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THE MAGAZINE OF THE LAGONDA CLUB

Number 165

Summer 1995

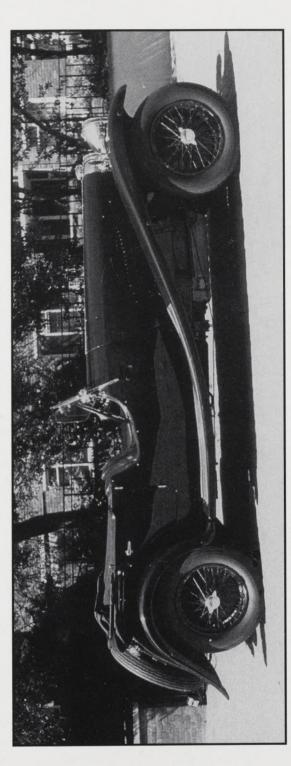
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MAGAZINE Issue No. 165 Summer 1995

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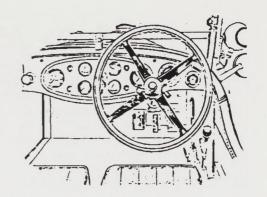
FRONT COVER

BPK 202, winner of the 1935 Le Mans, back on the circuit for our Jubilee celebrations.

Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller

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From the Driving Seat



YOU receive this magazine very late and, for a change, with no apology. The Committee unanimously decided that the Le Mans trip was so historically important for the Club, that we had to feature it properly here in the magazine. Unfortunately, those clever enough to go on the trip were so overwhelmed by it all that they took far longer than usual to write up their experiences. Not to worry, the Committee also decreed that we should record the event in colour, so we have a super selection of pictures for you all.

This magazine is almost exclusively devoted to the Great Event, no Letters, no Competition Reports, no articles on aspects of our favourite cars not linked with That Trip, but all will be back to normal with the next edition.

The Autumn magazine will not be seriously delayed by this issue. We have enough material to produce another magazine almost immediately, but copy is now being sought for the Winter magazine, which is put together over the Christmas holiday.

For our British members the long hot summer, now no more than a fond memory, has probably meant that they have made more use of their Lagondas than the more typical British weather allows. As Arnold Davey regularly points out in the Newsletter, we all get more invitations to attend events than even the most enthusiastic member could manage. My personal choice tends towards the events where we can do something, I never get very excited by the static style of show, although many

get a great deal of pleasure from this more gentle type of event. Whatever your choice, how about a short account of your summer activities? Plus a few pictures of course! We constantly strive to achieve a proper balance between the technical, the historical and the social side of Lagonda motoring, but this always needs **you** to keep us informed of what you are doing - and what you would like the Club to organise for you in the future.

It may sound strange, but I am pleased that the summer season is over, now that the pressures of the Vintage racing season are behind us and given that my Italian mistress needs very little attention to keep her purring nicely next year, I can devote more attention to my 2 My search for parts is unending, but with my nice new motorhouse all complete, the work gets really serious now. One of the problems one faces when building a car from a collection of parts is that of identification. Just what is that widget, which looks so important, but doesn't seem to fit anywhere? I have in my collection of parts a matching pair beautifully cast and brackets, machined, but the most careful examination of photographs and drawings failed to identify them. desperation, I took one to the AGM and asked everyone, expert or novice. Now I know, they aren't part of a 2 litre at all, in fact they don't seem to be Lagonda parts from any of our range of models, but I still wonder what they fit

Ken Painter

Reflections

WELL, that laid a few ghosts! A 120 car turnout for a Lagonda Club event has surprised and delighted everybody. There is no doubt that regional organisers and your committee have been haunted by the theory that, whatever event is laid on, very few members will stir themselves to attend. So now we have the answer - from now on all events will be held on Wednesdays and staged in supermarket car parks!

Seriously though, the send-off from Staines for the Le Mans Diamond Jubilee Rally was fantastic and a credit to Tony Mayes for conceiving the idea and then pushing it through, ably supported by

Tony Guy.

The day went so quickly that one hardly had the chance to savour the sights and sounds of so many Lagondas not seen before and so many new acquaintances. There were many of the latter who used to work at the factory making the cars and I also met several ladies who had worked in the offices fascinating. Hopefully Sainsbury's turnover didn't suffer too much - one shopper was heard to say that it was chaos as they were "putting on the Gondoliers in there!"

Stenna Sealink was persuaded to give us a bargain basement price for the ferry crossing, but got their own back by landing us at 5.00 a.m. in the dark and cold. However, as the sun came up, we were rewarded by the sight of seventy Lagondas in line astern, roaming through the mists of a French dawn!

We were to be treated to this amazing spectacle once more, as I led the

cavalcade down the historic Mulsanne Straight at Le Mans - this time with the roar of the crowd in our ears and the flag marshals whistling and waving every flag they had. This was so fantastic that I have to admit to a lump in the throat and a tear in the eye at this stage!

It was great to see our younger members having a go and the Rothwells 2 litre, complete with large Union Flag hoist aloft was a splendid sight. We felt guilty when we settled into the "comfort" of our farmhouse and on to the second bottle of local vin, when we realised that they had not made it. Eventually, Andrew arrived alone and begged a magneto from the Wadsworth spares selection, then disappeared back into the night, with stories of a stripped fibre timing gear, so we all feared the worst. Imagine the delight when, the next day, the Union Flag was seen again above the hedgerows, with the unique 2 litre growl to herald its arrival! They got a full ovation at the gala dinner - and regaled us with stories of how they fixed it with nothing but а wooden handled screwdriver and a pre-war shifter - "the lad should go far!" I was heard to say!!

We had lots more experiences, which will, no doubt be reported elsewhere, but one or two are worth sharing. First, it's no good trying to time somebody else's magneto when you have a hangover, I discovered that my confidence of the previous night was converted into a state of trembling perspiration the morning after.

Second, I gradually realised what makes the Lagonda Club unique amongst one-make clubs. I observed on the rally the tremendous variety of cars and their owners, with no tendency to the conformity noted in other clubs.

There was a certain "sameness" about the Aston Martin post-war crowd - all super folk, but row upon row of cars and people all looking alike. Even the vintage Bentleys tended to a common Le Mans bodied "greenness", with a lot of moustaches, which, I understand, their regalia stall can provide for new members!

However, nearly every Lag was different, with a model suitable for every taste, through from the spartan 12/24, via 2 and 3 litres, up to the sumptuous luxury of the LG6s and V12s. The characters that own and drive the different models are, in the main, perfectly matched to their cars and provide a complete cross-section of society, all shaking down together and having wonderful parties, thanks to our egalitarian accommodation regime!

Jill and I have inevitably attracted most of the praise for the event and we are grateful for all the letters and thanks we have received, but we could not have done it alone. Tom Harrington, based in Paris, was a huge support and organised most of the trip to Vichy - fantastic - he also got a lot more French francs for our weak pounds, which is important when you are turning over seventy thousand of them! (Yes, that's what it cost.)

Peter, Hilary and Rachel Whenman worked tirelessly on maps, routes, rally plaques, tankards for Mayors, who gave us memorable receptions seemingly where ever we turned up. (The village of Auvers sur sont Montfaucon turned out a fantastic party for us on the first night.) Peter's experience of organising the '85 trip was invaluable.

As always, our noble secretary, Colin Bugler, kept us up to date with moral support and cash banked.

Lots of members on the rally joined in with invaluable offers of help, which meant that we could enjoy ourselves, as well as being organisers.

When in the role of an organiser, one is assumed to have knowledge of everything, from where to buy a film for the camera, to explanations as to why the Prime Minister felt it necessary to resign in the middle of our holiday!

Following an unknown lapse of time, we may do it - or something like it - again. However, bound volumes of our notes are available to anyone else who fancies having a go!

David Hine



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Vingt-Quart Du Mans et les Lagondas

TWO years ago when this trip was mooted it seemed like a dream. Would we get there? Would we drive on the circuit? Would the car cope? Well, its over, we got there and it was wonderful.

As we were travelling from Northern Ireland we decided not only to go for the long weekend to Le Mans but also to go on to Vichy on the second part of the trip. We sent off our money, got the M45 (BPH 713) ready and discovered that, though Jill had sent us the tickets at the same time as everyone else, they hadn't arrived! Panic stations, but not Jill Hine, "No problem," she said "we'll sort things out at Southampton and we will get more Le Mans tickets." Sighs of relief, polish the car, pack "the suitcase" - our suitcase was greatly admired, plus Peter's device for carrying it on the running board. "We're ready to go, I'll just check the afternoon mail." says Peter, There's an envelope marked Lagonda, our tickets, posted Stockport 13th May, came via Bath, franked 12th June. What kind of transport is used by the Post Office?

Off we set on Tuesday 13 June and meet the Storrs at the Liverpool boat. We had a lovely crossing leaving sunny Belfast for a grey and very cold Liverpool. We had a good run down to Staines, arriving at 2.00 p.m., though my sister was rather windswept in the back. Staines was wonderful. Those who had worked at the factory were so pleased to see so many Lagondas together - I think there were 100 in all. One gentleman was able to identify his handiwork on Frank Storrs' LG45 tourer (ABL 97) and another declared that Bentleys were not a patch on Lagondas! Someone else was heard to tell his friend to come and look

as they were putting on the Gondoliers maybe we were all dressed rather oddly!

3.45 p.m., no sign of anyone gathering for the start and Jill is getting anxious the police wanted us away before the The baloons went off, Mrs rush hour. Harrison, daughter of John Hindmarsh, was there and received flowers and champagne. Then we were off, with our red white and blue plaques on the front of all the cars, our Esso stickers on the side and our Evening Standard caps. First stop was Rownhams Service Station, where Esso kindly gave us all free petrol, plus a cup of tea and a lovely Danish pastry - If I'd known how much good food I was going to have in the next 12 days I would just have had the tea! We had a photo call for Esso with five other cars, then it was off to the Novotel Hotel in Southampton - firstnavigation error on this part of the trip. Moral, the Lagonda in front does not always know the way! Irene is saying nothing in the back!

After a pleasant meal we take a look at the first casualty - a car with no water pump, or rather with a pump which is not working. As darkness falls they are pondering how to get it fixed. A man with a Panama hat sidles by with a weighty object wrapped in a cloth. "You'll be needing this." he says and vanishes into the dusk. The generosity of the man with the Panama hat, and many others, was frequently seen during the trip. We leave early to get to the boat, but end up being one of the last cars on board. We should have waited and done what we were told - sorry Jill.

We collected the keys for our cabins at 11.45 p.m. Shock, horror, they were

going to call us at 3.15 a.m. - and they did! Irene, for one, has never been up so early. We dock at 4.30 a.m. and put our watches forward an hour. Then off we go. 5.45 a.m. and there is a cavalcade of about sixty Lagondas out of Cherbourg, en route for breakfast at Chateau De La Roque near Herbercrevon, were we entirely mad? Breakfast was served in shifts. We had cake, then bread interesting! I didn't think the loos were too bad, but some were not so happy. Peter tried to work out why we were not charging, we never charged again.

Off we set again, heading for Brulon, where many of us were staying in farm This was a good decision as they were all lovely, but I am not sure that Roy Brittain and James thought it was a good idea to follow the Northern Ireland contingent as we sped off in what appeared to be the wrong direction - just trying a more scenic route. We stopped for cafe au lait and croissants in La Chapelle, then on again with us leading the Northern Ireland duo. We see Peter Whenman's car stopped, so we pull in as well - worst lunch of the trip and at least eight cars stopped - are we really just like If you are really lucky, Hilary sheep? Whenman may let you see the photographs of her post prandial snooze! On to Brulon and Les Belmondieres farmhouse accommodation, this was lovely and the owners, Monsieur and Madame Lemesle, were so helpful.

We had our first Vin d'Honneur that evening. Peter now knew that there was no hope for the dynamo and we set out a little late. I have to confess that I had not looked carefully at page 16 of our instructions, nor had we been able to find Michelin Map 232, so we did not realise that there were at least three Auvers in the district. We met cars going in the opposite direction, but we had asked directions and were following

them carefully. Our driver was a little irritated, but we got there in time for the speeches. David Hine spoke in French The wine and nibbles were tres bien! Then it was back to Les lovely. Belmondieres for dinner - it only took 20 minutes this time!. Madame produced a lovely country chicken dish and Monsieur taught us how to say rhubarb correctly in French! The men were in and out like vo-vos as a head gasket was being replaced by David Ayre and Richard Bush.

Sleep, a whole night, wonderful. Friday was a free day, so the chaps went to buy a battery charger and we girls went to Sable. We found the market, bought some fruit, had a lovely relaxing day and got back for the second Vin D'Honneur, with the Mayor of Brulon. This was a lovely occasion and David did us proud again with his speech in French (the same one). Then were were off to dinner at Tennie, a most pleasant evening, although with an early start next day and no charging we decided to leave before the pudding. Driving back was a bit hairy, following the stars, but we made it.

Saturday 17th June. The day had arrived and we were up at 6.30 a.m. Irene cannot believe these times! rendezvous with the Storrs at 7.15 and set off on a lovely cross country run to Le Mans, arriving just after 8.00 a.m. The word was that we were going to get on the circuit and, sure enough, at 9.30, on we went - 75 Lagondas lined up on the grid, behind over 110 Aston Martins anyone with Sky TV will have seen us all roaring down the Mulsanne Straight. There was strictly no overtaking, but as we were in two lanes it was possible to leave the slower cars behind.

Round we went once, then twice and, to our delight three times. I was thrilled to be doing over 70 miles per hour on the



Just some of the cars in Sainsbury's car park at the start. Raymond Baxter (in the centre) talks to a few 'Old Lags'. Photo: Alan Elliott



Lord Selsdon enjoys the driver's seat in Peter Biggs' car, which his father drove to 4th place in the 1939 Le Mans race. David Wall looks on approvingly. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller

Mulsanne Straight and I'm very pleased with my photograph of the other cars ahead at the chicane in the middle of it. It was wonderful and quite unforgettable - including Bru Jones, our British Bobby, who gave the car in front of us a ticket when we lined up on the grid. We took time for a lovely lunch at the Welcome Hospitality Centre on the inside of the circuit at the first corner and watched the start of the race from its garden - proof of which I managed to photograph - much to Peter's surprise. It started to rain as we set off for Brulon to get ready for the barbecue and let my sister meet up with her French friends - four kisses on arrival - very French! The Northern Ireland contingent was almost last, as usual, so we were in the tent. The food was great and afterwards David gave us a rendition of "'Arold on 'is 'orse with 'is 'awk in 'is 'and".

Sunday was another free day, so Peter and Frank headed over to David Hine's to work on Frank's car - sorry Jill! I walked from Les Belmondieres to Les Pres, the gites where the Storrs were staying and we had a delicious lunch of country pate, cheese, bread, salad and wine. The day ended with a dinner at Belmondieres and a sing-song led by Harry Moore (Alec Downie's minder). Songs from all regions were demanded. I have to confess that we did not know the words of the verses to "Danny Boy". speedometer needed rebuilding today.

On Monday morning we said "Goodbye" to the majority of the group and 25 cars headed off for the second trip. We hope to see many of the members of the group who travelled to Le Mans at the A.G.M.

Anne Walby

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Le Mans 1995

THE trip was preceded by hectic and rather expensive efforts by No 1 Son-in-Law to make the old girl fit to travel what turned out to be a 1300 mile round trip. Clutch, clutch spigot, exhaust system, new copper washers on the cylinder head studs to reduce oil in the inlet manifold and last minute panic when fuel starvation strikes. New petrol pumps and replace all fuel lines with plastic pipes in a mad rush.

Tuesday fine and dry and off to Alec and Sylvia in deepest Hampshire. An extremely pleasant night and we arrive in colourful convoy in Staines around mid-day. The sight is extra-ordinary and steadily becomes mind-boggling. I'd heard of Chenard-Walcker, but never seen one. A happy little Wolseley saloon is there to greet us, together with a little brown open car with a Lagonda

badge on the radiator.

Great send-off, but one wonders customers whether innocent Sainsbury, trapped in their little tin boxes between towering mountains of proper motor, agree. Through Hartley Wintney for some reason. chicken out and take the motorway early, but the rest of us test clutch and cooling successfully, though we think that one LG6 could do with some copper washers on the cylinder head bolts. We pass the little brown car stuck on the hard shoulder, but the occupants wave us on. £20 worth of fuel from Esso. Dare we be greedy and get lead-free? No. and so, after an excellent hot buffet from Novotel, we see once more the modern miracle of hundreds of cars, lorries and buses loading onto one ferry!

This is the precise moment to study our

tickets and find that we are due back in Southampton at 10 p.m. on Monday, over 300 miles from home. Anyway, we manage a last minute pre-booking at Travelodge.

Early dawn, the wrong side of the road, a huge convoy trundling along at whatever 40 m.p.h. is in Europe, and Northern France know that we have arrived. Instructions for finding breakfast get lost in the translation, but in fact we get there much earlier than expected. Nevertheless, the staff rise to the occasion and we have a proper French breakfast. (None of the rubbery croissant and a coffee - 50 Francs M'sieu - merci!) Magnifique!

Then bomb off in all directions to Gite and Hotel. French motorists cheer, flash lights and wave. Our spot is Hotel Grill, Sable sur Sarthe. And lo and behold, later in the afternoon arrives this little brown car. Vin d'honneur and our Chairman speaking perfect French in a strong South Lancashire accent. How was it done? Ask Nick.

Following morning and MG 6279 sits with its petrol pumps banging away all to themselves. Who? Why? What the H***? Ten or so bods gather around to watch the fun, giving ten or so differing forms of advice. Purely by good luck, Chris, Bru and Barry get things working again. Yes lads, good luck, because no sooner were we home than it started all over again, and intermittently as well, so it took till August to solve - I think.

More partying doesnt help an early start on Saturday for Le Mans. Would we be allowed a lap of honour? Personally, knowing the oily state of our engine and chassis, we feel that no

respectable scrutineer will allow us within a mile (sorry, 1.609 kilometres). Mis non, ne rien de scrutiny and there we are in that canyon by the pits. dons his police gear and books someone for parking and we're off. No passing you understand, definitely no racing of course, but what do we do stuck behind this little brown car? Sorry, but we must have passed it several times a lap, it was so slow - and we did three laps.

Our treatment of the little brown car is all my fault. I had promised Jeremy and Margaret a full set of racing slicks for their 1924 model 12/24 tourer. Together with the new clockwork key made for them by _____, these would have transformed their car's performance.

I shall gloss over the sudden appearance of a ditch in the middle of a field on the Saturday night.

Does anyone know how to live to 112, keeping all one's marbles, because I want to do the centenary run? We might have got the wipers to work by then.

Ruth and John Turner and MG 6279

P.S. And the little brown car was one of the few to complete the rally without a moment's trouble. Well done Jeremy, Margaret and 822 HYL.



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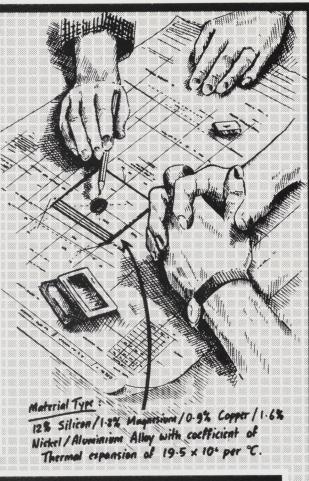
Sally Harrison waving off BPK 202 to lead the trip to France. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller



The procession sets off for Southampton. Has there ever been a bigger selection of Lagondas in one place? Photo: Arnold Davey.

Since 1907 the name Hepworth has been synonymous with piston manufacturing. Over the past 15 years small batch production has been undertaken by the first of the fourth generation. Peter Hepworth has built up over the years the largest and most specialised range of piston, cylinder liner & bearing components for pre-1980 engines anywhere in the world.

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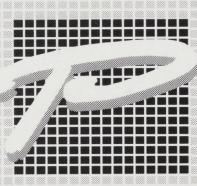
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- 1934/35 30 H.P. 4¹/₂ litre, Z, (M45) Comp HT 1²⁵/₃₂ Crown Dome 1937 30 H.P. 4¹/₂ Litre, Rapide, C.R. 6.55 to 1. Comp HT 1⁷/₈ Crown Cone
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4.30am on the Ferry. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller



Chateau de la Rogue, the early breakfast stop – Magic! Photo: Sarah Russell Floyd.

The Little Brown Car's Tale

FOURTEEN years ago, 822 HYL (originally PD 1256), a 1924 12/24 was little more than a two line advertisement in Exchange and Mart.

Brought home from Ipswich in the back of a furniture van, my children soon tired of a restoration project that looked as if it would encompass their retirement.

John Scholey, pre-war Lagonda employee, came to the mechanical rescue and the car was driven down to Rod Jolley a couple of years later, with plywood wings and a bucket seat bolted to the frame. Rod at this time worked from home and was rebuilding a 2 litre in his front room. This would eventually require the removal of an outside wall to effect the car's release.

Mechanically complete and bare metal body in place, we were now ready - 71 years late - for the big challenge, Le Mans.

Race preparation was meticulous. Paint secured and applied. Upholstery proved a problem, but the cushions from a garden seat proved the answer. There was no time to add the hood, but checking the rules we discovered that compulsory raising and lowering this was no longer a prerequisite.

The morning of June 14th dawned cool and clear and promptly at 9.00 a.m. we swung menacingly onto the highway. Having hopelessly misjudged the sheer power of the 1400cc engine, we arrived a short length behind the Hines at about 10.15, however, we secured pole position at the start line.

Being the eldest and technically most advanced machine, we were shortly besieged by the Gentlemen of the Presswell, Classic Car Weekly, actually, who managed a chronic misquote two weeks later, but a fine picture of the car's bonnet, none the less.

Ceremonies over, baloons released and

we were off. After the third roundabout out of Staines, a cry from behind "You go to Southampton. Yes?"

It was Bernd Holthusen in one of the 1939 team cars. We affirmed that Southampton was indeed our next stop and, much to our surprise, he pulled out and, with a cheery wave, swept past us.

We were not able to make full use of Esso's kind sponsorship offer of £20 of free petrol at a filling station outside Southampton, but squeezed a final fiver's worth into the gravity tank before proceeding on the last English leg to the ferry.

The 15th, damp and dark as we were turfed off the boat before first light. This proved something of a problem as, although the six volt electrical system had all five lights as promised in the original sales literature, we had not seriously considered night driving (I know Le Mans is 24 hours, but we had planned to follow a back marker during the evening).

However, undeterred, we sallied forth, but kept the speed down through the difficult bits of Cherbourg, before eventually reaching open country as the dawn came up, much to the relief of dynamo and driver.

By close inspection of the map, it became clear that Sable, our destination for the next few days, was some 200 miles away, a distance we would normally spread over three or four days.

Cutting lunch down to a mere two hours, we arrived without mishap at our hotel just before dusk.

Friday had been reserved for practice, but it was decided to miss this formality and the day was spent tightening the wheel nuts and spreading Rainex on the windscreen (this model is not fitted with a mechanical wiper).

We were grateful for these precautions,

as you will recall that the 1935 race was run in torrential rain and in these conditions one needs a wheel firmly attached to each corner and a clear screen.

Saturday. Finally we were on the last leg of the pilgrimage - the reward within our grasp. As usual we left an hour or two ahead of the rest of our party - we are great respecters of our host country's speed limits - and secured a parking place almost next to the high mesh fencing surrounding the track.

It must be said that, at this point, there were some who felt that we would not be allowed to enter the race, but I knew that our vehicle was within all the rules and no technical disqualification was

possible.

Promptly at 9.30, the wire gate swung open and we nipped smoothly through and onto the circuit. It was as I had always imagined it - the huge crowd in the stands rose as one as we jockeyed for position on the starting grid. Marshals were everywhere, official cars in front and rear, the starting lights flashing from red to green.

A number of Aston Martins were ahead of us, but I think they were only there for historic reasons and they were not seen

again after we started.

The flag was down and with a roar we hurtled forth. There is a really quite steep gradient from the start to the bridge and as we have only three gears we found 2nd sufficiently powerful to maintain a steady 20 m.p.h. to the top - a useful tip to those who come after us!

Unfortunately a few of our colleagues recklessly and unnecessarily in my opinion - saw fit to overtake us here and one can see why so many shunts take place at the start of Grand Prix racing,

when race rage strikes.

Once under the bridge we were able to engage 3rd gear and the speedometer needle rapidly trembled around 55 m.p.h. Our exhilaration was soon dampened as disaster struck, a jet of boiling water flew from the radiator and struck us in the face. It normally is

prevented from doing this by the windscreen, but we had raised this to the horizontal in order to lower wind resistance and assist aerodynamically. Realising there was a long way to go, we slowed to a more realistic 35 m.p.h.

It is amazing how fast a race like this goes and it seemed like only a couple of circuits - we were managing to lap in less than twelve minutes while the track remained dry - before the white flag was out and we were ushered into a slip road - with all the Aston Martins and the rest of the field forced to follow us off.

Needless to say, my mechanic - Mrs Oates - was a tower of strength throughout the event, but we were a little disappointed when our fellow guests in Sable fitted a cardboard clockwork key to the starting handle on the last night. Some people just can't take defeat and I am afraid they did not truly enter into the spirit of the event. I will not name names, but most of them came from Yorkshire.

Unfortunately there were some retirements during the trip and I put them down to the unnecessary accessories that many vehicles were encumbered with. Many of our companions spent hours worrying over various dials and knobs fitted to their vehicles and these tended to be the parts that failed. Oil pumps and water pumps are not necessary on a properly engineered vehicle. Four gears instead of three just give more chance of mechanical failure. Autovacs and petrol pumps are also luxuries that can give rise to problems - gravity never left an apple Windscreen wipers are on a tree. ineffectual and a common source of M.O.T. failure, and should be discarded. I noticed that certain vehicles were fitted with more than one carburettor - a constant irritation I would have thought, especially when coupled to an engine not built by the vehicle manufacturer.

Hoping this has encouraged all of you who were not first off the track in 1995!!!

Margaret and Jeremy Oates

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THE NEW KNIGHTS OF THE ROAD



David Hine reviews the line up before the laps of the Le Mans circuit, Jill prepares to photograph the event. Photo: Courtesy of Aston Martin Lagonda.



The Little Brown Car! The Oates family show the rest how it should be done. Photo: Courtesy of Aston Martin Lagonda.



David Hine listens to accolades from the Mayor of Auvers. Empty Champagne glasses wait for customers. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller



David and Doc Rider in cheerful mood, Madam Chairman practices her French. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller



Andrew Rothwell's G.C. 2 Litre, proudly flying the Union flag. Photo: Sarah Russell Floyd.



David Ayre assists Richard Bush changing the head gasket on the M45. Suitable refreshment to hand on the scuttle.

Photo: Alan Elliott

The Le Mans Trip: A Driver/Mechanic's Diary

SUCCUMBING to the greater comfort of the Sunbeam saloon, the scruffy old 31/2 Lag has not seen much use in recent years, so when I suggested to Sarah we go on the Le Mans rally, her immediate reaction was one of horror - "It'll never get there, last time I was in it, it broke down!" My careful explanation that the breakdown was not mechanical, but vapour lock caused by this awful supervolatile modern petrol, and that I had drastically altered the fuel system to prevent recurrence was grudgingly accepted, so we agreed to go. In fact we planned to go before the main party in order to spend more time in France. Two weeks before the start, however I followed succumbed to flu, bronchitis, but managed to croak a telephoned request to the Hines for us to go with the main party. I think Jill was in two minds whether to telephone the ferry operator or the undertaker! With typical efficiency, the Hine organisation sprang into action and the necessary bookings were made.

The journey to Staines was fairly uneventful, except that the water temperature became very high on the longer inclines on the M1, starting to boil on one occasion and I did wonder (to myself!) what might happen in France if it were much warmer. remembered that in the flap before leaving I had forgotten to change back from week to standard needles. changed them at Staines and it ran much cooler from then onwards. surprisingly, the car was notably more lively on the drive down to the Road Chef/Rownham Service Station outside Southampton, where, because there was

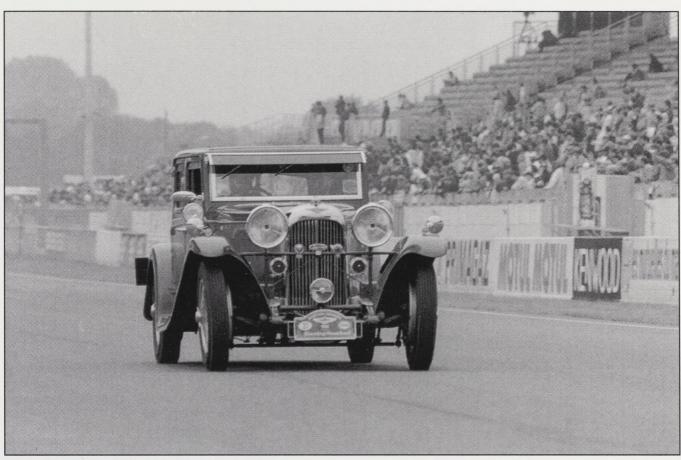
more free space, the line-up of Lags seemed to me more impressive than at With the aid of the £20 free issue from Esso, the tank was filled right up - with fingers crossed - the last ime it was filled right up, back in 1971, it immediately sprang a huge leak, but it was OK this time. On arrival at the Novotel, it was found that Robin 3½ tank Balmain's was leaking, fortunately, removal of a few pints solved the problem.

Initially, the pleasure of the early morning drive from Cherbourg was impaired by our becoming asphyxiated by the smell of burning oil. An anxious inspection of the gauges revealed nothing amiss, bit I was on the point of stopping to investigate further when I realised that the 2 litre in front was burning oil. Accelerating past rather self consciously (I didn't want to get a reputation as a tear a*s* too early in the trip!) solved the problem.

With the breakfast stop approaching, I realised that my navigator (as is her wont) had fallen asleep! After breakfast the weather seemed set fair and, joy of joys, it was agreed the hood could be lowered, the holiday had really begun. What pleasure to be driving a Lag on

these quiet French roads.

We initially missed the turnoff to Tinchebrai, probably as I was not concentrating: from boyhood I have been fascinated by that name. Forty years to the day that William the Conquerer landed at Pevensey Bay, the Saxons attained revenge for Hastings, when a largely Saxon army under King Henry 1st, defeated the Norman army of his elder brother, Duke Robert of Normandy.



Alan Whitehead's M45 Saloon passes the grandstands. Photo: Courtesy of Aston Martin Lagonda.



Bill Ambro's LG6. Beautiful paintwork! That's John Clayton's XK 150 reflected on the driver's door. Photo: Courtesy of Aston Martin Lagonda.

Robert was captured and spent the remaining 28 years of his life in captivity - and the precedence of England over Normandy started from that Battle of Tinchebrai. We were surprised to be the first of the main party to arrive at La Mierre farmhouse - a lovely spot. For a considerable time, no-one else appeared, surely they hadn't all broken down? No doubt they were enjoying themselves eating and drinking en-route - conduct unbecoming serious rallyists!

A quick check the following morning revealed that nothing had fallen off, no water required and no oil since leaving Harrogate - too good to last? A pleasant day meandering around the local area. Tonight, road blocked by an accident on return from Celebration Dinner. exciting finding the way back along First time I have ever narrow lanes. used the lights at night. Amazingly I could see the road ahead! Didn't think that was possible with "vintage" lights. Took it in turns with the Seabrooks to Their lights are lead the way. subsequently particularly good discover they cheat - Halogen bulbs!

Saturday a.m. An easy drive to the circuit, but failed to pass any petrol A big thrill when we were ushered onto the circuit. Amazed when we started the second lap. The car said "Can we go a bit faster?" I said "No overtaking" but we slowed down to give a decent gap to the next car and did a quick burst up to 80 m.p.h. before the next corner. Hang the tail out - that's £10 of rubber gone. "Now old girl," the car, not Sarah, "just because you were 2nd in the 1973 B.D.C. Lagonda race, there's no need to show off!" completed more sedately; a 3rd lap, we'll Passed Alistair run out of petrol! Barker's V12 at the side of the track, has he run out? (Apparently not, just a minor problem). Some relief when we were flagged off.

Incidentally, my copper mallet is clipped to the bulkhead and I was amazed and amused how many Frenchmen asked me what it is for, apparently being the most impressive part of the engine compartment. What is French for "to tune the engine"?

Saw the start of the race proper, but very difficult to sort out exactly what was happening. On the way back to the farmhouse, the charging became exceedingly erratic. Had intended to (but didn't) replace the brushes as a precaution before leaving. Next morning bolted down breakfast, removed dynamo, hurrah, worn brushes, new ones fitted, commutator expertly fettled by Roger Seabrook and a nice fat charge.

During the whole morning one could hear the pastoral sounds of the fettlers at work in the farmhouse courtyard, relieved only by the occasional expletive! In afternoon, returned to circuit in Roger's car to see the finish. Am ashamed to confess that this is the first time I've driven a 2 litre and was impressed by the pulling power of the car with a full load.

Next morning, said our good-byes and beginning to feel sorry we were not on the Vichy trip. No problems on return to Cherbourg, but it was sad to see two splendid Lags on recovery trailers - trust problems weren't serious. Journey back to Harrogate also uneventful, but it seems a long way north from Southampton. No oil used in 1000 miles, the old girl did very well.....Sarah didn't do too badly either.

What a super trip, congratulations and thanks to all the organisers.

Peter Russell-Floyd

A Passenger's Viewpoint

MY memories of this trip are truly happy, in spite of, I confess, a few initial qualms! When we set sail from Harrogate, although the calendar said mid June, we were wrapped up to the nines, with the hood up at my insistence - it felt like winter and I hoped it would be warmer in France.

Once we'd arrived for the assembly at Sainsbury's at Staines I enjoyed myself chatting to other club members and former Lagonda factory employees - some nice old boys - and not forgetting James Crocker! Shortly after the pleasing spectacle of legions of coloured baloons released over Sainsbury's, we were patriotically "flagged off" by John Hindmarsh's daughter, Sally, who had arrived in the 1935 winning Lagonda. We left behind us a few bemused Sainsbury shoppers, trying to extricate themselves from the car park!

From thence, wagons-ho to the Novotel at Southampton, where we met other participants and enjoyed an excellent value for money repast. Then it was line up for boarding the night ferry: we were on our way to France. I was amazed just how many cars could be squeezed nose to tail in the bowels of that ferry.... Roused at dawn, hurly burly getting off the ferry and drove towards Hebecrevon (lovely quiet roads) for our breakfast stop and, as usual, I was feeling hungry!

I shan't forget the Chateau de la Roque, which, with its beautiful grounds, appeared quite enchanting in the early morning French sunshine, complete with a friendly kitten and two lovely dogs. The, on to our farmhouse, La Mierre, run by the charming non-English speaking Madame Dubois, who greeted us. Shortly after, we made the acquaintance of Messrs Cooke, Purdey and Dutton (a lively trio of 'bon viveurs'), who had arrived a few days in advance

in Roger's Squadron Blue 1934 M45, and whose considerately placed signs we managed to ignore, thus approaching at the wrong gate (my fault, Peter's never thought much of my navigational skills).

Tonight the en plein air reception by the Mayor and people of Auvers was heartwarming - they really made us feel we were honouring them somehow by being there. Copious amounts of delicious canapes and drink appeared, followed by the speeches. Tom Harrington was a real asset throughout the trip, not least for speaking perfect French and interpreting!

Friday, being a "free" day, we followed David Hine's suggestion and took a scenic route through the Sarthe region, sunbathing and picnicing by a quiet river, visiting tiny Solesmes with its huge Abbey, and the town of Sable, famous for its biscuits. We enjoyed a dinner tonight and another opportunity to admire everyone's cars. The best part of the evening for a romantic like me was actually the drive home throught idyllically unlit country roads, because I have never before observed a night sky replete with such luminous stars - I suppose most places in England are now so built up that the street lamps dull our senses; anyway, I was glad that I did not have to drive, because I was able to put my head back and absorb this awe-inspiring spectacle.

Saturday, the big day! After breakfasting on omelette, toast and our own English marmalade (never travel without it!), we drove to Le Mans, following the consistently excellent directions in our blue rally manual. Most thrilling thing today was undoubtedly our three laps around the track prior to the actual race. It was rather nice also being waved at and cheered by spectators - now I know how



Go-faster goodies on the Oates' 12/24! Photo: Courtesy of Jeremy Oates



To boldly go where no Lagonda has gone before. The Turners explore rural France! Photo: John Turner

the Queen must feel. I was thinking of all the famous past racing drivers who'd driven on this same track. We had fun this evening at Madame Dubois's BBQ thankfully held in a large barn, because it was hammering down with rain. Partly due to this, we did not return for the

night racing.

On Sunday we returned to watch the racing with Roger, Ann and "young" Peter Seabrook in their 1929 2 litre. I think they watched it all, but I'm afraid that for the last hour or two I was enjoying being in the Motor Museum (nice and quiet!), wishing that the racing cars outside still resembled the 1930's Bentley I was admiring inside - these modern racing cars have nil character to me. One of the museum walls sported an unobtrusive but original Brooklands poster and a small plaque noting the "twinning" I think of Le Mans with Brooklands, which, I understand, were founded within a year of each other. Lots of other things I found interesting, including a large book of famous French racing drivers, with a photograph of "Fifi" Etancelin (real name Philipe), whose trade mark was to wear his cap back to front, as is so currently fashionable. Anyway, the race was all over when I emerged, back to the present, but it was nice that Britain had done well.

Sadly, like all good things, the Le Mans Lagonda trip ended for us on the Monday. It was pretty hot driving to Cherbourg, but at least we arrived without mishap, as did the oldest and, to my mind, the bravest car on the trip - Jeremy and Margaret Oates' 1924 12/24. It really was a shame to see two of our Lagondas arrive back on transporters. A long drive to Harrogate, but although we must have done some 1000 miles, Peter was pleased the old girl had managed to stand the course (the car - not me!).

In summary, I enjoyed this trip very much indeed and met some super people. I'd like to express appreciation to those responsible for its superb organisation, without which it couldn't have been so successful. Thank you very much and can we have another one next year?

Sarah Russell Floyd

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Parading in front of the Le Mans grandstands prior to the parade laps. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller



That's what I call a cherished number plate! Chris Salyer's LG45 from Oaklahoma Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller

Le Mans 1995 -A Personal Diary

LEFT home at 10.00 with Duncan and followed A30 all the way to Staines, had to remove blanking plate from in front of radiator and add water, due to overheating. Magnificent reception at Sainsbury's with more Lagondas than I have ever seen. Many Club members and many old Lagonda employees there, including one 90 year old who had known Wilbur Gunn and had worked on 2 litres. Signed on, fixed rally plate across front of car, although this was to give trouble later.

The rally was started about half an hour late by Sally Harrison, daughter of John Hindmarsh. Much confusion on leaving, as the Sainsbury's marshals insisted on sending all the cars around the car park twice, resulting in an unbroken circle of Lagondas, from which there appeared to be no escape!. Stopped at Peter Whenmans to sat hallo to his boys, Denis Jenkinson was there, nice to see him as he has not been well recently.

On the motorway our engine began to overheat quite badly, so we pulled off and moved the rally plate, which was partly blanking the radiator, fixing it to the front apron. At Rownham service station we were told the allocation of free petrol had already been exceeded, but he relented and gave us our share, some later members were not so lucky. Starter jammed here and I had to crawl underneath to free it. Also added more water to radiator and filled up our water cans. This overheating seemed curious, 2 litre Lagondas don't usually have this problem. Peter Whenman suggested that the radiator core might be partly blocked, preventing proper water circulation.

Arrived a Southampton, excellent buffet dinner at Novotel. From there to ferry, where some Lagondas had problems on the ramp, due to their drooping exhaust systems. The assembly of Lagondas on the car deck made a fine sight.

Not much sleep, as summoned by steward at 3.30 to vacate cabin. Disembarked and on the road by 4.15. Followed RN13, but diverted briefly through St Mere Eglise, the first town liberated in France by American Airborne forces. They have a dummy paratrooper hanging by his 'chute from the church tower, as of course happened on June 6th 1944. Not many people about at this early hour.

After some confusion with our route card, arrived at le Chateau de La Roque for breakfast, a beautiful serene spot. As we were all about an hour early, breakfast took some time, but was excellent. Visited a very interesting small war museum at St Martin des Besaces. The village was on the border of the American and British sectors and was liberated by the British. Given a personal tour by the very pro-British young curator.

Back on the road again, stopped at Tinchebray for our standard lunch - a beer and a sandwich, the latter comprising half a baguette about 2 feet long! Duncan's was ham and mine a very tasty cheese.

Arrived at our accommodation at Belmondieres, to be greeted by the sight of several other Lagondas apparently being rebuilt. Our accommodation was absolutely ideal for this, as there were outbuildings with a bench, vice, welding equipment and, most important, boxes of rusty nuts, bolts and other useful hardware! The hot tap in our room was broken and had to be operated by a ¼BSF spanner from the Lagonda toolkit. I don't know how normal visitors manage! We didn't attend the Vin d'Honneur, David Ayre and Richard Bush spent the evening changing the cylinder head gasket on the latter's M45, to the accompaniment of comments, helpful and otherwise, from a circle of onlookers, well wined and dined.

After breakfast Richard Bush found a flat tyre on the M45, the tube proved to be ruined, so I lent him my spare tube, it was actually an 18 inch but seemed to fit his 19 inch wheel OK. Today was a free day, so was spent servicing the cars and generally chatting, before a drive to visit Sable sur Sarthe, some 20 km away.

Returned to Brulon, for another overwhelming Mayoral reception, then to le Salle de Polyvalente for a gala dinner, where the ladies had forsaken their goggles, flying helmets and anoraks for a display of the latest fashions. Champagne was generously provided by Sainsbury's, re-imported in the back of a Volvo estate! Dinner was superb.

Race day. We had to be at the circuit by 8.30, so it was up at 6.00, not a good time after the previous night's celebrations! Found our reserved parking in Garage Maison Blanc, Peter Whenman had been there since 6.00 fending off interlopers. The refreshment stand in our enclosure was very popular.

I expected the cavalcade of Lagondas to be a slow procession, but in fact it was a fast tour of the circuit, following the racing line through the corners. These are much sharper than you expect, the various chicanes, which have been introduced to slow down the race cars are very sharp and also very narrow quite a revelation when you realise the race cars approach them at 200 m.p.h. in the darkness, rain and mist of the night.

We covered three laps of the 8.5 mile circuit and began to wonder if we would be allowed to stop! Eventually we were signalled off, continuing on the old circuit, past La Maison Blanche, where John Hindmarsh had been involved in collision with the Aston Martin in 1935, fortunately with no serious damage to his Lagonda.

The historic Lagondas then went out for a second cavalcade with many other cars from le Mans' history. Peter Whenman reported 112 m.p.h on the Mulsanne straight in his Le Mans replica, not bad for a 1935 car.

Watched the start of the race proper from the Welcome enclosure for which the Club had paid 120 francs each, in addition to the general enclosure price of 260 francs. This is over £50 each, Le Mans is not cheap! Got back to the 2 litre in torrential rain and introduced Duncan to the unique experience of erecting the hood in a downpour. A French onlooker wanted to know the entire history of the car, including looking at the engine - I tried to be helpful in spite of the conditions!

Tonight we visited La Domaine de Mierre, where Madame Dubois had organised a magnificent barbecue, which was held in a barn because of the weather. Several members greatly admired the barn, which could have held at least a dozen Lagondas.

Down to the cars next morning, to find a pool of oil under David Ayre's 4½Invicta. Investigation revealed a small hole in the aluminium sump. David tried to drill the hole large enough to take a self tapping screw, but the small hole rapidly became a large one. Eventually a search through the junk boxes produced a large rusty bolt, which David managed to insert into the hole

and stem the flow of oil. The repair lasted the entire trip and le Patron didn't seem to mind the general disruption, or the oil in his car park. Duncan and I visited Solesmes, with its magnificent Abbey, but we couldn't find a suitable place for lunch, so drove back to Sable and had our beer and sandwich at a cafe which claimed to be an English pub, where we were joined by several other members of the Lagonda party.

Monday and, for us, the last day of the trip. On our way back to Cherbourg, called in again at St Mere Eglise, to visit the American Airborne Forces Museum. It includes a Wacco glider and a new extension to the museum, donated by Douglas, a Dakota, which looked in marvellous condition. Tony Sherwood was there with his two sons, Tony had flown in Dakotas and Waccos during the war, he likened the latter to a flying brick!

Back to Cherbourg, calling in at a

hypermarket, where I bought a case of wine, it wasn't very cheap and turned out not to be very good either, won't go there again! Onto the ferry, David Willoughby's V12 was pushed on board as it had stripped its timing gears. An M45 was also pushed on, having apparently progressed no further that the quayside on the outward journey, due to clutch trouble. The wisdom of recovery insurance was clear!

Home eventually at 12.30 a.m., after more overheating and another attack of jammed starter. In spite of this, it was a very successful and enjoyable 1000 miles, with a wonderful reception by the French people. Great credit is due to the organisers, especially David and Jill Hine, Tom Harrington, Peter Whenman, and Tony Mayes, not forgetting the others who helped to make this such a memorable and historic event.

Alan Elliott

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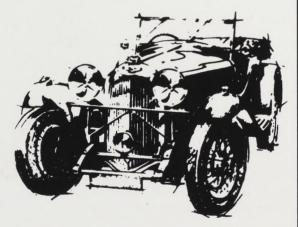
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Two 1937 team cars, so seldom seen together now, in the paddock at Le Mans. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller



David Wall leads a group for the parade laps. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller

One More Hurrah

THERE are not too many opportunities these days for an unabashed celebration. To indulge oneself in one's favourite sport, while at the same time declaring the occasion to be a time for some patriotic flag waving and chest puffing makes for an irresistible combination.

The last few years have witnessed many anniversary celebrations, but few of them would find their way into the pages of this journal, important though they were. Well, here at last is one that fits the category. The Diamond Jubilee of Lagonda's victory at the Le Mans 24 The Lagonda Club hour race in 1935. decided to hold the celebration at 60 (perhaps motivated by the vears advancing years of some Club members). My personal research among people versed in tradition showed that it indeed is possible to hold a diamond jubilee at either 60 or 75 years, or both if the Champagne holds out. I personally am delighted that I am able to use my 1933 Lagonda for such an event, before my legs can no longer contort themselves around the gear lever.

Even the organisers of the 24 hour race, the exalted Automobile Club de l'Ouest, recognised that an assembley of 70 Lagondas from all parts of Europe (I suppose that does include the UK) and a couple from America, was something special. Spectators fortunate enough to be early saw a parade of pre-war Lagondas, from an early twenties 12/24 model to the 1939 V 12 cars do three spirited laps on the famous course. All Lagonda models were represented, 12/24, 2 litre, 16/80, 3 litre 3½ litre, various models of 4½ and, of course, the V 12s. While the spotlight was on the cars which actually ran at Le Mans, many cars present had a long history. EPE 97 has campaigned regularly since its debut at the 1937 TT race, it lapped Brooklands at over 120 m.p.h. and, for a long time, held the Brooklands record of 104 miles in one hour. Owned by Terry Cohn, she was driven on the trip by Sven Erik Petersen. Brooks presented the sister team car, HHL 534, formerly owned by the late Lord Dunleath.

This was a rare occasion, when almost which featured the Lagondas prominently at Le Mans were gathered together and, additionally, travelled from the UK and Holland under their own power. Not too many vintage racing cars can make that statement. BPK 202, the 1935 winner, now the property of the Dutch Automobile Museum, came along, driven by Evert Louman, as well as both 1939 entrants, the famous V 12s that W.O.Bentley had created. HPL 448, the 3rd place car, now the pride of Bernd Holthusen of Hamburg, ran even more sweetly than ten years ago, when I had the privilege of riding in her at Le Mans during the last Lagonda blowout. HPL 449 languished abroad and was finally reunited with her engine and lovingly She joined her former teamrestored. mate at the circuit. These cars, which finished 3rd and 4th respectively, showed their thoroughbred qualities, perhaps to satisfy W.O. himself.

The trip to France began on June 14th at the site of the former Lagonda factory at Staines, now the site of a Sainsbury's supermarket. Their management, as well as the Evening Standard, graciously endorsed the festivities and offered much-appreciated support. In addition to the 70-odd cars that went to Le Mans, dozens more converged on Staines that morning, to fill the parking area to overflowing.

Sally Harrison, the daughter of John Hindmarsh, was present to wave the cars off. Also there was the present Lord Selsdon, whose father co-piloted HPL 449. A charming touch was the presence of a number of former Lagonda employees, who came forward with moist eyes to see their cars so lovingly treated. One came to Lord Selsdon, with drawings in hand, saying "I worked on that engine for your father, sir!" I doubt if any Ford employee will come to me in 60 years if my Granada is still surviving.

En route to Southampton to board the night ferry to Cherbourg, Esso kindly allowed us to top up our fuel tanks, which, in the case of the thirsty 4½s, did not do much to make the fuel gauge

quiver.

Thanks to the splendid preparation of our Chairman, David Hine and his wife Jill, the participants of the raid were treated to a variety of memorable experiences. The Mayors and residents of towns in the vicinity of Le Mans vied with each other to trade a look at our cars for some generously flowing champagne, and trade we did, happily.

As a final gesture to the historic race entrants, the organisers of the race invited the champion cars to participate in a Le Mans-type start, just before the race. Fortunately, the rains held off until the high speed machinery could provide some thrills for the blood-thirsty public. The weather grew progressively worse through the night, until half the field was eliminated and McLarens went on to win.

It was a great celebration, but the real pleasure we should all derive from this event is that our cars run well over long distances, with seldom a resort to a breakdown van and that, in being driven enthusiastically, provide for adults and young people of all nationalities a tangible living link with our history. Happy motoring!

Rudy Wood-Muller

PUB MEETS

Northern: Third Thursday, The Great Western, Standedge. Between Oldham and Huddersfield, past Floating Light towards Huddersfield. Details, Roger Firth, Tel 0161 303 9127.

Home Counties: First Sunday, The Show Boat, Harleyford Estate, Henley Road, Marlow, Bucks. Details Jeff Leeks, Tel 01494 563188.

East Kent: First Sunday, Griffin's Head, Chillenden, Nr Canterbury, from noon. Details, John Anderson, Tel 01304 613091.

Dorset: First Thursday, The Ship Inn, Wool. 15 miles E. of Dorchester, MR842868. Details Dudley Palmer Tel 01305 788458, or Peter Dobson, Tel 01202 731265.

Somerset: First Tuesday, The Strode Arms, West Cranmore, 3 miles E of Shepton Mallett. MR 668432 (VSCC Meeting)

Third Thursday, The Rose and Crown, East Lambrook, 5 miles E of Ilminster. MR 423190.

East Anglia: First Friday, Royal Oak, Barrington, Cambs. Details John Stoneman, Tel 01353 649494.

Second Wednesday, The Scole Inn, Scole, near Diss (VSCC Meeting).

Third Wednesday, The Bridge Hotel, Clayhythe, Waterbeach Cambs. Details, John Stoneman 01353 649494.

First Thursday, The White Horse, Edwardstone, MR95 2428. Details James Holland 01787 228241 or Charles Ping 01787 310559. Pub Tel 01787 211211 (Grid ref: 952428).

North East: First Wednesday, The Triton, Brantingham, near the A63T.

Midlands: October - April, last Sunday lunchtime, The Green Dragon, Willington.

West Midlands: Third Saturday of alternate months starting April 95, Talbot Inn, Chaddesley Corbett. Details, T. P. Brewster.

South Wales: First Thursday, Court Colman Hotel, Pen-y-Fai, Near Bridgend (VSCC meeting)



Tom Harrington and Jill Hine at Les Belmondieres in Tom's newly restored Rapier. John and Sue Walker behind.
Photo: Alan Elliott.



Rudy Wood-Muller prepares for a precarious tour of the Le Mans circuit on Bernd Holthusen's V12 team car. Photo: Alan Elliott.



Another shot of the cars lined up for the parade laps. Photo: Alan Elliott.



Bernd Holthusen manages to overtake the 12/24 of Jeremy Oates. Photo: Rudy Wood-Muller

Mike Edmondson 1915 - 1995

THERE was a brief report in the Newsletter of the death of Mike Edmondson in July, just a few days short of his eightieth birthday, but we owe it to him to note his life properly in the magazine.

Mike's involvement with Lagondas goes back to his boyhood, as his father, Bill, was General Metcalfe's solicitor (they lived near each other in Cheshunt, Herts). Bill was the "E" in the PERR Syndicate and also its mainspring in negotiations with the factory over the Syndicate's funding, in part, of the 1929 racing team. After the season was over, Bill became the owner of PK 9201. Mike was a schoolboy at the time, but became as involved as he could in all the affairs of the Syndicate. In 1930 the factory severed all connections with Fox and Nicholl and with the Syndicate, and the latter turned its attention to MGs, which were to become Mike's other great love. This started when Bill persuaded Cecil Kimber to build special racing Midgets for the Double Twelve, cars, which, when they arrived, proved to be too small for the massive Bill to get into, so the teenaged Mike took his place.

Continuing the MG theme, Mike and Tony Hurst bought the special N-type that John Dugdale had been driving with considerable success and, in Mike's hands, it did equally well in JCC events before the war. After the war, Mike returned to MGs and the West Essex CC. He joined up with Dick Jacobs and the Hon. Gerald Lascelles in promoting their Stapleford Hillclimb and getting it into the RAC Championship. He was racing

a ZA Magnette later and also campaigned "Henry", his famous 3 litre Lagonda. Henry started life as a 1932 "honeymoon coupe" on the older Z3S chassis. 1941 the car was in Singapore and on the Jap invasion, the owner dug a huge hole in his garden and buried the car in it. Remarkably, both car and owner survived the occupation and Henry was Mechanically he disinterred in 1946. was fine, but various tropical insects had eaten the body, so a new one was commissioned from a local Chinese carpenter, using a cigarette card picture as a drawing and some amazingly durable tropical hardwood for the It was not the prettiest body framing. ever seen, but solid and workmanlike and totally immune to rot. I am not quite clear when Mike bought Henry, it might have been as early as the 'forties, but he certainly had it when we first met in 1970, using Henry daily and racing his C-type Montlhery Midget, blowing it up, restoring it and racing it again.

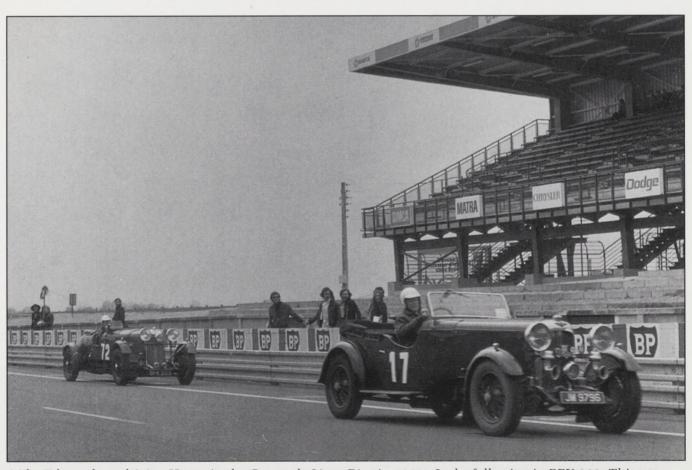
When I was researching the Lagonda history Mike was wonderfully cooperative and very patient, lending me the priceless PERR papers for years at a time, together with all sorts of other memorabilia, and happy to indulge in extended sessions of yarns about the Brooklands days. By some quirk, these sessions always seemed to take place on licenced premises. On his retirement he Loughton moved east from Chelmsford and we didn't see as much of each other, but his retirement project was to graft into Henry a Meadows 41/2 engine, followed by an Alvis gearbox and

a 3.3:1 back axle. This transformed the old warrior and there was a memorable afternoon when I played hookey from the office, together with a colleague from the County Land Agent's Department (also a friend of Mike's). The plot was for me to drive Henry as fast as he would go up and down the A10 near Ware, while Ian drove his BMW, with Mike wielding stopwatches and cameras and recording Henry in full cry. Inspired by Henry's new-found oomph, Mike then entered him for the VSCC Isle of Man events, where he acquitted himself well.

In his late sixties, Mike developed a lot of arthritis, which made walking increasingly difficult, but even when he had to be carried to the car he continued to race the MG, aided a great deal by Colvin Gunn. Eventually the sad day came when Henry had to go, as Mike, by now in a wheelchair, could no longer drive him. We concocted an advert for the newsletter and potential buyers had to undergo a shortlist and interview by the family to see if they were suitable to own him. Happily, Chris Mayes met all criteria and Henry continues to give sterling service, while Chris became a friend of the family.

Mike had several tragedies in his life, but you would never have known and, in fact, if you were asked to describe the stereotypical Lagonda Club member of the old school, you would find yourself describing Mike. Tolerant, friendly and enormous fun, we will all miss him a lot. He is survived by his daughter Jane, who has, in her time, driven the MG and we send her the Club's sincere condolences.

Arnold Davey



Mike Edmondson driving Henry in the Coupe de L'age D'or in 1972. Jenks following in BPK 203. This was taken at Le Mans or Rheims, Mike couldn't remember which. Photo: C.A.M. Mayes collection.



Martin Stretton in Simon Bull's S Type Invicta. Winner of the Ford Trophy for Road Going Sports Cars.

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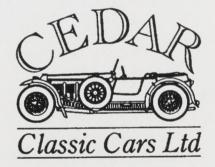
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