

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
LAGONDA CLUB

Number 176

Spring 1998



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In this instance all went smoothly, but AXX 757 does have a 200 BHP engine thus ensuring that the bride and groom could make a rapid departure!

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A 1904 Martini is currently being fully rebuilt. This is a fascinating project, because we are having to re-manufacture a vast number of new parts. We are tempted to wave the magic wand over the engine and see if we can double its original power, as we have with the Meadows engine, but the owner feels it might not be in keeping for the London to Brighton.

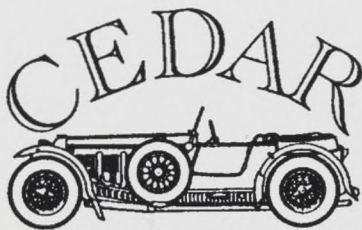
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FRONT COVER

This ought to be "Tail Piece". A spot of radiator
flushing on the Fougères Rally.

Photo: Pat Elliott

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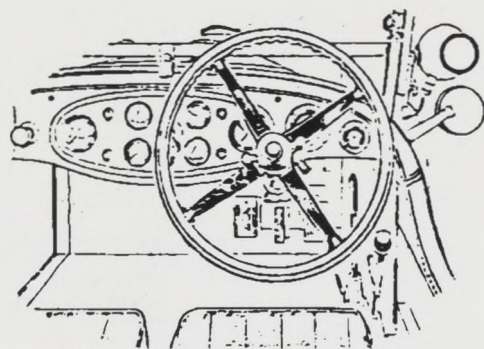
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From the Driving Seat

by Ken Painter



THERE WAS A TIME WHEN AN EARLY SPRING, such as we have enjoyed this year, would have brought out a rash of early tax applications for older cars. Happily this is now a thing of the past for most Lagonda owners, as the tax exempt status means that old cars can be kept permanently ready for those unexpected warm and sunny days in what was the "closed season" for vintage motoring.

The Rapier Register Dinner in March brought together many like minded souls, both for the dinner itself and for the lunchtime pub meet the following day. Chris and I attended the pub meet and met many old and new friends there, but curiously there was a distinct shortage of older cars in the car park. Many years ago we all travelled huge distances in our Lagondas, but the great increase in traffic and traffic speed, the advancing age of the cars themselves and, sadly, the advancing ages of many of the drivers make long journeys a rarity for many old car owners now. This isn't limited to Lagondas of course, even the so-called post war classics are a rare sight on our roads now, yet the old car movement has never been stronger, strange, isn't it?

I owe the Gostling family an apology, for allowing a mis-spelling of their name to creep into the list of awards and their winners. Although I met Harry only occasionally, he was always most friendly and helpful to me and I have many happy memories of his company at meetings around the country.

Progress on the family 2 litre Weymann saloon continues at the usual snail's pace. It feels rather like piecing together a dinosaur skeleton in the Science Museum as I have lots of curiously shaped and desperately fragile pieces of the skeleton, but find it difficult to see exactly where they should go. I now have enough new pieces of wood cut and shaped to begin to assemble the very front of the body and this will give us all a great boost to our morale as we see the new body begin to take over from the fossilised original. The current project, though, isn't woodworking at all, but involves cutting out, drilling and bending the first batch of the special metal brackets which hold each piece of timber away from its fellows.

I bought myself a pillar drill to aid this and other work on my cars, only to burn out the motor on the first one. The supplier exchanged it without question, it was only a week old after all, but the motor on the replacement burned out in exactly the same way a day or so later! Not wanting to do the same for a third time I "traded up" to a very much larger and more powerful drill from a British, rather than a Far Eastern manufacturer. It is a fine and sturdy unit, but is so heavy it took three of us to lift it onto the bench. When the Lagonda is finished I think I will move into bridge building, the drill will certainly be man enough for the job.



The Robby Hewitt Brooklands Memorial Trophy

by A. G. Brend

IN MEMORY of the late Robby Hewitt the Brooklands Society is awarding a trophy for the best Lagonda attending the Society's Reunion held every year.

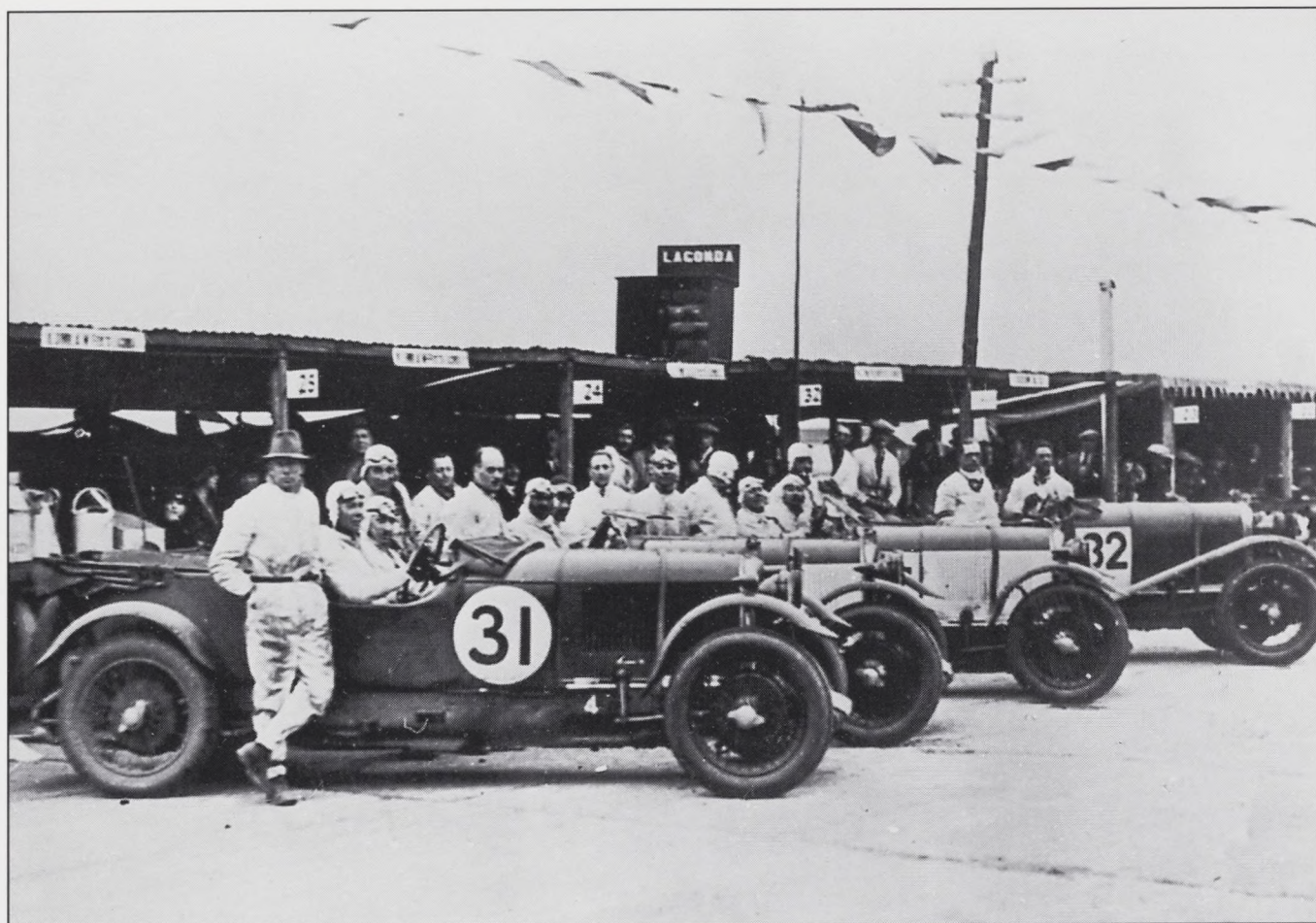
Known as The Robby Hewitt Brooklands Memorial Trophy, it was the brain-child of the executors of Robby's estate, principally Dan Margulies and Norman Goodman. Beneficiaries under her will contributed to set it up.

Robby was an enthusiastic supporter of the Brooklands Society. Her Team Cars were well known at the Reunions. I have negatives of pictures which she took at the 1970 Reunion, including a fine study of Henry (now Chris May's car). She regularly attended the monthly

film shows given during the winter months, as well as the Annual Dinners. For a time she had a car/cars exhibited in the Museum.

The Trophy was first awarded at last year's Reunion, which was attended by 5 Lagondas. John Dexter's 1928 High Chassis Tourer was judged the best, and the Trophy was presented by the Society's Patron, The Earl of March, at the Annual Dinner in November.

Purists will be interested to know that the photograph of the trophy was taken with a Zeiss Super Ikonta camera (16 frames on a 120 film) dating from the hey days of Lagonda and Brooklands.



1929 Le Mans Lagonda, Car No 9414, Registration No PK 9204 by Dan Hagen

I ACQUIRED THIS CAR IN THE MID 1930'S and was given the following technical details by Lagonda Ltd. It was built to run in the 1929 Le Mans Race, specifically to compete for the Rudge Whitworth Cup, qualification for this had been gained by Baron d'Erlanger and Douglas Hawkes, who completed the course in 1928. The car was to be known as No. 4 which was painted on the chassis and is clearly seen on photographs I have of it at Le Mans and Brooklands Double Twelve.

The frame was lightened, having specially pressed skeleton cross members with extensively drilled flanges, as also were the pedals and hand brake lever. The centre of the aluminium bulkhead was cut away and replaced by a sheet of thin gauge aluminium.

The engine had a special crankshaft and the flywheel was lightened to such an extent that the perimeter bolts were half exposed, the camshafts were steep lift and long dwell, which gave increased overlap and the firing order was changed to 1,2,4,3. The ports were polished and the inlets flared out to 35mm to take French Triple Diffuser Zenith carburettors, which needed a box full of spare jets to cope with various race regulations on fuel (at Le Mans 1929 it was 70/30 petrol/benzol). The magneto drive bevel was bronze instead of fibre and transmission was through a close ratio gearbox to a straight cut bevel rear axle, with choice of 3.6 or 4.1 ratios. The front brakes were cable, not rod operated.

The electrical system was double

pole through domestic type switches, the instrument panel had a hand operated fuel tank pressure pump and gauge, oil and water thermometers, oil pressure gauge, ammeter, speedometer and a beautifully active A.T. rev counter.

The floor was ¼" aluminium plate to conform with race regulations.

A 25 gallon fuel tank was fitted, with huge filler and excellent air tight clasp cover. There was also facility for a replenishment oil tank with release pipe to sump.

Eight Triple Hartford shock absorbers tied down the suspension.

At Le Mans it was painted green, but was re-covered black, with scarlet wings and wheels before I had it.

Original ownership of No 4 is a bit of a mystery - Fox and Nichol would have had to enter it for Le Mans, because they had been the entrants qualifying in 1928, but Robin Jackson drove it in the Double Twelve, at Phoenix Park and at other events before selling it to Mrs Dorothy Waddy in 1931.

No 4 gave me an immense amount of pleasure in the 33 years I owned and drove her over 250,000 miles. Up to the time the factory closed, I had a very friendly relationship with Lagonda's Service Dept. at Staines. We always regarded No 4 as a performance car and now it makes me sad that she has become just a museum piece.

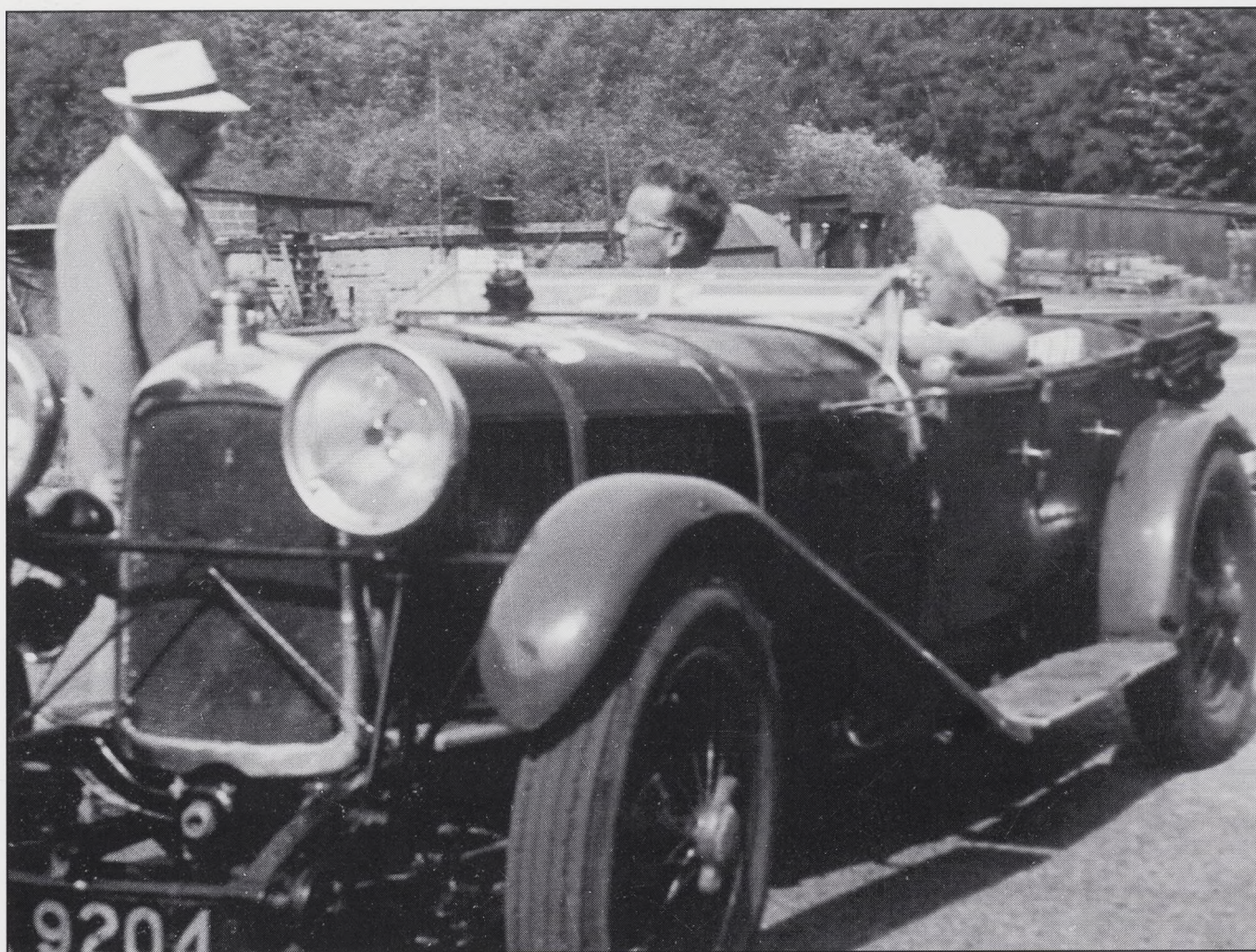


Two of Dan's photos of the car at Le Mans, 1929.

RECORDED RACING HISTORY OF 2 LITRE LAGONDA, CAR NO 9414, REGISTRATION NO. PK 9204. NO,NOMINATED AS NO 4, WHICH WAS PAINTED ON CHASSIS SIDE MEMBER:

- 1929 Brooklands Double Twelve Race, driven by R.R.Jackson and Bromwell, member of team that won the 2 litre class.
- 1929 Brooklands Six Hour Race, won 2 litre class at 63.98 mph, driven by Jackson and Bromwell.
- 1929 Phoenix Park, driven by Jackson and Bromwell.
- 1929 Ulster TT, driven by Jackson.
- 1929 Le Mans 24 Hour Race, driven by Rose-Richards and Brian Lewis, retired after 283 miles, blown cylinder head gasket.
- 1931 Won Brooklands High Speed trial, owned and driven by Mrs Waddy. Also appeared on other occasions at Brooklands.

Reference: track records.



With Arthur Fox at Brooklands Golden Jubilee celebration, 6th July 1957.

Ve Haf our Vays of Making you Drive!

by Witt Witteridge

THE ITALIANS HAD THEIR MILLE MIGLIA, we have done two retros, but in the pre-war days the Germans weren't having that and, of course, they ran the 2,000km durch Deutschland of which we did two retros, 1989 and 1990.

Norma said "Never again". She suffered a sore bum, acute fear, utter boredom, no shopping and extreme exhaustion. His nibs also suffered the former and the latter and, being a s.o.b. with a wonky left leg, the idea of doing another one was stupid and ludicrous. Being both of these, but also being extremely cussed, I sent off the 5200DM to cover the rally. this included best hotels, meals and all the other bits and pieces over eight days.

We slept on the boat from Southampton to Le Havre, did a leisurely trip across France etc. and arrived in Munchengladbach on Friday 18th July, a day early, to rest up. I filled the Lag with "blei frei", unleaded, as is all petrol in Germany, except for the "plastic leaded" stuff, which, I was told, was dearer rubbish and that I should buy a bottle of "additive" and give a shot to each tankful. It seemed to work!

"D" day dawned with an enormous gathering of exotic motor cars, eventual tally of about 230 vehicles, but only 76 pre-war ones to gloat over. We usually win a small trophy for the best Lagonda, being the only one there of course, but, curses, there was another M45, continental, owned by a German!

The first car off, a Bull Nosed Morris, departed at 0730 and the rest at half minute intervals, with the usual mini test, ie stop on mark and cross the next one in 3.4 seconds, without stopping. The times varied each day, the route was coded, eg R.L.A. (traffic lights), V (give way), etc, with distances at each point to 0.001 km; there were 500-600 such

instructions each day! The dreaded important "route stamping places" were often in some difficult to find pedestrian area in villages and towns and were choked with well-wishers, with the Burgomeister shaking hands and wishing us a guten fahrt and the presentation of local goodies, wine and the like, not to mention the tourist leaflets that filled the car by the end of the day. These stops, 14 - 20, played havoc with the time and that slow car was in front again. During the day there was sometimes another test, to average a given kmh over a given distance, my speedo is hardly accurate. We arrived in Frankfurt with a huge traffic snarl up and reached the hotel about 2030, with Norma in tears, as we got a bit lost and were rescued by a couple who were members of the organisation. Paper distance for the day was 502.15km but we managed more!

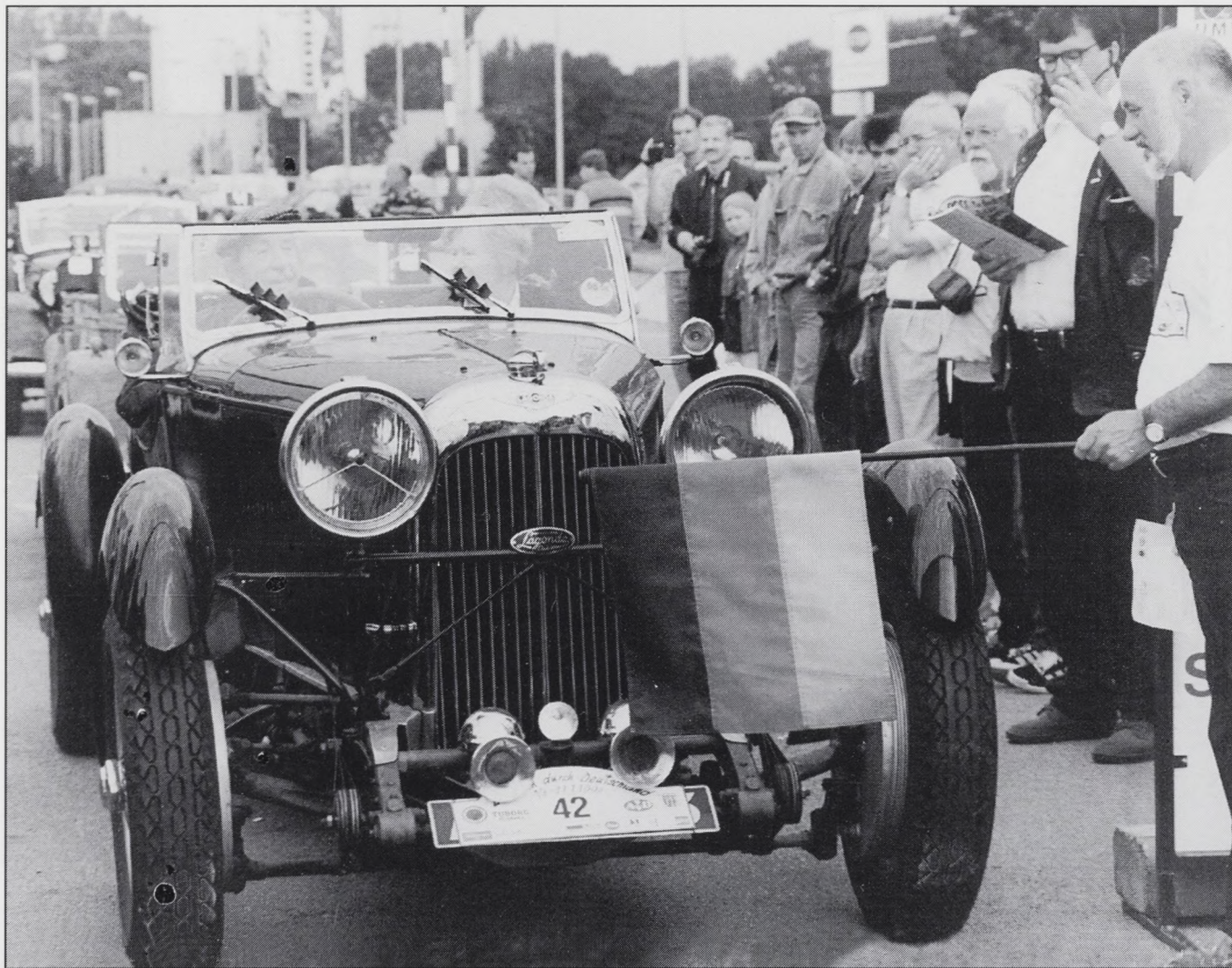
Monday was an "easy day", only 394.90km to Stuttgart, but with the usual checks, Norma cried again. We were all up to 2 hours late and got to the hotel around 2000 hours.

However, she is as cussed as I am and her navigation became razor sharp, full marks to her. On the following days I began to feel the weaker member of our team, but, again cussedness recovered my ego to the end. The paper distance was 2904km, but allowing for navigation error it was at least 3000.

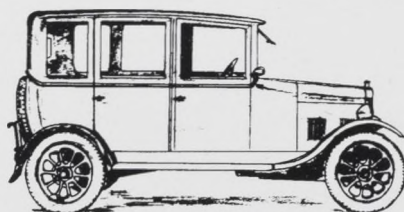
The roads in East Germany have improved from impossible to dreadful, the norm being cobblestones, interspersed with holes and almost decent surfaces. The people in E.G. seemed friendlier than W.G., more so in the south, with a more relaxed style of life. We had very heavy rain at times, hood up, hood down and still Norma didn't cry any more!

Sunday was prize day and farewell to a wonderfully organised rally, done, as always, by Gunter Kron and his team. We were about to leave when a huge cheer went up and Norma and I were escorted to the rostrum to receive a gold (colour) cup. As the announcement was made in German we are still not sure for what! Another goody, amongst dozens, was a large beachrobe/towel. I told Gunter the English didn't use them to bag the best

spot like the Germans. The old Lag never missed a beat the whole of the time, in spite of the severe shaking over some of the roads and the last part of the journey home was done cruising between 70-80 mph. Several Germans wanted to buy it and were surprised by the obvious power of the monster. Pity we didn't give it a treat with a go at the Mercedes team and the SSKs, which were missing this year.



Witt and Norma at the start of the Rally.



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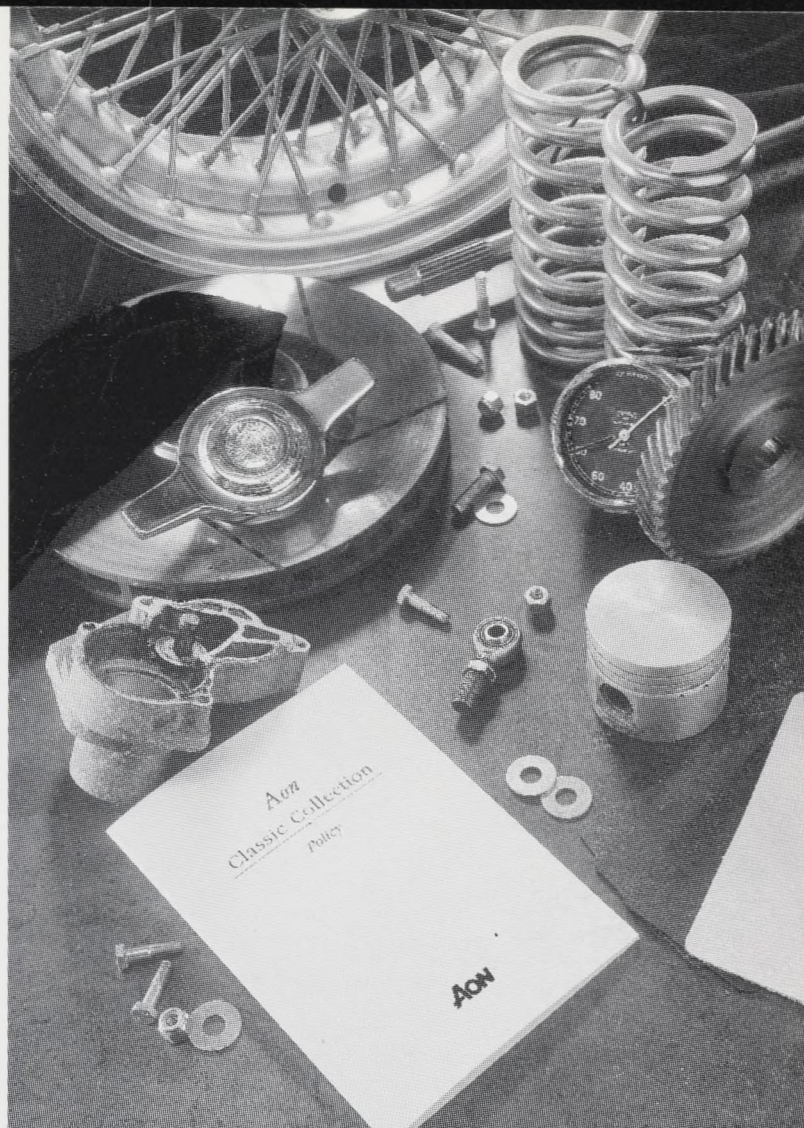
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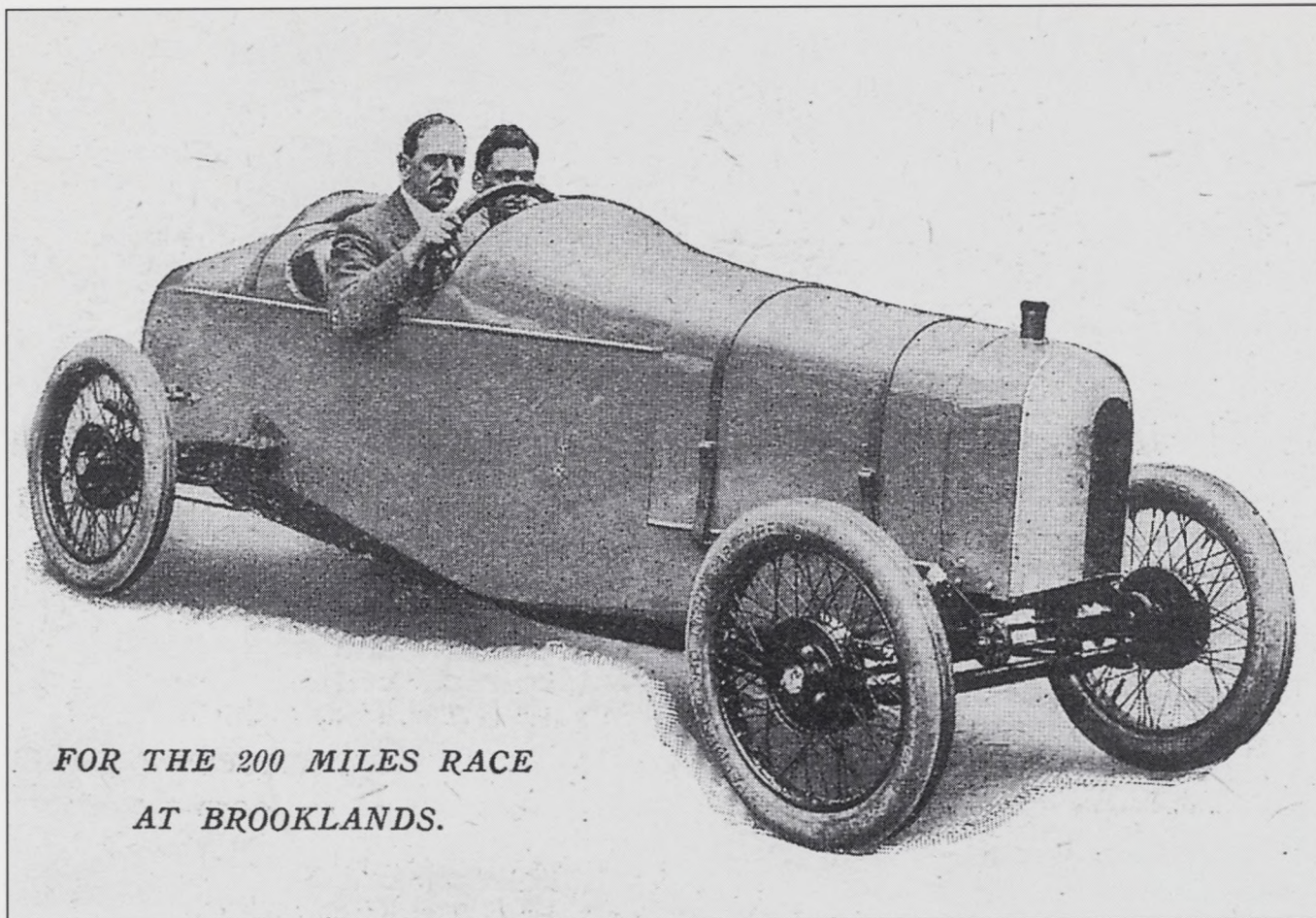
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Recreating the 1921 11.9 hp Racing Car(s)

by Jeremy Oates

I AM NOT THE FIRST PERSON to try and produce a copy of the two-seater cars that briefly raced at Brooklands in the 200 mile race in 1921 and 1922 and, at this point, have not got any further than any of them either.

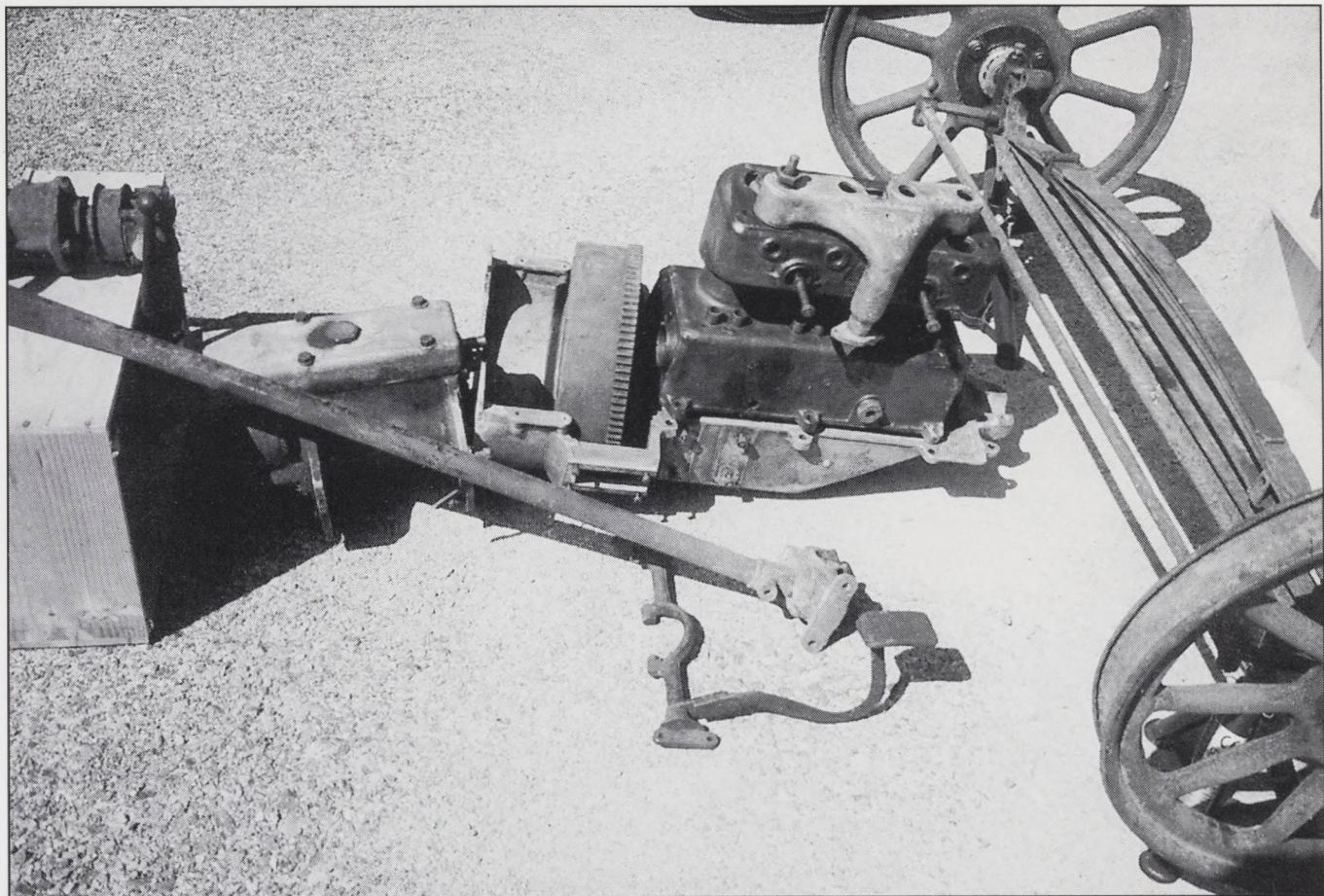
Like most owners of 11.1's or 11.9's, our garages seem full of engines, but very short on anything else. My embryo idea started with an engine which had been given to me along with the original box of bits to make an 11.9 and a set of artillery wheels found in Brighton 15 years ago.

A chance encounter with Brian Smith - who had a similar plan - yielded a pre-1920 engine (too early) with crankcase, top and head cast in one piece in very good condition and a gearbox

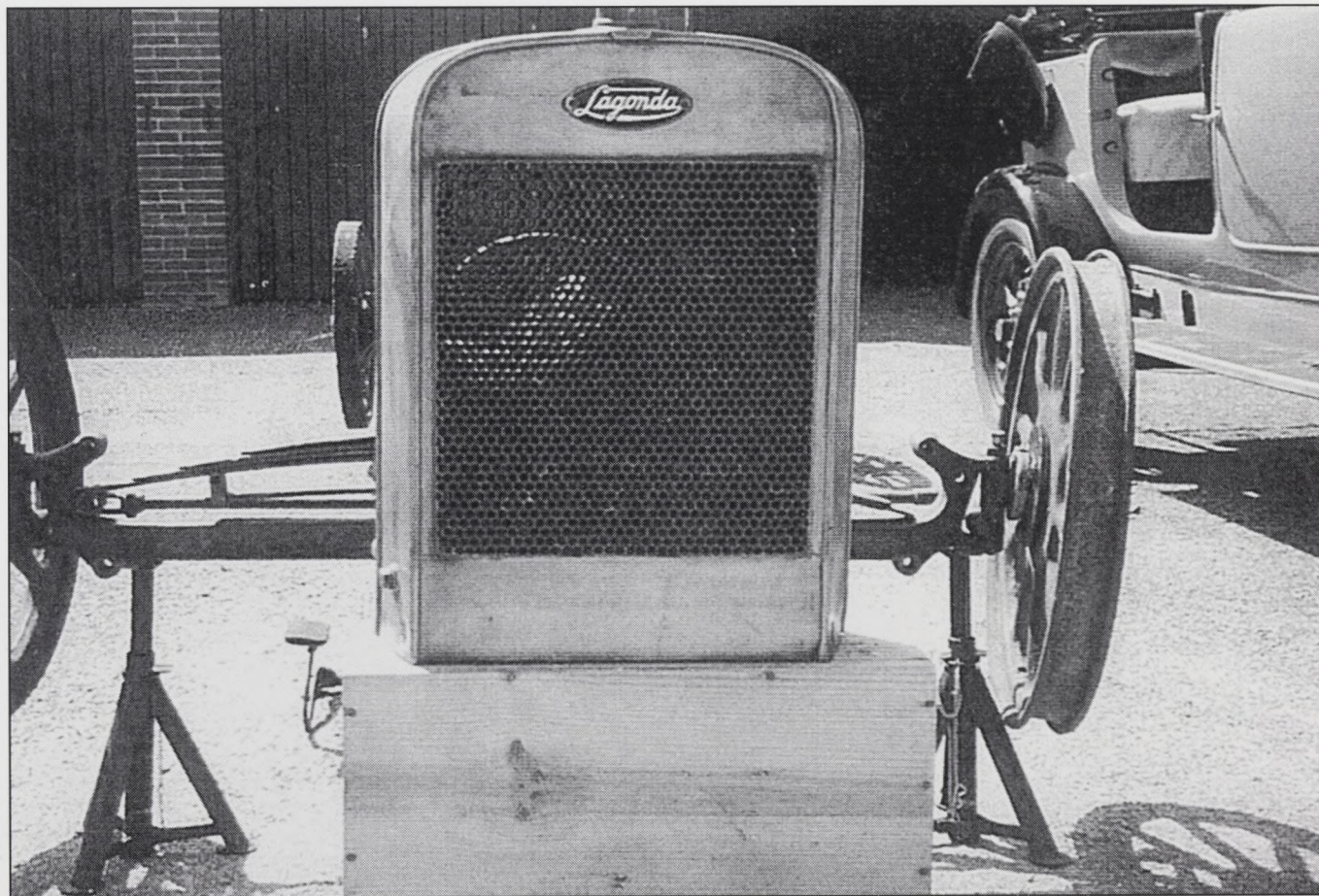
transmission brake and cone clutch.

Arnold Davey then kindly put me in touch with Pat Sage, whose garage disgorged an early front axle without front brakes, one and a half correct engines, a rear axle - very early - torque tubes, most of a steering column and a radiator.

With the help and moral support of Arnold Davey I have assembled about a dozen photographs of the cars taken from most angles and, with the aid of a lady photographer/computer enhancer, have been able to improve slightly on the originals. The sources of these photographs are original Autocar magazines, Beaulieu and the Brooklands Society.



Can anyone help in this heroic effort?



The time has now come to make decisions on the manufacture of the missing bits and listed below are my outline ideas:

Tyres: 710x90 beaded edge (no-one makes 710x85 any more).

Wheels: manufacture new hubs and spokes.

"Chassis": two rails 1½" angle iron to the same shape as 1924 12/24, with one steel bulkhead at rear of engine and one in front.

Engine: nearly standard. Side draft carburettor currently a large Zenith - but this does not tally with a blown up picture of that side of the engine.

Manufacture new exhaust, as per photographs at the time.

Instruments: AT Rev. Counter and Speedometer.

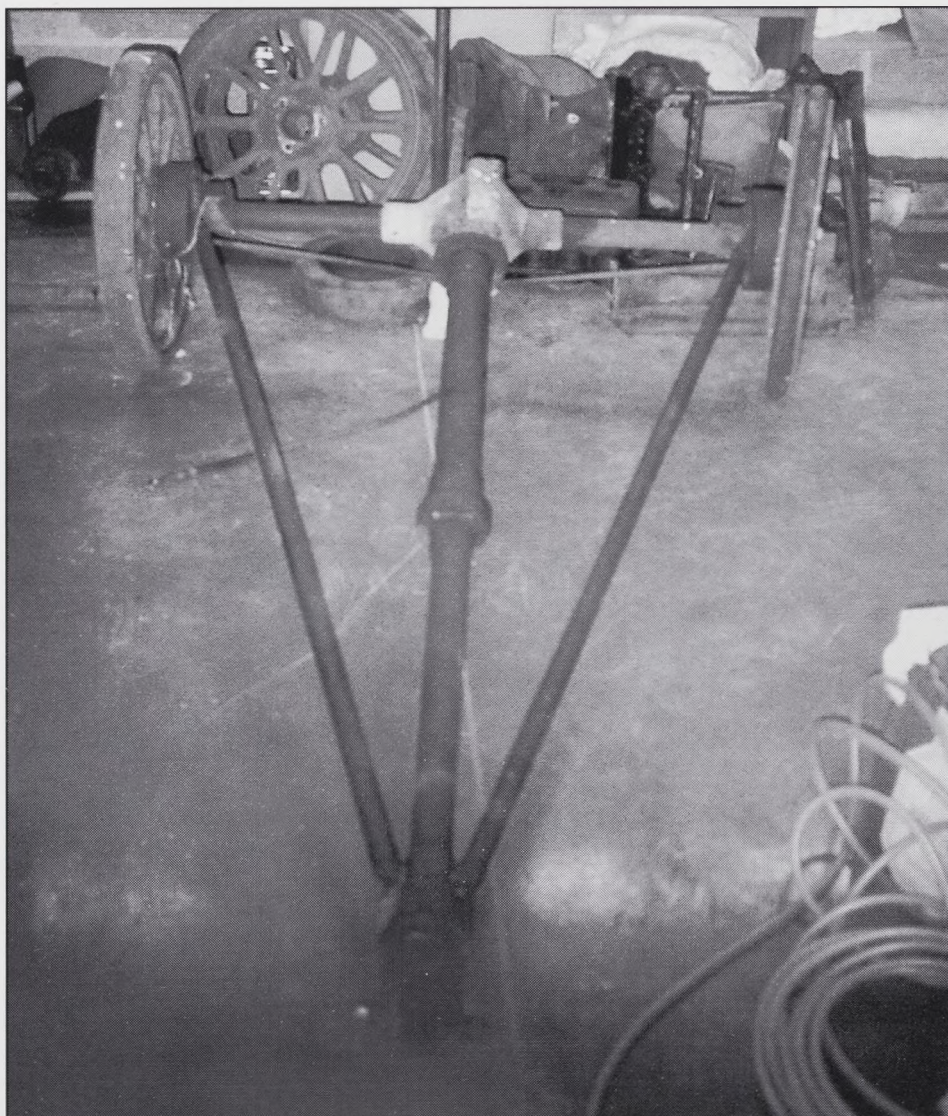
Rear axle: increase ratio to attain a top speed of 90+ m.p.h. The current top

speed of my 12/24 seems to be about 43 m.p.h.

Should anyone be able to add their input to this project, have any photographs, articles, thoughts, or spares lurking about in the woodshed, then I would be most grateful to hear from them. I will only get one chance at this, so it would be nice to receive as much information as possible now to try to reproduce the vehicle as closely as possible.

John Scholey has once again volunteered his assistance as the brains and skills to this project, although he really cut his teeth on the V12 Le Mans cars at the factory in 1939.

I can be contacted by telephone on 01730 825 561, by Fax on 01730 825 077, or you can write to: Jeremy Oates, Old Ditcham Farm, Ditcham, Petersfield, Hampshire GU31 5RQ.



The Fougères Rally 1997

by Alan Elliott

TAKE some twenty Lagondas and their crews, convey them across the channel to France, add the Brittany and Normandy scenery and historic chateaux, include the superb June sunshine and, above all, the enthusiastic organisation of Patrick Rollet - and you have the Fougères Rally!

When Pat and I first saw the proposals for the event, we said "That's for us". We enjoy France and had recently returned from the 1996 Claret and Classics Rally, which had been an excellent event, but rather hard work - and Bordeaux had been quite a long tedious drive.

The thought of crossing the channel, followed by a modest drive to Brittany was very attractive. Patrick Rollet is an extremely enthusiastic Lagonda Club member and he had already run the event for twelve years. Its full title is "les Recontres Franco-Britanniques de Voitures de Collection", but, this time, the Lagonda Club were invited as "Guest of Honour". A phone call to Patrick produced a sheaf of papers - very comprehensive information - and we soon sent our entry.

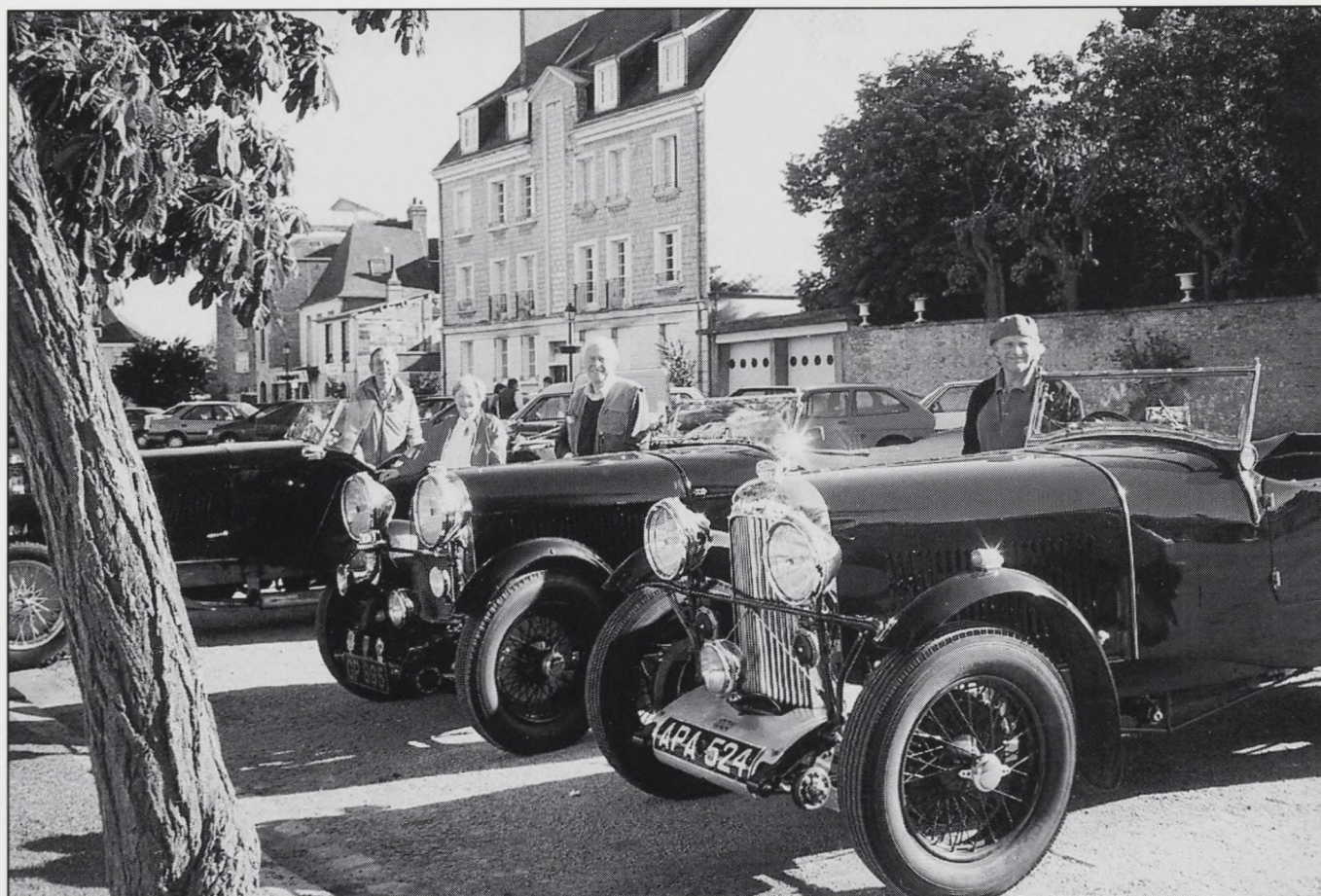
I had already read in our Newsletter that the Club intended to appoint a person to be the contact point on this side of the channel, but I didn't know who this was to be. However, this was made clear when I received a telephone call from Colin Bugler. As I was taking part in the rally, would I take on the role, as "Liaison Officer", to send out the information to interested Club members, generally to do whatever was necessary on this side of the channel and to liaise with Patrick Rollet? Like most things, this job turned out to involve much more than anticipated.

We managed to obtain extremely

good rates with P & O Ferries - almost half the normal fares. Most of us took the overnight boat from Portsmouth to Cherbourg, arriving early on the Saturday morning. Then a quick drive down to Carentan for breakfast, where the Lagondas parked in the early morning sunshine in the town square attracted much attention. Continuing the journey, we arrived at Patrick Rollet's estate, la Rude Veillais near Fougères and parked under the pine trees. Patrick and Julie had certainly been busy preparing the gardens! In addition to the Lagondas, there was a strong Alvis contingent, together with many other makes from Britain and the local enthusiasts from France, over 100 vehicles in all. Patrick's own 1932 Lagonda 16/80 was entered. This car is completely original and has never been restored. It has very unusual aluminium bodywork with original paintwork and has spent 40 years in the U.S.A. Patrick was also very busy with his loud-hailer, giving all the necessary instructions.

After very welcome coffee and much socialising with other competitors, we all set off to the fortified farm of Mesaubouin for lunch. Patrick had certainly found picturesque places for us to visit, all very much off the normal tourist routes. Lunch was a very leisurely affair, in the French tradition and, by mid-afternoon, most of us were ready for the final drive of the day, to our accommodation.

The majority of the Lagonda entries were located together at la domaine de Fretay, the site of a former fortified manor house, although little remained of the original house. It had been sadly neglected for many years, allowed to fall into decay and then, finally, blown up! However, various outbuildings remained



Early morning sunshine at Carentan. Witt & Norma Wittridge – M45. Alan Elliott – Two Litre Carry Stone in the 1933 Monte-Carlo Rally Two Litre of T. C. Mann. Photo: Pat Elliott



Lagonda-ing is awful hard.

and these provided separate accommodation located around a vast wooded park, with granite cottages, farm buildings and an old chapel. The whole was surrounded by a three metre high stone wall - it was not clear whether this was to keep the local populace out or the inmates in!

The whole atmosphere was very close to nature. David Willoughby's room had an entry into the roof space, where there appeared to be a length of cable. However, when prodded with a stick, eyes appeared and it slithered away. Le patron explained that these snakes were really quite harmless and often found their way inside. Not to worry! David and Jill Hine had very distinguished accommodation in the old Chapel, together with the Barkers. Our room had a most curious device in one corner which appeared to be some sort of trap, we really could not make out what it was, so did not investigate too closely. There was a great shortage of towels, so our old dog towel came in very useful. It is normally kept under the driver's seat for use when washing oily hands at Prescott.

The evening gala dinner was at le Chatellier, where the fabulous supercharged 1926 Grand Prix Delage of Alan Burnard was on display. This is the car driven in 1927 by Robert Benoist (or Albert Divo), and later in the 1950's was very competitive with an ERA engine. The car has been undergoing a thorough restoration, which is almost complete and it is now re-united with its original Delage engine.

Sunday morning, and we were all on parade to drive to Fougères, where we had the honour to be allowed to park within the chateau - the largest medieval fortress in Europe. John Thring and wife were most impressive wearing the kilt. We were treated to a fascinating cultural tour of the chateau and town, by General Barreau, a guerilla war specialist.

A drive through the Fougères forest brought us to Patrick Rollet's back entrance and a traditional "campagnard"

buffet lunch at la Rude Veillais. There was, of course, unlimited vins-de-pays, and still we had the glorious sunshine which continued throughout our visit. Cases of quality Bordeaux wines were available for those who did not want to return to England empty-handed and I can certainly confirm that it was very good!

Sunday afternoon saw the main public display of the cars, in the Place de l'Eglise in the attractive small town of La Bazouge du Desert. Patrick Rollet was again prominent with the microphone, until he became so hoarse, he had to take a breather! Prizes were given during aperitifs, offered by the Maire of la Bazouge in la Salle des Fêtes. Alastair Barker, with his le Mans V12 replica, gained the award for the car most people would like to own. Patrick Rollet presented the Guest of Honour award to the Lagonda Club Chairman, David Hine, who then very kindly passed it on to me, for which many thanks! It was a fine crystal decanter from Fougères. There was then just time to get back to Fretay, a change of clothing, and then off to the evening festivities, another lengthy banquet, at le Chateau du Bois-Guy. The Lagonda Club being "Guest of Honour", David Hine responded with one of his inimitable monologues, which certainly brought the house down!

Monday morning provided a welcome break to minister to the cars. My 2 litre and David Davidson's similar car (which had once belonged to Ivan Forshaw) were both suffering from blocked radiators. Le patron at Fretay kindly let us use his pressure hose to back flush our radiators and a happy hour was spent in this task, although I don't think it made much improvement! Some of the others in the party tried their hands with the go-karts, on a track around the old walled kitchen garden of the chateau.

Radiators reconnected, and it was then time for the buffet lunch, as guests of Monsieur and Madame Gardoni at le Chateau des Hurlières, Chatillon en Vendelais. Their gardens are the pride of

the area and the magnificent rhododendrons and pines provided welcome shade from the intense sunshine - just like the south of France! The Gardonis were taking part in the rally with their 1936 Citroen "traction avant" cabriolet. After the lengthy lunch, the afternoon event was to the museum of agricultural machinery and steam engines at Juvigne.

Some entrants then departed to catch the overnight ferry back to England, while the survivors attended the final banquet of the event, at le restaurant du Cellier at Landean. Many of the competitors stayed on for the six day "grand tour" of Northern Brittany, Fougères to Roscoff. Patrick's friend, Herve Hardel, organised a very good programme and French cars joined the group at the other end in Locquirec.

For us, it was back to Cherbourg. The American Airborne Forces Museum at St Mere Eglise is on the route and is well worth a visit, commemorating the liberation of the first town in France.

There is still a paratrooper hanging by his 'chute from the church tower - but he is now a dummy! The journey home was enlivened by having to stop every ten miles or so to re-fill the radiator, but we eventually made it back to Dorset.

The whole event was most enjoyable and sincere thanks are given to Patrick Rollet and his team for the superb organisation and for inviting the Lagonda Club as Guest of Honour. Congratulations Patrick!

Footnote:

A crew from Rennes technical college were making a colour video of the Fougères rally, which, by all accounts, is very entertaining. Copies are available by sending a £15 Eurocheque to: Serge Faydel, 15 rue Francois Duine, 35000 Rennes, France.

The Fougères Rally will take place again in 1998, from 23rd to 25th May, preceded by the tour of Northern Brittany. Make a note in your diaries now!



Prize giving at La Bazouge. Patrick Rollet on extreme right, with loud-hailer.

Photo: Pat Elliott

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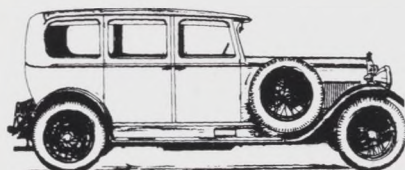
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Six Years of Highs and Lows at Coys' Historic Silverstone

by Colin Bugler

I FIRST BECAME INVOLVED WITH RACING at this event back in 1992 when Martin Grant-Peterkin was looking for Lagondas. He already had an entry from Terry Cohn's EPE 97, the famous 1936 Team Car and wanted more of the same ilk. Various team cars were considered but most of those were in the hands of people who did not wish to race them. I then mentioned that I had a replica of the 1936 TT Lagonda which I would be happy to race and that Peter Whenman raced a replica of the Le Mans winner. Martin explained that the organisers didn't want replicas.

About a week later (by which time the meeting was only about two weeks away) Martin phoned to say that he would accept my replica. "Oh, and by the way, you will need an International Racing Licence - I suggest you phone the RAC and ask them to upgrade you". I realised that I should have been obtaining upgrading signatures on my licence, but had given up doing this many years ago, thinking that I would never move outside VSCC events. The man at the RAC suggested that I wrote him a letter quoting my experience and he would see what he could do! Here the fax came into its own and within 24 hours I had the OK. "Oh, and by the way, you will need to have a stress related ECG before we can upgrade you". By now the time was getting critical and, apart from checking through the LG45 to make sure she was really fit, I rushed off to the local Clinic and did the treadmill exercise wired up to a strange machine. The result was sent off to the RAC with the upgrading application and the International Historic Licence arrived on the Thursday morning about three hours before I was due to leave for Silverstone! A close run thing.

Arriving at Silverstone, Valerie and I were overwhelmed by the difference between this International event and a normal VSCC meeting. The paddock area was completely different and our caravan, which normally joins similar outfits behind the paddock, was now dwarfed by the massive motorhomes - many with European number plates - which crowded the camping area. Other areas were unrecognisable as they were covered by marquees, displays, funfairs, etc. As Valerie and I were also running the Club's regalia stall in the huge Lagonda Club marquee, we realised we had a very busy weekend ahead of us.

Friday morning consisted of signing on, a first testing run and then scrutineering. Murphy's Law intervened and my exhaust system came adrift on the track. By the time the scrutineer arrived I had jury rigged it with some metal from an oil can and two big jubilee clips - not the sort of fitting to impress a scrutineer - but he made no comment.

Saturday morning was a qualifying session with the first heat of the racing after lunch. These Historic Silverstone races are in two heats of eight laps each on Saturday and Sunday, the full G.P. circuit being used. The two performances are aggregated to produce the final result. They have always been a two driver race but, back in 1992, this rule was not enforced and it was possible to have one driver, provided he called in at the pits for the official change of driver, jumped out of the car and jumped in again. The Saturday afternoon race started well, as far as I was concerned, with the 4½ overtaking several cars at the start until baulked by traffic. After about two laps, the engine started to fade. I came into the pits for the "driver change" but she seemed to be running OK so I

went out again. The problem continued and, in the end, I completed only about five laps. After exploring various theories I realised that the twin SU petrol pumps had decided to choose this vital time to say good-bye. Rob Pollock had run a big end on his Invicta and very kindly grovelled underneath the chassis to remove his SU pump and we rigged this for the Sunday session. All was well and I completed the eight laps but, of course, the 4½ was well down in the results because of the retirement on Saturday.

The only other Lagonda excitement that weekend was that EPE had overheated on Saturday and, first thing on Sunday morning, Terry and I removed the radiator and back-flushed it. I tried to persuade him to adopt the Alan Brown sock technique, but he obviously thought I was unhinged and didn't remove his footwear!

All this time, Valerie had been running the Regalia stall with some help from Jill and Jeff Ody and John Breen. This was the first time we had been involved with an enormous marquee and learned much for subsequent years.

An exhausting weekend for all of us, but we felt that a lot had been achieved.



In early 1993, Martin Grant-Peterkin told us that the BRDC, who run this event, had decided that cars in the pre-war Sports Car Race should be pre-1932. This ruled out the LG45, but he indicated that an appropriate 2 litre would be acceptable. By that time, Alan Elliott had left the racing scene and my 2 litre was the only one which was currently available. It soon became apparent that she was one of the slowest cars in the race, but she toiled along, completed 14 laps out of 16 during the two days, being last but one in the results. Allowing for four retirements I felt that she had done quite well. Our eldest son Martin co-drove and thoroughly enjoyed the weekend.

Lessons learned from the previous

year on the Club marquee side had resulted in a young enthusiastic sub-committee chaired by James Greenwood organising an impressive display of Lagondas and photographs, together with the usual regalia - it all looked very good.



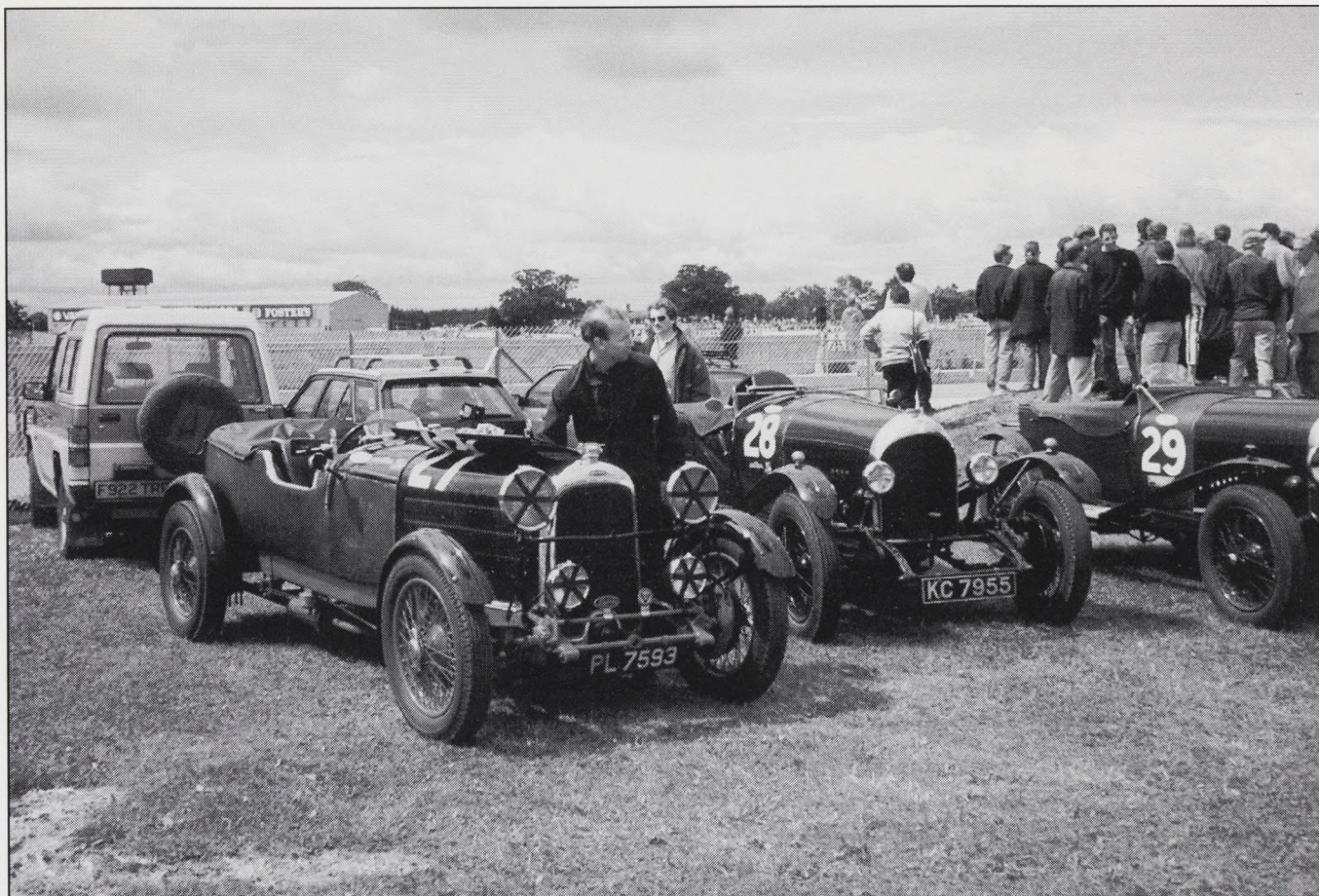
1994 was another 2 litre year, this time marred by overheating and Martin and I removed the cylinder head on the Friday, looking for blocked water passages without success. We changed the magneto and checked the timing, but the car was still running too hot. Despite this, the Lagonda was 24th out of 32 finishers, with four retirements. This was the second year that the 2 litre was the only Lagonda in this race.

As to the Club marquee, the usual regalia and photographic display were there and, on this occasion, David Ayre had worked extremely hard to produce a wonderful theme of historic racing Lagondas, which included one of Ivan Forshaw's 2 litre Team Cars, a "Double Twelve" 2 litre, a 1934/35 M45 Team Car, the two 1939 V12 Team Cars and Maurice Leo's two post-war V12 Team Cars. Some of these were inside the marquee and all excited much comment. There were very many other varied and excellent Lagondas on display just outside the marquee and the Club featured in subsequent favourable publicity in magazines.

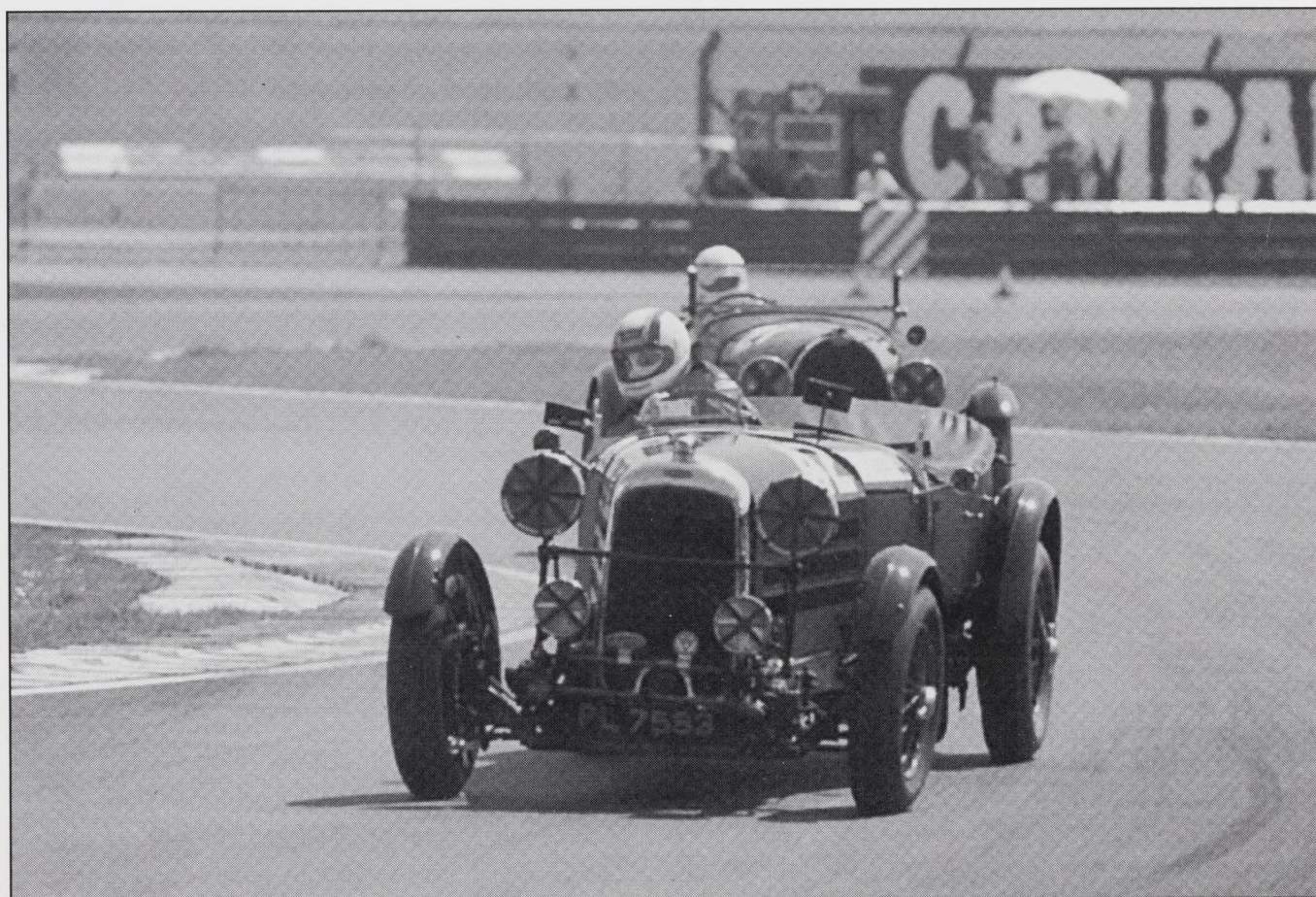


The 1995 race meeting almost turned into quite a disaster. Again the 2 litre was invited but, in the Friday morning practice session immediately before scrutineering, a rear tyre burst on the track while Martin was driving and, by the time the scrutineers arrived, we were in the middle of changing this.

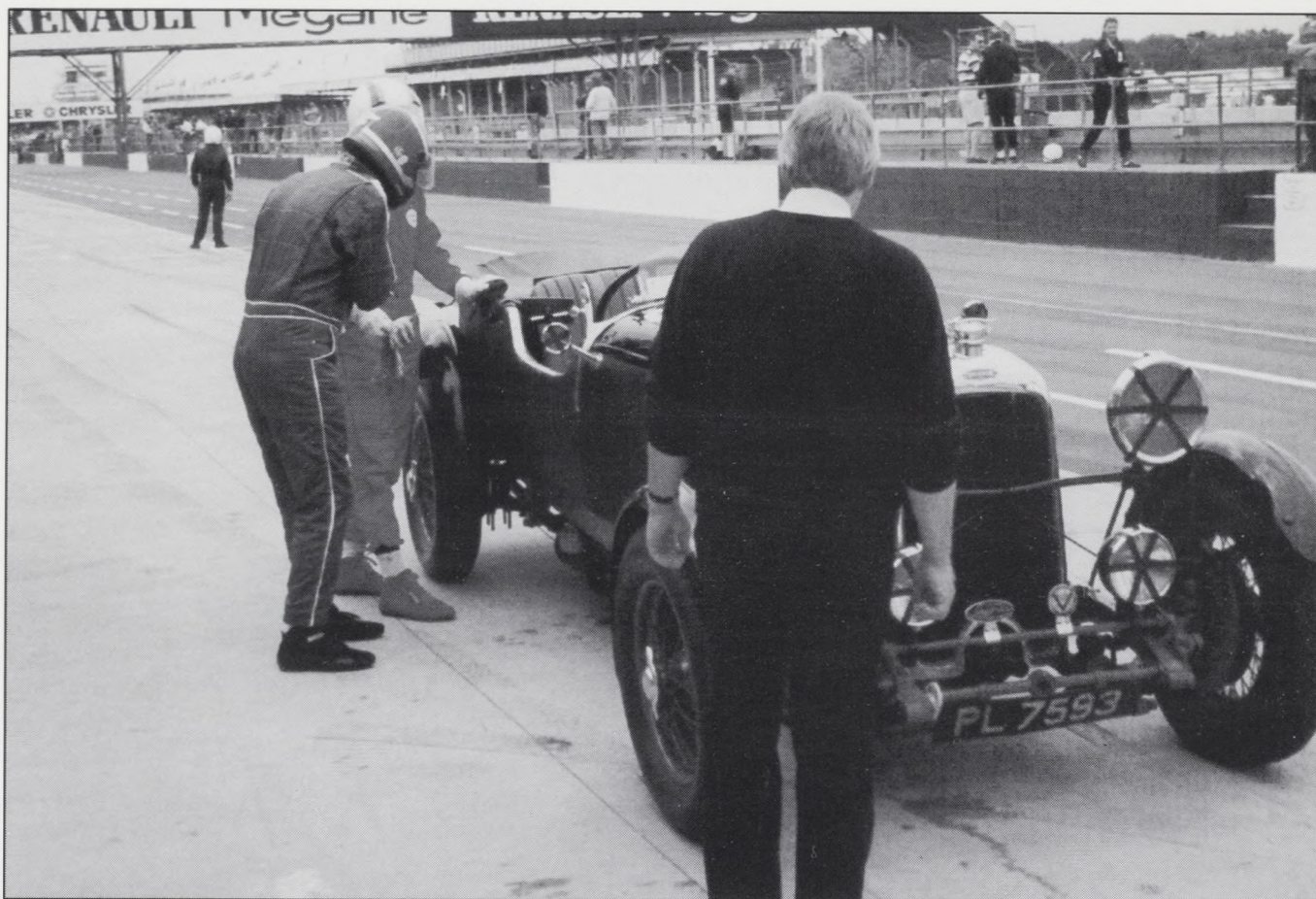
The first question from the scrutineer was "Have you got your Historic Papers?" This produced complete shock as, although I had seen some reference to FIA



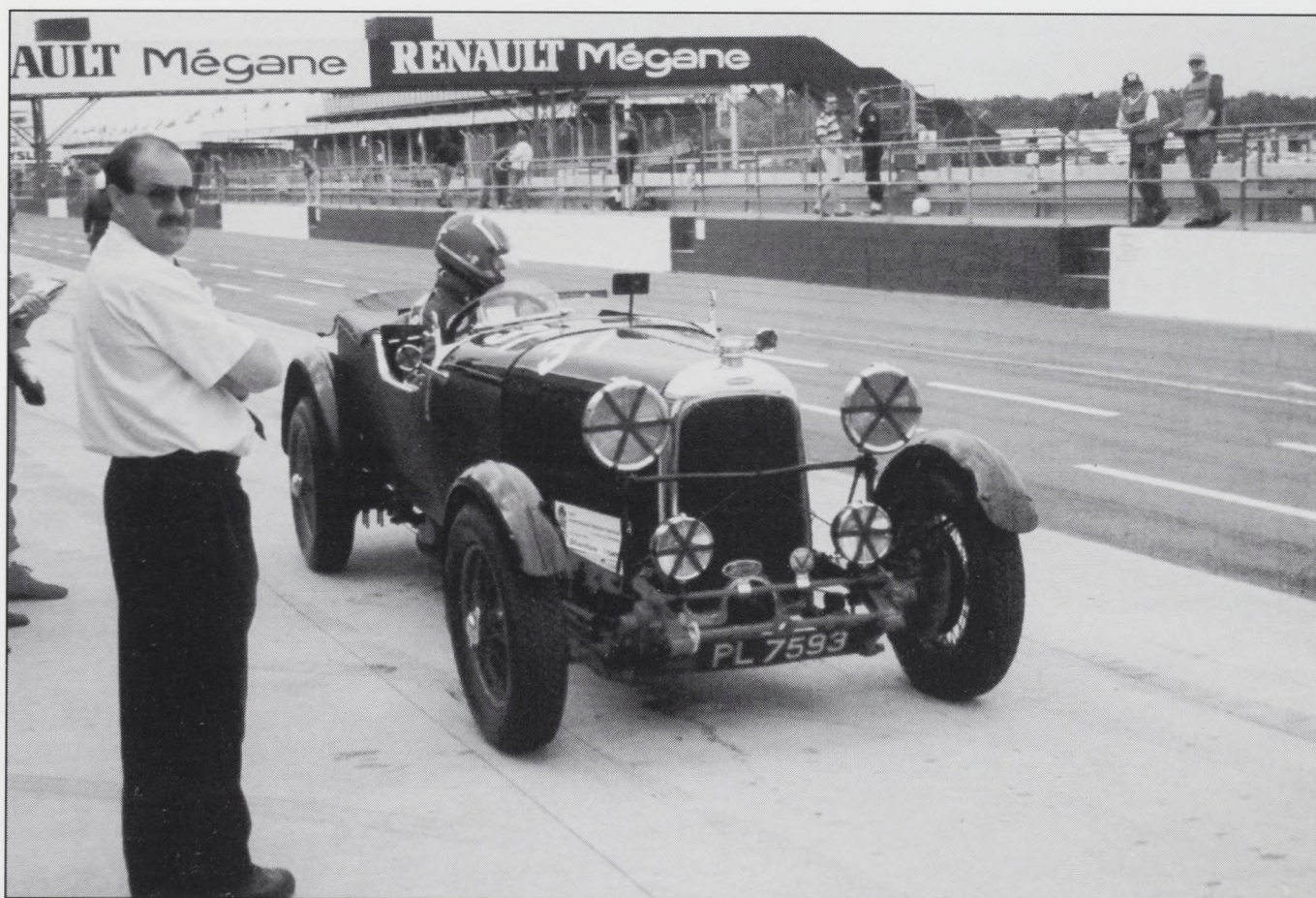
The 1993 event, Martin Bugler prepares the 2 Litre.



*1995. This picture appeared in the 1996 programme captioned as, "An early Aston Martin"!
Photo by Sutton Motorsport Images.*



1996: Changing drivers, Martin hands over to Colin



... and Colin prepares to rejoin the race.

papers in the Regulations, I had unwisely assumed (as did many others) that this related to the Grand Prix cars. Subsequently the stewards decided that the dozen or so of us in this position would be allowed to race but would be fined £100! My first reaction was to walk out (Keith Schellenberg of 8 litre Bentley fame did so and has not been back since), but Martin had done so much work on the 2 litre getting her ready for the race that I decided to pay the fine. Suffice it to say that certain authorities felt we had been badly treated and we were eventually compensated.

The tyre problem had been caused by the body leaning over on the right hand corners and the inside of the tyre being rubbed by one of the bolts securing the rear mudguard. We got round this by raising the mudguards about two inches higher. During the whole of this weekend I was suffering from a very debilitating virus infection which caused a high temperature and dreadful lassitude. This was not helped by a heatwave and I spent much of the weekend sitting in the shade feeling very sorry for myself. I kept my racing to an absolute minimum, doing only two laps on each day, but there were no complaints from Martin, who is very competitive and relished the challenge.

Valerie was again running the Marquee, but hurt her back on the Saturday evening and was out of action on Sunday to the extent that she was taken to the Medical Centre by ambulance. We didn't see much of the marquee on Sunday, which had been kept going by Jill Hine and the ever-willing John and Ruth Stoneman who had, for some years, provided the catering side.

The results ended up with the 2 litre 26th out of 28, with seven retirements.

When Valerie and I somehow got ourselves, regalia, stall, etc. home, we were exhausted by heat and the problems we had had - it took many weeks for both of us to recover. Luckily Martin drove the 2 litre back to his own home.



In 1996 EPE 97 re-appeared after massive improvements by Derek Green. Martin Stretton and his wife Amanda were the very excellent drivers and a ding-dong battle for the lead was a highlight of the weekend and kept the crowd on its toes. The final winner was an Alfa Romeo, with EPE a very close second. Meanwhile the Bugler 2 litre had been doing her best and was 33rd out of 35 with six retirements. By now, our son Martin was driving the 2 litre extremely well and had a very enjoyable friendly dice with several 3 litre Bentleys. We were joined this year by Martin's two sons Christopher and Nicholas, who are motor sport fans and thought the whole weekend extremely exciting. Chrysler had joined Coy's as sponsors and the immediate result was a massive hospitality marquee, with excellent food for drivers and partners throughout the weekend.

After the previous year's problems with paperwork, I had obtained FIA documents for the 2 litre and the LG45. The amount of work in completing these forms with much fine detail and many photographs was quite daunting, but both cars were accepted by the authorities.

In 1996, the Club did not have a marquee as by now the Historic Festival had reached such huge proportions that the authorities had been forced to move freebies like car club displays to less accessible positions and even, in some cases, outside the Circuit. Valerie, for once, had time to browse around the many stalls and exhibitions which make the event so remarkable.



I had dropped hints in previous years that if my LG45 was needed again she could be available. In 1997 the 2 litre was fortunate enough to be invited (there were still no other 2 litres with Historic papers) and then, quite suddenly about

two weeks before the meeting, Bob Wood, the keen Invicta enthusiast who now selects cars for the pre-war race, phoned me to ask whether I would enter the LG45 as well. I told him I would be happy to enter a second car (thank heavens I had the FIA papers) and already had a co-driver lined up. This was Ian Horner, a friend in the Alvis world who had raced his front wheel drive car at previous Historic Festivals and was already the holder of an International Historic Licence. At this point Bob Wood said that he was hoping that I would let a journalist have a drive. Paul Chudecki, who writes mainly for a magazine named "British Sports Car", which is published in Germany and Holland, wanted to write an article on Coy's Silverstone as an active participant in a British sports car. Naturally I was a little concerned at the thought of a complete stranger driving my 4½, but I had a word with him on the phone and discovered that he has an International "B" licence, which is higher up the scale than mine and regularly races TVR's. He had driven a pre-war Aston with a central throttle and I felt confident enough to agree.

The plan was for me to drive both cars, albeit for only a few laps in each race, with son Martin being co-driver in the 2 litre, Ian Horner being the 4½ co-driver on the Saturday and Paul Chudecki the co-driver on the Sunday. This sounds complicated but actually worked quite well, with a plan written down in advance and followed by the able pit crew of Christine Horner and Valerie. A simple pit signal was fabricated to indicate to each driver when they were due to come into the pits.

Getting the two cars to Silverstone was achieved by Ian towing the 2 litre on a trailer behind his motorhome, with me driving the 4½ and Valerie towing the caravan as usual behind our Land Rover. We arrived Thursday morning to secure a place in the camping area, as it was clear from the paddock plan that space was very limited.

The 4½ was readied and we drove it over to the paddock for signing on. At this point, Ian asked if he could drive the car gently round the paddock to get some idea of the controls as he had not had an opportunity to drive the car before. Through no fault of his, the cylinder head gasket decided to blow between numbers 5 and 6 cylinders and we promptly had to settle down to fitting a new gasket. Well, what else would we have done for three hours on a rainy Thursday afternoon? In the meantime, Martin and his family had arrived with their tents and prepared the 2 litre. Come the evening we were all well ready for the barbecue and good food prepared by our loyal ladies and three families piled into the Bugler awning and ate and drank and, even though it was still raining, we were happy and relaxed. What else could go wrong?

Friday morning arrived with no rain and the cars were scrutineered. Paul Chudecki was held up by traffic and arrived just before the first practice session. I only had time to point out the controls to him and mentioned that if the water temperature rose above 170°F to switch on the electric fan. I drove four laps in the 2 litre and then handed over to Martin. In the meantime Ian had done four laps in the 4½ and handed over to Paul. Suddenly Martin arrived in the pits unexpectedly with no transmission! While I was panicking about this I realised that the 4½ had not come around and, in fact, the practice session finished with still no sign of her. Eventually, a breakdown truck arrived towing the 4½ and my morale was at rock bottom. Was Coy's going to be a no-show for us this year? However, Paul explained that the thermometer had reached 170°, he had switched on the fan, but the temperature continued to rise and he decided to pull off the track and switch off the engine, rather than risk an engine failure. Eventually we decided that the overheating had been caused by an air pocket after the head gasket change,



1997 - Paul Chudecki

Agency Renel, Italy



A fine shot of an Invicta, also featured in the Coys 1996 Event Guide.

Photo: Sutton Motorsport Images

which had worked through the system and reduced the radiator level during the practice session. One problem solved.

The 2 litre's problem turned out to be a failed fabric disc and, after an abortive trip by Martin to Red triangle in Coventry, we obtained a second hand one from Peter Whenman. Our son, David, collected this and brought it to Silverstone Friday evening. We are now considering buying a mobile phone, having used everyone else's! By 11 o'clock on Friday evening the 2 litre transmission was operative again. I could hardly say the same for myself and now knew why I had to have a stress related ECG to compete!

The Saturday morning qualifying session was uneventful, but the first eight lap race in the afternoon was enlivened by rain. I started in the 4½ and had a scary moment coming out of the Woodcote corner on the first lap when I fed in the power too quickly - the back started to go, I over-corrected and the car swung wildly from side to side two or three times. Mac Hulbert, in the Silver Eagle Alvis behind me, took the opportunity to get past, but I overtook him later. After three laps I handed over to Ian Horner, who experienced a very frightening moment on the left-hander at Brooklands corner with a massive spin. Martin, driving the 2 litre, following Ian closely, arrived within seconds and was in danger of T-boning the 4½. I was blissfully unaware of this and took over the 2 litre for the final two laps of the race, but soon realised that the car was down on power. This turned out to be a broken inlet rocker, which was soon replaced.

Sunday was a far more relaxed day, although the 2 litre's transmission was again vibrating and needed some further adjustments. Paul was co-driving the 4½ with me this day. I started in the 2 litre, handed over to Martin after two laps and discovered from the pit crew that Paul was driving extremely quickly and was

well up with the leaders. I decided to give him an extra lap and took over for the final two laps - the minimum requirement. A sign of his hard driving was that the brake pedal was well to the floor and, although I thought I drove very hard for the rest of the race, some of the brake pedal pressure had returned by the end!

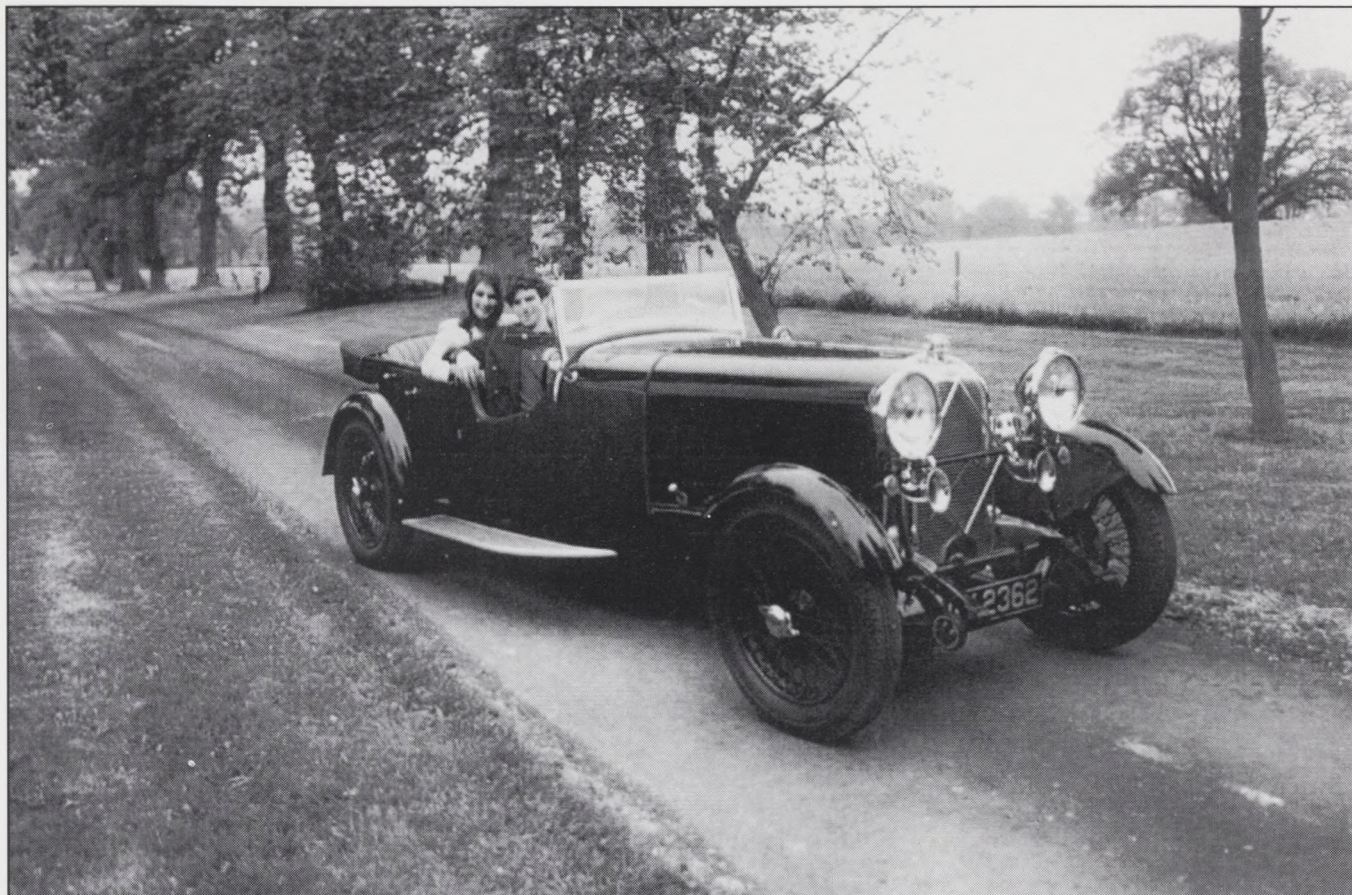
Results for the Sunday race showed the 4½ in 8th place but, after Saturday's wet weather problems and excursions, the aggregate result was 15th. The 2 litre did even better than usual, being 29th out of 37 - Martin has certainly learned how to get the best out of this car.

In 1997, for the first time, there was a team of three Lagondas, with EPE being driven by Terry Cohn and a friend. For once the winner was not an Alfa Romeo, but a Talbot and this British marque also took the Team Prize.

It was pleasing to note that, although my 4½ is fairly standard, the best lap (by Paul!) was within seven seconds of the highly developed EPE, which is very good on the full Silverstone circuit.

As I was writing the above, it reminded me how very much we, as a family, enjoy this event. The International atmosphere is tremendous, the racing first class (the full circuit is much more interesting than the short Club one) and although much effort and sometimes worry is involved, each year we look back on the event with much satisfaction. Other Club members who compete, albeit not in Lagondas, such as Jo Moss and Tim Metcalfe, would, I believe, agree that Coy's Historic Silverstone is the best event of the competition season.

It would be wonderful to see more Lagondas racing there, so please, you fellow racers, take the trouble to get plenty of signatures on your licence and FIA papers for your car. Then, at least, you will be ready if the opportunity arises, sometimes at very short notice indeed!



Philip Mayhew's 3 Litre was used as a wedding car when his son George married Diane Youdale, better known as Gladiator "Jet".

Photo: Mike Vaughan, "Hello" Magazine



The ex Ken Painter "Singapore" Lagonda, now owned by Mike Truter in Australia. The second spare wheel was fitted for a planned overland drive from Singapore to England which never took place.

Ernie and the Lark

by Arnold Davey

IT HAS BEEN A SLIGHT PROBLEM, ever since we changed our monthly meetings at the "Swan and Filofax" to the first Monday, to get people there when the first Monday happens also to be the first of the month. People don't seem to notice the new month for a couple of days. So it was pleasant to find a good turnout on 1st April last and especially to see our Founder Member, who normally only comes now on warm summer evenings, as a concession to his arthritis and the effects on it of his rather stark tourer.

As is the way, the discussion, fuelled by the landlord's Old and Dreadful, ranged far and wide. At one point someone was talking about all the products Lagonda made that weren't cars, like printing presses and van bodies and so on. I happened to remark that I had seen the Mem 'n Arts of the company when researching the history book and it included the right to make boats and rubber goods and aeroplanes and all sorts of things, adding, "Not that they ever did, of course". At which point our Founder Member butted in, saying, "Ah, that's not quite true, me lad". (This always makes me feel about fifteen again). "They did make an aeroplane once, but nobody's ever heard of it. Bearing in mind some of the FM's other yarns, the reaction to this was less than welcoming, which rather nettled FM, so he added "I've got a photo of it hidden away somewhere". This mollified the critics a bit and we pressed him for the story. Now I won't attempt to render this verbatim, what with all the digressions and arguments on points of detail, but the story which emerged, tidied up a bit, goes like this:

As the First World War came to an end, German prisoners of war were allowed out to work locally, provided

they weren't asked to do any war work and Lagonda took on a few for labouring jobs which the predominantly female labour force couldn't be expected to tackle. One was a handsome young man called Ernst, who had been a pilot in the German Air Service, an NCO, since the mores of the time made the observer the officer while the pilot was just a glorified chauffeur. Ernst came from a wealthy but non-aristocratic family and was mad keen on flying, so he jumped at the chance of being paid to do it. Unfortunately they had an engine failure while on the Allied side of the lines and while Ernst got them down safely, both were captured.

Ernst's good looks, plus his willing and friendly nature, made him a hit with Lagonda staff of both sexes and particularly one young lady in the Cost Office, so it was no surprise when, after the Armistice, he began to seek ways to avoid being repatriated to Germany. With peace returning, he was able to contact the eminent legal firm of Turbary, Pannage and Estovers, who had handled his father's English business before the war. They had influence in all the right quarters and, looking forward to Ernst's father's custom, they pulled out all the stops on Ernst's behalf and he found himself legally entitled to stay in England and become a proper employee of Lagonda Ltd. His engineering background soon led him off the shop floor on to the design staff, who, unwilling to wrap their tongues around "Ernst", rechristened him Ernie.

The end of the war had left thousands of pilots with a taste for flying, but no suitable aircraft. Aeroplanes had developed at a phenomenal speed during the war, so that pre-war ones were just absurd by 1919, but ex-military planes, although astoundingly cheap to buy,

sometimes just shillings, were far too big, powerful and thirsty for any but the rich to contemplate. there was an obvious and growing need for a light aeroplane for the private pilot. It would need to be cheap to buy and run, have folding wings to facilitate storage and be reasonably easy for its owner to maintain himself. Any number of projects were discussed, but they all fell down for lack of a suitable engine. Finally, in 1923, a conspiracy between the Air Ministry, the Royal Aero Club and the Daily Mail (who put up the money) resulted in the announcement of the Lympne Light Aeroplane Trials, where the big prize money on offer attracted an immense amount of attention. In retrospect, we can see that the Civil Service had drawn the rules too tightly, as is their wont and, by restricting the engine size to 750 cc, were only going to get powered gliders, not a suitable light aeroplane, which would have to await the production of suitable engines later in the decade.

The announcement of the Trials fired Ernie's enthusiasm to get back in the air and he quickly saw that half an 11.9 engine would fit the requirements, so applied for an entry form and recruited his pals in the factory to plan a suitable airframe. Now it wasn't all that simple to cut an 11.9 in half when it had a two bearing crankshaft, but Ernie reasoned that you could turn it round - in fact you had to - and make up a mounting plate at what was now the front of the engine that could incorporate a main bearing and Robert's your relative. This new plate would also enable him to provide the very strong thrust bearing that aero engines have to have if the propellor is not to pull the crankshaft out of the block. Of course, he had to make up a special crankshaft as a vertical twin does not have its throws at 180 degrees to each other, but he was going to have to do this anyway. the next problem was weight. Half an 11.9 was still pretty heavy by aircraft standards if it was only going to give out about 18 b.h.p. So he enlisted Bill Oates' help to tune for more power, but soon realised that the demon tweaks

that got the single seater up to nearly ninety at Brooklands did not go with the safety and reliability required of an aeroplane.

The next step was to examine the possibility of casting the head and block in aluminium alloy, but this was going to cost serious money, so letters to and from Dad began to multiply. Dad took more than a little convincing, but Germany was just feeling the grip of hyperinflation at the time and his bankers advised that transferring a high proportion of his cash to England made a lot of sense, provided Ernie didn't spend it all on his wild project. So a London account was opened, with Ernie given the power to draw on some of it, but not much, for obvious reasons.

By now, news of Ernie's activities was all over the factory and inevitably came to the ears of the management. They were in two minds about it. They liked the enthusiasm and could see benefits if it succeeded, but also feared the disruption to production Ernie's one-off bits might entail. Ernie was summoned to the boardroom, where his frankness and charm worked wonders and eventually an agreement was reached that he could use any of the firm's facilities, provided: (a) he paid the costs of labour and materials, including overtime for specialists and (b) he didn't disrupt normal production in any way. With Dad's money burning a hole in his bank account, Ernie agreed at once and set to work with redoubled enthusiasm.

His original intention was to go for a monoplane to keep weight and drag down, realising that with very limited power at his disposal, take-off performance was going to be critical. However, before he got very far he discovered that a very lightweight wing had to be braced by so many pylons and wires he might just as well go to a biplane and get the rigidity. but with drag reduction the aim, he did experiment with retractable undercarriage, arranging for the complete wheel/strut/axle assembly to fold up into the wing root/fuselage junction. You can just see this in

the picture. He was a pioneer in this and experiments with bicycle wheels soon revealed that the big problem was not folding the undercarriage, but securing it when lowered. After several abortive arrangements his final system utilised a handwheel operating a fine-pitch and therefore irreversible screw, which wound the rear legs along a track inside the fuselage. It took a long time to operate, but significantly reduced drag.

Engine development went better than expected. They cast an alloy head/block one Sunday (Dad paid for the overtime). In fact they made four while they were at it, in case one or more got damaged or proved porous. As there was no time to alter the cores, this alloy affair was going to have only marginal strength and, not having any stronger metal liners for the cylinders, it wasn't going to last very long. But then Ernie was not thinking beyond the competition and provided his engine survived about 10 hours of flight he would be satisfied.

He had already designed his engine endplate, which served a number of functions. It was fabricated from steel, chosen for ease of welding rather than anything else, and held the new crankshaft end bearing, kept the water in and also the oil, as it extended down to seal the end of the half-sump, a standard 11.9 item cut in two. The crankshaft, needless to say, had to be machined from a solid billet by Ernie's favourite machinist (Dad's money paid for the midnight oil). Ernie had at first wanted to go for alloy connecting rods too, but a lunchtime's work with the slide rule showed they wouldn't be strong enough without a re-design, so he had to content himself with standard items with a row of holes in the web in search of weight reduction.

It was in the structure of the aeroplane that Ernie was at his most daring. He had started by assuming the conventional technology of the period, with spruce ribs and spars, braced by wires and covered with doped fabric. In fact he had already made a dozen or so ribs when a chance conversation with a colleague set

him on a quite different course. This man had a brother who worked at the Staines Linoluem Works. As the two largest employers in the town, there was a fair bit of to-ing and fro-ing of staff between the two concerns. The gist of the conversation was that the research arm of the Lino Works were working in the utmost secrecy on experiments with load-bearing lino for the infant airship industry. This industry was attempting to compete with transAtlantic liners and, the customers of the day being very demanding, they would not forego any of their creature comforts in return for speed, so that on the one hand the airship designers were seeking more lift from their gasbags, while having to install grand pianos and potted palms for the passenger lounges. One of the ways of saving weight was to have a structural flooring material which did not require an additional covering. The experiments had been satisfactory and the lino works was even now setting up a pilot plant to make the stuff, with a view to eventual world-wide trade. At that time the airship was considered to have a rosy, and profitable, future.

Ernie followed this up avidly and eventually managed to get into the pilot plant and discuss his project. The material was an early thermosetting plastic resin, bonded to a fine silk fabric backing. When set, it weighed about the same as 18 gauge aluminium and was roughly the same strength, but its advantage to him was that at room temperature it could be easily moulded to any shape on a former and then baked in an oven to set it. Ernie realised he could use the portion of wing he had already made as a mould and form a complete wing all in one bit, doing away with all the ribs and bracing wires, provided there was a main spar to transfer the flying loads. What's more, Lagonda's stoving oven was big enough to take one of these half-wings. A small alteration to the design resulted in his being able to make four identical half-wings from the one mould, only the tips having to be handed. Much the same applied to the tailplane and he

contemplated applying the same technique to the fuselage, but ran into too many problems to follow it up. The process was infinitely quicker than the hand-built wooden structures of convention and soon his machine was beginning to take shape.

In view of his engine's likely limited life, Ernie wasn't keen on too much test running, but he had to do some, to establish the actual power output, so that his friend in the drawing office could design the right propellor, which another pal in the bodyshop laminated for him. For quickness he used a standard car carburettor, making a mental note to avoid extreme attitudes in the air and reassured by the 11.9's excellent record on trials, with their outrageous gradients. It didn't take long to discover the engine was far too heavy if he used water to cool it, since the radiator and its plumbing were weighty even at half the 11.9 size, plus the weight of the water itself, always provided generously in designs at that time.

More lunchtime brainstorming sessions in the canteen brought another inspiration. In those days refrigeration was in its infancy and most food shops and cafes used an icebox instead, which was literally that, an insulated box full of ice on one side of a perforated partition and the food on the other side. The necessary supplies of blocks of ice were the business of the United Carlo Gatti Company, whose yellow and black trucks were as common as Norbert Dentressangle's are today. A phone call established that they were prepared to deliver to Lympne airfield when asked. The idea was to do away with the radiator and its pipes and surround the engine with a light aluminium tank which would be filled with ice immediately before start-up. The heat of the engine would melt the ice, of course, but more calculations based on the latent heat of fusion of ice into water, followed by the latent heat of evaporation of water into steam, convinced Ernie that he had about 20 minutes of cooling available on a filling. He then rather burnt his boats by drilling a number of large holes in the

crankcase, so that the ice could cool the bores and run away afterwards to a small tap at the bottom of the new tank. To test the theory, another evening session ensued, Ernie having wheedled a block of ice from the canteen manageress. They found that about ten minutes running melted all the ice and a further ten or so boiled the water, but Ernie consoled himself with the thought that this was a static test without the cooling effect of the propellor wash, which he could rely on in the air.

The Lympne Trials were scheduled for early October 1923 and Ernie was delighted to find that they were far enough advanced by the end of July to be able to spend the whole of the August Bank Holiday weekend for the first complete assembly of the machine. It ought to have been completed on the Saturday, but all sorts of hitches developed and it wasn't until the Monday afternoon that the completed aeroplane could be wheeled, wings folded, into the store at "The Chestnuts", which it had been agreed he could use. Ernie was going to be the pilot, of course, and had been casting about for an airfield to try his plane from, but with the machine being home-made and unregistered, he ran into all sorts of bureaucratic obstacles, so it was decided a dawn test along the A30 across Hartford Bridge Flats would have to do, to begin with at any rate.

They towed the machine down the A30 behind the works hack 11.9 and assembled the wings at the Blackwater end just as dawn was breaking. To save weight and complication, Ernie had dispensed with any instruments, so he had to rely on a wet fingertip to guess when his engine was warm enough for full power. Eventually he was satisfied and gave the tiny plane its head into the rising south-westerly breeze. The take-off was agonisingly slow and prolonged and gave way to a series of bounds before the Lerche (Lark), as he had christened the plane, finally remained in the air but only very grudgingly began to climb. It refused to climb very high, however, so that the trees on either side of the road

remained a hazard, should the wind change direction. Ernie was now faced with a classic pilot's dilemma. He could abort the flight and land in what remained of the straight road, or he could turn, risking losing height and hitting the trees, so that he could retrace his course back to the London end of the straight and so make the whole length available for landing. He didn't have much time to make up his mind, so he took the safe option and landed, perilously close to the end of the straight by the time the machine had stopped rolling (there were no wheel brakes, of course).

Back at Staines that evening a council of war was held with his helpers, for by now there was quite a large band of these. On the plus side, the plane had actually flown and the ice cooling system had worked better than expected, with some lumps still unmelted in the tank. Also, in all the excitement, Ernie had forgotten to retract the undercarriage, so the performance in the air had been less than was possible on a longer flight. On the minus side, a maximum altitude of thirty feet wasn't going to win any prizes and either more power or less weight was urgently required. Ernie began to think that his earlier attitude to the tuning of the engine might have been too conservative and sought advice from the people who had prepared Oates' racers. Their first suggestion was to throw away the Zenith carburettor and substitute a larger Claudel-Hobson. But they wouldn't let him "borrow" the one off the single-seater and while Ernie was seeking another, there was an unexpected turn of events.

The management had heard probably exaggerated accounts of the trial flight. In those days merely to get off the ground was regarded as a success and they sought another interview with Ernie. They were impressed with his results and fancied they could see a future element of diversification for the factory. Before any decisions were taken, the meeting adjourned to Ernie's store to inspect the now finished aeroplane. Back in the boardroom, a proposition was put.

The factory would give full works backing to the project under certain conditions. These were:

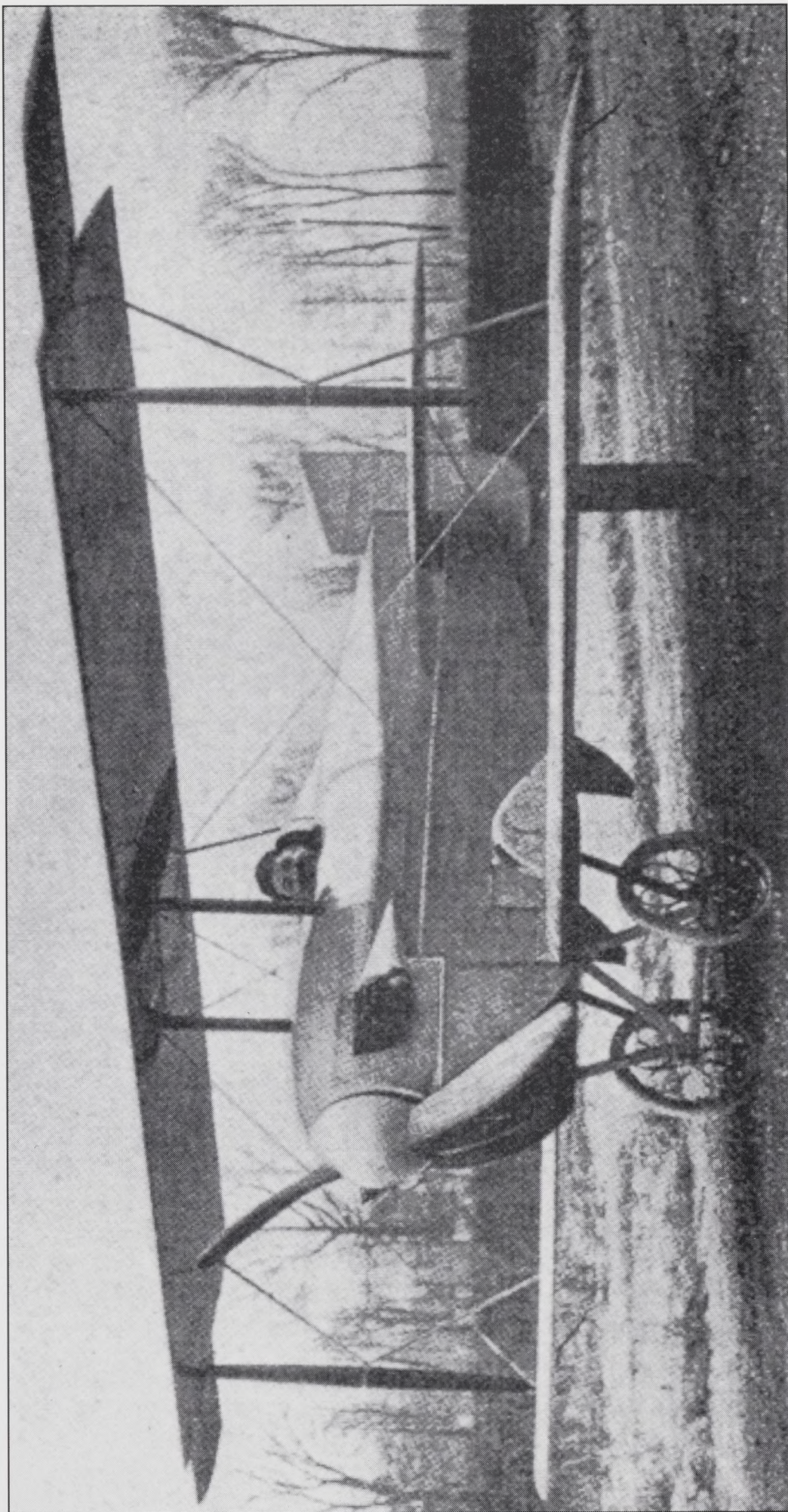
i. If it won the competition, or did well, the factory would take over and turn it into a production machine, paying Ernie a royalty on each one sold.

ii. The plane was to be called the Lagonda Lark. (Ernie's name had been *Der Leichtflugzeug Lerche* - not a great selling proposition five years after the Armistice).

iii. He was to paint it, as the special resin of the wings and tailplane looked extremely unattractive.

This last point was very true. Ernie hadn't given any thought to finish - he had enough other problems. The natural colour of the resin was a sort of dingy greyish brown and in places the fabric backing, which was for some strange reason light blue, was visible. The fuselage had the conventional clear dope finish, giving a creamy colour, on which grubby fingermarks were already evident.

Naturally, Ernie accepted with alacrity, for he had never expected, or even sought, factory backing and it looked as if money worries, at least, were over. The suits then entered into a long discussion on colour schemes, in which Ernie took little part. The days of all Lagondas being dark green were over, but the standard colour schemes were all a little sober for a young man's sport like private flying. Eventually it was decided that a lighter version of the blue they already offered on the cars would be suitable and appropriate instructions were issued to the paint shop, still using brushes in those days. Almost before he knew it, Ernie's baby was being whisked away, partially dismantled and installed in the paint shop. He had hastily to tell the foreman that only the very minimum of paint was to be applied, for it was heavy stuff and the last thing he needed was more weight. This was on a Friday and, unknown to Ernie, a brisk argument then developed between the paint shop foreman and the Works Manager as to how this extra work was to be fitted in without disrupting normal production.



Ernie poses in the Lark at Hartford Bridge flats.

Eventually, the reluctant Works Manager agreed to weekend working and overtime and work started on the aeroplane after lunch on Saturday. Nobody thought to tell Ernie, who took a much-needed weekend off, confident that nothing would happen until Monday.

When he got in on Monday morning, it was to find the paint shop foreman standing by his desk, with a strange expression on his face, half gloom and half dismay.

"You'd better come and have a look at your aeroplane", he said. Ernie sensed that something was seriously wrong, but the foreman said no more and led the way to the paint shop, where no work was going on. Every inhabitant was standing round talking animatedly, but stopped at once when Ernie appeared. It was a total disaster. It hadn't occurred to anyone to test whether the paint they were going to use would react with the magic resin, it wasn't the sort of thing that entered one's head in 1923. But it had reacted and what had been a neat little aeroplane on Friday evening was now just a mess of melted resin and slack rigging wires, drooping from the main spars. This was mid-September and there was no way a new set of wings and a new tailplane were going to be made before 8th October, so the whole project had to be abandoned. Ernie was distraught, but there was nothing that could be done, except hope there would be another competition next year. (There was, but that's another story).

I was still not entirely convinced by FM's rambling story and arranged with him to call the following evening to look at and hopefully borrow the picture he said he had of Ernie's Lark. When I got there he looked very surprised, having obviously forgotten all about it, but recovered at once and invited me in. Mrs FM offered me a cup of tea and we sat and chatted, while FM could be heard upstairs, opening and shutting drawers and muttering to himself as he hunted for the elusive picture.

I learnt a lot of hitherto unknown information from Mrs FM about her

husband's background. She called him Roy, but admitted his Christian names were Ackroyd Stewart, named by his oil engine specialist father after the man he regarded as the true inventor of what we call the diesel engine. In fact there was so much animosity that FM's family held that there was no mystery about Rudolph Diesel's disappearance from a cross-channel ferry in 1913. The family firmly believed that FM's father was on board too, and pushed him overboard.

Eventually FM reappeared, flushed and triumphant and handed over the photograph you see here. This dispelled any doubts. It really was a tiny little aeroplane and you can see the housings in the wing root for the retractable undercarriage. The photo must have been taken on the flight test day, as it is on a road somewhere, although the absence of leaves on the trees is a puzzle. FM guessed that there had been a recent brush fire, common in that part of Hampshire, which would explain it. I still had a few odds and ends to clear up if the saga was to make a magazine article. Pleased to have found his treasure, FM was expansive.

"Fire away, me boy", he said, "Anything you like".

"First of all, how did you get this story?"

"That was just before the war, when I had a job in Shepperton and took to having a drink in "The Ship", opposite the factory, from time to time. Lots of Lagonda people did the same and we used to yarn about Lagonda affairs".

"What happened to Ernie? did he have another go?"

"He meant to, but shortly after the 1923 competition his father was taken ill and Ernie was sent for to take over running the business. After a bit he changed the factory round and went into aircraft seriously".

"What was his surname? Perhaps we may have heard of him".

"I'm not sure", said FM. "See if he has written anything on the back of the photo".

So I turned it over and very faintly, in pencil, it said "With best wishes, Ernst Heinkel".

Letters

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed photo of a plaque found in Sainsbury's Staines branch last October.

A more appropriate site could have been chosen to display it, but there is much "passing trade" en-route to the Gents lavatories!

Thank you for my regular issue of "The Lagonda" - it is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

E W "Bill" Holmes

Dear Ken,

I was most flattered to read of the award of the Densham Trophy. As you know I use the Crossleys a lot, but have not competed in Club events for years. Thank you so much.

I am very interested in Bill Wright's article on mods to the 16/80 engine. Whereas I certainly do not wish to dismiss both modifications it is worth mentioning that in some 270,000 miles (the sum of my mileage in both my Crossleys) I have had no trouble from camshaft bearings or the rather inadequate looking skew gears driving the camshaft. However, what Bill implies is quite right - camshaft lubrication on this engine is pretty basic. Following on from what he says about worn rockers, my solution (some years ago now) was to have a new rocker shaft made, together with new phosphor bronze bushes for the rockers. There is no doubt that the skew gears driving the camshaft are a weak link and some have been known to fail. As Bill says, any I have seen have shown considerable wear. However, I believe there is a simple solution which my experience has shown to be sound - if expensive - change the engine oil very frequently. Use a cheap 20/50 multigrade and change at least every 1,000 miles.

The water pump is another weak point and represents absurdly basic engineering! I have standard cylinder head mounted pumps on both cars and, in winter especially, need to top up very infrequently - if at all. My solution is to have a new shaft fitted, together with new bushes and then to fit the correct packing, as recommended by Lion Packings. It is Walkers "Fortuna" square packing, but I cannot read the part number on the very oily packet! It has completely solved the problem.

I am well aware that Staines stripped and rebuilt the 2 litre Crossley engines "so that they worked properly", but to give them their due, those chaps in Manchester knew what they were about!

Best wishes

Stephen Weld

It is a long time since I delved into my 16/80 engines, as I sold my last one in 1969, but I think Stephen means the skew gears which drive the oil pump, rather than the camshaft itself. Although I can't claim anything like his total mileage, both of my cars needed the oil pump gears and the driving gear on the camshaft itself replacing. The first car was simply done, as Ivan Forshaw was able to supply a spare engine with a good camshaft and skew gear, the second car was fixed in Singapore by a local engineer, who made up new gears. In neither case were the rocker shaft and bushes touched and, after all these years, I can't remember if they were checked and found serviceable or simply ignored!

Stephen is right in that prevention is certainly better than cure, but for those owners whose cam gears have passed the point of no return then the provision of a better oil flow may be the most attractive solution. I am not sure I go along with the

idea of "cheap" oils. Reports I have read in the past suggest that some of the very cheap multigrades don't remain "in grade" very long and quickly revert to a sort of monograde. I use Duckhams 20/50, obtainable at a very low cost from the local branch of ASDA. I have also tried the very expensive synthetic oils in my racing engine and found that they were not entirely suitable, probably

because older engines run at lower oil temperatures.

One 16/80 owner has resolved the water pump problems by fitting the internals from a post war Ford pump. He has half promised an article on this, so perhaps this anonymous "plug" will encourage him to write it up for posterity!

K.P.P.



The plaque at Sainsbury's, Staines, (see previous page).



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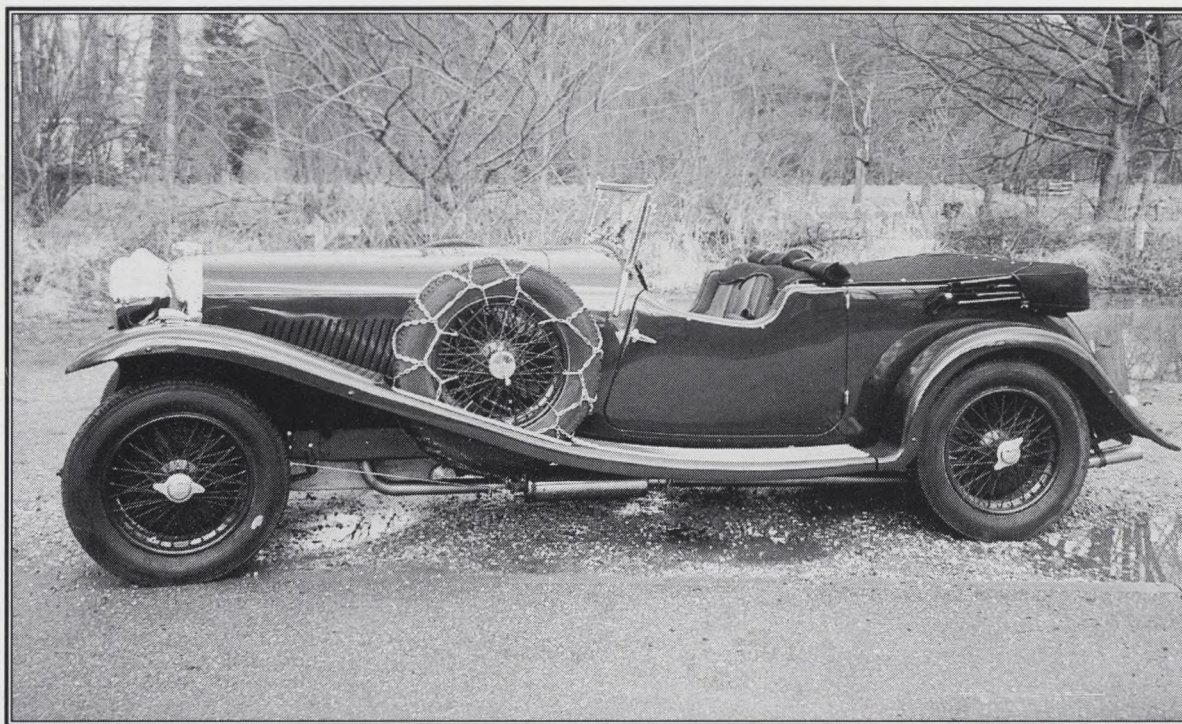


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