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LAGONDA CLUB**

**Number 147      Winter 1990/91**







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MAGAZINE

Issue No. 147

Winter 1990/91

*Editor:* Ken Painter, Little Barn, The Shoe, North Wraxall, Chippenham, Wilts SN14 8SE. Tel: 0225 891718.

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## FRONT COVER

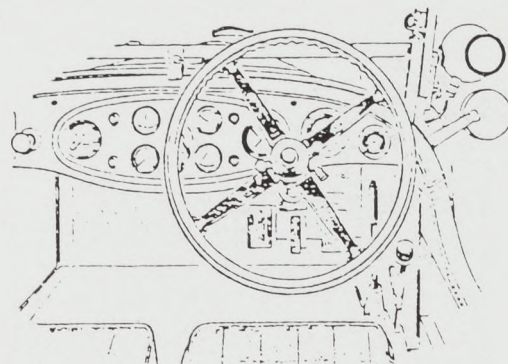
*Roger Firth's HC 2 litre, apparently suffering from a serious radiator leak!*



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. Acceptance of an advertisement for publication in "The Lagonda" does not imply endorsement of the product or service by the Committee.



# From the Driving Seat



Before I sat down to write this piece, I glanced through edition No. 13 of "The Lagonda", there is no significance in the number by the way, I was simply attracted by the picture of the then new 4½ litre V12 Lagonda sports racer on the cover. The letters pages gave one a sense of déjà vu though, as the theme seemed to be "Whither the Club?" As 1991 dawns and your Committee ponders the very same question, 134 editions of the magazine later, it seems that we don't change very much.

One thing that **has** changed, but very subtly, is the magazine itself. Edition 13 carried just five advertisements in its 40 pages, but the advertising picture is very much more encouraging now and this allows us to produce more pages and more pictures and still keep within budget. We are trying to work towards the stage where the advertising will cover the total cost of the magazine, but this may be some way in the future. We are also looking very carefully at ways of making the magazine even more attractive, both to you, the club members and to those companies who advertise within its pages. One thing we do promise, the ratio between advertising and 'proper' editorial content will be watched very carefully so that, as the number of advertisements increases, so do the number of pages devoted to matters Lagonda.

Thanks to the kindness of Tim Wadsworth, the Painter family were transported to the Vintage Sports Car Club New Years Day meeting at the Versons Hotel, just outside Ledbury in proper motor cars. I enjoyed a ride to the event in Tim's 2 Litre, whilst Chris travelled there in a fine Riley Nine tourer. The event

itself was a resounding success. I didn't even attempt to count the cars in the carpark, but there must have been at least 100, including a good selection of Lagondas, with a 2 and a 3 Litre, a replica Le Mans car and Roger Threlfall's beautiful LG6 DHC.

Just about every major marque was there, including three GP Bugattis, plus a varied selection of such rarities as the Crouch Helix. I fell in love with a vast and dignified Edwardian Lancia, which could have garaged a Rapier in the rear passenger compartment. And all this on a day which started as cold and icy and degenerated into heavy rain and high winds. Don't let anyone try to convince you that vintage motoring is only fun in the fine weather.

Spare a thought for poor Roger Threlfall though. He offered Chris and I our return trip in his lovely and very covetable LG6, which had only just been put back on the road after a total engine rebuild and, with less than 200 miles covered on his new engine, he was taking things very carefully indeed. Just outside Gloucester our taste of sybaritic luxury came to a sad end, when something very nasty went wrong and the engine seized. As I write this, we don't know exactly **what** went wrong, but the signs are not encouraging. To add to his problems, the hood became detached whilst the car was on the back of the rescue vehicle and both the frame and the car bodywork were damaged, to say nothing of the effect of the driving rain on his seats and carpets. Our condolences Roger and we hope that your beautiful car is soon fit and well again.

K. P. P.





# Jottings from the Chair

## 1991: A YEAR OF CHANGE

Valerie May's retirement from her position as our secretary for some 30 years has prompted a thoughtful review of our needs and objectives as a club. A number of different strands to this main theme have arisen, because you can't appoint a new club secretary without a job description, and that means defining what members expect from their secretariat; and what the rest of the Committee need from the secretary on the one hand and can themselves contribute on the other.

When Valerie took over the job, the whole business was very informal, and keeping the Committee minutes, the club records and the instruction books was about the limit of a secretary's task. Answering the occasional member's query also came into it, but these were relatively few.

Nowadays, we operate in a world of bigger business, which contains at one extreme clubs like the Bentley, Rolls, Aston and Jaguar ones, with full time office premises, faxes, computers, word processors and the like, and which are open in working hours, and closed the rest of the time. At the other extreme are clubs on more traditional lines, like the Alvis, Riley or STD clubs. The dividing line seems to be between those for makes which are still in production today, and those for obsolete makes. As usual, we with Lagondas fall somewhere in between the two categories, but it looks as if our next secretary will have to face being part of a much more commercial world, with

more paperwork and less chance of runnings things on the kitchen table after tea.

The sheer volume of activity going on in the vintage world these days, and the expectation by members that they can reach the club anytime in working hours, means that our next secretary will be more in the role of a manager, and less of a secretary in the old sense, taking minutes and so forth. Fortunately we may have found an enthusiastic and suitable candidate.

At the same time as the secretarial debate, in December we were exposed to the failure of the Christmas film show in London (which attracted only four applicants), the contrasting success of the Yorkshire Christmas Dinner in Beverley, and some coincidental discussions with the Bentley club. These sorts of concerns are not new and the BDC have even gone to the length of carrying out an analysis of management tasks and objectives, to tackle the problem.

To cut a long story short, there seem to be two significant factors involved in running a successfully active club: the rotation of the club leadership, and the organisation of social activities locally in the regions.

The purpose of rotating the committee membership is to avoid the management becoming representative of only a particular generation of members: when we wanted to drum up support for the film show this year our immediate



reaction was to ring around members who had been coming for the last 10 or 20 years. This concentration on the older generation of members was a reflection of the fact that we had not been forced to bring in new members to the Committee, to replace those obliged to retire if we had had a rotation system. Similarly the Chair should be inescapably replaced every three years or so, in my opinion.

The other change shown up by the film show episode and the Bentley discussions, was that events in the national centre of London are now irrelevant to members' interests, and that events run by the area secretaries are much more popular. Both the Aston Club and the BDC are organised more deliberately in this way, and what I

feel we need to do is have the membership register separated out into local lists. The area secretary can then be in a much stronger position to maintain contact with his own local membership than in the past, where he has had to do this on an informal basis.

Clearly this sort of change cannot be made overnight, and the debate will need to involve as many of you as possible, but I am hoping that by the time of the next AGM we shall be in a position to seek your confirmation of a new secretary, a new system for refreshing your Committee, and a new emphasis on the importance of the area secretaries.

With best wishes for 1991 to you all.

J G O

#### NOTICE

If you have already taken, or get the opportunity to take a photograph of your Lagonda in the snow, please send a copy as soon as possible to Jeff Ody, for possible use on the 1991 Christmas card.

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# Bringing the Booze to Birmingham

It is some years since I last put pen to paper, but nothing of importance has happened to LJ8429. We took part in the '88 and '89 Norwich Union runs, covering the long legs in each event without anything of note occurring, but felt that two events of this nature were enough, especially after experiencing the crowd scenes at Donnington at the end of the '89 event.

1990 had nearly passed by before a decision to enter the Coventry Motorpanels Shakespeare Run was made. By the time I rang Martin Hone the lists were full. Two days before the event an M45 dropped out and we took the spare place. After a very pleasant day in Warwickshire, we had our picnic at the finish in the grounds of Coombe Abbey, just south of Coventry, then tootled off home. A day or so later, Martin telephoned me to say that we had won the Peugeot-Talbot premier award. This turned out to be a very handsome cut glass decanter and the local paper carried a photograph of Simon and myself, with the 16/80 in the background.

For some time, Simon had been talking about taking the car to France in the summer and, when his Round Table announced their main charity raising function for 1990 was to enter a team in the Birmingham Post Colmore Beaujolais run during the first week of November, it was decided that we would take part in the 16/80. Another Tabler, Andrew King, would also enter his Speed 20/25 Alvis special and we would run together.

The Birmingham Post Colmore held a meeting to lay out the rules and regulations and it seemed that, given a reasonable amount of luck, we should be able to take part. Most of the entrants were using very modern, high tech machinery and looked at our ancient machinery with bewilderment, but we duly paid over the entry fees and were accepted on our

proviso that we could have an early start time, both for the outward journey and the actual timed and measured return. As the cars were 57 and 54 years old respectively, this was agreed without too much difficulty.

Having committed our cars and ourselves, it was necessary to make some rapid preparations, commencing with the most important member of the team, that is, the car. For some time we had been running with a noisy back axle and had actually placed an order with Roger Firth for a new CWP set, just to keep on the shelf in case of need. The first thing to do was to open up the axle and see if we really needed the new one.

A horrible sight met our eyes. Not only were several teeth on wheel and pinion splintered and fractured and bearings worn loose, but the tapered end of the pinion, which is keyed into the prop shaft flange, had sheared its key and welded itself into the mating taper.

How far we had blithely travelled about with the drive in this state it was impossible to know, but clearly, it was ready to part at any moment. With only a week to go before our departure time, some serious telephone calls had to be made to the gentleman in Stalybridge to hasten the delivery of the new CWP set. Unfortunately, when it did arrive, it was an unmatched set and some more time was lost in locating and receiving the correct parts.

However, with three days to go, the new CWP was in place and we set off to do some running in. The damaged set had a ratio of 4.2:1, so it would appear that it too had been a replacement, as these cars with the Wilson pre-selector were set up on 4.666:1. It was a pleasant surprise to find that we had not lost too much top end speed. 3000 rpm on the old ratio gave an indicated road speed of 60 mph. With the new ratio we needed to pull 3300 to



give the same, give or take a bit of waving about of the speedo needle. The benefit was very noticeable around the houses and on sudden sharp gradients, so, all in all, it seemed a good move to have placed an early order with Roger.

The Lucas short trumpet horns, that had only ever given out a strangled squawk were removed and a superb Klaxon fitted in the place of the centre, dipped beam, lamp. In the place of the trumpet horns, two long range Hella driving lamps were fitted and these were wired up so as to give independent operation, or with dipped headlamps, or with all lamps. A 30% antifreeze mixture was made up and the coolant system changed for this. A straight 40 grade oil change, plus a new set of plugs, completed the preparations for the car.

The spares and tools situation was considered very carefully and it was decided that, in order to keep the all-up weight to a minimum, only simple roadside repairs would be contemplated and only those tools required to carry out such repairs would be carried. In the event, this boiled down to a complete set of spare bulbs, spare magneto, spare capacitor and plugs, a set of bottom hoses, an aerosol of tyre sealant in the event of multiple punctures, plus enough oil and water to make a change, or if required, for topping up. The significance of only taking a set of bottom hoses will be apparent later on in this narrative.

Further weight saving was to be achieved by removal of the hood and side screens. I never like having them up, they rattle and bang and restrict visibility. Besides, the Alvis did not have any anyway. Any terminal breakdowns would be catered for by an RAC get-you-home contract.

### **Monday 12th November**

The Dover/Calais crossing being mandatory for all runners, we planned our departure for 02.30 hours, in order to keep clear of as much traffic as possible and then to take the 08.15 ferry. Our route lay down the M6/M1, straight through the City and out onto the Dover road. This was accomplished without anything of

note occurring but, by the time we exited London, traffic was beginning to build up and there was a mist or fog that extended all the way to Dover. A light drizzle had set in and the lorry traffic increased as time moved on and we approached Dover. This reached such proportions that I was seriously concerned over our plans to use motorways as much as possible. At times it was terrifying, sitting in an open car with juggernauts passing and repassing within a few feet, at speeds so much greater than our own. The spray from unguarded wheels soaked both of us each time we were overtaken; how the Alvis crew were faring, sitting so much lower in the special, hardly bore thinking about. By the time we entered the ferry terminal, the rain had stopped and we had 25 minutes to wait before boarding, so we had accomplished the first leg of the journey without trouble or mishap.

The planned route down to Mâcon lay east of Paris in order to avoid the legendary traffic jams, with or without the doubtful benefit of the *Periferique*. We planned to drive at about 50/60 mph until we had had enough. Leaving Calais on the A26, we passed through St. Omer, where Haigh had his H.Q. in the '14-18 War, through Bethune and Arras, to the east of Bapaume, then to Bellincourt, west of Cambrai and through St. Quentin. To our right lay the Somme river and the weather would have been familiar to those many thousands of soldiers who lived and died in this sombre area of France, some 70-odd years ago.

The run down to Rheims, Chalon sur Marne and St. Dizier was without drama, though on entering the Marne valley the fog descended again. Down this valley in 1814 marched Blucher in the Allies' victorious advance on Paris. Ironically, a hundred years later, Joffre stopped Von Kluck at Chateau Thierry in the same valley, but it was not until 1918 that the Germans were eventually rolled back by Marshal Foch, in what became known as the second battle of the Marne.



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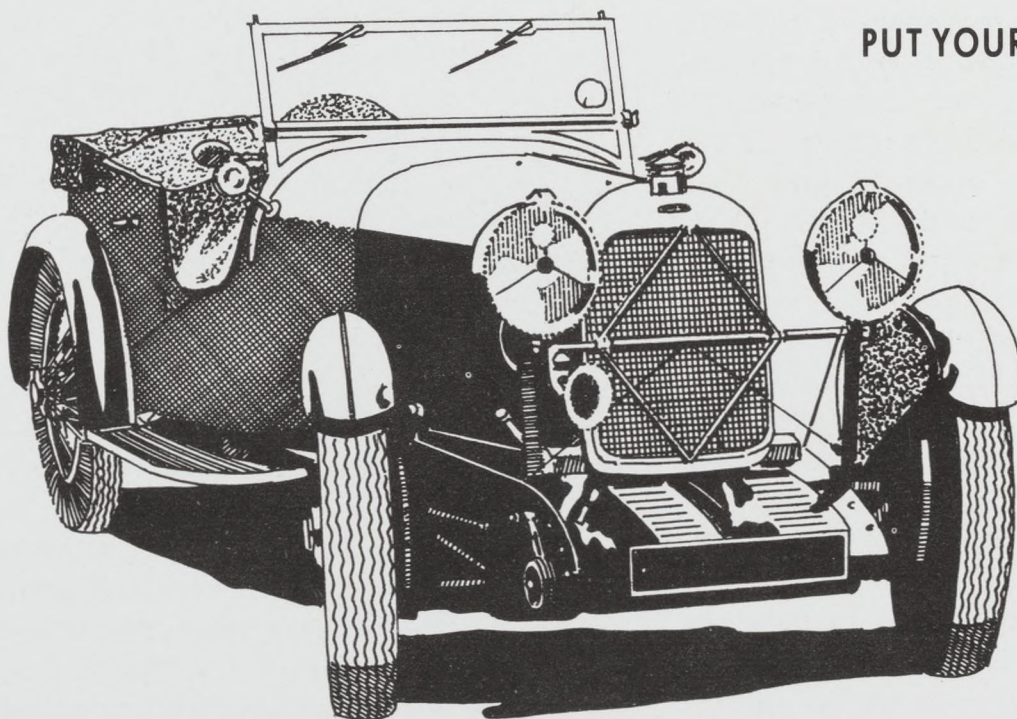
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Incidentally, this was the first time that troops of France, Britain, Italy and the United States had successfully participated in a unified operation.

Our fears of the motorway proved to be unfounded, certainly not deserted, but very quiet after the maelstrom of the M20. Trucks that passed did so safely and with a friendly toot, private cars passed swiftly and without apparent inconvenience from two old motors, thumping along at what must have seemed to them a snail's pace. And this on only two lanes.

As night fell, we entered the long valley running almost due south, that has the Marne canal on its left and the N67 running down the middle. The fog was, again, quite dense and the rain had returned, so it was time to think about a hotel for the night. Consultation with the Alvis team revealed that we required a five star hotel, with heated garage for the cars, all for the price of a Welsh hillside B&B. Entering Joinville, we treated the startled inhabitants to the sight of two ancient automobiles, driven by bearded, goggled and leather clad crews, circulating rapidly around the town and stopping outside each hotel; at which point a heated conversation would take place between the crews, who would then leap back into their cars and head off in another direction. No agreement could be reached, so we pressed on to Bologne. Just to the west of Bologne lies Colombey les deaux Eglises, home of one of France's greatest heroes, General De Gaul.

In a few miles lies the tiny hamlet of Bretheney; it is the sort of place that has the entry and exit sign on the same pole; but it also has the Hotel Bellevue, a Les Routiers Restaurant, on the left hand side. I decided that we had gone far enough, it was 20.00 hours and we had been driving since 02.30, with our only real rest being the ferry crossing twelve hours previously. The Bellevue was a charming family hotel, perched high up on the banks of the Marne canal and with the main road passing its front door. The proprietor welcomed us with warmth and charm, instructing the cook to clear space in the warm and cosy cellar that lay opposite the

hotel, cut into the side of the hill, so that the "voitures anciens" could also sleep in warmth and safety. The cost of the night's hospitality is forgotten, but it must have approached very closely our previously mentioned requirements. My own sleep was restless and disturbed to some degree, over-exertion at an advanced age, or the noise of the passing traffic just outside our little balcony, I don't know. Simon slept like a dead man and had to be tyre-levered out of bed the next morning. Andrew and Tony, the Alvis crew, had also slept the sleep of the exhausted. A breakfast of superb coffee and rolls saw us up and away for the final leg down to Mâcon.

### **Tuesday 13th November**

Just before Chaumont, Andrew signalled that they had a problem, investigation revealed a near-side mudguard strut had fractured. In order to take the weight off the remaining two, the mudguard was roped across the bonnet, this seemed to be a satisfactory arrangement, until something more permanent could be done. Leaving Chaumont, one takes the A26 again, south to Dijon, passing such evocative places as Chevry Chambertin, with its dark and fruity red wine, Nuits St. Georges, a heavier, deeper wine here, Beaune, Chalon sur Soane and, finally, into Mâcon.

Our destination was the Mâcon Nord Novotel and our arrival time was 12.45. The weather had improved, the rain had stopped and everyone was elated at having completed the second leg. We were half way, nothing could stop us now. Simon and Andrew went off in search of a friendly garage, Andrew to have his wing strut welded up and Simon to check out the position of the propshaft couplings at the rear axle. We had been irritated by a vibration that had not been apparent until the CWP change and I wondered if the propshaft markings had not been aligned when it was refitted. Some of the entrants, who had arrived in their more modern cars, went along for the experience. I took a shower and relaxed until they returned.

Dinner that night was a fairly exuberant affair, to say the least. Everyone had his or her tale to tell of



adventures on the way to Mâcon. Our was of relief that the cars had held together. The crew had youth on their side anyway and this required a certain amount of letting off steam. The wing strut had been welded up and even repainted and the 16/80's shaft markings all corresponded, so all was well. By the way, the French for welding is "splatfizz", with the accent on the "a".

During the day, other entrants had arrived, these included a DB5 sans bumpers, several exotica, Porsche etc., a two day old Rolls Royce, BMWs of the 750 type, loads of 4x4s and multiturbo look-alikes and a West Midlands Passenger Transport double decker bus, complete with nine drivers. The crew of a TR7 arrived in a hire car, having left the TR with its fan embedded in the radiator somewhere in Paris.

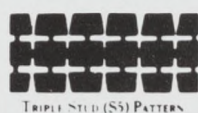
### Wednesday 14th November

For some, the day dawned very painfully. Apparently the bus had taken a full load into Mâcon and the revelries were terrible to behold. However, there was serious business for the Lagonda and Alvis team,

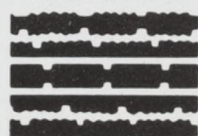
as it was due to leave on the measured and timed return leg at 10.30. The remainder of the field would be set off at intervals, commencing at 22.30 instead of the more usual 12 midnight. The local Police Authority had ordered this due to the very large number of runners. With our odometers checked by an official of the Birmingham Post, we were set off with a great deal of good natured banter from those who had further rounds of drinks and jollies to endure before they were due to leave twelve hours later.

Our route home was to be the same as the outward leg and, right on cue, the rain came down, even heavier than before. This continued in various degrees all the way northwards, until we reached Rheims, when it started to lighten up. At times there seemed to be more water on the inside of the car than outside. Our goggles became uncomfortable with the rain soaking into them, but it was even more uncomfortable without them. A good deal of time was spent taking them off and putting them back on again. Water was building up in little rivers across the

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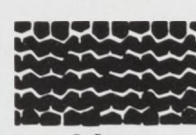
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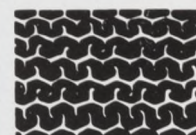
5 STUD PATTERN



R5 PATTERN

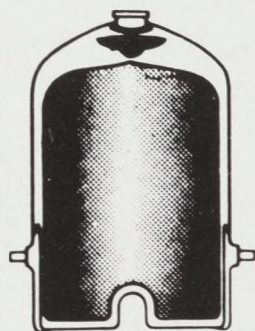


R6 PATTERN



CR65 PATTERN





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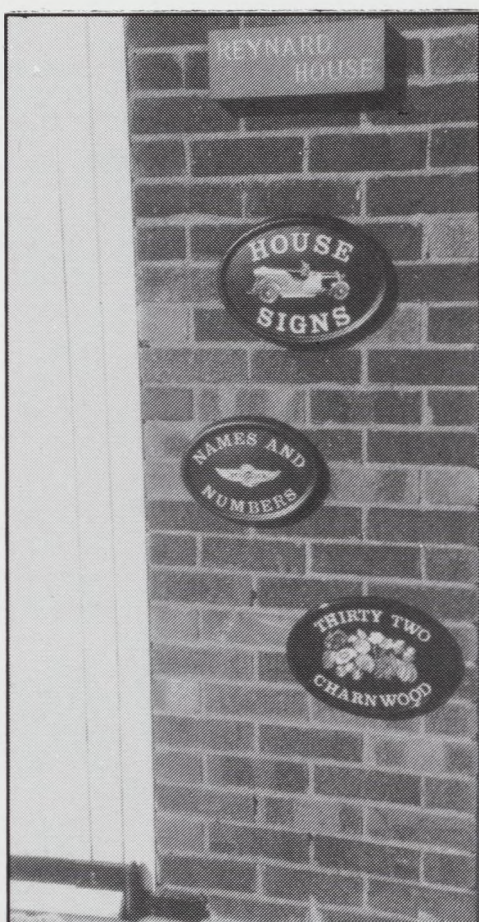
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instrument panel and I thought that we might start blowing fuses soon, as it trickled down into the wiring. Just south of Rheims we split a top hose. If you are still with us, dear reader, you will remember that we had a fine stock of bottom hoses. The engine room was a mess from spraying 30% antifreeze and the rad was nearly empty.

Repairs were effected by tying Sylglass tape around the hose and removing the pressure plug from the over-flow. Where do you get Sylglass tape from in the middle of the night, in pouring rain, on a French motorway? Answer, the front transverse spring of a 20/25 Alvis, whose owner had thoughtfully wrapped it up in it.

Not long after this, in fact just north of Rheims, the Alvis signalled a stop. The long-suffering nearside mudguard had come adrift altogether and, in doing so, had ripped off a lamp, causing a general fuse blowing session. However, it did not take long to break the mudguard off completely and stow it in the capacious tail of the Alvis. A quick search through my box of spares produced a correctly rated fuse and, with some insulation tape over the severed ends of wire, we were off again.

#### **Thursday 15th November**

Calais was reached at 23.45 and the 00.30 ferry brought us back to the UK. A fairly quick exit through the green channel saw us back on route towards London. the crossing had been choppy, but none of us noticed it, we were all sound asleep. Refreshed after our brief sleep, we set about the return to Birmingham with vigour. A stop for petrol in the Old Kent Road revealed that the Alvis offside mudguard stays were starting to break up, so a fairly sophisticated system of ropes and bungee cords was employed, to ensure that, if all broke up, the mudguard would at least stay with the car. We were too near home to stop now. The 16/80's radiator was topped up and away we went, into the City and out onto the Edgware Road, bound for the north and the M1. Although the time must have been around 3/4 o'clock in the morning, I was amazed at the number of shops, particularly

greengrocers that were open and trading in the Edgware Road.

At Scratchwood we stopped for coffee and the Alvis crew searched for the source of an irritating vibration that was becoming more apparent as time went on. However, nothing was obviously amiss and we left fairly quickly as there was a menacing crowd of youngsters hanging around the entrance. The breakfast on offer had apparently been cooked two days previously and was uneatable. Hey Ho, we were back in Merrie England.

By now we were beginning to feel the increase in heavy lorry traffic. As we progressed northwards toward Birmingham, this increased to such an extent that, once again, I was in fear of our lives. One millisecond of inattention, one grabbing rear brake on an artic, would have meant certain death for the four of us in our open cars. Lorries hurtled past us, never more than a length apart, as if they were players in some homicidal game of catch me if you can. We see reports of multiple motorway smashes so often that we are in danger of taking them for granted. How lorry drivers can be brought to their senses is a difficult question for me to answer, but a few hours in an open motor car, travelling at 50/60 mph in the near side lane during the early hours of the morning might help to change their attitude; or is this attitude just another manifestation of the awful aggression that is displayed so often in this country nowadays?

Nevertheless, we survived and, at last, turned off the raceway into the much maligned Spaghetti junction, which was undergoing a lengthy closure in parts, due to a tanker driver managing to impale his vehicle on one of the supporting pillars. We took the City Centre exit, drove down Great Charles Street, around the front of the Town Hall, into Eroad Street, past the Hall of Memory, Baskerville House, the new Convention Centre, down the Five Ways underpass, up into the Hagley Road and, finally, a right hand turn against the flow of the early morning traffic into the grounds of the Strathallen Hotel. We were home, but the drama was still not played



out. The finishing line at the Strathallen had been placed just inside the entrance. As we stopped to be greeted on the line, this meant that the Alvis behind us still had her backside sticking out into the roadway. the lights changed, the traffic sprinted, Andrew roared, we shot off the line into a sideways skid and the Alvis filled the place we had been occupying seconds before. At last it was really over. It was 07.45 on Thursday 15th November and our mileage from Mâcon read 648 miles in the Lagonda and 700 in the Alvis. At this point we were not very bothered.

### **Post Mortem**

Examination of both cars revealed how well they had stood up to fourteen hundred miles of almost continuous driving in mainly atrocious conditions. The mystery vibration in the Alvis turned out to be failing fabric coupling between engine and gearbox drive shaft. There were only three bolts left in it. Some redesign work was going to be needed on the front mudguard support system. Perhaps Lagonda could teach them a thing or two here. As for the 16/80, we had lost part of the advance and retard control rod system. A section was missing altogether. Fortunately, the magneto in use has its a/r spring loaded to advance. The spare works the other way and it would have been a problem to be solved. The leaking top hose had caused a devil of a mess under the bonnet, but this is only a matter of elbow grease and metal polish. An indication of the severity of the rain can be gauged from the fact that all the yellow varnish on the head and driving lamps had been washed off. Otherwise, apart from being travel stained, the 16/80 was none the worse for her first trip to France.

Sponsorship was disappointing. We raised £702, mainly from Birmingham business friends. The vast majority of companies approached ignored our appeal. Some replied saying their budget had been spent. A reply from Aston Martin said the budget had been spent and, in any case, the writer disapproved of what we were doing. The fashion today is to drink Beaujolais as young as possible, the vin de l'annee being rushed to the eager public

as quickly as possible. The idea may be romantic, but wine such as this is never the best the country can produce. No wines of real quality were ever made overnight. It takes time in the bottle as well as in the barrel to achieve the miracle. It was unkind of the Aston man to labour the point. Herb Schofield gave very generously; thank you Herb. Your money has gone to children who need it, along with the rest of the money raised.

Would we do it again? I don't think so. Both the car and myself are rapidly approaching the autumn of our lives. Perhaps some gentler jolly in the summertime around the villages of France would treat our old bones more kindly. It was good fun driving the old car around the roads of France, with my son being so good-natured about the history lessons that he could not get away from. Somehow the traffic seemed gentler, the manners milder, the country larger. Perhaps I should not make judgements from one such concentrated period of motoring; yes, that's what we did; we motored in France. Here, we seem to just drive, with all the violence that the word implies.

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# Billie Winckley: Genius of Gear Cutting

How fortunate today are all the people who own and drive cars. Cars which steer well over rough roads and pot-holes, cars which have clutches gentle to a lady's foot (do you remember the Austin clutch?) and gearboxes which are either automatic, or sweet to change gear.

I can recall driving an Albion five ton truck and, after second gear, if you didn't time the gear shift accurately, the gear lever would crash back and nearly dislocate the wrist. And I remember an old ex WW1 Crossley ambulance, which didn't engage gear at all, unless the engine and gearbox were exactly in sympathy.

During the 1930's, Major Wilson designed the epicyclic constant speed gearbox and Daimler the fluid flywheel. At least, that's what *they* called it. In London the ENV company at Acton married the two together and the self changing gearbox was born.

In France in 1934, Citroën designed and produced the first successful front wheel drive car and placed the gearbox right out in front, just behind the radiator, so that the gearshift lever was mounted on the instrument panel and the bronze gate was actually bolted behind the panel. The gearshift lever was connected to the gearbox by yard long 15mm rods. It worked quite well and I owned three Citroëns.

During the early thirties, the synchromesh gearbox was born. I can't remember exactly who first introduced it, but the Ford Dagenham Y type, the Ford Eight, had the synchromesh gearbox. This worked, by a small bronze cone clutch, which accelerated the mating gear dog when the driver shifted gear and the gear into which the change was made was permanently running in mesh.

The principal reason why early driving was difficult and hard for women was the tough job of learning to 'time the gearchange', so that the gears slid easily

into the next speed reduction, without any noisy crashing of the gearing. Many cars had a short upright gear change lever by the side of the driver, which directly swivelled a shaft running in an aluminium casting onto the top of the gearbox, inside the box a double steel finger then swivelled and slid the gear into position for the driver to try and persuade the teeth rotating to mesh with the opposite gear wheel.

Making good gearchanges was something of an art. When a gear is driving, the gear tooth faces are actually sliding and rolling and thrusting each other aside, to produce the rotation and, when 200 horsepower is transmitted via the gearbox, then at some time, the entire horsepower output of the engine is being thrust through maybe five to six gear teeth. So, if the driver is accelerating hard, then the gears will transmit huge torque. Gear wheels not running in synchronism will collide before teeth engage. Making really good gears with synchronous teeth is fraught with troubles and at Lagonda we made all our own gearboxes.

Billy Winckley was the foreman of the milling section, where we made the gear teeth profiles. Bill was then around 40 years old and had one good eye and one glass eye.

To make a good gear wheel in those days, the finished gear had to be depth hardened on the tooth faces, but hardened and tempered overall. A period of carbon penetration fusion had to be percolated into the tooth faces of the gear wheel, but the carbon was not allowed to enter the rest of the body of the gear flanges. At Langonda we arranged this by machining the main body of the gear wheel oversize of finished size by about a tenth of an inch, except the bearing bore, but machined the tooth flange to the finished size. Then the gear blank was heavily copper plated. After copper plating the gear teeth were



cut, then the gear blanks were loaded into a cast iron box in a heavy bed of a special charcoal and heated for some hours at around 700 degrees centigrade. The carbon entered the newly cut tooth faces and 'carburised' the steel, but the carbon didn't penetrate where the copper overlay covered the steel.

Cutting the gear teeth really was something of a skilled art. The Swiss hadn't yet invented the MAAG rolling gear tooth grinder, Germany hadn't produced the HEY edge tooth rounder, Pfauter underhobber was a dream, and Leaselend didn't exist to give us the Lees Bradner milling hobber.,

Gear teeth were cut on milling machines. Each tooth on a gearwheel was cut a tooth at a time and each tooth required at least six positions of cutting before the final profile was approached. So a gear with sixty teeth was positioned over 300 times for a cut to be made and each reposition had to be precisely the same as the previous cutting position. This sounds dramatically impossible, but this is what happened.

The teeth were all cut on a Browne and Sharpe 2g UNIVERSAL milling machine. We had three of these machines, several double-ended Milwaukee heavy machines and two Archdale verticals, three Dennisons made by Alfred Herbert (closed in liquidation several years ago).

Now, in order to cut the tooth slots, the gear wheel must be accurately fixed on a working shaft, which allows the machinist to rotate the wheel assembly accurately to a thou and is strong enough to take the thrust of the cut. This must then be rotated precisely, tooth by tooth. First the gear blank is precisely centred under the cutter. The working shaft is fitted to a dividing head, which is geared to the machine. The dividing head is a circular divider, which will divide any circle into any number of precise divisions.

So, there is the blank, copper plated, bolted onto the working shaft fitted to the dividing head and exactly under the cutter shaft of the Browne and Sharpe 2G. Next, the choice of tooth cutter. Browne and Sharpe make their own special formed

cutters for each type of gear tooth. The correct choice of form on the cutter is the decision which finally dictates the shape of the tooth.

So here we go to make a new gear wheel. First, before cutting anything at all, the setting of the circular divisions is checked by slowly and methodically going right round the circumference of the gear and making sure we are back exactly where we started, to a thou. Once that is confirmed, the depth of the tooth is calculated and the measuring vernier set to the depth.

A simple plain cutter is then clamped to the machine cutting shaft and the sixty separate positions of the teeth are cut to depth in the middle of each tooth with the plain depth cutter. This plain cutter is then taken off and replaced with the cutter which cuts the arcoid form of the gear tooth. The dividing is reset, so that the cutter is offset precisely by the distance of half the width of the tooth. Again, sixty small cuts are made on one side. Then the dividing is reset to the opposite side of the gear teeth and, once again, sixty small cuts are made to the other side of the teeth. The cutter is then taken off the cutter arbor and the finish profile cutter is mounted and the same procedure followed, the sixty divisions are precisely made, to cut the final curve of the sides of each tooth.

In the nature of these things, the cutters leave burred edges at each side of the tooth flange and these were removed by clever girls, who used small air operated grinders and very small grinding wheels, which carefully removed the ragged edges and left a perfectly smooth edge for the entry and exit of each tooth edge.

The teeth were then ready for the carburising furnaces, so the gear was sent to the hardening shop. After carburising, the gears were sent back to Charley Robinson (foreman of the centre lathes section) and the final machining of the sides and bore done to a tolerance of plus or minus a thou. Then the gears were hardened. Hopefully the hardening wouldn't cause distortion (it sometimes did) and the gear could be checked for



good rolling.

In our final inspection department, Len Phillips had a simple machine called a Parkson Gear Rolling Tester, every type of gear was represented by a special 'master gear'. The master was fitted horizontally on the Parkson gear tester, the new gears were fitted to a shaft on a sliding carriage and the gears meshed and rolled by hand. At the end of the tester a dial gauge showed the error, if any as variations, in thous, from zero.

You lucky people. Today, none of that elaborate procedure is necessary. The Pfauter gear hobber rolls and rotates and cuts the gear tooth in one operation. Modern steels do not require the carburising process at all and the Swiss MAAG gear tooth grinder grinds and rolls the gear teeth all at the same time . . . so that the tooth profile is exactly as if the gears were rolling in a gear box - and the Hey gear tooth finisher rounds off each edge. Even further advances in machining now allow the teeth to be cut after the gear wheel has been hardened, by electrophoresis cutting. So all the risk of distortion is gone.

The last gear wheel I cut for Bill Winckley was a helical spur wheel made

from a blank of black fibre and was a timing gear wheel, maybe for an LB6 camshaft valve timing gear.

In 1939, Lagonda began to make all the gearboxes for the Merlin engines which were fitted in Lancasters. These gearboxes were the power take-offs for the electric generator, the hydraulic systems and the auxiliary drives.

Bill Winckley converted the milling machines to cutting the flap slots for the wing flaps in the wings of the Westland Lysander, the slots in the blades of the cooling rings for Bristol Beaufighters and Blenheims and for cutting the chain teeth of the aluminium sprockets; the slots of the jackscrews which moved the flaps in and out. I dare say there were many others I don't remember now.

The big double ended Milwaukeees were used for cutting the first flat faces on the cylinder heads and end faces of the twin cylinder 8 hp Petter engines used in generating sets and air compressors. The huge volume of milling work which Bill managed can be seen by the fact that each Merlin gearbox had seven gear wheels, three bevels and a nine inch offset spur gear wheel.

Towards the end of the war we began

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to try out the development of diesel engines. As most people know today, in diesels the fuel is injected at high pressure through spray nozzles. The pumps control the fuel injection by a volume control. This is a helical slot in the end of the pump cylinder shaft and the leading edge of the slot is the critical control. If that is a few thousandths of a millimetre out, then your engine will hunt and there just ain't nowt you can do.

Then we began to work on the LB6, which was sold to David Brown and was called the Aston Martin. The first four cars were fitted with a semi automatic gearbox by Cotal. This was a constant mesh epicyclic gear box and the drive was controlled by fixed clutches, these were circular electric magnets switched on by the driver from a miniature gate on the steering column.

Lagonda ceased volume production of gear cutting and sent the gear blanks out to either David Brown, or to Fitzpatrick, on the North Circular Road in London. I made many visits to Fitzpatrick's to check production before the boxes of gears were shipped back to us.

The postwar LB6 production line was very interesting. Lagonda was the first car producer to use transfer machines for

general volume production online. And I'll tell you about that and about Freddie Hawkins, Bill Ellison and Charlie Denyer - who could grind a diameter to plus or minus a thou of a mill and take off four thou of a mill if you asked him. I know he did, I asked him. Four thous of a millimetre is neafly 0.0016 thousandths of an inch, and he could grind a 22mm shaft down by that, which means a cutting reduction of half that. The machine was a Landis plain shaft grinding machine in an air conditioned room. That was the standard of accuracy.

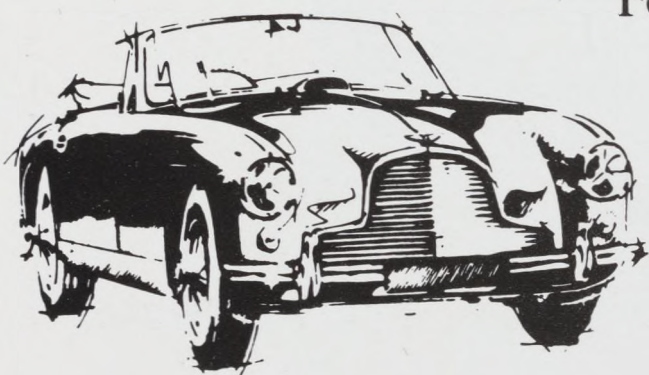
The general work standard was set by Langonda themselves. Ordinary reamed holes were normally made to working tolerances of plus or minus half a thou. George Betts in the tool stores had rows of standard plug gauges for all standard holes, with the reamers ready ground. The surface finish of the holes was worked to Taylor Hobson surface finish testers, where the undulations of the steel surface were measured in millionths of an inch and the stylus was magnetically amplified. I think we were the only car maker to do that too. That's how good we were . . .

All that superb skill, knowhow and development is all gone now too.

**John D. Berridge**

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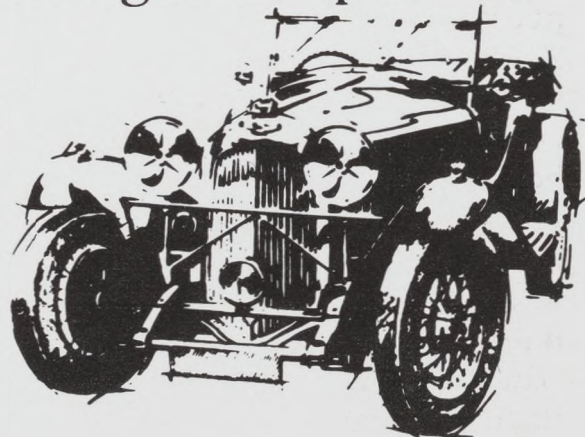


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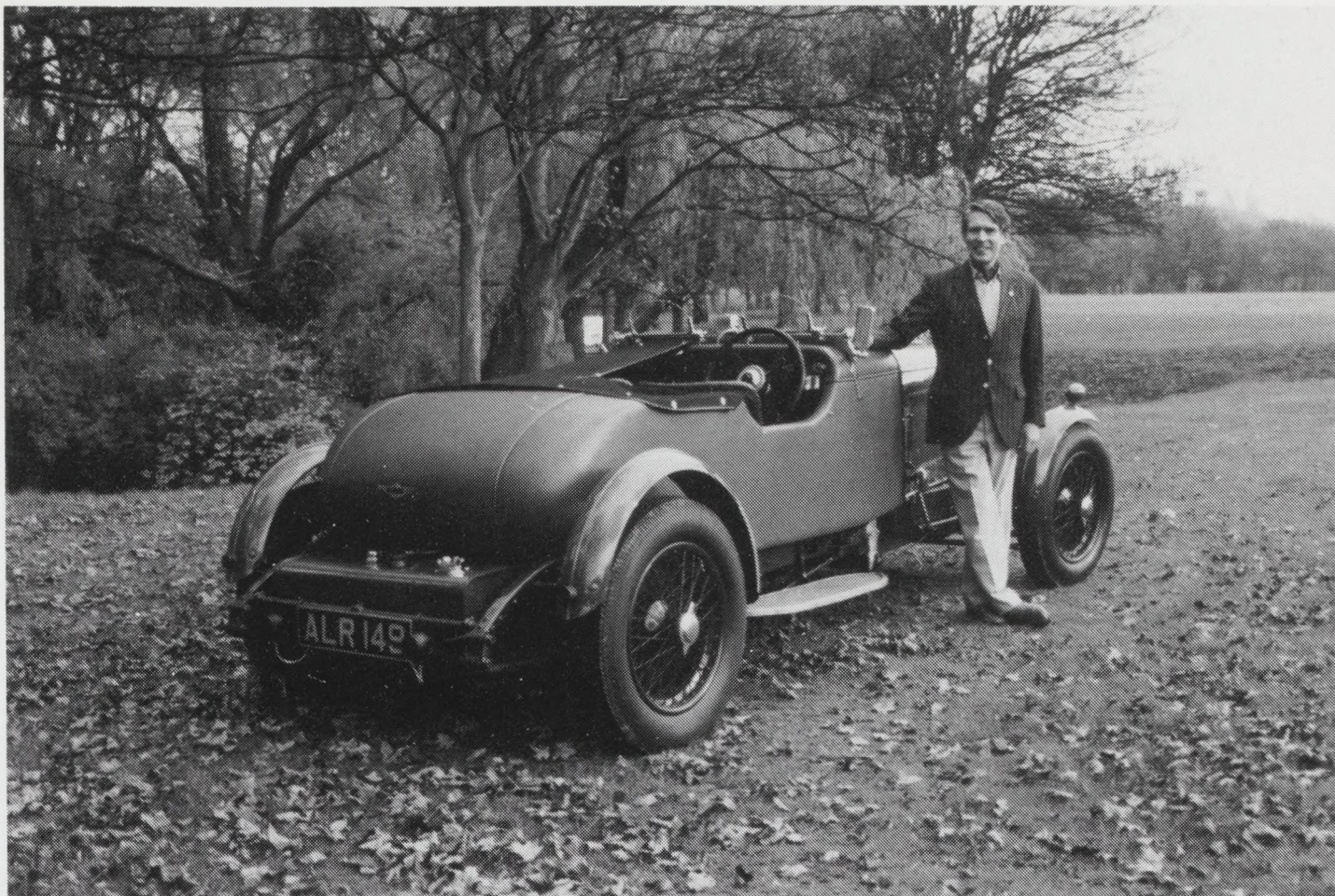
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## The Restoration of ALR 149

I am writing this in the hope it may prove of help to other members considering a similar project and because I believe that it may be of general interest.

First, a word about my background:

**1** Batchelor – important when working all hours that God sends and for setting out windscreen frames etc. strategically all over the lounge carpet for prolonged periods.

**2** Manufacturer of miniature magnetos for model aircraft engines and HT coils for competition cars. NB. aeromodelling is a hobby that was also shared by the late Col C E Bowden, an ex member, who also owned an M45 and a Scott Squirrel.

**3** Leader of “Jim Shelley’s Frisco Jazz Band” – also relevant as the 8 piece band continues the sound of Lu Watters Frisco Band. Lu died last year and he also owned an M45 Lagonda in San Francisco.

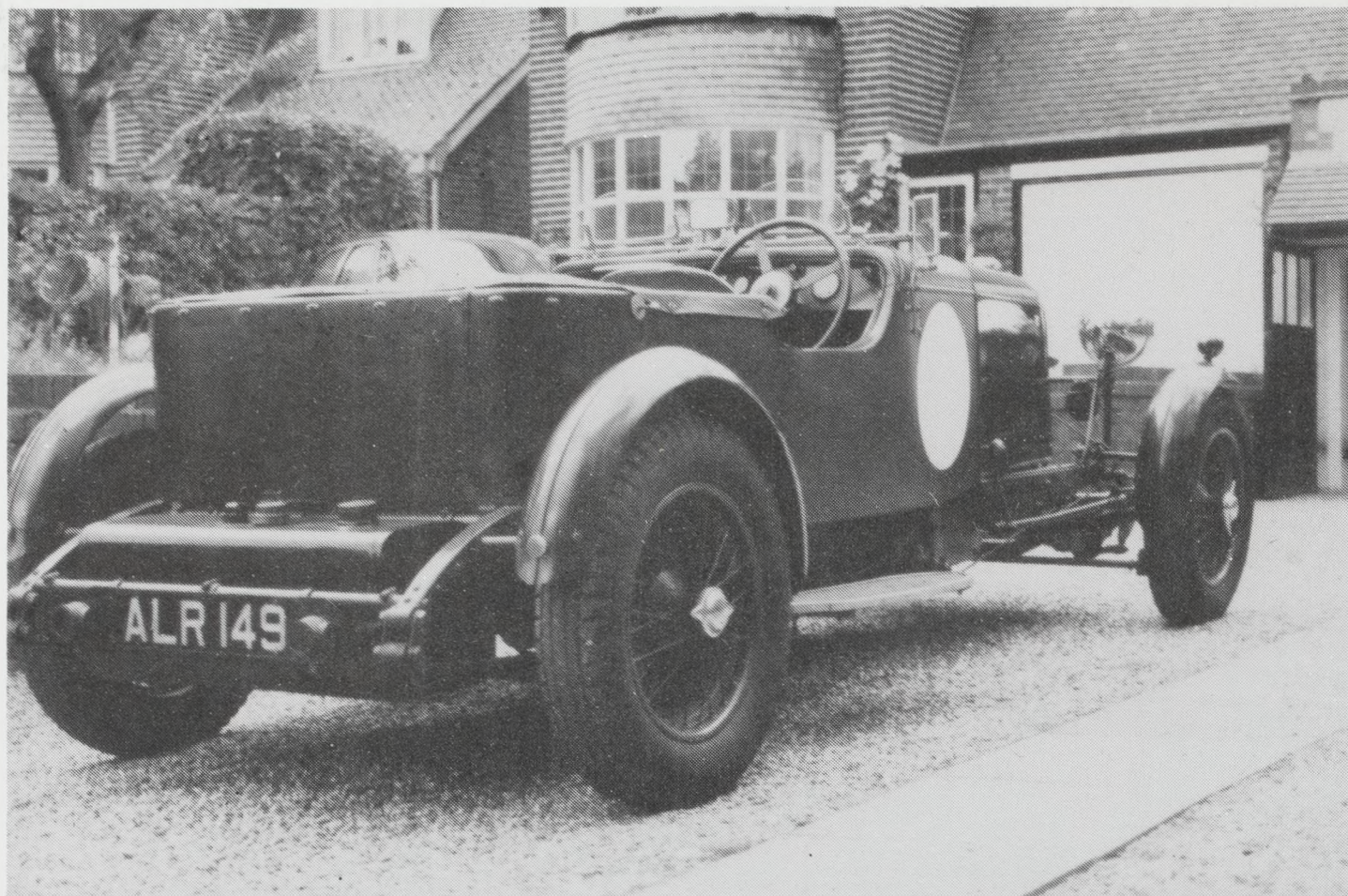
Now the car: I have owned it for 19 years, having previously owned a 1930 Alvis 12/50 Beetleback and a red label Bentley 1924 3 litre Park Ward tourer. I mention this, as both cars influenced my body design, not only the bugback, but also the windscreen design.

The body on my M45 was not original, in fact it was made from packing cases, which made the car very light and fast, but rather crude in appearance. So I felt free to redesign the body, but I wanted to keep it stark, ie fold flat windscreen of minimal area, with aero screens, one small door and no hood – and the prettiest period styled bugback I could devise.

### **Special Concession for Wives and Girlfriends**

In case of a torrential downpour, a Lagonda Club umbrella can be fitted, complete with ‘screw in’ aluminium tube,





*The car before restoration.*

between the front seats, use the  $\frac{3}{8}$ " b.s.f. hole for the centre floor bolt, with two elastic bands to the windscreen. This works fine up to 50 mph, cuts out the problem of stowing a damp hood and retains the smooth contour of the car's rear end.

I used aeromodelling techniques when building the body from plywood and ash, steaming, screwing and gluing the  $\frac{1}{8}$ " ply planks round the rear contour. (I burned out two electric kettles doing this

though.) The body was covered in green vinyl by Ron Passam, of Burton Under Needwood, Staffs, who also made a lovely job of the Connelly hide seats and the carpets.

A new, fold-flat, screen was made from scratch. The base was sawn out from  $\frac{1}{2}$ " brass sheet to conform to the body shape. A very useful item for this is a Rabone spirit level angle finder, which ensures that everything is symmetrical and correct. I angled the assembly 9 degrees inwards

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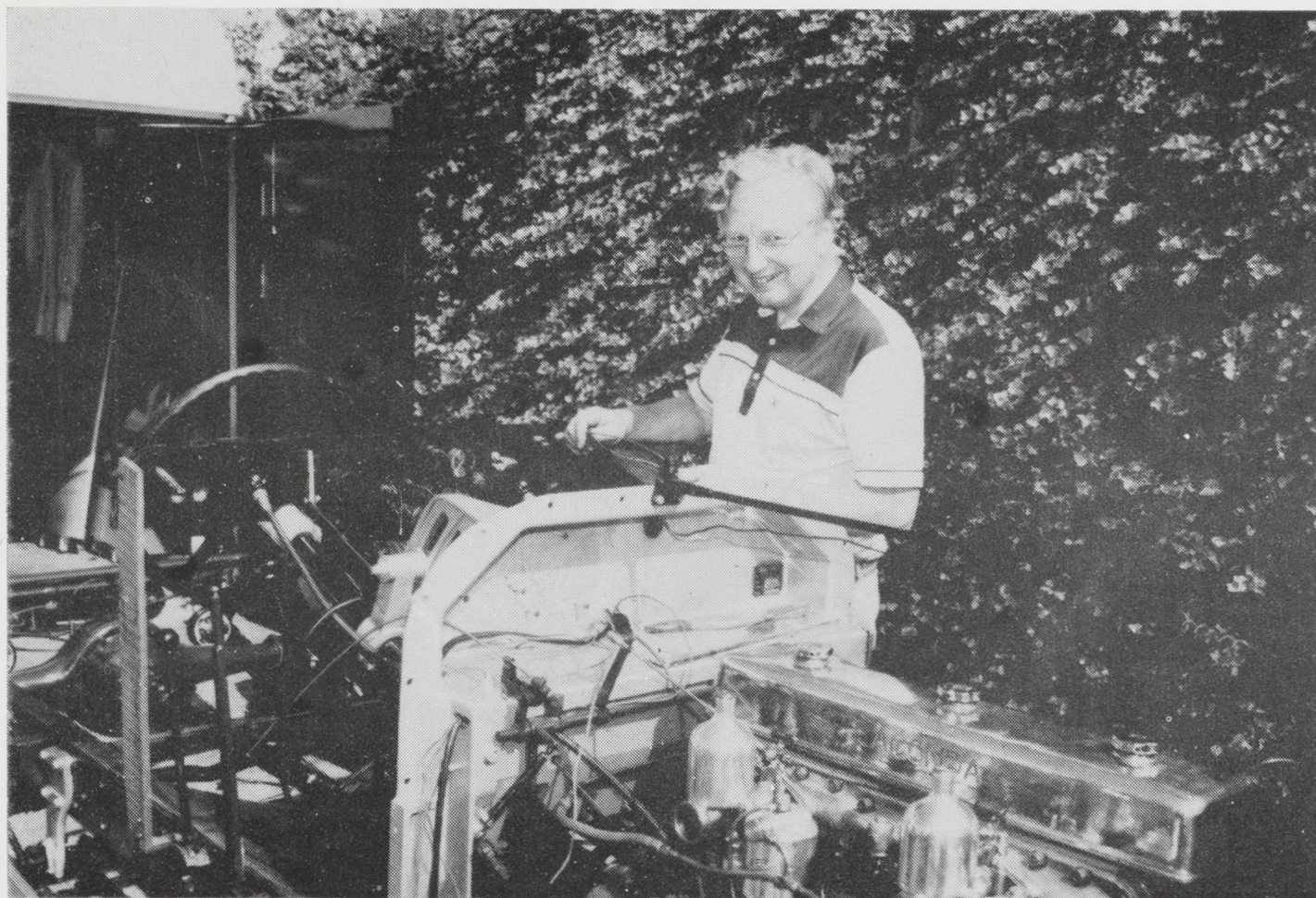
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and 15 backwards. Brass windscreen frames were obtained from Paul Beck and the windscreen itself was built up on the car. I fitted lugs to take aero screens and the screen itself lifts off simply by undoing 3 bolts on each side of the body.

New seat frames were obtained from Brian Ricketts in Southampton and I made  $\frac{3}{4}$ " ply bases, but I found it best to use 2 x  $\frac{1}{16}$ " ply laminations, pop riveted round the seat backs to get a nice shape.

#### **Now for Some Mechanical Matters**

the engine was rebuilt by Allards of Newcastle Under Lyme. I fitted a  $3\frac{1}{2}$  : 1 axle and the car proved to be competitive in VSCC events at Oulton Park, Silverstone and Curborough. At Silverstone, the original fan disintegrated, putting little lumps in the bonnet. A new fan was eventually obtained from Ivan Forshaw.

The water pump constantly dripped, so was treated to a stainless steel shaft by Brian Morgan and the greaser was dispensed with. The magneto was rebuilt by Boulton Magnetos of Wolverhampton and I devised a double bellcrank linkage around the back of the block. This links the distributor and magneto and, as "Silent Jim", the electrical wizard who did all my electrics, fitted separate switches for the magneto and the coil, I can check the timing against engine revs.

The SU carbs and petrol pump were

rebuilt and I decided to get rid of the side exhaust, with which I had once blasted a hole in a lady's nylons, so fitted a 16 swg stainless system, running under the axle. I fitted mild steel blocks to the chassis to take axle check straps, these are truck door restraint straps, are  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " long moulded rubber, come from Albert Jagger of Walsall and are absolutely perfect for the job.

For paint I used Finnegan's Smoothrite on the chassis and Hammerite on the bulkhead, rear brakes, drums etc. Other work was undertaken as follows:

Stainless Steel exhaust, by J & B Welding, Bridgetown, Cannock. Tel. 0543 462412.

Chromium plating, by Profin, Bridgetown, Cannock. Tel. 0543 462590.

Petrol tank rebuild by Serck Marston, Willenhall. Tel. 0902 737371.

Paintwork by Thompson Motor Bodies, Walsall. Tel. 0922 612837.

Finally, I give sincere thanks to: Jim Martin, John Rock, Brian Morgan, Alan Brown, John Ryder, Gordon Williams, Roy Beebee, Tony Bishop, Ron Passam, Ron Harris, Brian Ricketts and all the other members and friends who made the "Bugback" possible.

**Jim Shelley**

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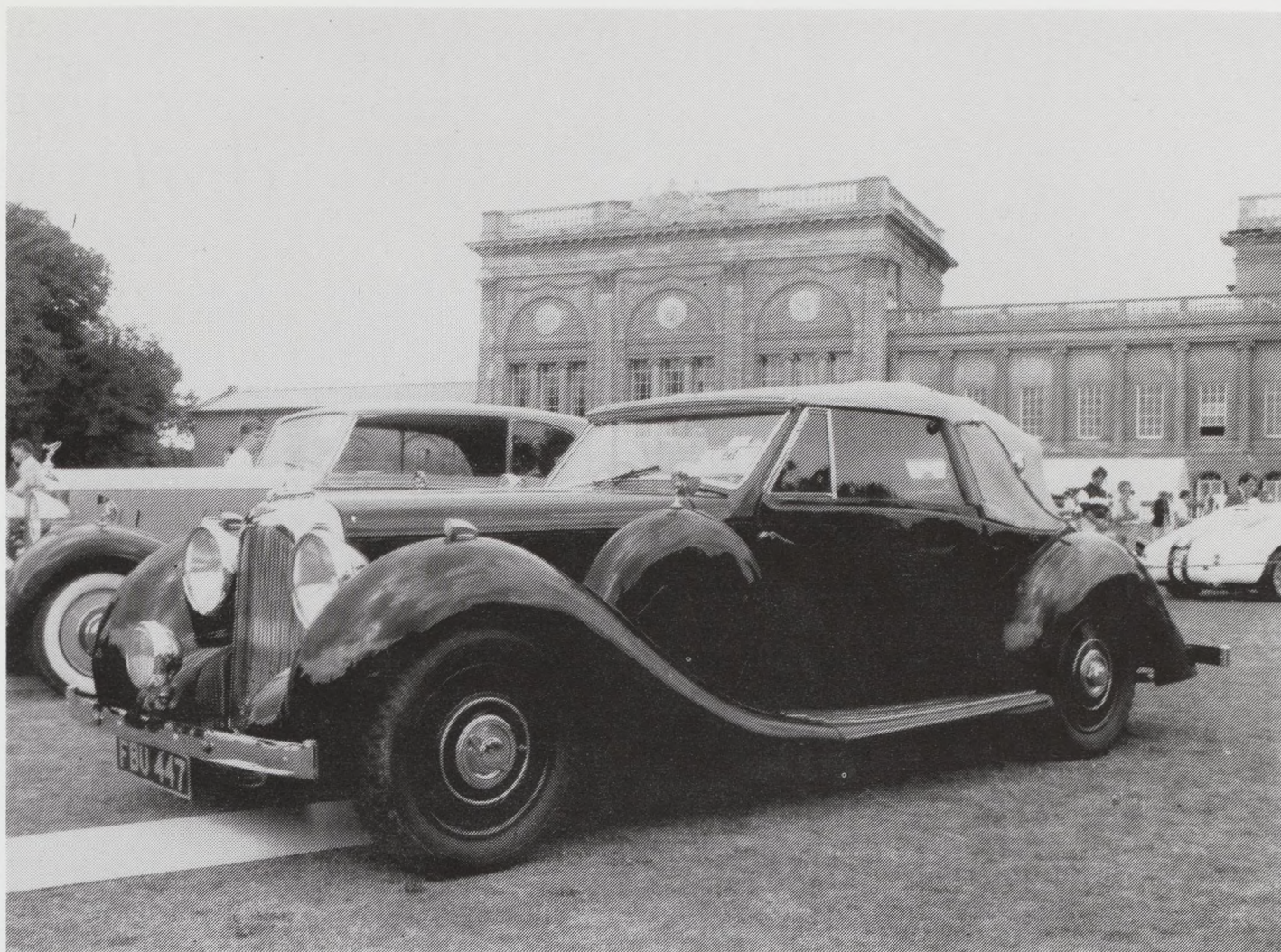
Contact: Bill Evans (E.14 2-litre L.C. owner)

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*P. Lapin's LGG, Winner of the Veuve Clicquot Trophy.*

# Lagondas feature at Louis Vuitton Concours d'Elegance

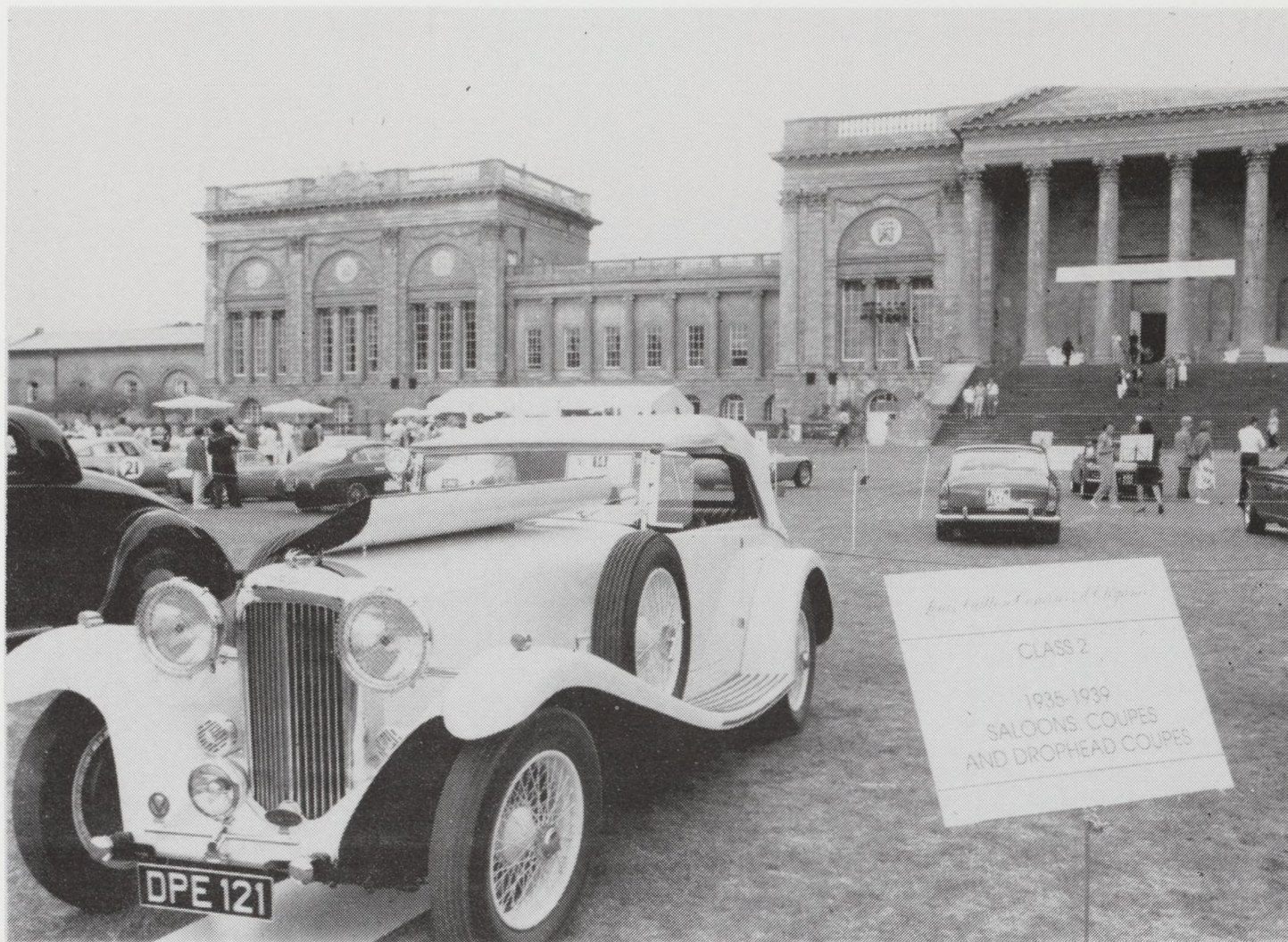
The first Louis Vuitton Concours d'Elegance was held at Stowe School in conjunction with the Christie's Historic Festival at Silverstone on 28 July. This invitational event looks set to rival Pebble Beach as the worlds' premier Concours de'Elegance. The back drop of the palatial 18th Century Mansion set in fabulous National Trust grounds designed by Bridgeman, Vandbrugh and 'Capability' Brown provided the ideal setting for an event featuring some of the UK's most exotic motor cars, including many Lagondas.

Lagondas represented were:

- 1933 3 Litre Selector Special
- 1935 LG 45 Tourer
- 1939 LG 6
- 1939 C12 DHC

The team of celebrity and technical judges had a very difficult task to pick the winners in 7 classes, the overall 'Best of Show' and the Givenchy Trophy, a special award of the judges, who included Victor Gauntlett, John Surtees, Karl Ludvigsen, Lord Brocket, John Heffernan, Hon. Gerald Lascelles, Stuart Turner and Chris





*Norman Webster's beautiful LG45 at Stowe.*

Nixon among the list of motoring, publishing and design personalities.

Winner in the very competitive class for Saloons, Coupes and Drophead Coupes 1935-1939 (The Veuve Clicquot Trophy) was Mr. P. Lapin with his delightful 1939 LG 6.

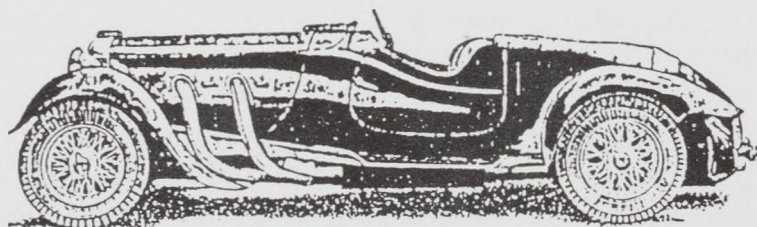
The Louis Vuitton Grand Prix de Stowe (Best of Show) was won by Charles Howard with his magnificent 1929 Mercedes Benz 36/220 'S' type with

coachwork by Castagna.

Planned as an annual event, the organisers of the Louis Vuitton Concours d'Elegance will welcome distinctive Lagondas and visitors to Stowe again in July 1991.

For further details please contact:

**Jon Gross, Co-ordinator,  
Louis Vuitton, Concours d'Elegance,  
One Craven Hill, London W2 3EN.  
Tel. 071 723 4388**





## PUB MEETS

**Midlands:** Third Thursday in each month at the "Green Dragon: Willington (just off the A38 between Derby and Birmingham).

**Northern:** Lancs/Yorks V.S.C.C. Pub Meeting: the Lagonda Club are invited to this meeting, which is held at the "Floating Light", Standedge. (A62) on the third Thursday of each month. Further details can be obtained from Roger Firth, 061 303 9127.

**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 "Triton", Brantingham, near the A63(T), 10 miles west of Hull.

**Dorset:** First Thursday each month at the "Frampton Arms", adjacent to Moreton Railway Station on B3390, Bere Regis. Map reference 780 891.

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## The Fourth Team Car

There seems to be some uncertainty about the fate of the four 1936 Lagonda/Fox and Nicholl team cars, two two-seaters and two four-seaters (in theory).

At Staines in mid 1937 we still had EPE 97 and one other. Two had been sold and, I believe, are still running. I get confused at Bentley and AMOC meetings now, with all the replicas (I almost said pseudos). But to return to my tale: in the late summer of 1937, EPE 97 was in the Service Depot, I think for a check-over before lending it to the technical press.

I decided to take it a bit further than the standard test route of Runnymede, Priest Hill, Englefield Green, Tate Hill, and home by the Egham by-pass, so I took it home to Ewell that evening. Very enjoyable and all the enighbours came along to stroke it.

It was enough to make my eight year old son decide that he needed a proper car to back up my 1930 low chassis 2 Litre (GF 3575).

At about that time, the works decided to dismantle the fourth car and it was rebuilt and sold as a pale grey LG6 tourer. The bonnet and body shell were thrown on a small scrap heap, just outside the Kit Stores. It must have been there for some time before my son's demands became more pressing. Discreet enquiries led to being told that I could have the bits. It was going to be a  $\frac{1}{2}$  size LG6, but as I found an old Auster folding rear windscreen, the links would make a nice pair of wishbones (a la V12), so it finished up as a bit of a mixture.

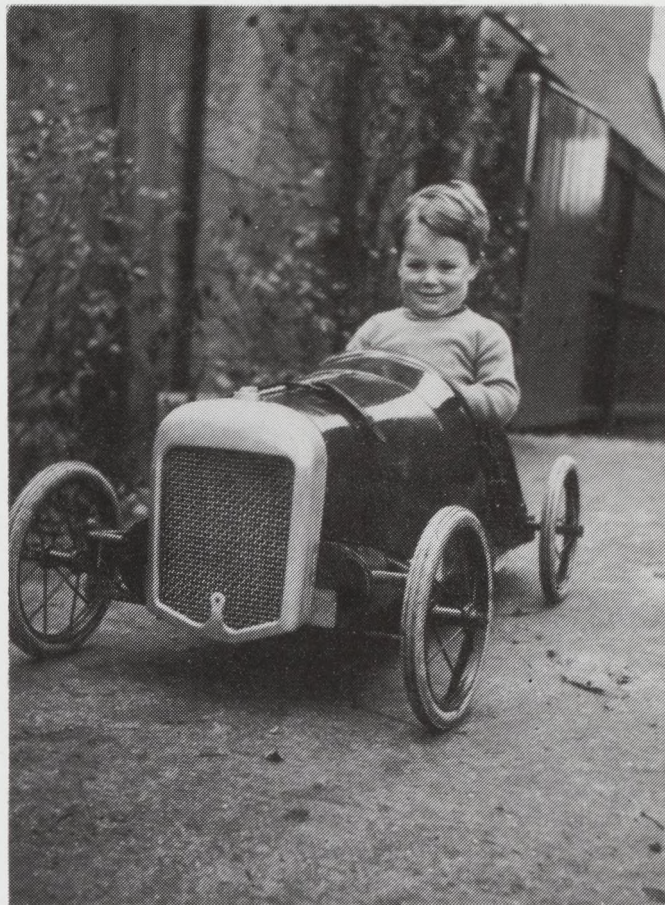
From under the counter in the panel shop, a 9 inch tall V12 radiator appeared.



The bonnet was a section of the original, chopped down. Rev counter and speedo were defunct oil gauges, painted up and the outside exhaust was properly lagged with asbestos cord to avoid burning his arm.

In the end, the new owner was very pleased and took considerable pride in owning a *real* racer. When he grew out of it, it was passed on to other cousins in turn and, when I tried to find it years later, nobody knew where it had ended up. A pity.

**Derek Rutherford**



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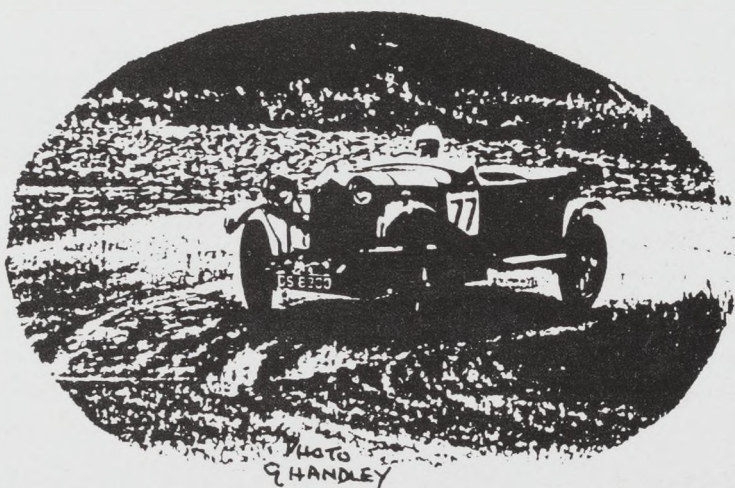
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*Weston Super-Mare Sprint. Weld before practice in his Crossley.*

# Competition Round-Up No. 5



This report covers the few "close-season" events from 3 September to 1 December 1990, giving brief details of Club members efforts during the period.

## **3 September 1990 VSCC Madresfield Concours and Driving Tests**

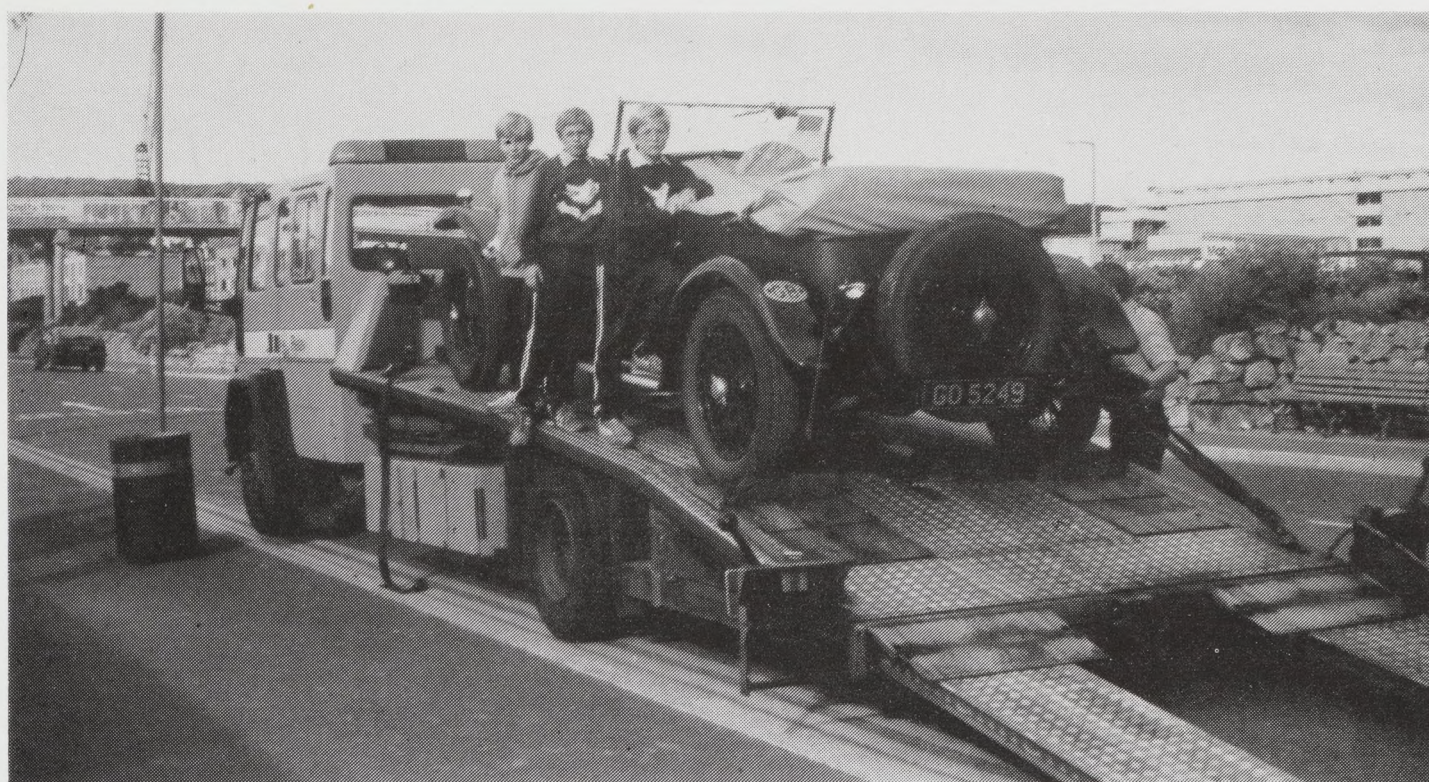
Paul Tebbett took a 3rd Class Award in the driving tests with 72 penalty points in his Riley Gamecock, and Robin Colquhoun in the LC 2 Litre PJ 4790 scored 107, both in Class A.

In the Concours John Ryder took the Montagu Trophy with his 1933 3 Litre Tourer APH 13.

## **16 September 1990 VSCC Kentish Rally**

Those ubiquitous characters John Harris and his navigator CM Ping in the hard-worked LG 45R LBT 74, and as usual, came away with an award, this time a 3rd Class with 59 penalties.





*Weld after practice – more welding required?*

### **7 October 1990 VSCC Weston Super Mare Sprint**

A good Club turnout for this popular West Country event, I had to withdraw unfortunately, due to big-end problems, but Alan Elliott and Stephen Weld represented us in Class 2, and Peter Whenman and the Millers appeared among the Heavy Metal Specials in Class 4, Stephen had a clutch disintegration during practice and withdrew but not before registering a 'Coasting' time of commendable rapidity! P J Evans represented the Rapiers in his Special.

#### **Results**

<b>Driver</b>	<b>Car</b>	<b>CC</b>	<b>Reg No.</b>	<b>H'cp</b>	<b>Run 1</b>	<b>Run 2</b>
AT Elliott	1930 LC 2L	1954	GP 895	28.5	29.53	29.33
SCE Weld	1930 Crossley	1991	GO 5249	28.5	NS	
P Whenman	1934 M45R Spl	4453	BKA 240	19.5	20.11	20.38
JPC Miller	1936 LG 45 Spl	4500		19.5	20.22	20.91
CJ Miller	1936 LG 45 Spl	4500		19.5	20.63	20.34
PJ Evans	1934 Rapier Spl	1065		22.5	22.30	24.15

### **21 October 1990 VSCC Eastern Rally**

Again our expert Rallyistes John Harris/CM Ping pulled it off, gaining a 1st Class Award in Class 3, with only 73 penalties. Well done LBT 74 and crew!

### **10 November 1990 VSCC Lakeland Trial**

Paul Tebbett gained a 2nd Class Award in Class 2 in his Riley.





*Dick Sage showing how it is done at the VSCC Enstone Driving Tests*

*PHOTO: John Batt*

### **1 December 1990 VSCC Enstone Driving Tests "A Sparkling Day"**

This was the competition debut for our latest acquisition, the "Winter Sport" 1927 14/60 Saloon TU9522. The lack of high performance is considerably offset by the warmth and comfort I have to tell you! What a great pity so many of this sort of sporting saloon were decapitated in the past. We were not quite bottom! Paul Tebbett was there again in his Riley. Good fun!

**RJS Dec 1990**

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*The Lagonda Factory Fire Brigade with their NFS tender, taken at some time during the war. Can anyone recognise the members of the team?*

## Some more Wartime Memories of the Lagonda Factory

Reading about the request for assistance with Wellington gill rings in the last magazine prompts some more reminiscences from John Berridge:

The picture of the assembly of the gill ring supports was taken in the old wood body shop. The gill assembly took up most of the space.

The tube supports for the gill rings were assembled from  $\frac{3}{8}$ " tube, specification t26, which I might have somewhere, and

the end supports of the tubes ended with steel forgings from Morgans of Willenhall and another firm.

The forgings and tubes were assembled and brazed on assembly jigs, which were from the drawing office under the chief, Freddie Hawkins, who was something of a genius where planning and tooling were needed. The gill ring assembly was all under the foremanship of Frank Gifford who, if still alive, might have old drawings,



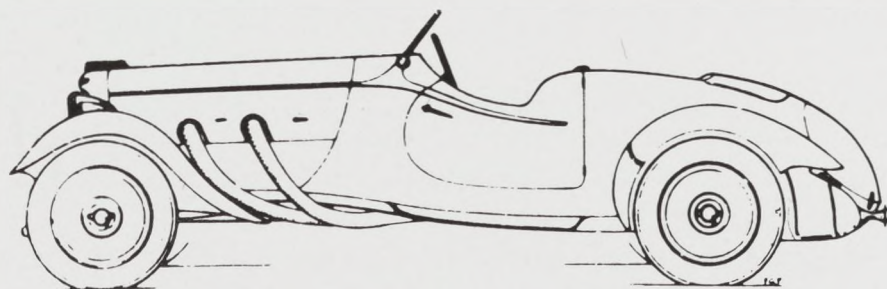


*Left to right, Bill Ellison, unidentified, Ted Humwicks, M. M. Wheeler, the Works Doctor.*



*A more formal grouping of the Works Fire Brigade.*





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but there were several types of support assemblies. I can recall that alum and steel small tapthreaded items were riveted to the circular tubes which mounted the gill lever plates, one every 12" or so, then there were some supports which had silentbloc rubbers in steel. The two end forgings of the Y shape were bolted to the cylinder heads.

Anybody who has any knowledge of the jigs and tools would be likely to have detail of the tube assembly.

R. P. Frazer was also the inspiration for the 2" and the 5" rockets which were made at Staines. In North Africa, we had no real defence against the Mk IV Panzers (or the others) and in 1940 we had no anti tank guns either. The only A. T. defence was the Boyes rifle... so Freddie Hawkins went to Woolwich Arsenal, where 6 pdrs were developed and brought back the drawings. The 6 pdr was redesigned at Staines and directly put into production in the workshop under the office block (opposite the gasholder). The

hydraulic recoil was all made there, the breech block made somewhere up the London Road (can't remember where), all the rest, except the barrel was made at Staines. The first 300 or so were shipped to North Africa – and all lost at the "Knightsbridge Block", where the commander set up a square (!!!!!) and the Panzers simply went round.

Frazer, with others, developed a solid fuel rocket which was fitted to Hurricanes at Kingston and used with great success against the Panzers. It was fitted on pylons under each wing and sighted by a ring sight to the tank turret ring. It carried an explosive charge of about ten pounds, I should think, but I didn't see very many on the tankbusters.

Then we at Staines were directed to produce a 5" rocket, which was coded the UP5. The old service department along Chertsey Lane was cleared and machine tools set up for machining the tubes and venturis and we sent out thousands weekly. In addition to that, we also



produced the hydraulic shock absorbers for the bombers, called the Messier Shock Retractor.

Another product of which we made thousands were the reduction gearboxes for the medium and heavy bombers. These were made under Lionel Taylor, who was 'king' of gearboxes and, later diesel pumps and injectors. All the gears were made from special forgings at Staines, all the heat treatment was done in our own plant. The only work we couldn't cope with was the bevel gears, which were cut by Fitzpatricks, on the North Circular Road in London.

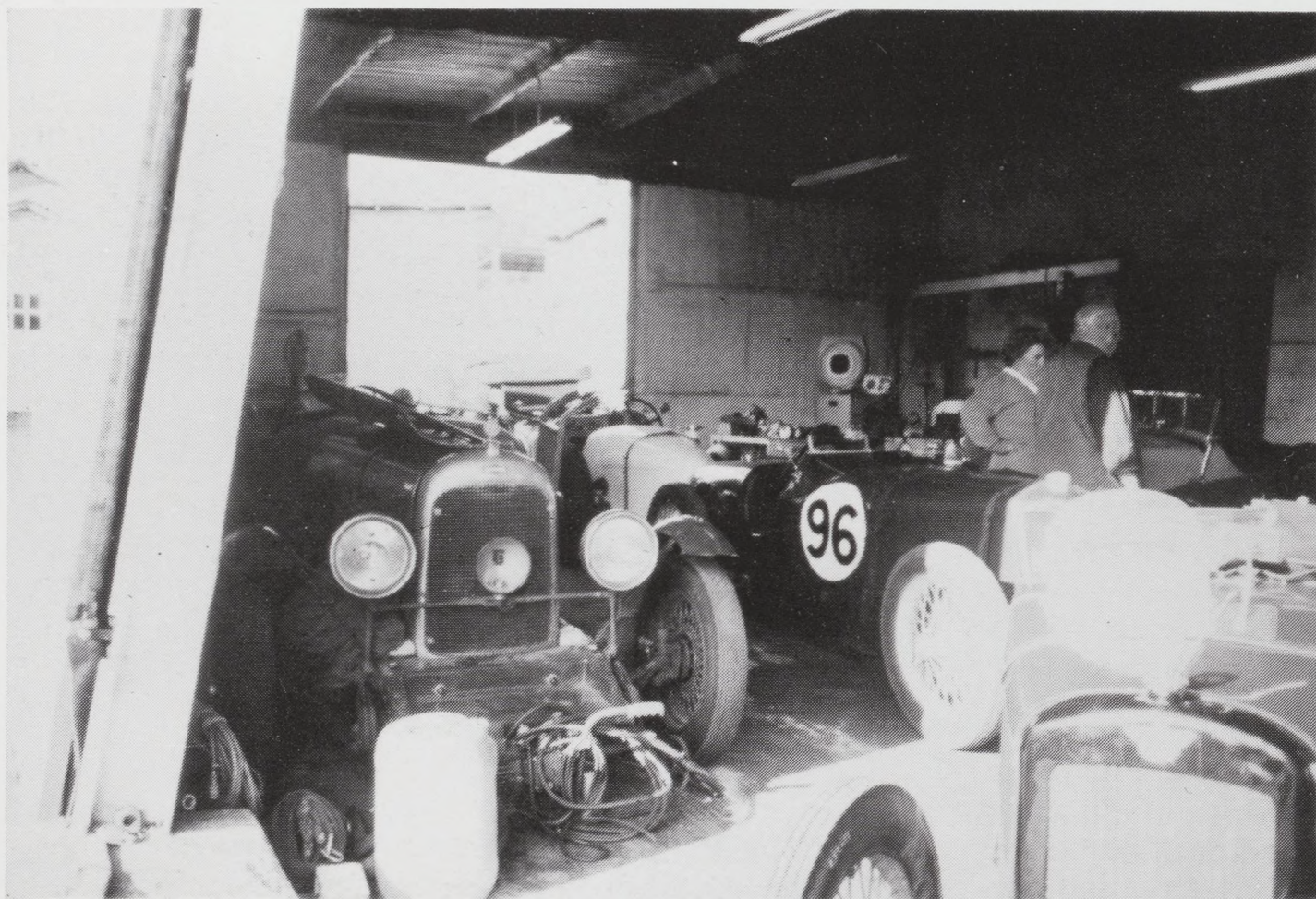
Freddie Hawkins converted an old Pearn's horizontal borer to machine all the five side faces of the gearbox and the bevel faces were machined on a special Archdale radial drill.

Then another panic arose when it was found that the UK didn't have any native

production for spares for submarine diesel engines, but I have recounted that tale in Edition 138 of the magazine . . .

Now for something completely different . . . The pictures are of the works fire brigade and the ambulance brigade. On one picture I have identified Bill Ellison, Ted Hunwicks, who was jig and tools, HH Wheeler the Financial Secretary, and the works doctor, but I can't recall his name. Bill Ellison was the foreman of the semi-automatic lathes, the section with Ward 2As, 3As, Gisholts, Warner and Swaseys and Herberts. Bill's department machined all the items for the cooling gill supports and the machining was superb. One girl, who cut the outside screw, was a Squadron Leader's wife and, when Wellingtons did a raid on Berlin, Watney allowed a tannoy of it on the factory public address system. More to come!

**John D Berridge**



*See "Letters" page opposite.*



# Letters

Dear Ken,

I trust I am not the only member of the Lagonda Club totally disenchanted with the new venue for the A.G.M. Are we going to be made to suffer the dust and the expensive food for yet another year? Where have our friendly, low-key, fun get-togethers gone? Is it too much to ask the Committee to find a more reasonable establishment offering perhaps a good choice of bar snacks and, once we have found it, can we stay there forever?

I would suggest that, as Lagondas were manufactured in Staines, the A.G.M. should be held as close to the old works as possible, or at least no more than twelve miles from where I live in Esher!

Yours ever,

**Phil Erhardt**

*The following letter was received on notepaper bearing a Brockband cartoon of a Maserati as a heading. Your Editor wishes it to be understood that bribes of this nature are not essential to ensure the publication of letters.*

Dear Ken,

My wife Candida visited Barrie A Gillies at his racing workshops last week and snapped the enclosed photograph of a 2L Lagonda Double Twelve Team car. (See p. , Ed).

The car is in poor condition, but still carries racing roundels, the 'right' accessories and so on, and is soon to undergo extensive restoration – whilst retaining its lovely old patina – for a Dutch customer.

Yours truly

**Richard McCann**

Dear Mr Painter,

I enclose a copy of a letter which appeared in the Glasgow Herald newspaper on 12th October. As a member of the Lagonda Club, the title intrigued and interested me. In addition, my wife, who is an art teacher, was drawn to the article's content.

I thought the letter might be worth publishing in the magazine and accordingly wrote to Sir Andrew Gilchrist. He was kind enough to reply and say that he was perfectly happy for me to forward it to you for publication. In one sentence of his reply he quoted the words of the French mechanic who examined the car: "Monsieur, les bielles sont fondu." My best attempts at translation is "Sir, the connecting rods (or probably bearings) have melted"

**R. D. Hunter**

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*The letter to which he refers begins as follows:*

**By Lagonda to Arles**

October 9

Sir,

It is with pleasure mixed with nostalgia that I read Serena Sinclair Lesley's enticing account of Arles and its awakening to the Van Gough connection (October 8).

Fifty-five years ago, Arles was a long way from waking up to Van Gough. I was stranded there for three beautiful days because my car (the best but for this incident I ever owned, a Lagonda 3-litre "close coupled sportsman's saloon", price new £1080, price second-hand £135, exactly three times my Foreign Office salary at that time) had chosen to run its big-end there . . .

*The letter continues to discuss Arles and Van Gough and, much as I admire his work, I feel that this magazine is not the best place for matters of this sort. The letter ends:*

. . . I have even written a book (more or less) about Vincent which will be published next year. If it makes money, I shall spend three more days in Arles . . .

But, alas, without my old Lagonda

**(Sir) Andrew Gilchrist**

Arthur's Crag  
Hazelbank

Dear Ken,

At the recent Hatherleigh Auto-Jumble I was lucky enough to buy a new Ki-gas reservoir glass filter bowl for £1 and Bulletins 62/63/64 together with the 1968 Register. My decision to forego Beaulieu this year is vindicated!

Bulletin 62 includes a reprint from the Autocar Road Test of the 2½ litre Lagonda Saloon dating from 11th November 1949. Part of this Road Test reads . . .

"The suspension is unusual in that each rear wheel is located by a single large wishbone formed of tubes with widely

spaced pivots, one near the centre line of the car behind the final drive housing and the other carried on the frame ahead of the wheel. The drive half-shaft itself is universally jointed. Thus, although it is not a true swing axle design, it has a similar pattern of wheel movement. As the wheels rise and fall they assume an inward and outward camber, and tend to toe-in slightly.

On a bend the outer wheel, which governs car behaviour, tends to steer the car slightly towards the inside of the curve and counteract the oversteer tendency usually produced by this type of suspension geometry."

So much for Mitsubishi or whoever claiming to have been the first to introduce four wheel steering!!

Turning to the Register, I see WG19, one of the 16 VdP 2 seater bodies 16/80's is shown under Doc. Young's ownership as having a 3 litre engine, Z 2340, although this is not shown on the old style replacement log book. The immortal bodily remains are what I am currently rebuilding onto a 3½ litre chassis following the terminal chassis bending crash in ? 1969. The engine I have is a 76mm bore 3 litre but I cannot find this number on it anywhere. During 1953/56 the car was owned by D. C. Trower of Norfolk and at that time the photos he has provided show it still had the 16/80 engine. He bought it from Youngs of Bromley and states it used to have Brooklands Motor motif on the dashboard as original suppliers, but this has not survived. In May 1960 the car was registered to Curries Garage, Chudleigh Knighton and this establishment closed about 7 years ago, following the murder of Currie Junior. Doc Young was registered as owner in March 1962 and I bought the incomplete 3½ chassis/3 litre engine/VdP 16/80 body basket case in February 1972, when an impecunious student.

It would be most interesting if any Club members can fill in some of the chequered history of WG 19.

Yours sincerely,

**Robin Michelmores**



Dear James,

Very many thanks for your letter and the enclosed copy of the Obituary of Beatrice Shilling. Like you, I was completely mystified as to the identity of the Rapier she was reported to have raced in the 1950s. However, whilst reading the obituary I noticed that she was in fact Mrs George Naylor and then the penny (or should it be shilling in this case?) dropped – Mrs B. Naylor used to race the polished alloy bodied Rapier special KG 5363 with much success. During the 1970's the car was owned by David Seath who took it to Australia when he emigrated about 10 years ago. The car then passed on to Bernie Jacobson who rebuilt it as an Eagle

Replica and had the car back in the UK for the 1984 celebrations. Bernie has recently sold the car, and now wishing he hadn't – the new owner being not the enthusiast Bernie thought he was.

Apart from the Rapier interest, what an amazing person Beatrice Shilling was. I have read about the early fuel starvation problems with the Merlin engines but didn't realise it was solved so simply and by whom.

Many thanks again for sending it to me – more useful copy for the January News. Incidentally, John Batt also sent me a copy of the obituary.

Best regards

**John Organ**

## Beatrice 'Tilly' Shilling

Beatrice "Tilly" Shilling, who died aged 81, was not only a notable aero-engineer, responsible for remedying a defect in the Rolls Royce Merlin engine during the Second World War, but also a renowned racing motor-cyclist.

In the 1930s she stormed round the Brooklands circuit and was awarded a coveted Gold Star for lapping the track at more than 100 mph on her Norton 500.

"Tilly" Shilling was once described by a fellow scientist as "a flaming pathfinder of women's lib"; she always rejected any suggestion that as a woman she might be inferior to a man in technical and scientific fields.

In 1940, when Hurricane and Spitfire pilots encountered a life-or-death carburettor problem, she was already a highly regarded scientist at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough.

The problem which landed on her desk in the carburation department was this: pilots were obliged to turn on their backs

in combat to dive because the "negative-G" of simply putting the nose down resulted in starving the engine, causing it to splutter or cut out.

This was a critical defect since the Daimler-Benz engine powered enemy Me 109s permitted Luftwaffe pilots to perform the manoeuvre unhindered. Miss Shilling came up with a simple stop-gap device – which cost less, as it happened, than a shilling.

Nicknamed "Miss Shilling's Orifice", it was a metal disc about the size of an old threepenny bit, with a small hole in the middle. It was brazed into the fighter's fuel pipe, and when the pilot accelerated in a dive the disc stopped even momentary starvation of the Merlin engine. By March 1941 Miss Shilling's Orifice had been installed throughout Fighter Command, sufficing until replaced by an improved carburettor.

A butcher's daughter, Beatrice Shilling was born at Waterlooville, Hants, on



March 8 1909 and after working as an electrician and electrical linesman she took an engineering degree at Manchester University.

In the 1930s she was recruited as a scientific officer by the RAE and began on a small salary doing fairly menial work. Even as a senior member of that establishment she was renowned for rolling up her sleeves and getting her hands dirty – shopworkers respected the fact that she could braze a butt joint between two pieces of copper with the skill of a fitter.

When she married George Naylor, whom she had met at aerodynamics night-school classes, colleagues presented her with a set of stocks and dies. It was said that she turned her own wedding ring on a lathe in stainless steel.

After the war she shone in charge of investigations at Farnborough – such as a probe into aquaplaning by aircraft taking off or landing on wet runways. These occurrences raised particular public alarm when an Elizabethan airliner crashed on take-off in slush at Munich, killing most of the Manchester United football team.

Her investigation of the related problems included conducting a series of trials for the Engineering Physics Department to assess braking performance on an experimental high-friction runway surface in conditions of heavy rain. She summoned a convoy of bowsters to spray water on the concrete, while a wingless naval Scimitar ran up engines as if for take-off.

Miss Shilling shared her passion for speed on wheels with her husband, and visitors to their home were astonished by the variety of motor-cycle parts scattered around. **In the 1950s she successfully raced her 1935 Lagonda Rapier at Silverstone, her skilful engine-tuning producing a speed of more than 100 mph.**

She also participated in sportscar racing at Goodwood, and another of her pastimes was pistol shooting.

Miss Shilling was appointed OBE in 1948 and retired in 1969, after 36 years at Farnborough. She is survived by her husband.

*(Reprinted from Daily Telegraph  
17 November 1990.*

# Lagonda

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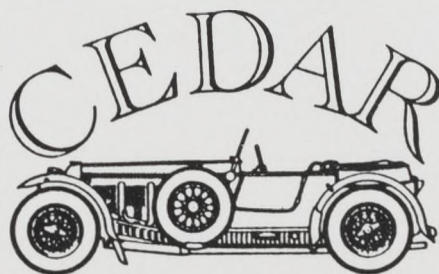
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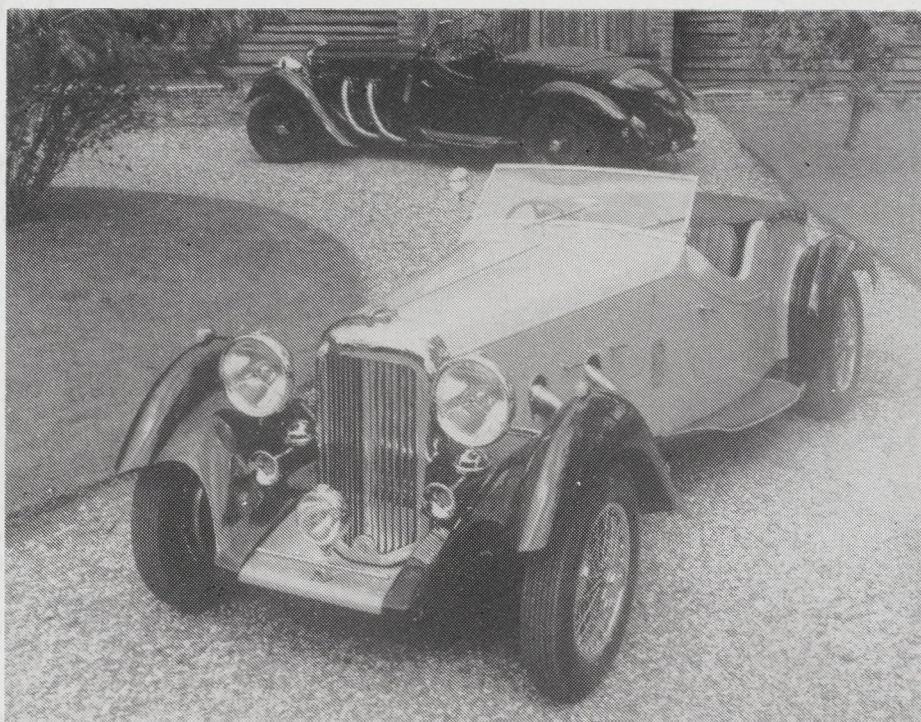




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