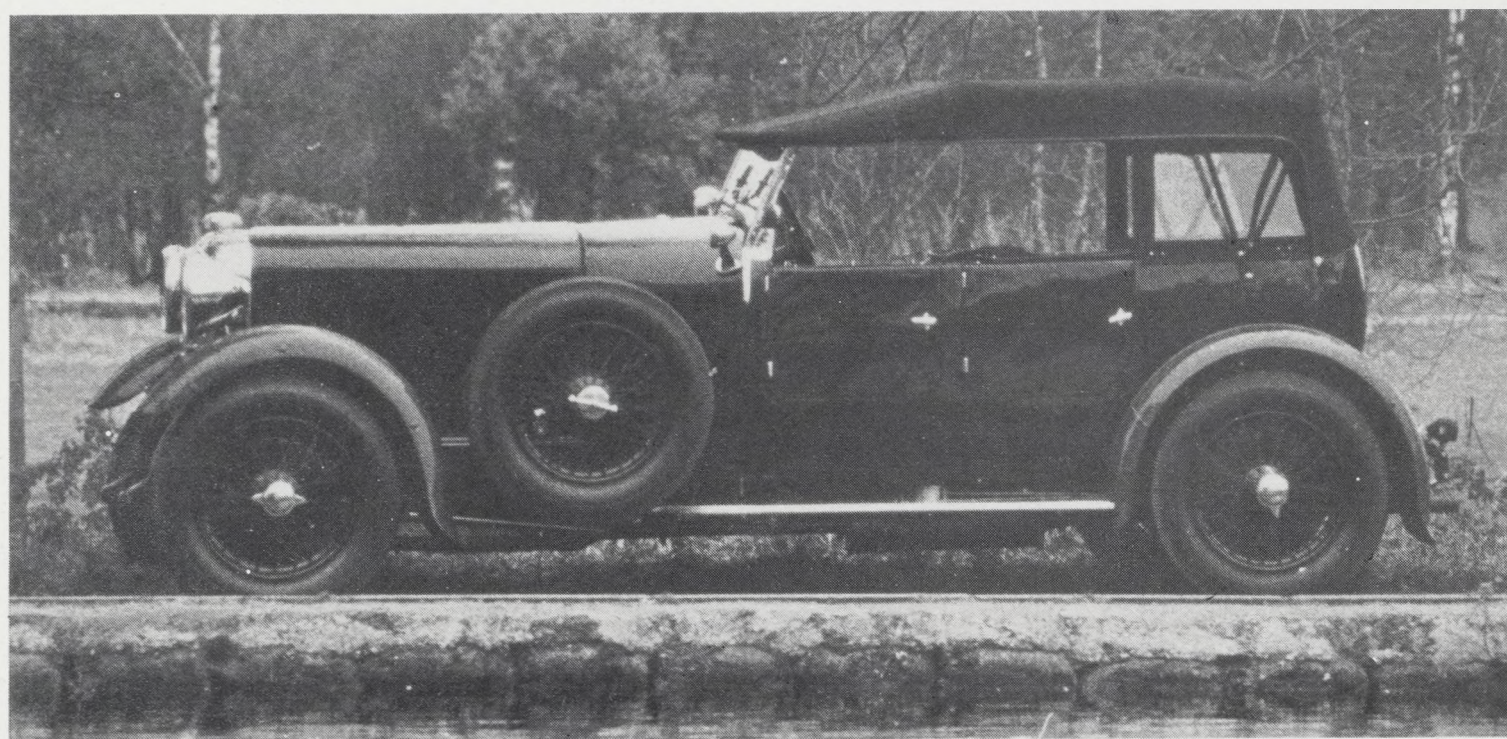
Rear axle, springs, wheel bearings and the rest of the bits are original. Touch wood, they look good for another 15 years.



Peter Whenman

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Tyres used were Dunlop 600 x 18", giving 29 m.p.h. per 1,000 revs in top, the car seeming quite happy at 4,500 revs.

We drilled the clutch for lightness, but not too much, and had it balanced. We also removed the front end balance weight.

When the brake drums got rather badly scored we had them skimmed and fitted with steel liners. This, however, was not good as during a race with Howarth's car the heads wore off the rivets and the steel inserts broke away from the drums. Fortunately without locking the wheels. We discarded the liners and fitted extra thick linings. These saw the 1951 season out.

I then had new brake drums, into which I drilled 17 1" holes for cooling and lightness.

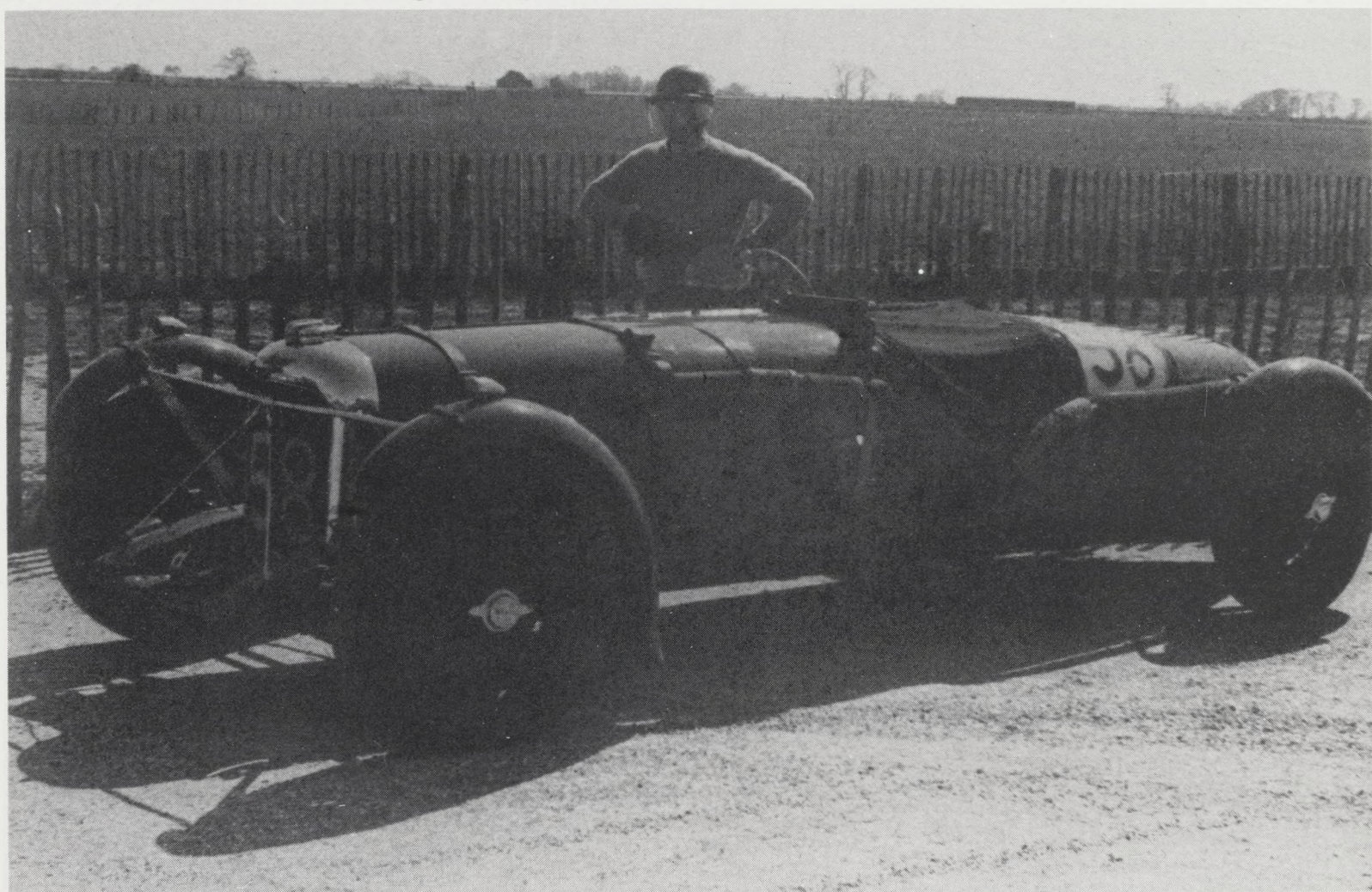
For racing we used a 60 per cent petrol, 40 per cent Benzol mixture. For road use, Benzol being short, we used 80 per cent petrol, 20 per cent Benzol.

Shock absorbers are two Luvax and two friction front and rear, the same ones fitted on the car when new.

We did consider shortening the chassis. The car, however, got round corners quite well so this remained an idea only.

May I close by adding that my brother shared at least half the work in keeping the car racing and that most of the winter evenings were spent "messaging about" with Lagonda and Alfa cars.

JOE GOODHEW



EPE 97 after shrinking, Goodwood 1951.

Photo: Guy Griffiths

MAGAZINE CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

AUTUMN: AUGUST 15th WINTER: NOVEMBER 15th

SPRING: FEBRUARY 15th SUMMER: MAY 15th

Thank you

Plasticiser Migration

or The Glue Sniffers Paradise

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND the nature of the problem it is necessary to sketch the background to the events leading to the rather curious title. Two years ago I decided to fabric cover the body that I had built for the 16/80. The principle reason for this was also the best one; namely that I liked that type of finish. Secondary considerations were the difficulty in rendering invisible certain joints in the aluminium covering of the ash frame work, particularly in the area of the compound curves at the rear, and the joins between the scuttle and the main body. Not being in possession of the necessary welding techniques and being hampered by the joins being deliberately made over ribs and spars of the ash frame itself, that would have precluded welding in any case.

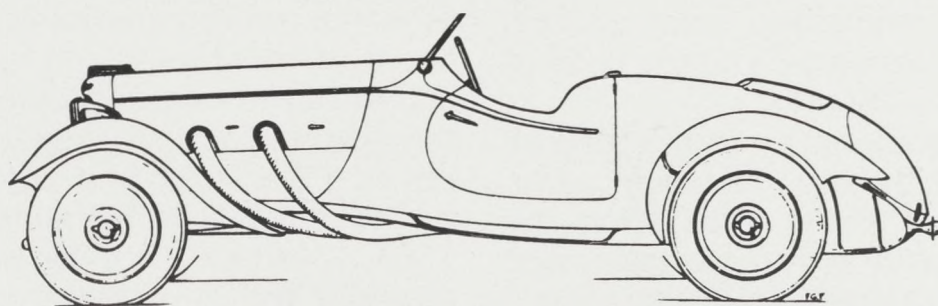
Research had shown that there were fabric covered 16/80 tourers when the model was first introduced. So not only was my conscience clear, but I was happy doing what I wanted to, a rare enough delicacy for anyone these days.

The material chosen was a Vinyl coated, cotton backed leather cloth, fairly standard in the trade, a Kapoc type padding, linen sheeting and Dunlop Thixofix adhesive. The procedure, designed for the one man enterprise was:

Firstly all the joints in the aluminium skin were securely pinned along each edge beneath the ash frame. Any slight gaps were filled with Isopon, the whole was then rendered smooth and to shape. Next I gently roughened the alloy sheeting to afford some "grip" to the padding, which was applied and tacked in position, using the Thixofix. When the body was covered the padding was teased out to a uniform thickness and tapered off towards the edges of the top and bottom rails of the body and around the door openings. The padding was then locked firmly into place by encapsulating it in linen sheets that had been begged or stolen from the household linen cupboard. The linen then being pulled tight, glued and tacked over every edge. The linen sheeting served two purposes; 1. to present a united and stable surface to the top fabric and 2. to protect the delicate padding from the massive heaving and stretching that was to be

employed in fitting the leathercloth.

In order to achieve a drum tight fit of the leather cloth, and to avoid having to increase the labour force from one, it was necessary to devise a system similar, in some respects, to a good old fashioned wrack. With the body bolted to the chassis to provide a firm base to work on, a sufficient length of material was unrolled to reach from side to side of the car, whilst going round the back and finishing roughly in line with the front dumb irons. The width of the material was enough to ensure an overlap at the top and bottom rails. Each end of the fabric was rolled around a 1½" square length of timber, the same length as the width of the fabric, and secured to the piece of wood with a "G" clamp at each end. Each "G" clamp was in turn roped with a nylon tow rope, to a single fixing on each side of the car, securely screwed into the garage wall immediately in front. The chassis was then rolled forward until two timber baulks placed longitudinally between the garage wall and the bulk head were held securely. By inserting a steel bar between each pair of ropes the fabric was pulled around the body and all the slack was taken out. It was then possible, by making an even number of turns on each bar, locking them against the supporting timber bulks between the wall and the bulk head, to wind up the fabric covering. At the same time that tension was applied at the front, heat was applied by a battery of hair dryers suspended at the rear and Infra red lamps placed along the sides of the body. The heat produced and the creaking of the ropes being tightened, created an atmosphere that would have been familiar to any high class operator in the service of the Inquisition. The system worked quite well, and I eventually achieved a drum tight covering over the whole body using a single piece of material. This was left "in situ" for a day or so to settle and a further twist or two on the ropes was required before I judged that all the stretch had ceased. The leading edge of the material was then tacked all round the scuttle edge and the wracking machine dismantled. The body was lifted from the chassis for the bottom rail to be secured, bringing the material well up the inside before gluing and pin-



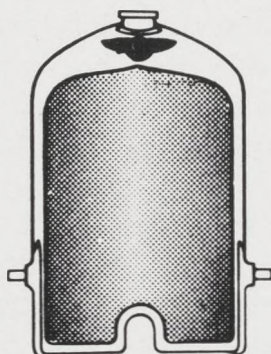
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ning. The door orifices were treated in a like manner, all the cill edges and other difficult small areas being covered by a single layer of the fabric, secured by Thixofix.

This work was completed and for a time all appeared to be satisfactory. However, some two years later I find that the areas where the adhesive was applied directly to the fabric and the alloy or wood substrate are parting company. The fabric has lifted and apparently frayed along the edges. My first thoughts were that it was a result of weathering, due to using the car and the adhesive drying out, but on investigation this proved not to be the case. What had happened was that where adhesive had been applied directly to the back of the vinyl based material, plasticisers used in the preparation of the vinyl to give it flexibility had "migrated" through the backing and de-

stroyed the adhesive. No amount of pressure or temperature variation to the affected parts could restore that which had been lost by the action of the migrating plasticisers. The only remedy is to strip all the affected surfaces and remove the tacky (but not tacky enough) remains of the Thixofix using a solvent such as T559, Tolurol, or Gemclean; recut new fabric material and re-make using an adhesive that does not react with the vinyl topping such as Dunlop S1588 or 1115.

You may or may not think that these notes are pretty heady stuff, but wait until you get down to doing the cleaning off and recovering bit. Choose a dry day, do it in the open air and wear a mask.

And for Pete's sake don't light a "ciggy".

PETE TOWERS

"La Lagonda"

KNOWN HISTORY of my LG.45 FPE 200. In 1974 I wanted "company" for my DB.4, so I went to London to buy an MG TC or something similar. I could not find any MG for the money I had in my pocket, but I spotted an advertisement for a Lagonda 1951, 2.6 L which was for sale at £750.

It took me two hours, and five cups of tea, to bring the price down to a realistic £500, considering the decay.

The seller was very good indeed as I had never thought about buying a Lagonda and never even seen one before. However, I had faith in the Aston Engine and knowing R. S. Williams, I decided that the car could always be repaired at his premises – at that time a tiny workshop in Cold Harbour Lane.

It was a good thought as the car boiled soon after in Kings Road and was, to my great shame, towed to the above mentioned workshop where it was duly repaired, overhauled, re-painted and re-trimmed during various "rescue" operations which took two years and many trips between France and England, with or without the car – the painting and trimming being mostly done in France but mechanical work and the soft top in the U.K.

This gave me the opportunity to meet and get to know a large variety of people; some of them, Captain Forshaw included, providing considerable help and morale boosting and others, which I won't mention here, being just

an expensive nuisance.

But, to the pre-war Lagonda.

Some time later, when I came back from a trip to Saudi Arabia, my brother told me that a certain Mr. Alan Graham had phoned as the L.O.C. had given him my name. This gentleman was a very nice American, owner of FPE 200, at that time the only known Lagonda in France. With mine we doubled the figure and three months later, after a bit of Sherlock Holmes analysis, I spotted another three which were not in the Club.

Soon after, in February 1975, Alan Graham told me that his Lagonda was rather heavy to drive and, as he had a Bentley being repaired in England, he offered me the LG.45.

I drove the car in a Rally-Promenade in the "ile de France", I liked it, nothing drastic happened and I bought it – this time at his price! Rather more than I paid for the previous Lagonda.

The first job was to ". . . dédouaner la voiture" (clear it from Customs) which was done in a remote Custom's office. This could be tricky but "manageable" once you know the system.

The second job was to thoroughly examine the file which I had inherited. I spotted in the log book – which I still have – a very interesting document: a bad photocopy of the advertisement which indicated that Alan Graham bought the car in 1970 with 43,000 miles on the

clock. I bought it with 48,000 approximately so it had run 5,000 miles in five years.

The Registration Book also indicated that the previous owner, Mr. David Skeme Duff who initially lived in London and later in Weybread, Diss, Norfolk, had registered the car between 1952 – when it had 25,500 miles on the clock and 1966. He probably had it until 1970, without taxing it, as it was bought at this date by Alan Graham with 43,000 miles as previously stated.

I would be very interested to know the history of the first 25,000 miles, i.e. the first 15 years of FPE 200.

Unfortunately the Registration Book in my possession is a continuation book which starts on 9th January 1953. The original registration was issued on 8th May 1937 and there is a gap in between when I don't know where the car was, to whom it belonged and what sort of repairs were done at that time.

Alan Graham and myself had to do quite a lot of work on the engine but I would like to know who modified the front shock absorbers, replacing the usual adjustable friction type by pistons which are not comfortable at all on country roads.

I have quite a file with an album of colour photos. These are difficult to detach and mail but nevertheless interesting as they show the Lagonda at its different periods.

The car is now re-painted in dark blue with red coachwork line and has performed well in a few rallies, the Paris-Deauville being one where it received first prize – a horrible cup – the second car won 12 bottles of *Charles Heidsieck Brut Vintage Champagne* (sad!).

In 1978 the car was at its best so I decided to use it as a suitable wedding carriage to go to, and return from, St. Louis des Invalides Church in Paris. The car was very much admired.

I have used it on various occasions but it is not practical to have a Lagonda in Paris as the water boils by the time you have reached the "Boulevard Peripherique" so one must plan one's "sortie" well in advance, trying to predict the eventual traffic! Not easy.

The car has now 53,300 miles on the clock and I have good reason to believe it is genuine.

I would be very pleased to hear from people having known the first part of its history or anything interesting.

My previous letter to the magazine brought in some very nice answers from people who just like travelling in France on country roads and "Routes Nationales".

Take advantage of your strong Sterling Pound and come to France this summer.

Happy motoring.

AUDOIN DE DAMPIERRE



What more can any man desire?

Photo: Audoin de Dampierre

V.12 Team Cars – A Detective Story

THE OUTLINE of the story is well known. Alan Good dragooned W.O. into building special V.12s for the 1939 Le Mans race, well before he was ready to contemplate a sporting model and giving him only about five months to do the job. They got the cars ready, just, and they ran to schedule, not to win, coming 3rd and 4th.

After a further outing at the August Bank Holiday Brooklands meeting, the cars were stored in a shed in Staines, got bombed, and were sold after the war as desirable restoration projects. One went to Indianapolis and has stayed in North America, the other went through several owners, all in the U.K. – Bob Cowell, Ian Carr, Lord O'Neill and currently John Rees. The detective story, referred to in the title, covers my attempts to clear up once and for all which car was which.

I fancy that W.O. originally only intended to build one car, but Alan Good's disclosure of the project coincided with the death of Lord Selsdon's grandmother and his inheritance of £65,000. This was burning a hole in his pocket, hence the approach to Lagondas and the second car. Lord Selsdon, by the way, had only fairly recently inherited the title and was better known as The Hon. Peter Mitchell-Thomson who had raced extensively in HRGs and had driven at Le Mans before. Grannie's fortune enabled him to set his sights a bit higher. He was 26 to Bill Waterman's 34.

The works car was finished enough to be displayed at Good's 7th June cocktail party, even though it wasn't enough of a runner to be demonstrated. The chrome radiator slats disappeared as soon as serious testing was started. The Selsdon car was only completed the day it left for Le Mans. In the course of this investigation I have looked at dozens of photos of the cars and there seemed to have been ceaseless alterations made to the details. For example, two different types of aero screen and the last-minute addition of airscoops to cool the rear axle. Also the cars were tested at Brooklands with chromed headlamps but raced with black ones, the wire mesh "windscreen" first lay on top of the bonnet and then was recessed into it and so on.

Anyway, to get back to the story, the two cars have consecutive chassis Nos. 14089 and 14090, and I have learnt not to assume that the

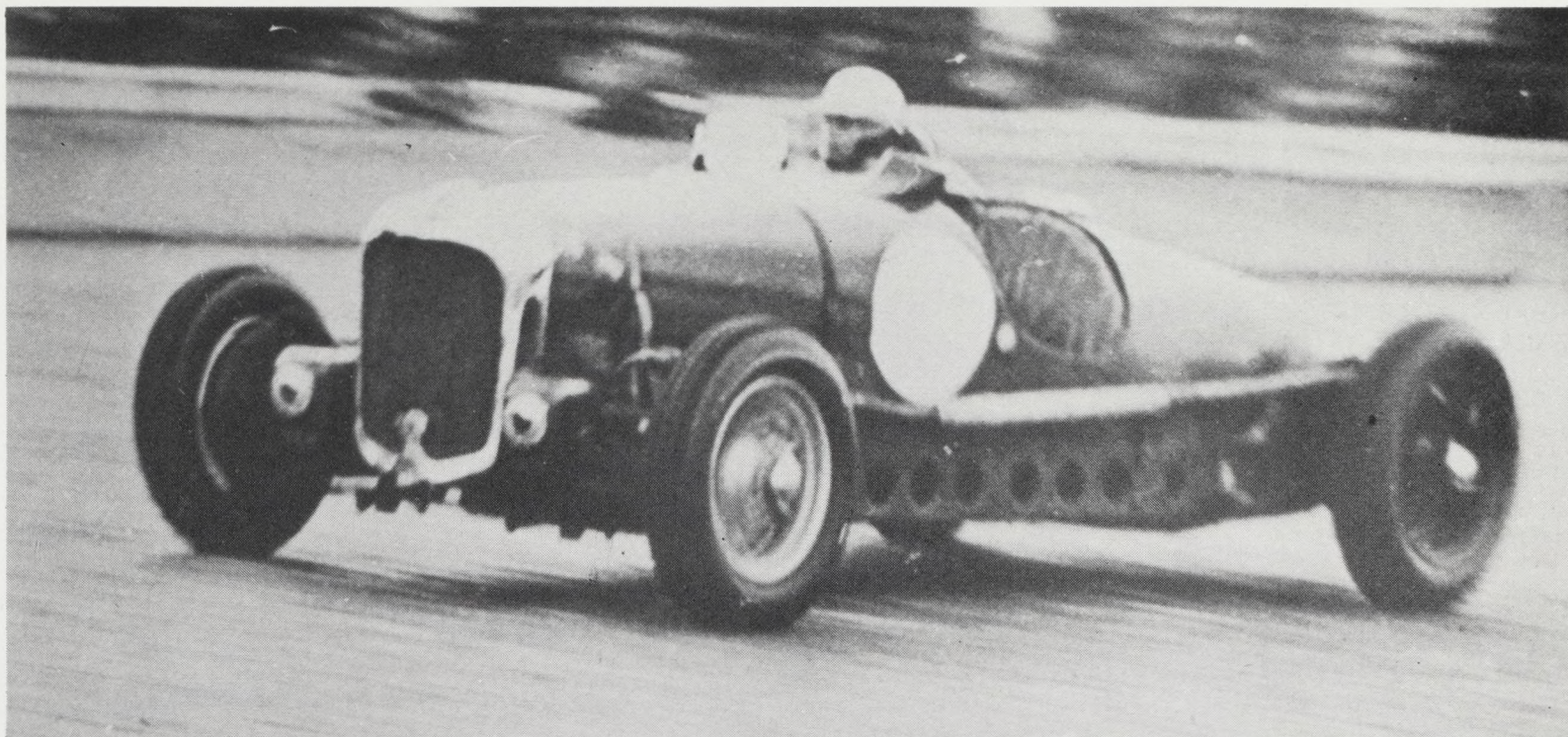
works car was the first one. The car that went to "Indy" was 14090, the Rees car is 14089. At the June cocktail party the works car appeared on trade plates, 485 PB, one of the Factory's set. By the time of the Brooklands test the works car was carrying its racing number 5 and had large white circles painted round the horns, so that it could be distinguished in the race from No. 6 which was left plain green.

Now Ian Carr, in his "Cars I have owned" in *Motor Sport* of January 1953, said the V.12 he owned was the Brackenbury/Dobson car. This car was registered GRK 77, a London registration of April 1948, but Bill Hartop, my predecessor as Registrar, had the cars the other way round, making the Brackenbury car the Indy one.

As Bill was a meticulous recorder one hesitates to change his cards without strong evidence.

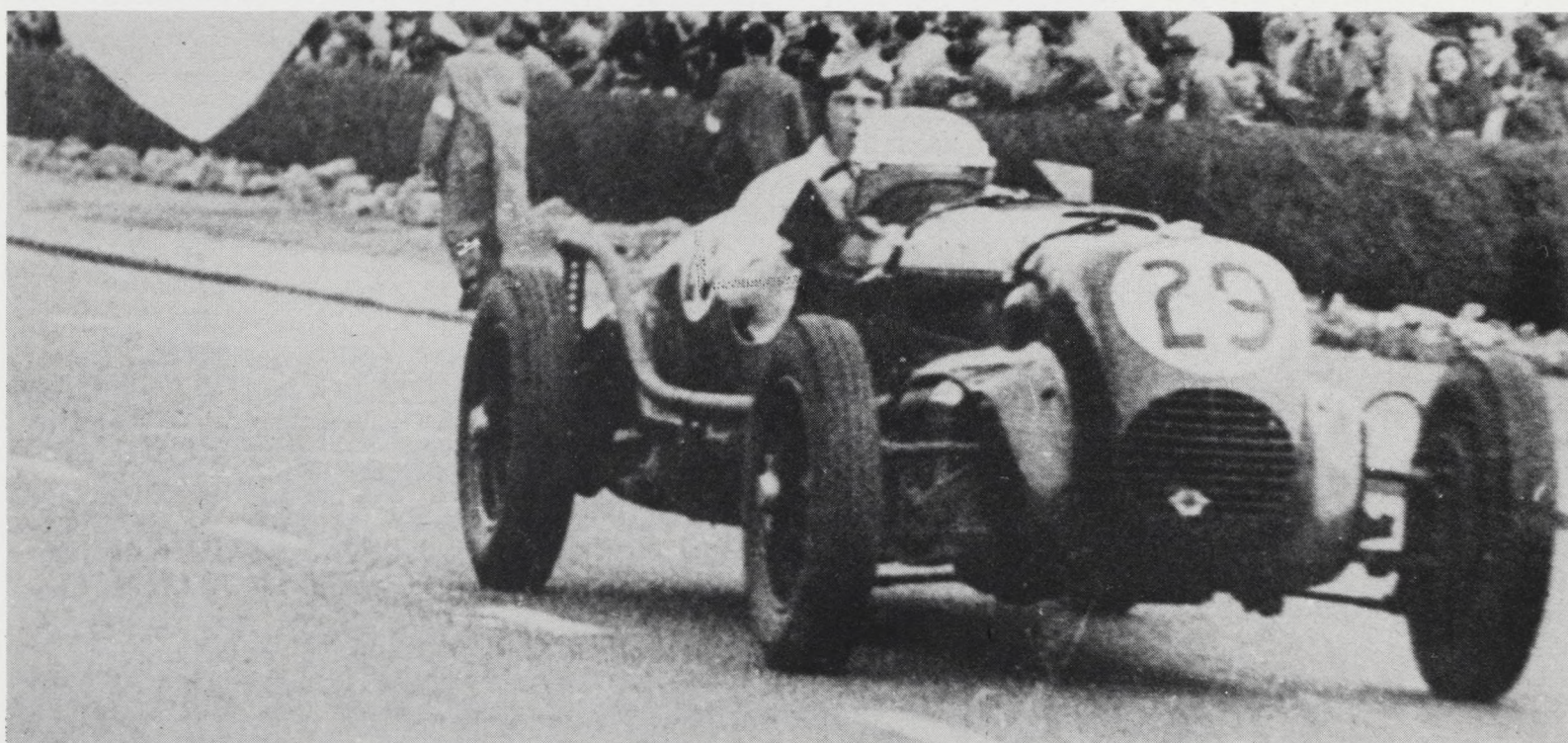
John Rees, who is doing a monumental rebuild-to-original on 14089, kept prodding me with snippets from wartime *Autocars* about the cars. These seemed to suggest that his car was the Brackenbury car. Then Cyril Posthumus did an article about the V.12s in the *Brooklands Society Gazette* and included a photo I had not seen before of the cars lying wrecked in their shed, and the nearer one bore a registration number of HPL 449, which is 1939, Surrey. It was said to be the Selsdon car. But of course HPL and GRK could have been the same car, since it would have saved a lot of money to re-register a V.12 after the war when the flat-rate £10 tax only applied to newly registered cars and a pre-war registered V.12 cost about £60 to tax, equivalent to four or five hundred, today.

I wrote to Cyril Posthumus about the problem and he was very helpful, sending me a bundle of photos to copy, including the originals of his V.12 article illustrations. One of the most maddening was a picture of both V.12s queuing for the boat at Dieppe after the race. The nearer car carries HPL 449, the other tail is obscured, but both are photographed from the back and the race numbers have been removed. So we were no further on. The "cars bombed in the shed" photo was interesting, since examining the original you could see that only one was there (HPL). The car behind was in fact an LG.6 and the one beside HPL



Robert Arbuthnot, practising at Indianapolis, in the ex-Selsdon car, May 1946.

Photo: courtesy of John Rees



Robert Cowell in the Jersey Road Race, April 1948. This is the rebodied ex-works car. Placed ninth, he was unkindly described as "the mobile chicane" by Motor Sport.

was a standard V.12 because the chassis outriggers were visible and these were removed from the racers. But, the front of HPL was so battered that it is difficult to tell whether there were white horn enclosures or not.

One further photo was a puzzle. It was of the Selsdon car, still carrying racing No. 6 and with green horn enclosures, in a roped-off enclosure at some unknown concours d'elegance. It is on the same trade plates, 485 PB, but these are attached to a proper number plate which is obscured by the trade plates. The fact that it carries No. 6 dates the event to between Le Mans and the August Bank Holi-

day (where it was No. 5), but we know that the race numbers were removed for the drive home from Le Mans. So they must have been put back for the display. It cannot have been before the race, as there was no time.

As a result of this, the feeling was growing that HPL 449 was the Selsdon car and that the works car had not been registered before the war, running on trade plates all the time. John Rees then unearthed a set of photos of the Indy car at the track and also the technical details of the car from the Speedway authorities. These showed the ungainly new single seat body that Robert Arbuthnot had had built on

the car, the fact that the car had reached the track and practised there (contrary to what I said on p.456 of the book), and the car weighed 2,731 lb. The fuel tank was enlarged to 45 gallons and the sump held nine gallons of oil. But no hint of whose car it had originally been, or of the chassis number.

Then, out of the blue, Ted Inman Hunter wrote to Cyril Posthumus with the photographs that cleared it up. There were two sets, the first taken in the early part of 1946, showed Charles Brackenbury driving the works V.12 chassis in Surrey. There is no bodywork at all and Charles has rigged up cardboard wings and a perspex windscreen braced off the scuttle. The car is on trade plates, 168 PC. The other set of photos were taken at Elstree Speed Trials in April 1946 and show the Indy-bodied car, but carrying number plates HPL 449. Thus it emerged that the works car had not been registered pre-war and so became GRK 77 in 1948 and was therefore 14089 and the Selsdon car was HPL 449 and 14090. For once Hartop nodded and the records have been amended suitably. Thank heavens there weren't three cars or we'd never get to the bottom of it.

Lots of other side trails opened up in the course of the inquiry. Bob Cowell bought the works car and put a quite pleasant but anonymous-looking body on with a concealed radiator and a circular grille. It raced like this in the Jersey Road Races of 1948 with the exhausts taken over the rear axle and slots cut in the bonnet sides with the camboxes sticking out. Later he added a 2.6 grille, moving the badge up to accommodate it, cut doors in the sides and added a windscreen. The exhausts were taken under the axle as originally. The original wings had vanished and substitutes were found from a current production tin box. It looked absolutely awful.

It is surprising to see the number of changes made to the cars between Le Mans and the August Brooklands meeting. You would expect the lamps and wings to go and shorter silencers to be fitted, plus the regulation fishtail. Even removing the jacking points is not unexpected, but it is odd to see a complete scuttle panel, representing about a quarter of the bodywork, to be replaced; the new one having neither the wire mesh windscreen nor the recess for it. It may be that the panel used



V.S.C.C. Elstree Speed Trials, April 1946. Robert Arbuthnot shows the ex-Selsdon car prior to embarking for the U.S.A.

Photo: E. Inman Hunter

for Le Mans had cracked to bits and was replaced by an earlier one which didn't have the recess. As a mark of confidence, they even took off the mirrors. Lord Selsdon had entered his car for the Liege G.P., scheduled for 27th August. He went, but the race was cancelled and car and driver just about got back across the Channel before war broke out.

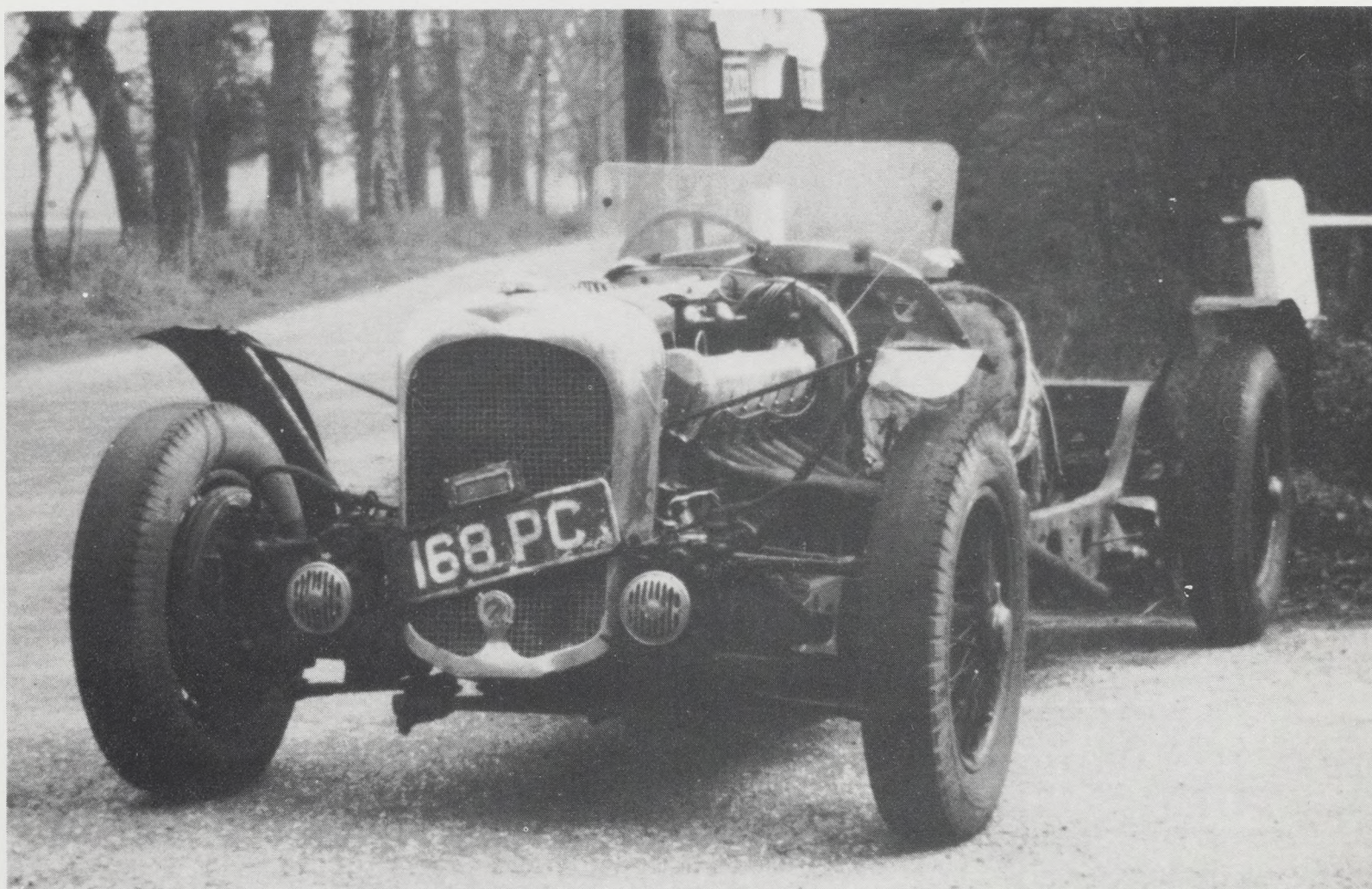
I came across a cutting in W.O.'s papers that I can't resist passing on. It is from the *Evening Standard* of the Tuesday before Le Mans. After giving all the gossip about the two lords; how Lord W. had gone straight from Eton to an engineering college course in Glasgow for four years and how Lord S. had once worked for a builder for £4 a week, the writer then turned loose the purple prose in describing the Le Mans circuit. "The race is a terrific test of endurance as well as of skill", he breathed. "The course runs through forests and fields, across open moorland and through villages. There are hair-raising bends, sharp corners and steep hills to be negotiated". Moors? Steep hills? He must have gone to the wrong Le Mans.

What actually happened at Indianapolis?

Well, HPL got there all right and started to practise. Unfortunately it needed to lap at 114 m.p.h. to qualify and the car couldn't better 104. Then, on the way to the track for another go, the car came off the towrope and had a nasty crash, destroying the rear axle and bending the chassis frame at the curved part over that axle. It was repairable, but not quickly and as they were off the pace anyway, they gave up. "They" in this case being Robert Arbuthnot, the owner of the car. By that well known law, the bends in the chassis side members came at about the only point where no holes had been drilled to lighten it. Actually, some of the "lightening" holes have tube bushes welded in, which makes me wonder if their purpose has not been misunderstood, and they were really there to stiffen the box section, by means of these bushes, and not to lighten anything.

Rereading the first part of the above, I am struck that the time scale does not come over and the impression is given that it all took about three weeks. Three years would be nearer.

ARNOLD DAVEY



The ex-works car, as driven by Charles Brackenbury in the winter of 1946. Tyres were hard to come by then. The car is capable of 130 m.p.h. This is the photo that solved the puzzle, see text.

Photo: E. Inman Hunter

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Oils and Lagondas

VINTAGE CARS are probably synonymous with "wrapping up well", a good breakfast of treacle on porridge before setting out and a fine golden syrup pudding at lunch to set you on your way again. A nice thick oil was also thought to be a good thing; usually to be changed to a different grade in summer and winter, like one's overcoats.

Are we right in attributing so much importance to viscosity? It is one of many characteristics of a lubricant but it is the only characteristic used by the Society of Automobile Engineers in allocating the S.A.E. number of an oil.

Change is often not agreeable: least of all in the attitude of Vintage motorists. It took nearly a decade to stop switching from summer to winter oil and for multi grade oils to be accepted. It was as long ago as 1976 when B.P. introduced low viscosity oils and only fairly recently that the new 10W/30 oils started to gain ground against the conventional 20W/50 oils.

The importance of maintaining a film of oil between bearing and moving surfaces, even at high temperature, has traditionally been considered of paramount importance. However, the chemical advances achieved in modern lubricants have lessened the need to maintain a significant oil film thickness as an essential physical characteristic for protection of the moving parts.

It must be emphasised that a modern lubricant contains numerous additives. The liquid that comes out of the tin is now a complex substance with the ability to meet many different demands. These include protection against engine wear, foaming of the lubricant, pour-point depressant, rust, a detergent ability and dispersancy quality. Additives help to produce a conditioned surface which will not scuff or pit and must be able to look after the engine from crankshaft to camshaft. A modern lubricant not only has an S.A.E. number but also an American Petroleum Institute specification (A.E.I./S.E.) and should also meet the tests imposed by the *Communauté des Constructeurs* of

the Common Market.

Low viscosity oils show power improvements at high speed and fuel savings at low speeds.

M.I.R.A. tests have indicated power improvements of the order 5 per cent, with negligible wear. Tests on government vehicles showed fuel savings between 2 per cent and 5 per cent and on other vehicles between 5 per cent and 7 per cent.

Particularly interesting is the saving on short trips of a few miles where M.I.R.A. tests showed savings of more than 10 per cent. On trips of about five miles savings were only marginally less than 10 per cent. This figure reduced, however, on longer trips of more than ten miles.

In general usage a high proportion of trips are of low mileage, although Vintage cars are usually thought of "long-legging it" across miles of countryside. It may well be that their owners find these savings of interest either in their family cars or Vintage machines used on local runs.

The importance of maintaining this viscosity, despite high temperatures, gives rise to the questioning of the appropriate oil pressures in an engine utilising a low viscosity oil. It may well be argued that it is no longer necessary to link the four criteria of fluid flow, temperature, viscosity and pressure in the equation if all that is necessary is to be sure that more than the low viscosity oil is circulating adequately. Would therefore a flow meter perhaps be more appropriate than a pressure gauge?

Although this is the second of a short series of articles, started by Jeff Ody and completed by myself, perhaps the latter question might be used to spark off a third article, if not a number of letters within the Club on this theme.

I have no doubt that this would be a shapely and timely move away from treacle towards lightness in our attitude towards both lubrication and la nouvelle cuisine.

DUNCAN WESTALL



Lagondas I Have Owned

HAVING ACHIEVED 30 years Lagonda Club membership it seems a good point to review 30 years of ownership with a few light-hearted reminiscences. In spite of this long period I feel no different now when climbing into the driving seat than I did then. The gear lever still goes up my trouser leg.

I first got the Lagonda "bug" at the tail-end of World War II, when a few of the "few" still had access to their Astons, Bentleys, Lagondas, M.G.s etc., and occasionally petrol, to belt them round the perimeter track. The Bentleys seemed to be the prerogative of rather senior officers, of which I was not, so I set my sights accordingly, and appropriately on Lagondas. With their better technology (e.g. removable heads) even at that stage, they seemed to me a better each way bet.

The seal was set in Newark, when the scrambling had been finally scrubbed, and I used to gaze longingly at a high chassis 2-litre tourer (about 1927/8) parked day-by-day outside the Parish Church. I was in the habit of passing my lunch-times "following" Sheila

Curridge at the Old White Hart (*Anyone else for a trip down memory lane?*) and the time between "closing" and a lift back to camp on the mail run was spent wallowing in fantasy over this vehicle. I never met the owner, but my Lagonda fate was sealed.

As I became a "family man" before a Lagonda owner an open car (the only car) was out of the question, so my first car was a 2-litre 1930 high chassis saloon (BR 8412) bought from Colin Lyne for £65. (*Asking price – no apologies for being impecunious.*)

Colin gave me 15 minutes "dual" round the houses, in East Cheam, and away I went across South London, untaxed or insured.

At the same time I joined the Lagonda Club and enjoyed much invaluable correspondence with Ivan Forshaw.

It was a cracking good car and carried us many thousands of trouble free miles, apart from dirt in the tank which kept getting into the carb. It needed, and was given, a certain amount of body treatment, and we attended several Club functions therein.

The rage then (I think) was Bob Freeman Wright's "Rapide", and whilst I couldn't aspire to anything so sporty, pricey, or impractical, I was "4½" bent. So, determined to "move up", I toyed with selling "BR". In order to get an idea of "price" went to see a 1931 2-litre saloon advertised in the *Lagonda* magazine at £280 (a great price in those days). I completely fell for this car, which had been recently rebuilt by Davies Motors, and threw in every available ha'penny to make the owner an offer he could accept. So in 1954, PO 4558 became ours and with a little cleaning (cleaning note, not polishing) won 2nd prize in the Club A.G.M. Concours in 1955. But it was no more sporty than "BR" (being much heavier) so the prime object of the transfer had been missed.

Selling this car took a long time. Firstly it was "top end of the market" and I think 1956 must have been one of those mini downturn periods we used to have before the current style major economic collapse. The man who bought it did so because there was no play in the Advance and Retard! (His test.) He bought it at night and immediately set off to Devon.

During the selling endeavour I acquired (at last) a 1927 high chassis tourer with twin carbs



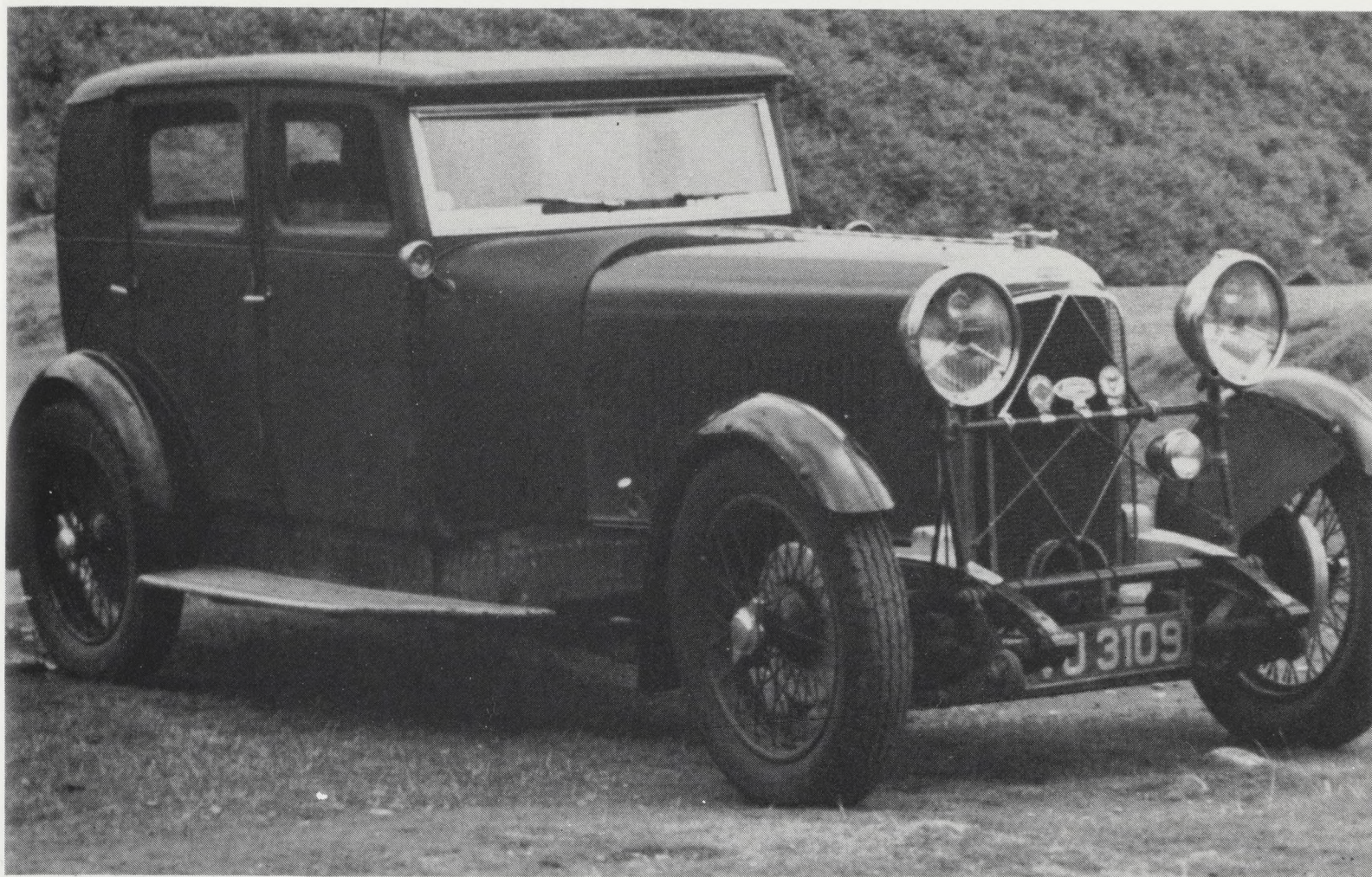
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A pretty 3-litre Weyman saloon.

Photo: G. Warren-Smith

from Gerald Emerson at the all time modest transfer price of £55 (he was moving house). This car (TP 5159) needed a major body refurbish, which it got, and attention to the engine, which, alas, it did not.

Almost as soon as it was handsomely ready for the road I too had to move house (to the Midlands) and it too had to go. It was taken over by a club member who kept it some time and eventually installed a 16/80 engine – I can't think why!

A brief flirtation with a Rolls 20/25 followed (the family now mustering six), and my wife having discovered synchromesh took a good deal of persuasion to go back to near-crash box Lags – this time in the guise of a 1934 4½-litre pillarless saloon (AKU 102), again bought in the dark in Bristol for £75 (taxed and insured). It was only just worth it. The aluminium doors had had the rats in and it took months of patient endeavour to make it presentable. But it would "GO", like nothing else I'd ever driven before.

The need for two cars obliged us to change it for two Rileys (very good cars in their way), but I soon managed to transmute *mine* into a 1930 3-litre Weyman fabric bodied saloon (VU 3109) in 1959 which I was to keep as the family

car, through thick and thin, until 1973. VU 3109 again came from Bristol (ex Holcroft), again at the princely sum of £75.

Essays into several other marques occurred around this time, a 3 carb. 16/95 Alvis, smooth but thirsty, the inevitable 3-litre Bentley, disappointing, and a host of Rileys, all excellent value for not much money. But the Lag remained and became the family friend – the children grew up with it and my wife knocked down the garden wall with it.

Even the neighbours got to like it. I revamped the compression ratio, to compete with the motorway buses – a difficult business but with great success and great surprise to other M1 users. In this form it would "clock" over 100 m.p.h. given five miles clear road to wind it up and a mile to stop it again.

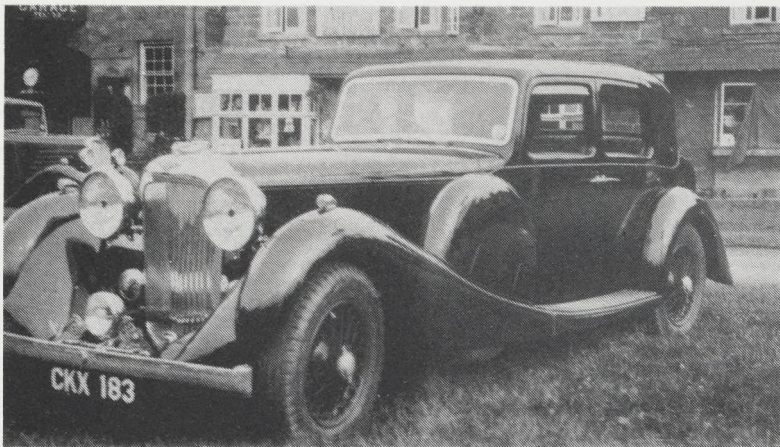
Another relocation (North → South) preceded great privation and Lagonda-less-ness for a year or two until we (as a family) were able to get the best of both worlds. We now have a 1936 4½-litre Drophead (ex BRU 200) ex Carl Nolton, and a 2-litre semi sports tourer ex John Paston-Green (KA 7214), and we are very pleased with them both. We plan to keep them indefinitely.

GORDON E. WARREN-SMITH

Letters to the Editor

40 year itch

Dear Sir — As one of those "newish" club members who did not know the late Henry Coates, I was delighted to read the reprint of his 1958 article as reference is made to CKX 183, an LG.45 Saloon which I knew very well indeed.



A period picture of CKX 183.

Photo: Geoffrey Gates

In fact my first experience of driving a Lagonda came in early 1936 prior to collecting CKX 183 from the works at Staines for my father. During the building of the car we would visit the works on Saturday mornings to watch progress and I would be given a lesson on handling an M.45 Tourer by the Service Manager, Mr. Davies, or one of the test drivers, as I had been weaned on Austin 10, and then a Talbot 105 with a preselector gearbox, and so it

was thought appropriate that I should be able to "sort them out". Looking back, I wonder what all the fuss was about. I still funk second to bottom!

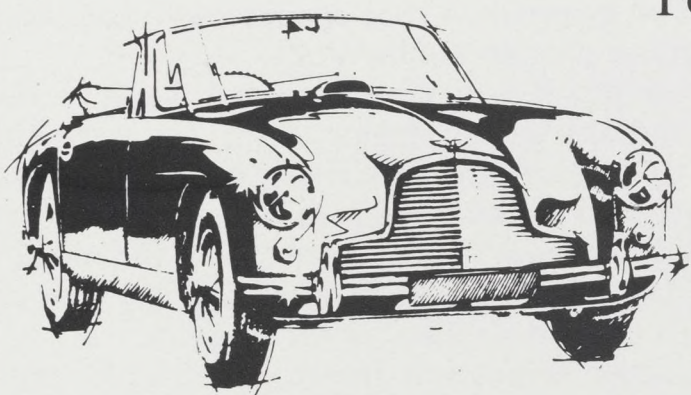
CKX 183 was I believe, Sanction I with a G.9 gearbox and remained in the family until the early '40s when having been laid up from the outbreak of war, it was sold for £150. Thereafter, it languished in a garage in Watford to re-appear in early 1946 with a price tag of £1,250 on it, which was somewhat more than my gratuity would stretch to.

I drove CKX 183 from Aix-les-Bains to our home in Buckinghamshire, in two days, in 1938 and on more than one occasion, saw the magic 100 m.p.h. come up, something which is commonplace now. I did not drive a Lagonda again from 1939 until 1979, a lapse of 40 years, when I purchased a 1936 Sanction II LG.45 tourer again with a G.9 gearbox, engine/chassis No. 12086, and bearing the registration number PRX 440M.

My knowledge of this car's history is very obscure. It previously bore a Zambian registration plate No. B5445 and belonged to a former member of the Club — L. Mitchell — who carried out major renovation work on the car in Zambia prior to returning to the U.K. with it and subsequently disposing of it.

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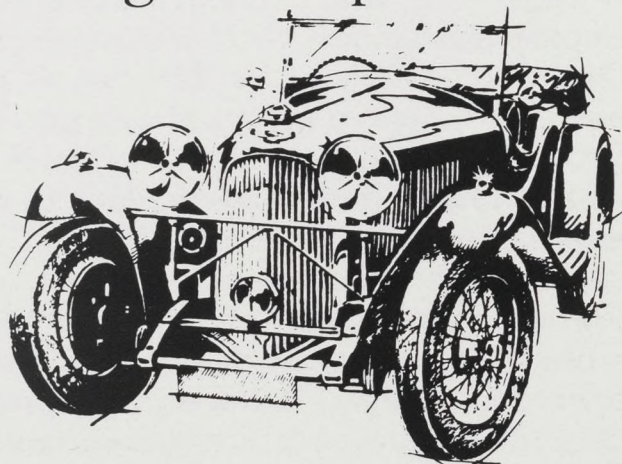


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When it left England originally, and who it belonged to prior to L. Mitchell's ownership will probably remain a mystery, but it did have one moment of glory when it featured in an article in a girly magazine in black and yellow livery (the car) between our respective ownerships.

Since I purchased it from one of those purveyors of horseless carriages who shall remain nameless, it has been a long, hard flog to bring it up to an acceptable standard, as much work was required to be done to the suspension and steering to make it roadworthy, to say nothing of curing its addiction to overheating. Fortunately for me the "Southern Lagonda Factory" if I may use the term, is located near my home, at Deddington. My very good friend and club member David Greenwood can claim the credit.

Last winter we overhauled the bodywork, replaced the running boards and resprayed her. The next job is a new hood and irons and new side screens, then I think DE 444, as it is now registered, should be O.K. for a while.

GEOFFREY GATES

The Paddocks,
Brackley, Northants.

The laid up old car

Dear Sir — Referring to April's Newsletter No. 71 and the "jungle drums" sounding out from the dreaded D.V.L.C. regarding logbooks and registration on to the computer.

I have been in correspondence with a very helpful Mrs. Harmer, Vehicle Enquiries Department. "Yes" legislation has taken place. If you want to retain your old car's original number plate you must register it before November 1983. "No" you do not need to lose your old Logbook, but you must ask for its return or, if you feel anxious, you are allowed to send them a photocopy of the log which will be accepted in lieu. The address of the Department is: Conversion Sift RAS 1014, D.V.L.C. There is no charge for registration and return of your treasured log. If you don't register and want to tax, after November, you will get a *modern number*!

If you forget to request the return of the log, they now keep them for some five or six weeks before shredding, due to past protests at their destruction. You can also go to your local Licensing Centre and ask them to take a "transcription" of your log and return it to you,

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after a short wait. In the event of no co-operation, refer them to Mrs. Harmer, Vehicle Enquiries Department, Telephone Swansea 782325, who has offered to handle it for anyone who cares to send our cars in trust to her.

I hope this will stop the faceless logbook "shredding machine" for our members and any other interested car owners that wish to keep the original registration numbers and documents.

PETER HOLT

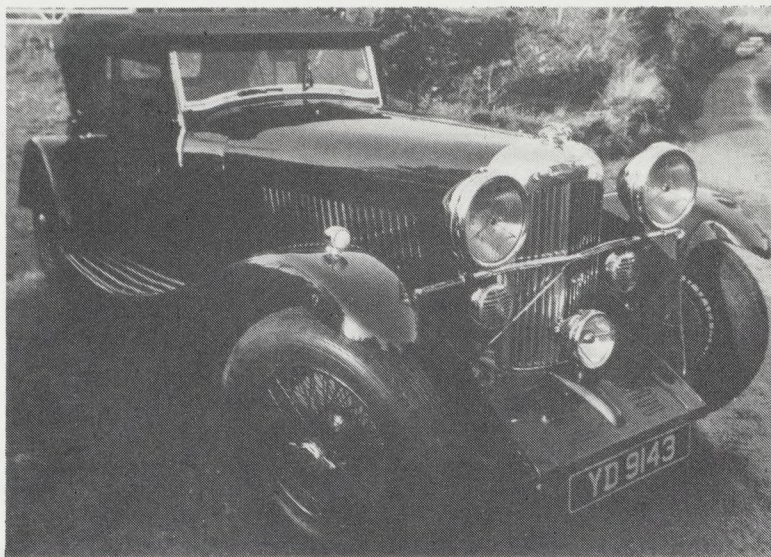
14 Templewood Lane,
Stoke Poges.

Bristol Fashion

Dear Sir — As promised a report on the Lagonda Car Stand at the Bristol Classic Car Show, 26th–27th March 1983.

The stand was an enormous success, many thanks to Glyn Roberts for generously donating the stand. The public showed enormous interest in the Lagonda 16/80 as this car was in the B.B.C. series "The Citadel".

We handed out an enormous amount of application forms for people who were in-



Best P.V.T. at the Bristol Classic Car Show and T.V. star of "The Citadel".
Photo: Lionel Parker

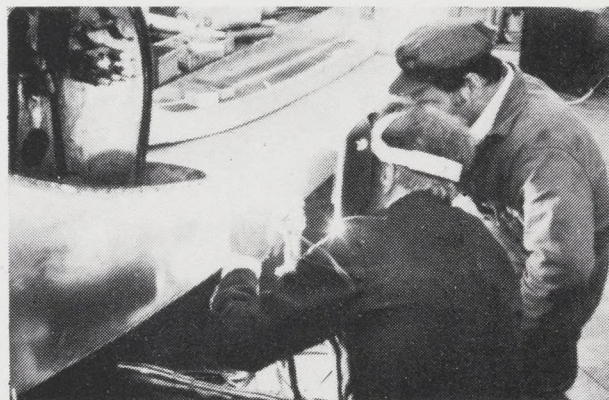
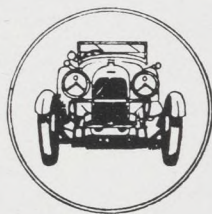
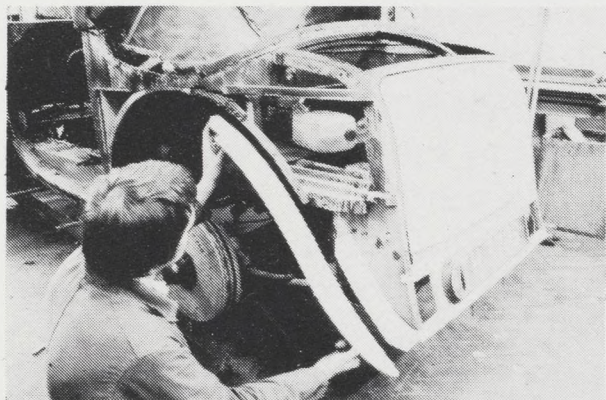
terested in joining the club. With great pride I announce the result:

**LAGONDA 16/80 – Best Post Vintage
Car In Show**

For which a cup and two rosettes were presented.

LIONEL PARKER
"Sandy Gates",
Bath, Avon.

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