

THE MAGAZINE OF THE LAGONDA CLUB

Number 184

Spring 2000



THE
Lagonda



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You have all seen enough of EPE 97 which is of course still out there racing in the hands of its owner and behaving as a well prepared old lady should, so time for something different!

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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!

Simon Bull's Invicta has semi-retired from racing and is being used as a "Q car" for everyday use in London and long distance touring, surprising many a modern with its 230 BHP and 125 MPH top speed.

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.

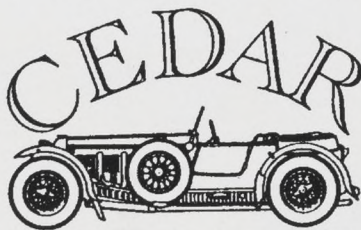
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FRONT COVER

BPK 203 reflects the Millenium sunrise in her radiator, see "Letters", page 25.

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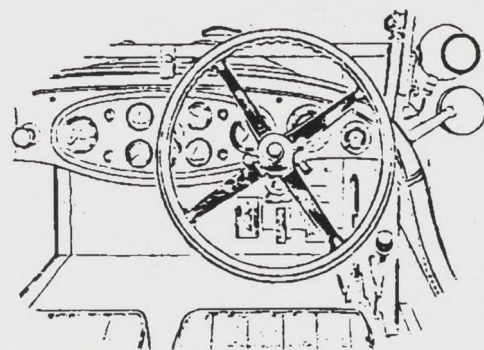
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Photoset by Calderdale Typesetting Ltd. Ripponden, West Yorkshire • Tel 01422 825888

Printed by Pennine Printing Services Ltd. Ripponden, West Yorkshire • Tel 01422 825333

From the Driving Seat



Ken Painter reveals all about putting the magazine to bed

IT IS SUNDAY morning and the galley proofs have come back from the printers. Chris, my wife, is a childminder, but has no little darlings tearing the house apart on this, our day of rest, so it is the ideal time to create the mock-up of the magazine you all love to read. The day goes like this:

10.00 a.m., the dining room table is set up just inside the French window and is instantly covered in papers and photographs. The process is supposed to be simple, one takes the freshly printed pages from the printer, decides on the order the articles will appear and glues them over the pages of a copy of the last magazine. To make sure that the page count ends up correct - it always has to be a multiple of four - you work alternately forwards from the front and backwards from the final page. So far, so good.

10.20 a.m., some changes are necessary to the committee list on page two. I have heard on the bush telegraph that one of our representatives has moved and I don't have his new address. I telephone our Hon Sec and, not surprisingly on a Sunday morning, get his answerphone, so leave a message. Seconds later, my phone rings. The Hon Sec never rests and takes time off from topping up the oil in his chain saw (don't ask) to give me the information I need. Between us, we think of several other items which we need to discuss and it is 11.00 a.m. before the call ends.

11.10 a.m., the Chairman and I have created an item for the magazine and

now I want to alter it slightly. I ring him and get answerphone number two. He rings me back within minutes of my call. By the time we conclude the discussion it is now 11.30 a.m. and the page proof process has reached the bottom of page five.

11.35 a.m., my telephone rings, it is for me. Anne, the Secretary of a local old car club, is arranging a display and demonstration of historic racing cars at the Lotus factory in June, would I bring my car along? I check my diary, we are free that weekend and it sounds fun, but I need further information and, once I agree to attend, Anne needs more information from me. 11.50 and the last two pages of the magazine are now sorted as well. At this stage I don't know what numbers to put there because I want to add some extra pictures and this will alter the page count.

12.00, the phone rings again. It is a man in Surrey ringing about a 'wanted' advert I placed in a national magazine for a steering box for a 1930 Standard Big Nine. He doesn't have a spare, but he has two steering boxes with the same problem as mine. Have I had any success with my advert? No. Neither did he when he tried. Why don't we get together and see if we can modify the boxes to take modern bearings? We discuss his plans and it is clear that he has given the idea much thought, he has already sourced appropriate bearings for two of the problem areas and I have ideas as to how we resolve the one big problem this leaves us. He promises to send me the

detailed plans he has drawn up so that I can discuss them with Andrew, my friendly local machinist and get a proper second opinion on our joint ideas. As I put the phone down it is 12.30 and Chris suggests we have an early lunch.

Before lunch is finished the phone rings again. It is Andrew, my friendly local machinist. No, he isn't psychic, but he has just finished making me a bracket for my Maserati's aeroscreen and can I collect it today as he won't be in his workshop for another week? At 1.00 p.m. I drive the 14 miles to his workshop. Chris, bless her, asks if I will call in at the supermarket on the way home as she is out of chocolate. How can I refuse? I arrive at Andrew's just after 1.30, he is eating his sandwiches and offers me a beer, we sit and have a leisurely drink together, discussing another of my ongoing projects, the restoration of a Morris Minor pick-up truck. He restored and modified a Traveller some time ago and waxes lyrical about the Rover 2000 seats he fitted. I have bought a pair of MG Metro seats for mine, but don't think they will fit as they are quite bulky, thanks to their high backs. "Not to worry!" he cries "I have a set of 2000 seats in cream leather in my store room, you can take them now!" We fight our way through piles of bits that only an old car enthusiast could love, only to find that the mice have got there first and the seat cushion is now a very convincing replica of the surface of the moon. All is not lost, he has another set, in blue fabric, in a dead V8, I can try the damaged seat for size and if it fits I can take the blue set. I also notice a huge pile of 8 foot fluorescent light fittings, rescued from a factory which closed some time ago. Four are threaded into the back of the Volvo, along with the tatty seat and the aeroscreen bracket, at least my garage will be a brighter place in the near future.

Then follows a conducted tour around his workshop, where he has the Aston Martin "Razor Blade", a lovely Hispano Suiza, an Edwardian Chalmers,

an Alvis 12/70 chassis and a strange American V8 dirt track racer all undergoing restoration, mostly for customers, but the Chalmers and the dirt track car are his. I am more interested in the Maserati 6 cylinder crankcase he is machining and he, in turn, is interested in borrowing the special tool I had made to dismantle the Tecnauto suspension on my Maserati. I agree to deliver it to his "other" workshop tomorrow, then leave for the supermarket, mustn't forget the chocolate and I might as well re-fuel at the same time.

I arrive home at 3.45 and the dogs, mine and the next-door neighbour's, are desperate for their afternoon walk. On the way home I meet Dean. He is converting the old Victorian village school into a splendid period home and we became good friends when I discovered some photographs of the building, taken when it was first built. He has offered me some wooden pallets to build a compost store and agrees to deliver them on his wheelbarrow if I will keep an eye on the building whilst he and his wife are away. By the time we part it is now 4.30, the future of my compost is assured, but the magazine has hardly been started.

Domestic duties call again and I telephone my elderly mother in Oxfordshire. She has recently recovered from flu and the batteries in her hearing aid have gone flat, so she does all the talking. Half an hour later I am ready to start again on the magazine and actually work for an unbroken hour before dinner is served and for nearly the same again before I stop for a short while to watch the only TV programme I will get to see over the entire weekend.

9.00 p.m. and another hour's work is begun, before the dog claims his 'last thing at night' walk and the cat yowls for her helping of dog biscuits. Dog and cat eat happily side by side from the same bowl and there is never an argument. Why couldn't my children have been as good natured?

10.45 p.m. and it's time for bed, the

rest of the magazine must wait until the morning.

Monday, 9.00 a.m. On the final straight now and Chris's childminding duties don't start until lunchtime, so I have a relatively uninterrupted morning. Except, that is, for a special delivery of parts for the Morris and then the man wants to know where he can find another address in the same street. None of us in the half-dozen houses around mine has ever heard of it, or the people who live there. After twenty minutes of puzzling he gets the parcel out of the van to show us. It is for another village a mile away. We point him in the right direction and I go back to scanning and printing copies of the pictures I want to use in the mag. The new computer, scanner and printer are still capable of unexpected tricks and I don't always get the size and shape I asked for, then it all has to be done a second time. The printer is running out of ink too, so the colours all reproduce as strange stripes. Good job they are only intended as a mock-up of the real thing.

A quick snack lunch, then back to the grindstone. The magazine is now virtually complete and is much bigger than usual. I think you are going to like it. Captions are written for all the

illustrations. A final check is made to ensure that the adverts are where the advertisers wanted them, a covering letter is hastily scribbled to the printer and the package is delivered to the local post office, minutes before collection time. The autumn magazine will be my fiftieth, I think I'm getting the hang of it now.

Lagonda Club duties complete for a while, I deliver the tool for the Tecnauto suspension, as promised. The "other" workshop is nearly 40 miles from home, but the journey proves to be worth the effort, as I arrive just in time to watch the unpacking of a rare and wonderful 1924 Delage V12 engine, due for a total overhaul. The rest of the car is there too, the bodywork is a beautiful pointed tail two seater and the entire aluminium body, inside and out is 'engine turned', row upon row of neat overlapping concentric circles. It must have taken forever to do and the effect is stunning. Of the six cars on view in the workshop, three are unique and one is so rare I have never seen another. The others would get the average enthusiast's pulses racing too, but I have seen them before, so the thrill is reduced somewhat. Life for your Editor is never dull.



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Centenial Display and Parade, Coys Silverstone. August '99

John Batt reports

OVER 50 selected cars, blazing hot weather, a splendid marquee in a prime location (and adjacent to the Scarf and Goggles Pub!) plus plenty of assistance and enthusiasm from all Club members made for a splendid three days enjoyment. A great follow on to the theme of the Brooklands party.

Coys always put on a good event which this time featured a BRM celebration together with a wide range of period motoring related attractions. John Ryder who also happens to represent us on the VSCC committee, gave a splendid commentary as our cars toured the track on Saturday and Sunday. This was a special concession from the organisers who also allowed Sunbeam display laps. They were located just a little way from our pitch also celebrating their 100th year. Clearly they were in good company!

Photographs are courtesy of Brian Watson and Jeremy Oates. Lagondas participating represented almost the full range of production from Staines and Newport Pagnell. On view were the Lawrence 11.9 and Oates' beautifully restored 12/24 early cars, through all the main models to LG6, V12's, Marshall's DB 2.6 and Robert Watt's AML V8. Maurice Leo had intended to bring a DB Le Mans V12 to complete the selection but was unable to do so at the last minute - he would have enjoyed the blast around the track where the usual ploy is to hang back, then give it the gun!

Also involved and partly on duty wearing his Coys' hat was our Northern Secretary Herb Schofield. His 3 Litre tourer on prominent display in the marquee matched by John Ryder's concours winning slightly later model.

Terry Brewster brought along his much raced LG 45 Special and Terry Cohn was competing in the famous EPE 97 LG 45 factory car. The Bugler family were well represented with Secretary Colin racing his LG 45 team car replica and Martin their trusty LC 2 Litre. It was also nice to see Roger Cooke along with his new M45 LM Special just running in.

It is pleasing to report Club funds were also enhanced following the splendid efforts of David and Irene Willoughby who had their excellent range of Club Centenary regalia and mementos on sale in the marquee, under the capable control of Susie Batt. Business was extremely brisk aided by the glorious weather since folk tended to shelter in the marquee to escape the sun! Special thanks is due to Doc Turner's daughters for their persuasive selling abilities, Julie and husband David Blackburn, also Rachel with her husband Tim over on holiday from their home in New Zealand. It was also great to have their collective help clearing up when it was all over!

Everyone certainly enjoyed the occasion and it is hoped to be there again 21-23 July 2000. However, please make a future note that a special effort will be made in 2001 when we celebrate the 50th birthday of the Lagonda Club with Coys' preceding celebrations at the AGM to be held at Woburn Abbey, together with a visit and drive around the Millbrook Proving Ground.

Finally, the Club and Centenary Committees would like to thank everyone involved both participants and helpers in making this another successful Club event.



Coys Silverstone, the cars line up for the parade laps. I think car 71 must be a Peter Whenman Rapier Special!



More of the splendid array of cars for the parade laps.

Lagonda Parade. Silverstone July 30-31st
August 1 st '99

Early Cars: Steve Lawrence 11.9 Light
Car. Jeremy Oates 12/24 Tourer.

Rapiers: David Bugler, Chris Banks,
Malcolm Charles, Malcolm Burgess,
Mike Podmore, Bernie Jacobson.

2 Litres

Clive Dalton	2 Litre Continental
John Batt	2 Litre S/C.
John Stoneman	2 Litre S/C
Tony Guy	2 Litre S/C
Dick Jones	2 Litre H/C
Ian Ronald	2 Litre H/C
Roger Llewellyn	2 Litre UC
David Ayre	2-4½ iSpl.

16/80

John Breen 16/80.

3 Litres

Clive Sherwood	3 Litre Tourer
David Westall	3 Litre Tourer
Tim Miller	3 Litre Tourer
John Ryder	3 Litre Tourer

Nigel Hall
Chris Mays

3 Litre Saloon
3-4½ Tourer

4½

Bill Quint
Mike Pilgrim
Warren King
Robert Miles
Ian Pointer
Brian Watson
Geoff Gates
David Duffy
David Blackburn
Robert Goodchild

M45 Tourer
M45 Saloon
LG45 Saloon
LG45 DHC
LG45 DHC
LG45 DHC
LG45 Tourer
LG45 Spl
LG45 Spl
LG 45 Team Car
Replica
LG 45 Team Car
Replica

Colin Bugler

V12, LG6

Bill Ambro
Nick Channing
Peter Blenk
Jeff Leeks

LG 6 DHC
V12 VDP Tourer
V12 Saloon
V12 Saloon

Post War

Peter Gilkes
Robert Watts

DB 3 litre saloon
AML V8



EPE 97, still collecting winner's garlands!

An Antipodean Adventure

Ruth and John Turner take MG 6279 to New Zealand

NEW Zealand is superb for vintage motoring. There's the weather for a start; from sub-tropical in the north to moderate British in the far south and Alpine in between. The natives are friendly, speak a vaguely recognisable English (yiss = yes, munnutt = minute), and drive on the proper side of the road. They even stop BEFORE you use a zebra crossing! Traffic is generally sparse and most roads are "sealed" (Kiwispeak for metalled). There are several "metalled" (i.e. unmetalled) roads especially in South Island, and here and there a few "unmetalled" (ie. B*****y H*ll). For a real 1920's touch most country lanes are still signposted by the A.A. in their familiar yellow. Petrol is 31p/litre. People wave and motorists hoot if you're in a proper car, and, believe it or not, you can even leave it unattended!

Unfortunately every silver lining has its cloud. Kiwiland is a hell of a long way off; Crocosmia and Agapanthus in the North, and Lupins in South Island grow exasperatingly, exuberantly wild on the roadsides; the sun is confusingly in the North at midday with Orion upside down at night; distances are in kilometers (what they?) and there is a blanket speed limit of 100 k.p.h. resulting in an infestation of speed cameras.

On our previous visit to No 4 daughter and son-in-law in 1998 we realised that our next trip would coincide with the Royal Sun Alliance Vintage Rally 2000, so we decided on a ski holiday (Spend Kids Inheritance) and take the Lag. Now, why can't Shipping Agents quote an all-in, there-and-back price? Also Witt Wittridge in '92 scorned Marine insurance (typical gung-ho fighter pilot). I didn't (typical cautious

brown job). It's a con - the exclusions seem to be everything you want to insure against! Anyway we set about doing all the jobs on the Lag. that we'd been putting off for years to make her fit for colonial roads. And as ever it took longer and cost more than anticipated, hence our absence at Centenary events. Nevertheless, thanks to Alan Brown, Don Hoggard, No 1 son-in-law David Blackburn, his brother and assorted friends, all was screwed together in time and off she went with at least 16 other entrants from the British Isles.

Seven weeks later when we arrived, there she was, smirking in the sunshine. She fairly blossomed, and I doubt she'd ever had her hood down for such long periods in her life before as we spent the next six weeks touring and rallying. Mind you, once we were on the rally routes of country lanes, "metalled" roads and the like, her old bones didn't half shake - and, dear reader, if you emulate us, keep an eye on the wheel hub nuts!

The Rally itself was incredible. It was supremely organised with a thousand cars dating from 1896 to 1970 taking part. Inevitably the several hundreds of cars from the '20's and '30's were Fords, Chevies and the like; the expensive, delicate, hard suspended British cars of that era were useless in the glorified farm-track roads of the time. However, several Alvises (Alvii ?) came over from the U.K, we saw two Crossleys and there were five Lagondas. Selwyn Jackson brought his V12 DHC and 3½ litre tourer, one for each foot. Ian and Mary MacGregor toured their beautifully restored DB 3 litre DHC. It was a most impressive tour de force completed in only four years. We briefly caught sight of Lewis in his 4½ tourer from the U.K



A Triumph Gloria travels a “metalled” road.



Positive and to the point!

and there was us. The fellowship was equally fantastic. We once found ourselves in a group speaking Kiwi, Oz, Canadian, U.S., Northern Irish, Lancastrian, and Yorkshire versions of English. And we all found ourselves with mutual friends and acquaintances.... one bloke from South Island owns a 12/24, could I get him to join the club? No, and he's even stayed with the Oates, and if they couldn't charm him in, who can?

We were based in Hamilton, North Island and planned on a hub and spoke system. The hub was Mystery Creek, a huge showground just outside the city, and the spokes were the rally stages either out to, or in from, various towns around. There was a clever colour-coding system ensuring that the roads weren't choked with antiquated chuff-chuffs. One aspect of the route planning was to ensure that as many rural communities as possible, especially schools could see us. We had an hilarious meeting with the kids of Whitehall, a hamlet which, as far as we could see, consisted of the school, ("toilets available") and a village hall. Many of the children thought nothing of travelling several K's to get there. Our visit made their day, and they were greatly surprised at the comfort of Lagonda seats. Another feature of the planning was to allow entrants to choose either long, medium, or short versions of the stages depending on the fragility of their mounts. One of our group had a 1913 Empire of highly Edwardian appearance, and to our astonishment and admiration chose the long versions of anything up to 80 miles. Talk of Jeremy and his little brown car! He chugged up hills, trundled down them, shuddered over potholes and corrugated corners, and came home triumphant!

Interest in old cars is very high. There was an open day for the public at Mystery Creek. An estimated 23,000 people turned up, yet the population of Hamilton is nobbut 100,000 or so! Equally the standard of maintenance and restoration was an eye-opener to us, though admittedly a few were O.T.T.

These boys and girls are living in a sparsely populated country thousands of miles from anywhere, but their enthusiasm and expertise ought to shame us who have one-make car clubs on every street corner. We implore all car clubs in this country (which started the nonsense) to respond quickly and positively to any requests from this vigorous, happy nation. End of sermon!

The next International, depending on sponsorship, may be in 4 years or 6 years time. We hope the former, otherwise we may be full time gardeners in 6 years - pushing up daisies!



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"You're not just a Number with us"



Ian and Mary MacGregor chat to John Turner and No 4 daughter behind their respective cars.



. . . Mutual friends and acquaintances . . . "Do you know Peter Walby?"

Over the Hill and Far Away

Tom Willcox confesses all

IT IS well known that, if you are burdened with awful guilt, confession is good for the soul, so here goes!

About ten years ago Roger Firth brought his Close Coupled 2 litre High Chassis Saloon with him on a vintage rally that we also attended in the Lake District. Shirley and I were very taken with the car, never having seen this particular bodywork before. At the end of the rally we said to Roger, "If you ever decide to sell the car do please let us know".

Earlier this year, walking Offa's Dyke with another vintage car friend, we found ourselves in a small Welsh border pub having our evening meal when, unexpectedly, the mobile phone rang. It was Roger, who remembered our conversation of a decade ago, kindly phoning me to say that although his car was still not for sale, the only other known example, owned by Margaret Leigh, was in fact for sale.

On returning home a few days later we phoned Margaret and arranged to go and see the car. Once again seeing an example of this beautifully proportioned motor car, with its lovely folding occasional rear seats, made us fall for the design all over again.

The deal was done and a couple of weeks later we went to fetch the car. It was a sad parting for Margaret, who had loved the car for a long time, but we promised to look after it, give it a kindly home and above all to preserve the Weymann body and not to turn it into a fake open model. The car ran beautifully on the 90 mile journey home and we reported its safe arrival to Margaret.

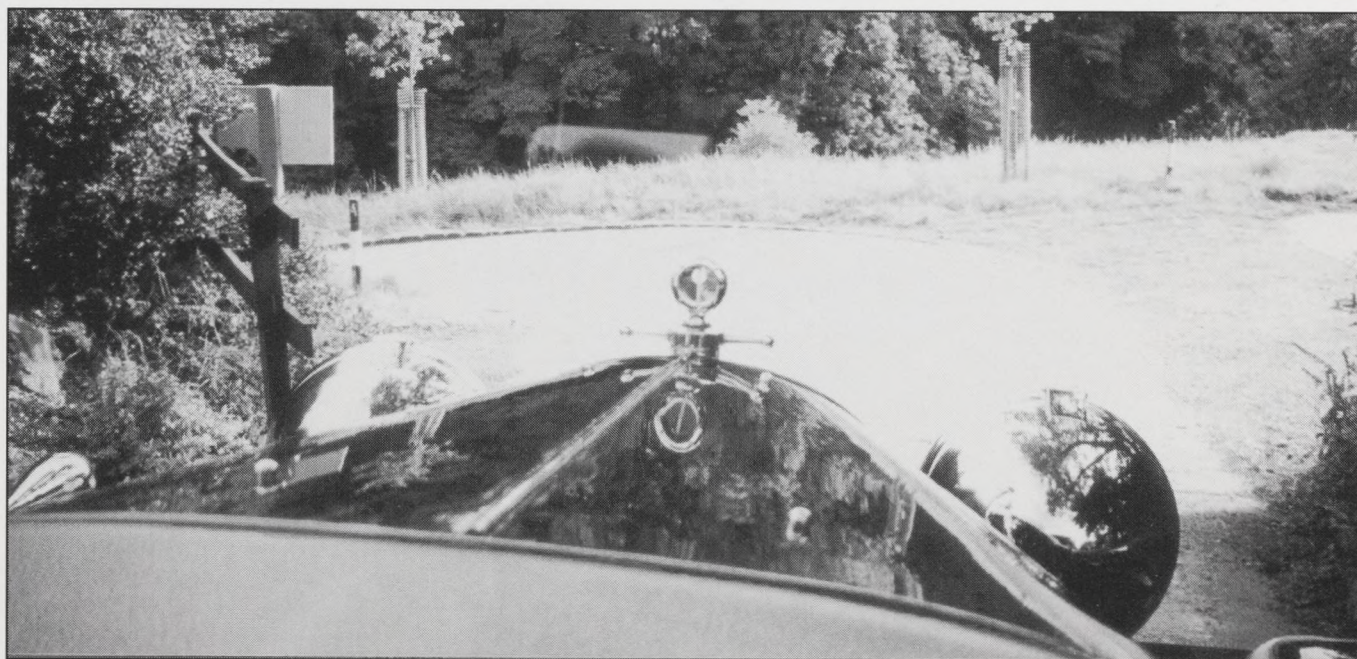
Five days later we were due to go to Shelsley and then to Malvern for the VSCC 65th Anniversary week of celebrations. We had already entered our

much-loved "A.N. Other make" of car, but were so pleased with the new addition that we decided to take the Lagonda instead. I was to drive the 2 litre and Shirley was going to tow our 1928 Eccles caravan with the "modern".

The Lagonda has no choke, relying instead on its Ki-gas system for starting. This is fine, but I had found that the car needs to warm up a little before being driven, as without a choke, the engine is inclined to splutter if an immediate attempt to drive off from cold is made. I therefore got the Lagonda out of the garage, set the brake and left the engine to warm up a little while walking down to where the caravan was parked, to check that the indicator and stop lights were working.

As we were checking the lights, to my utter horror, the empty Lagonda passed me running down the hill. The car missed me, the caravan and the Volvo, but as it did so I tried to stop its headlong rush. The passenger door, which was nearest to me, was locked however and therefore I was thwarted in my attempt to board the car.

The Lagonda continued to accelerate, heading for the damson tree on the right of the drive. Just before it got to the tree the car ran up a bank, as the drive drops through a small "cutting" at this point. Rising up the flowerbed banking on the right caused the car to change direction to the left, so that it turned away from the damson tree and started to swing back onto the drive again. It then crossed the cattle grid and passed between the gateposts without touching them. At this point the drive takes a sharp left turn, to traverse down the field below the house. The car, now



running straight as a die, continued directly forward, crossed the kerb of the drive at a right angle, passed between two recently planted lime trees and disappeared from view over the edge of the drive, descending a one in four slope in the field.

We rushed after the car, feeling certain that it could only be a total wreck after its 150 yard journey to the bottom of the field. To our total amazement, the car was sitting at the bottom of the field intact, the right way up and with the engine still "warming up". As the slope flattened out it had run into the very soft, wet, lower field, where the tyres sunk in, bringing the car gently to a halt, some ten yards before the six foot drop into the brook.

In a state of considerable shock, I walked back to where we are having some building work done to ask for help. The ground was too soft to use the dumper truck as a tow vehicle, so, with the aid of a rope attached to the front of the car, with three men pulling over their shoulders, like Humphrey Bogart in "The African Queen" two men pushing at the back and with the car being gently driven forward, out she came, without a scratch to be seen.

Still in a state of shock, I rang our local "garagiste" to check the car over. He duly arrived and, after a careful examination, said that he could see no reason why we should not continue with

our plans to go to Malvern.

We set off rather later than intended, but arrived safely at Shelsley. After going to bed in the caravan I could not get out of my mind the other possible consequences of the car's flight. What if it had hit Shirley or me? What if someone had been walking up the drive? What if a car had been coming up the drive? There were many other dreadful possibilities. Eventually I got to sleep, when I had a night of bad dreams of the awfulness of the day.

It was of course, very stupid to leave a car with a fly-off handbrake at the top of a hill with the engine running, I assume that the vibration of the engine must have released the handbrake and set the car in motion. I have learnt my lesson and will never do the same thing again and I will never cease to be amazed at my luck in getting away with virtually no damage following such stupidity.

Margaret's son, David, visited us at the Malvern VSCC campsite. As I had promised his mother I would look after the car I had to confess what I had done, but also reassured him that in spite of everything the car was well. Perhaps what was almost more harrowing was the number of Lagonda owners who came up to us at Malvern and said "What a lucky chap you are to have Margaret's car". Yes, lucky indeed, but little did they realise just how lucky!



The nightmare scenario.



Celebrations past – a lovely shot taken by Roger Stowers at Brooklands.



Celebrations to come – Roger Firth has commissioned some Millennium Ale for the Isle of Man Rally.

A Rewarding Experience

Scott Ward, an 'old Lag' reminisces on times past

WHEN alerted by an old friend as to the approach of the Lagonda Centennial at Brooklands my first thoughts were that I must make sure to read the ensuing reports. After further discussion I was fairly easily persuaded into promising to turn up, he having generously offered to meet me on the day at London Heathrow, transport me to the track, and return (personally if necessary) in respectable working order to North Yorkshire.

So, flown by British Midland from Yeaton, where in 1937 I had received my first flying lessons, Sunday, 18th July 1999 at Brooklands completely exceeded all expectations. To begin with I could scarcely believe we had ever constructed so many magnificent cars. That so many Lagondas, decades later are so lovingly preserved and maintained almost baffles credulity. The fact that I was there, having first set eyes on Lagonda engines in 1934 triggered many memories. On completion of my apprenticeship, my first appointment was in the Test and Experimental department of Coventry Climax Engines Limited at their Friary Road plant. I remained there about a year working under Laurie Hathaway Chief Engineer, and George Hurst who was the very kindly (and patient) foreman.

At that time about forty Lagonda Rapier engines stood completed and out in the open, in what had earlier been a small walled garden - awaiting collection. Eventually my discreet enquiries drew forth the opinion that no money was forthcoming to pay for them. More about this later. Meanwhile, we were kept steadily busy testing six and four cylinder engines which we manufactured for both Crossley and Triumph.

One afternoon in 1935 a mysterious

silence had become apparent with people inexplicably idle. George Hurst had actually risen from his somewhat unusual seat upon a box and said to me "Don't clock in Scott". A little later, "Triumph's credit has been stopped at the Bank", Triumph was I am certain our major customer at that time. Luckily I had been (successfully) interviewed that morning at Daimler for my next similar job; engine tester on Heenan & Froud dynamometers. I was able to make my peace with Laurie Hathaway, by visiting him in hospital at Leamington, and to thank both him and George Hurst.

Working at The Daimler Company, for me, turned out to be what Queen Mary might have termed 'quite a different kettle of fish'. I learned quite a lot there but was not sorry when reading The Autocar, hot from the press, to see "Vacancy occurs for racing mechanic", etc. Apply R.R.Jackson, Brooklands. My application went off with the speed of light, resulting in an interview with his Foreman, Curley Skelton, and I joined them forthwith.

The Brooklands season of the Jubilee Year, 1935, came to an end with the 500 Mile Race in October, after which Robin Jackson 'went into Winter Quarters'. In short his married staff were kept on, while single or younger ones readily found other suitable employment.

I then wrote to Lagonda at Staines where, I had been informed by a friend, 'a fresh injection of cash was in progress'. The resulting interview was with J.E.Davies, sitting in his erstwhile Service Department, on what was to be his desk in what was to be his office (no roof yet) - I on another box, each knee deep in carpenters' off-cuts and sawdust. After half an hour his admonishments to

me were "I'll give you a trial. Six weeks; and then if you are not up to scratch - out you go! And that's final". Next, tramping out of the 'office' he added "I certainly would not advise anyone who has a job to leave it to come to this place". I had actually, at Vickers-Armstrong Limited, Weybridge Division, but I was not to be dissuaded. I enjoyed a year as probationary test driver, initially under Stan Purdey, from Aston Martin who was in charge of engine rebuilding in the Service Department, and then I was out on the road in company with Smithie (from South Africa), David Cleghorn (ex sea-going engineer) and Bill White from the Lagonda agent in Bradford.

At that time the 4½ litre tourer was expected to pass the wooden finger signpost (on your left) at the foot of Priest Hill, Old Windsor in top gear at about walking speed, then accelerating gently, using only the advance and retard hand-control on the ignition, (no gear changes!) and, steadily increasing road speed so as to approach the crest, Englefield Green, at 60 mph - but then very necessary indeed to be able to stop on a sixpence.

Open road testing on the long straight stretches of the Exeter Road, passing our 'front door' towards the Hartfordbridge Flats (A30) necessitated strictest judgment as I remember concerning the far distant 'blind summits'. Approaching these at high speed before any prevalence of 'white lines' could be very dangerous indeed. This was a period when 4½ litre open tourers were expected to be capable of 100 mph. In the event of an owner not being satisfied, the company would take him and the car to Brooklands for independent timed tests.

Working in the Service Department was never dull, resembling Piccadilly Circus in that if you stayed there long enough some one you knew would certainly walk by. For instance pioneer aviators, leading owners, breeders and trainers and other celebrities - as did Billy Cotton frequently bringing all serious work to a standstill. After lunch one day, a good lunch no doubt, strange,

approaching music heralded the entry of himself joyfully capering in playing what was clearly a highly polished inlet manifold, though in saxophone mode. This was accompanied vocally "Ah press dis middle note down. Der music go aroun an aroun - an it come out here". His guests, hilariously scampering behind in Indian file, each having selected a brake drum or other musical makeshift to be beaten in time, while circumnavigating the hallowed domain of J.E.Davies! I almost forgot to include the step dance; one might have thought it was Christmas.

John Heath at that time was one of my close friends of whom I recently listed about two dozen, many later achieving lasting status in the Lagonda hierarchy. From him I had his 1927 Delage DISS 2 litre Van den Plas tourer. A truly delightful car in so many respects, pointing me in the right direction for the future.

A young friend from Stirlingshire, whose 4½ had "developed some trouble and could I lend a hand?" appeared to be in need of help. To my surprise the cylinder head (and very much more) turned out to be in his room at the Caledonian Club, then in St. James's Square. There was otherwise nothing wrong with the room. It just seemed perhaps not quite the thing to be completing this serious restoration in such beautifully preserved Chippendale surroundings.

I left Lagonda most reluctantly, even J.E.Davies advising me not to do so, but I had been invited to join a team intending to introduce front wheel drive into Britain. I therefore joined Citroën Cars Limited and stayed with them excepting the War Years until 1947.

However in 1942 at Alamein but a week or two before the Battle began, my Colonel instructed me to "take a few days leave" and to go to GHQ in Cairo, there to "secure" a Leyland chassis, to have an instant, but wooden, facsimile Armoured Command Vehicle body built upon it and suitably camouflage painted, and return with it pronto to HQ 10th Armoured

Division (where I was his Adjutant). The key man at GHQ solely controlling the release of every single new vehicle from Base turned out to be Bertie Thornley, now Lieut.Col.GSD 1. The interview including necessary telephone calls took almost an hour. I fairly quickly recognised him. On leaving, and walking towards the door of his office I said "I think we have met before Sir". He looked concerned but puzzled until I said "Lagonda". After some hearty reminiscences he said "Why on earth didn't you say so in the first place? We could have got through this business in half the time".

One more faint Lagonda echo from far away Cairo recalls the young lady being interviewed by Lady Mountbatten as to her proficiency before becoming a member of a rather select team of military ambulance drivers to operate in the Western Desert. "And how did you say you were taught to drive?" The reply, "On the company's cars. My father arranged it". The name of the young lady? Holberton. Sir Edgar Holberton it was who succeeded General Metcalf at Staines to carry on the company during one of the most critical periods in its history.

Conclusion

Sailing home from the Middle East in 1945 on board the Pasteur afforded time to consider priorities. Rounding St. Catherine's Point for Southampton in a blizzard of snow on 29th May, my conservative leanings remained firm. Although certain of my close friends had jointly but clearly decided a 3 litre Bentley best for me, in the ensuing search I found a little used and partially neglected 2 litre low-chassis Lagonda, first registered in September 1930, from memory. It was fitted with what I believe to have been a version of the T2 body all steel, not fabric, and finished in black above British Racing Green. Our family car had been a Napier, in Napier Green, the colour eventually referred to as British Racing Green.

The trail thus far had been by way of Tobruk, 1941, whence a Tank Officer, wounded and shipped out by destroyer was now thought to be recuperating in Broadway. I suppose my visit there in 1945 was although requested, unexpected. His aunt was able to tell me that, Humphrey being not at home, the 'Bentley' was in Cheltenham.

My first view of this, now a Lagonda, was difficult to believe. It was partially buried beneath the lower slopes of a 'mountain' (altitude between ten feet and twenty feet) of small coal in the vast garage of the Queens Hotel. My copy of the 1938-39 Automobile Association Hotel Handbook reads "TN3013; 100 brms; H&C; Pub.G. adj". So this was it.

Several hours later countless barrow loads of coal had been personally shovelled and wheeled nearer to an exit, by me, though officially still Acting Lieutenant Colonel, and I was satisfied that VJ 3109 merited rescuing. Mrs. Beryl Mercer of nearby Shelbourne Hall was the previous owner and was prepared to let it go to a good home.

Considerable restoration was needed, and the next few years saw, at times, feverish activity. I became a member of the Vintage Sports Car Club and from fellow members I received much valuable advice, encouragement and help. For the main engine overhaul to highest standards I was fortunate in knowing Charles Griffiths, through the Bentley Drivers' Club; even though I had preferred a Lagonda. Covering my embarrassment I asked for a quotation, pleading this somewhat deprived upbringing. As hitherto his standards had been set by Bristol Aeroplane Company, for the reliability of whose engines he had frequently been responsible I, with postwar optimism, accepted.

This was a decision never regretted so far as I know, and even as recently as the 1970s when an evening telephone call had me listening to details read out from my 1945-6 (account) receipts by the new owner of VJ 3109.

Naturally an invitation was extended

from Little Barrington in Gloucestershire to a Cheshire Naval Air Station and accepted for what eventually turned out to be a hastily arranged and heartily enjoyed bacon and eggs supper for their family and ours and, of course, a trial run to Taynton in Oxfordshire. Most satisfactory.

So much for an early version of the hemispherical combustion chambered engine of the Sports 2 litre tourer. What I next needed was a choice of axle ratios. Any owner who has not yet lain underneath his 2 litre, lifting and changing rear axles, approximately one hundredweight each in weight (I had collected three; ratios between from memory 4.0:1 and 4.5:1), might perhaps first consider joining a Fitness Club. In those days we took it in our stride.

The gain in performance, if not electric, was definitely very encouraging. A preliminary get together on 15th September 1945 - The First Post War Rally of the Vintage Sports Car Club, held at Bagshot - gained me a plaque, (even though carrying throughout the day a vital collection of spare parts in my haversack, in case the car itself might have to be left at Bagshot in, as you might say, the worst possible scenario).

At the VSCC Bisley Driving Tests on Sunday 21st July 1946, VJ 3109 was one of the four 2 litres entered, which included Peter Densham's. Of some 28 entrants Webb (Lagonda) was placed fifth. Entries by marque were as follows

Alvis	5	Amilcar	1
Bentley	5	Bugatti	1
Lagonda	4	Delage	1
Austin	3	Fraser Nash	1
Aston Martin	2	Lancia	1
Hispano Suiza	2	Mercedes-Benz	1
MG 1			

Final markings:

Austin 1, 2, 3=

with MG 3=

Lagonda 5 & 7

Mercedes-Benz 6.

Sorry chaps!

In 1946 I succeeded in running to ground a small company near, from memory Camberley who were unable to deny that they had a very small but limited stock of top quality material from which a new hood and tonneau cover could be made and fitted, but that it was very scarce, and not knowing whether, if ever, further supplies might be forthcoming. Only by the persuasiveness of my description of the dreadful times we had had in the Western Desert could they be prevailed upon to agree to consider possibilities. As to what it cost, my memory is blank, but they made an expert job to it.

Similarly in March of that year my wife, in the Maidenhead Nursing Home, a patient of Dr. M—— told me that waiting for our second son to arrive he stood looking out over Boulton's Lock from the balcony of her first floor room, he asked "What did you say your husband's car is?" "A Lagonda" my wife brightly replied. "It looks as though he has arrived". Those were the days! When we all paid our own bills, perhaps I should have made do with a Bentley.

As for tyres, I believe that in 1946 was the only occasion of having the unusual opportunity of being held to ransom by a real millionaire. Before the war for similar transactions I had watched him carefully extract from his trouser pocket a wad of notes which were clearly his principal working capital but now, before getting my Lagonda reshod I had to inspect his personal fleet, a hangerful of immaculate Rolls-Royces under dust sheets.

This 2 litre later competed in the Lewes Speed Hill Climb where, despite having probably the most important collection of 2 litre back axles in the country at that time, we were outclassed, but gave a good account of ourselves.

Two memorable cars of the period were Forrest Lycett's 8 litre Bentley and Anthony Heal's magnificent 3 litre TT Sunbeam, each having given me an exciting ride home, when needed. So my occasional vehicle off road after some

competitive event could be agreeably tolerated, not to mention enjoyed.

Stepping forward over more than half a century the Lagonda Centenary celebration at Brooklands was an experience almost beyond the powers of imagination. So many Lagondas, not only present but immaculate, and in impeccable condition bore witness to the unlimited technical resources, and incalculable personal financial investment, therein concentrated, second only possibly to Rolls-Royce.

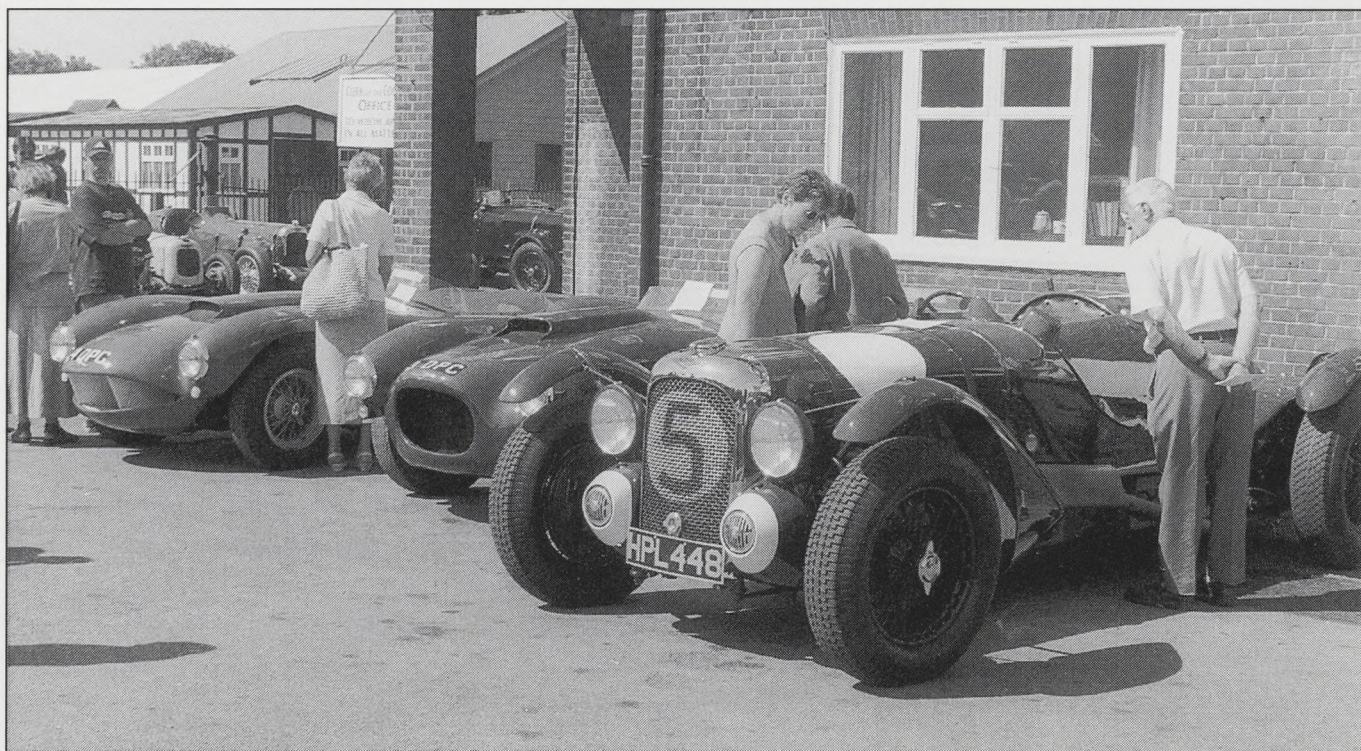
To encounter somewhat unexpectedly the Tim Ashcroft Rapier BPC 44, which I had first worked on in 1935, now to find myself standing unwittingly beside my previous 2 litre Low Chassis Speed Model VJ 3109, last seen in about 1948, reminded one what a small world ours is.

Harking back again, at one of the post war Motor Shows I espied Tim sitting quietly alone on the Bristol stand. Our ensuing conversation I would not have missed for worlds, and I can only regret my inability to recall so few of the more significant, and perhaps controversial opinions; particularly when later discussed with Alan Lamburn whose task it had been pre-war to introduce design

modifications for the production Rapiers, and with whom I had worked closely since 1950.

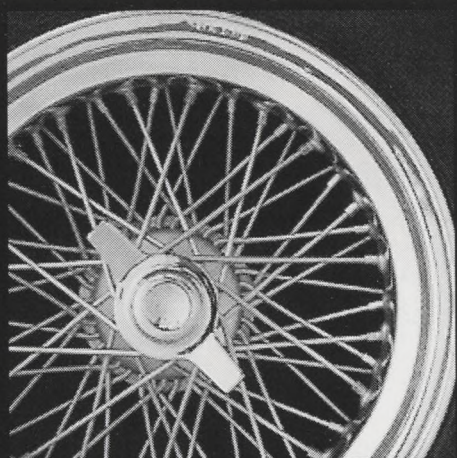
Alan Lamburn's personal involvement with Lagonda predated mine in the 1930 by some four years. On through the 1950s and 1960s I re-encountered many others including CW (Rex) Sewell. Frank Ayto, and Frank Feeley, not forgetting Gerald Lascelles, helping to keep Aston Martin in the picture.

Early one morning hastening south on the Great North Road before dual carriageways, my rear view mirror provided an unforgettable image; no traffic about except a Lagonda very rapidly overtaking. What could explain its load which in the half light appeared hazily to protrude either side of the car? At the Ram Jam Inn where my intention was to pull in, this Lagonda was already parked and, as I thought, on the back seat lay a magnificent twelve pointer, the nearest respectable deer forest lying some four hundred miles away to the north. A nostalgic note perhaps, though a colourful one, on which to conclude such pleasant reminiscences of Lagonda motoring in the Good Old Days.



Three cars, 36 cylinders. Pre and post war V12s at Brooklands.

Photo: Roger Stowers



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Lagondas in Australia, the meeting in Blackburn, Victoria. See Giff Hatfield's letter opposite.



Letters

Dear Ken,

Thought you may be able to use the enclosed photos for the magazine. BPK 203 must surely be the first Lagonda in the world to have seen the new millennium sunrise. I can say this with confidence because the rest of New Zealand was covered with dense low cloud and lots of rain.

The photo is taken looking across the sea at Kekerengu Beach, on the East Coast of South Island, at 6 a.m., where the clouds miraculously parted and the sun came up over the water, all reflected in BPK 203's radiator!

After this, we continued south to Christchurch, where the vintage car club had organised a jazz band day at a country pub. When we arrived, our French stick, which had been suspended above the manifold for 10 miles at approximately 2100 rpm, was done to perfection and other members were most impressed!

Further to John Turner's article on BPK 203 in Magazine 181, we now reside in the northern province of South Island, in the heart of the wine producing area. The Lagonda is a familiar sight at some of the local wineries, where I take all my visitors.

Happy New year and Good Motoring!

Alison Moores

Dear Ken,

I noticed a request for members to provide photo's and memories of centenary events. Though now some time ago I enclose a series of photo's I took while in U.K. last year. There are also photo's of an Aussie centenary meeting, of which I have only recently had my film processed.

While our time to attend the U.K. events was somewhat limited it was really a magnificent experience to see so many fabulous Lagondas together and in action - at Great Malvern, Ripley and of course the ultimate - Brooklands.

It was also great meeting Lagonda people - people I had either not seen since I lived for a while in England in the 60's or had only "met" through correspondence.

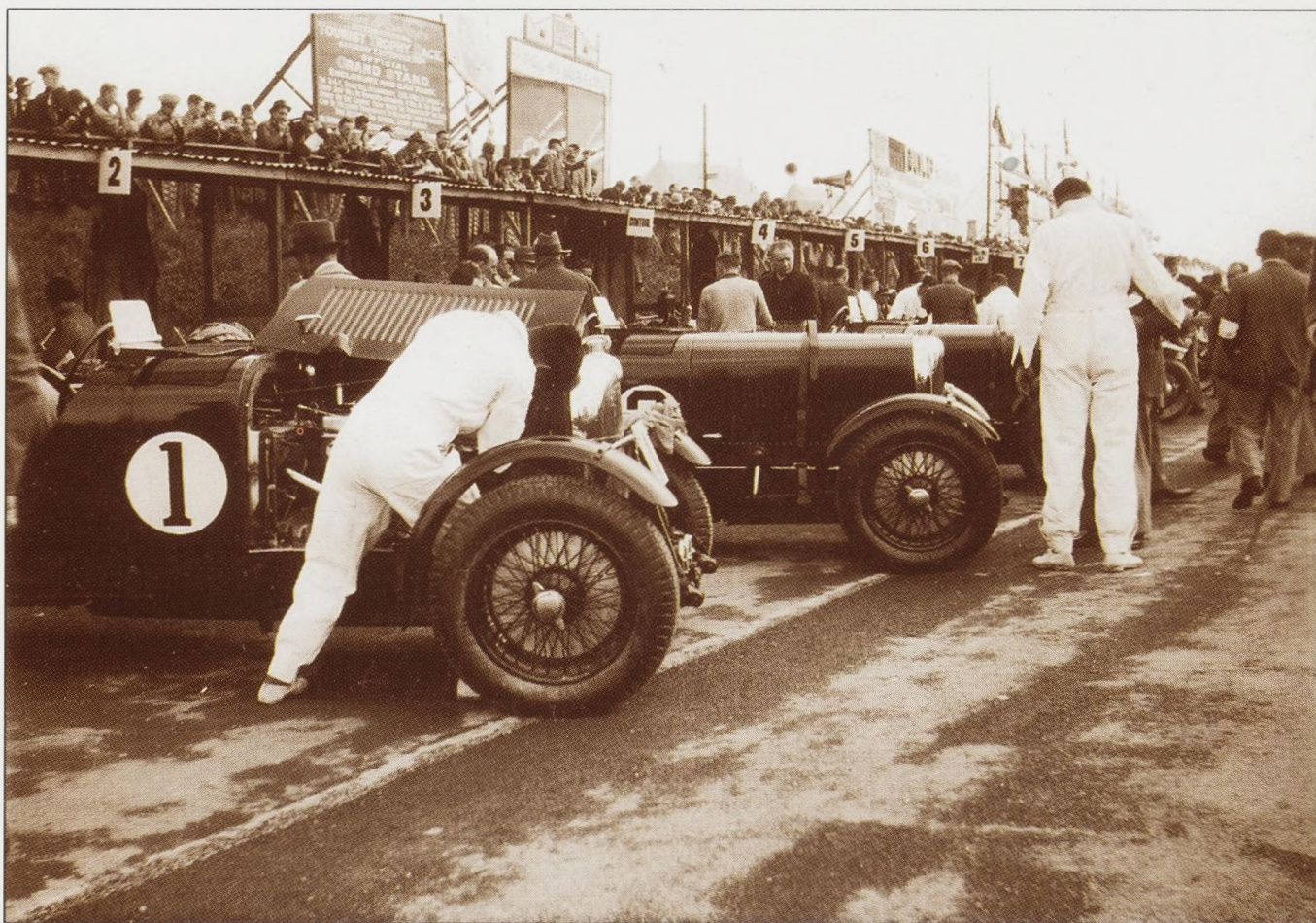
To be able to closely examine other M45R's, including the Olympia show car as mine has a similar (though Australian built) body, was very special and useful.

I felt especially honoured to be given the chance to drive a couple of them.

Back in Australia on 14 Nov. we had a local centenary celebration organised by a couple of the other Lagonda owners (Bernie Jacobson was one of them - he was involved in quite a few of the centenary events with his white Rapier). Enclosed is a series of photos of that day. As you can see I had a Lagonda flag flying from my Rapide and we had a (delicious) centenary birthday cake.

The organisers managed to get a dozen or so cars from round Victoria (which is about the size of U.K.) assembled in a park at Blackburn (suburb of Melbourne) on a glorious day. Great weather for a picnic lunch and for poring over cars. Some of the cars travelled considerable distances to be attend.

While we were not permitted to perform events in the park we had use of quite a good area and indulged in much detailed inspection as you can see from the raised bonnets. Our cars also attracted a good deal of interest from the general public, as well as from some car enthusiasts coming especially to see our cars since the event had been promoted in the motoring press, and in the Vintage



Lagondas at Brooklands. See Roy Taylor's and Arnold Davey's letters on page 28.



Sports Car Club news.

As you can see from the photo's our centenary event attracted a high proportion of Rapiers, two V12's and single examples of other models.

Also enclosed is an article from our major newspaper with some detail of Graeme Miller and his V12. Graeme was intending to visit the U.K. earlier this year and was going to contact various club officials.

I hope you may find some of this of interest and possible of some use. We will be back in the U.K. again briefly this year, in early July, and will be on the lookout for events which coincide with our visit.

Regards,

Giff Hatfield

I hope to feature the newspaper article in a future magazine. KPP.

Dear Uncle Guru

Well, axle tramp was a good one wasn't it. I have taken most of the advice given and now have a wonderful set up of wires, pulleys, MG shock-absorbers, brackets, bungee rubber, front oleos from an old Vampire jet and amazing castor angles.

The 2L is now settling down well and has returned recently from the Fougères rally which has expanded somewhat since the Lagonda Club was invited a couple of years ago. But even with an entry of 140 cars it was still very relaxed and well organised. We have done the centennial Brooklands, gone raspberry picking, done a wedding for a friend, attended various VSCC meets, posed at the local pub and generally had a lot of fun this summer, often with four up.

Apart from being rather (very) slow on inclines it has all been most satisfying.

However there are a couple of operating questions for you.

Why should oil pressure increase on a long run? (from about 38 psi to almost 45 psi). I would normally expect a marginal drop. Does this indicate a blockage somewhere, and should I worry? I have tried to reduce the pressure via the relief valve, but it doesn't seem to

have much effect. It also takes a while to build up pressure, according to the gauge, which quickly registers about 25psi from a cold start and then gradually builds up to around the 40 mark.

Secondly, having failed to make the last few feet of the test hill at Brooklands because of clutch slip, what do I have to do to cure this? It is never a problem during normal running. I remember commenting to David Ayre about the absence of 2L's from driving tests, despite the odd assortment seen at the VSCC winter event. He said this was probably due to the inherently weak clutch rendering the car unsuitable. So can anything be done?

Kind regards

Don Courtney

P.S. Is it time to remind new readers that this column is written for the benefit of the not-so-experienced owners? And to say that the advice of the more knowledgeable and wiser bretheren is eagerly sought and very much appreciated.

Dear Ken,

In issue No 25 of the Newsletter, Arnold Davey was kind enough to make appreciative reference to my article in the magazine concerning a 3 litre engine which had devoured its cam follower matrix.

He queried whether this particular engine - and indeed the others to which I referred - were '6 plate', or '3 plate' versions, suggesting that the former, being of a stiffer configuration, may be less prone to such structural failures

As it so happened, all the engines of which I had gained knowledge in respect of this particular failure have been 75mm bore '3 plate' designs and indeed it may well be that the '6 plate' casting was less failure-prone in the matrix area.

However, inasmuch as 'section change' is the dominant factor in potential fatigue failures where cast iron (in particular) is concerned, he may well have answered his own question when postulating the theory that a stiffer outer

section could well transfer even greater stresses to the relatively slender geometry of the matrix. Information on the '6 plate' failures would doubtless throw some light on this, but, like many historical engineering analyses of failure, you need a pretty significant sample in order to draw safe conclusions as to cause and effect.

Co-incidentally, I have recently been reading bound volumes of the magazine from 1950 onwards. What a wealth of technical data and 'practical' information tips were published then!

A **lot** more workshop activities and much less of expensive 'high profile' social events then, I note!

Ah well, tempus fugit I suppose.

Yours aye

John Ryder

Dear Ken,

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed photographs which I hereby give to the Lagonda Club in gratitude for 10 years' happy membership and enjoyment of the magazine. They were passed to me by the aged son of a Lagonda owner of the 30s, who was an obvious Brooklands enthusiast and of the "in-crowd", judging by the proximity of the photographer to the drivers and machinery. I'm sure some of the more knowledgeable of the Club will have fun identifying personalities and cars.

Do what you will with the pictures, as a non-member now, having sold my 3 litre, I'm grateful to the club for all the friendship and advice so freely given.

Yours faithfully

Roy Taylor

Copies of the pictures were sent to Arnold and the originals will be lodged with him in the Club's archives, he comments below: K.P.P.

Dear Ken,

Thanks for the pictures from Roy Taylor, all very interesting since naturally we haven't seen them before. Comments:

The big picture of all three M45s. This is at the 1934 TT, lined up before the

start. The very tall man in white overalls with his back to the camera is Donald Wilcockson, Fox & Nicholl's chief mechanic. I think the man, also in white overalls, working on the engine of No. 1 is Jack Playford, but as you can't see his face, this is just a guess based on the visible hair style.

The Rapier picture was taken at the 1935 TT, as Davies Millar only competed in that one with this car, which was blue. I don't know the chassis number and I get the impression the Register don't either.

Little boy looking at No 2. This is also the 1935 TT and the attributions are right. The difference from 1934 lies in the sidelamps on the M45s, which were fitted for Le Mans and left on. In 1934 the cars had no lamps. Also the typeface used for the number 2 is much lighter than that used in 1934.

2 Litre picture. We have no record of UU 2946, but the registration is London, early 1929. I note the supplementary parking lamp attached to the nearside sidelamp. Probably owner fitted and the fact that it is only on the nearside suggests he was in the habit of parking on the wrong side of the road. Or is there also one on the offside? Perhaps there is. (There is, but it is difficult to see on the small copy I sent to Arnold. KPP) In the days when you had to leave lights on when parked, these little lamps which showed red one side and white the other were a great battery saver. Talking of lamps, I would normally expect a high chassis car to have a Barker rod dipping system fitted, but can't see it on this one.

All fascinating stuff and I look forward to seeing the originals.

Regards,

Arnold

Dear Ken,

The last magazine and recent newsletters have produced many reports of overheating problems with M45s. Hitherto, I had always thought that it was only my car that suffered.

On many Alpine Rallies over the past years, I have had the pleasure of meeting other M45 owners, particularly from



*Le Mans winner, bread oven and bar – just how versatile can a Lagonda get?
See “letters page 25*



Gordon Ryder's M45R gets a ride home. See “Letters” page 31.

Switzerland and Germany, who combat the problem with all manner of ingenious devices.

This year, the World F.I.V.A. Rally was held in the Alps of Northern Italy and starting in Turin. The temperature each day was in the upper 90's. surprisingly, I found myself to be the sole U.K. entrant so was proud to fly the Lagonda flag. We had taken five comfortable days to reach Turin from Shropshire. The ex-Morris Minor pusher pump fitted by Alan Brown was already proving itself and Alan's offside hardwearing sock (in British Racing Green incidentally!) was functioning well. The days were, however, becoming hotter still and I had to revert to roping up each side of the bonnet so that I had a gap of about two inches along the sills and which, of course, leaves a small gap around the bulkhead. This operation, which, in fact, ensures no further problems, attracted the attention of an Indian who turned out to be the Editor of "Auto-Car Magazine" in India. There is no connection with our "Autocar" magazine. He said in his delightful Indian dialect "this car wouldn't go in India you know". To which I replied "It isn't going very well in Turin either!" He was, of course, quite right as, whilst the M45 is perfectly adequate in an English climate, it is very different in the Tropics and major changes would have to be made. I then encountered an LG6 owner who showed me his solution to the problem. He had two supports made in hard rubber each side of the bonnet and shaped like an "L", with the horizontal stroke much thicker than the vertical.

These simply fitted on the sill and supported the bonnet two inches or so off the sill. I certainly have found that getting the hot air out virtually removes the problems we encounter.

To revert to the Rally, the event proved to be possibly the most enjoyable F.I.V.A. Rally ever. The hotels, the routes, the food, the wines and the laid-on events were quite superb. It was increasingly apparent that what Fiat (the main sponsors) say, goes. So much so, they

even arranged a cocktail party on the shore of Lake Maggiore with a 50 minute display by the Italian 'Red Arrows' team, the Frecce Tricolori. Imagine the red, white and green smoke all over the lake. Day one took us inevitably to the Fiat works at Mirafiori and to have the chance to drive several laps of their 'new' test circuit. Martini & Rossi provided an extremely tasty lunch.

The following day was notable as we were allowed to drive on the famous super-elevated banked track at the Lingotto, the former home of Fiat. I found that I had to have two bites at most of the corners to get up there, rather like a multi-storey car park. Batches of 15 cars, all shapes and sizes, were allowed on the track, which proved to be a most enjoyable thrash, but quite dangerous, with everyone trying to get to the top of the banking. In the evening we had a cavalcade of the mounted carabinieri interspersed with a parade of Fiat cars from the year dot, it being also their 100th year.

During the succeeding four days and because of the numbers, the entrants were split into two groups, visiting many resorts on alternate days, Val d'Aosta, residences of the Royal Family and the land of wines and good foods, the Langhe, before converging on Stresa on Lake Maggiore. Long Alpine drives in very hot and humid weather appeared to be quite manageable in the M45 with the additional fuel pump, the raising of the bonnet sides and the Lancashire Woollen Mill sock. The Italian F.I.V.A. Rally was one of the more memorable events.

On our return home, we "took-in" the circuit at Monaco, visited Magny Cours and finished at the ultimate, the Lagonda celebrations at Brooklands. In all, some 2600 miles.

Sincerely

Stuart Timmins

When the Painter family lived in Singapore, Doc Young, Roger Gilbanks, Harry and Marianne Robinson all ran 4½ litre Lagondas and several raced and rallied them as well, but I can not

remember any of them suffering from fuel vaporisation. Can it be something to do with the modern fuel formulation? K.P.P

Dear Ken,

Your article in the magazine which arrived this morning has stirred me into activity, of a sort. A photograph which I took on the last day of the Northern rally 1999, shows the ignoble end to my motoring for the day. Believe it or not, the gearbox seized on the Saturday evening, just as I was parking the car after a good run in the North Yorks Moors. The gear lever was stuck and would not budge in spite of much experienced help, so the car was abandoned for the night, we had the dinner to attend. Next morning the RAC were called and transported the car to Alan Brown's at Knarr Mill, where, bless him, he replaced the box with another of mine and I was on my way to Fougères two days later.

I have owned and driven my M45R for more than forty years and of course had my fair share of problems, but whenever I needed advice or practical help, friends in the Club have always turned trumps, which says an awful lot for the Club.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Ryder

Dear Ken,

having read the last Lagonda Mag, I note that you had an interest in Len Vale Onslow's flying attempts in a Lagonda powered aircraft.

I went to see him in February, as I am writing a book which includes "Famous Midland Engineers". He told me the following story:

His two older brothers, Gordon and Harold, were founder members of the Midland Aero Club, formed at Castle Bromwich and built a monoplane in 1910, powered by an inverted Lagonda V-twin of 1200cc. They flew the machine for 250 yards at a height of 12 feet and won a prize of £250.

Later, using one wing of the monoplane, they made a glider, from which Len was suspended on a bamboo

frame. They towed it from a hill in Erdington, overlooking the reservoir, using a strong 50 yard cord. Piloted by Len, it immediately gained height and continued in flight until they reached the reservoir, when the cord tension was released. The machine then crashed, leaving Len unconscious. They carried him home and laid him on the couch, thinking he was dead and hoping their parents would assume he died of natural causes! He survived this and many other crashes and achieved many records competing on motor cycles.

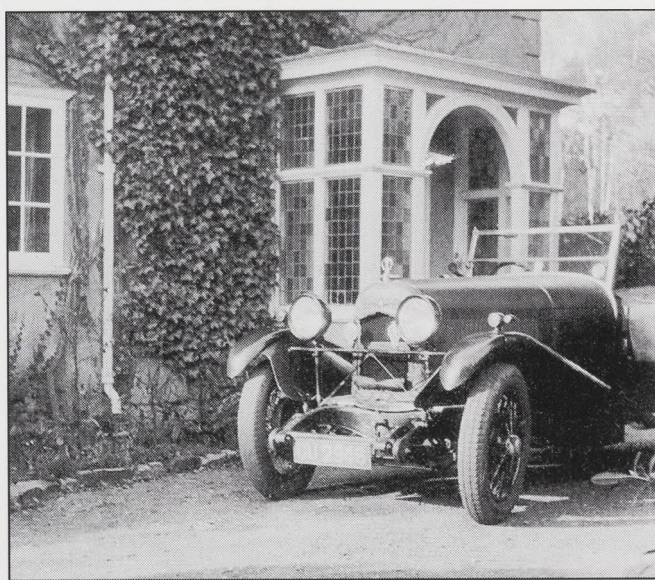
One of his greatest achievements was to win the Brighton Speed Trials in 1926 on a 172cc machine of his own design, at a speed of 88 mph. He designed the first all welded chrome molybdenum frame to be used on a motorcycle. This was incorporated in his own make, S.O.S. Machines.

He was awarded the M.B.E. in 1995 for his services to motor cycling and was featured in "This is Your Life" in 1999. Len is still going strong at the age of 99.

Best wishes,

Jim Shelley

Jim's book will be published shortly and he has promised to send me a review copy. If this is typical of its contents, it sounds like a jolly good read! KPP.



The Lagonda 2 litre picture submitted by Roy Taylor, see his letter and Arnold's reply page 28.

Classic Days at Brands

Tony May gives us a taste of things to come

SUMMER is on its way and thoughts turn naturally to some of the delights in store for us during the coming competition season. For those Lagonda Club members who from time to time like to see a broader spread of classic, historic sports and racing cars in dramatic action there are some great fixtures to anticipate.

Brands Hatch has long had the reputation for mounting spectacularly exciting race days for the older sporting cars and this year will be no exception.

The 13th and 14th May weekend brings the BARC Classic Festival to this famous Kent circuit and expect to see an array of Classic and Historic Saloons, pre-1974 Post-Historic Touring Cars, pre-1983 Group 1 Touring Cars, pre-1966 Austin-Healeys, MGs, Triumphs and much more besides, all contesting for honours over the Indy Circuit.

Mouthwatering line-ups of historic racers are then promised for the weekend of 1st-2nd July - two days of ultra-close racing in the HSCC International Superprix. If this weekend lives up to anything like the 1999 event, then you are in for a thrilling time! The highlight of this event promises to be the Historic Grand Prix races with their immaculately prepared entrants - hotly contested as ever. Many famous marques from the past can be seen in the full programme of events for sports and touring cars throughout the Saturday and Sunday.

The following weekend, 8th and 9th July, will see our friends the AMOC present their special Midsummer Astons event. This will be well worth supporting with a fine array of Aston Martins of all types, and perhaps even some Lagondas as well, competing

against a wide variety of other classic makes. Special races featuring Ferraris, Porsches and Austin-Healeys and others will provide an international flavour to this action-packed programme and this is sure to provide some exciting racing.

The reason why these events at Brands Hatch attract such quality entries is that they are well organised, professionally marshalled and well supported by the spectators. Great weekends are promised - the opportunities to watch many famous racing marques from pre-war and more recent times competing flat out on this demanding circuit are too good to be missed. Make no mistake, although the cars are usually immaculately presented this does not deter their drivers from stinting in any way their efforts to win. The pits walk-about, when possible, are very popular and allow you to get close to the cars in the lunch interval. Plenty of photo opportunities there! The Paddock too is an interesting place to stroll around, perhaps finding other Club colleagues enjoying the friendly atmosphere. And most importantly the spectators are provided with good viewing of the racing from all parts of the circuit.

Cadwell Park, Oulton Park and Snetterton are also members of the Brands Hatch Leisure Group - to find out what events are being held at all of those venues this season, call 0870 60 60 611 and have fun with some "Classic" days out. Good spectating!

(Meeting dates are correct at time of going to press - advisable to ring the Circuit to check any late changes.)

PS Please apply using the form, or photocopy if you like, remembering to fill in your Club details. Offer applies to UK residents.

C.99

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Electrical Theory

by Joseph Lucas

POSITIVE ground depends on proper circuit functioning, the transmission of negative ions by retention of the visible manifestation known as "smoke". Smoke is the thing that makes electrical circuits work; we know this to be true because every time one lets the smoke out of the electrical system, it stops working. This can be verified repeatedly through empirical testing.

When, for example, the smoke escapes from an electrical component (i.e., say, a Lucas voltage regulator), it will be observed that the component stops working. The function of the wire harness is to carry the smoke from one device to another, when the wire harness "springs a leak" and lets all the smoke out of the system, nothing works afterwards. Starter motors were frowned upon in British Automobiles for some time, largely because they consume large quantities of smoke, requiring very large wires. It has been noted that Lucas components are possibly more prone to electrical leakage than Bosch or generic Japanese electrics. Experts point out that this is because Lucas is British and all things British leak.... So, naturally, British electrics smoke.

The battery stores the smoke. In fact it can store so much smoke if you open the top and light a match, the resulting explosion can do serious damage. I'm sure you are aware that usually where there's smoke there's fire. If you connect

a battery to a charger, the smoke is then returned to the battery; therefore we can think of a battery as a reusable storage device for smoke. The smoke circulates through the system, due to the pressure differential in the battery (smoke pressure reservoir). When the system is at rest, all the switches and relays are closed, keeping the pressure areas separated. When the reservoir becomes depleted, the pressure simply equalises everywhere in the system and stuff just won't work.

The smoke can escape from the wires when a path is created between pressure differential areas that have too little restriction. When this happens, the smoke travels through the wires so fast that the friction between the smoke and the outer walls of the wiring heats the wires until they rupture. The smoke continues to escape until its pressure is equalised with the atmosphere.

The light/smoke converters (headlights and other darkness absorbing devices) consume the smoke to suck up darkness and convert it to light. The smoke pump impeller (stator) converts magnetic flux into smoke, which is returned to the smoke reservoir (battery).

This fascinating technical article was adapted from an article appearing in the Norton Owners' Club Newsletter and was supplied by Steve and Ann Lawrence.





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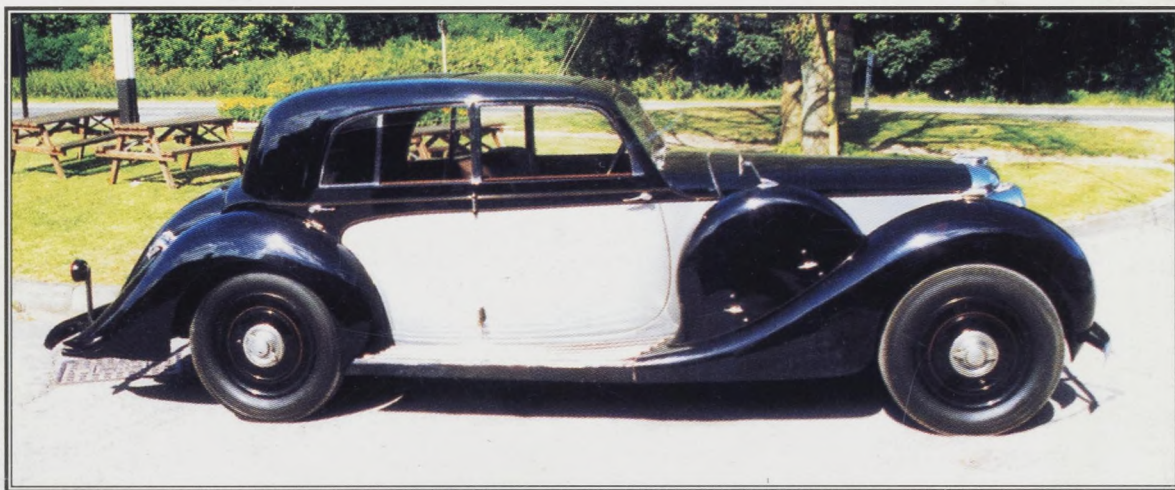
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