

Wigton Motor Club Ltd

Start Line

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www.wigtonmc.co.uk

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What are you up to during lockdown?



Lots of members are busy with their cars hidden away in their garages or workshops. Here is Ed Glaister's GSM Delta well on the way to running.

What are you up to? Let us know!

Motorsport for All

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Talking Point

Topical Comment from the world of motoring

Some of you may have by now come across e sport, which is virtual racing via the internet. Most of the top race and rally drivers are taking part in weekly contests on the main circuits or rallies. The technology is quite remarkable and it's not that different to watching the real thing. Indeed the rallies with the drones and in car action are very good. However it lacks atmosphere and I agree with Motor Sport's Andrew Frankel who said "It's a bit like watching someone drinking non alcoholic beer." it certainly doesn't hold my attention for any length of time.

In fact the virtual version of Formula E is probably better than the real thing, which is not saying much! Part of the problem is that much of modern motorsport, certainly at the higher levels, is actually quite boring. The lockdown may pave the way forward, think of the money saved if all races and rallies were "virtual"! Teams like McLaren and Williams would have their financial worries solved and drivers would get their seats on merit and not by the size of Daddy's wallet. There would be no huge transport or environmental costs. TV coverage would be free. What's not to like?

These days the technology in motorsport is almost beyond understanding and it must be increasingly difficult for designers to see ways of making the cars faster without breaching the regulations. At the same time an outstanding driver can't make much difference to a car that is slightly slower than the best. If for example you swapped Lewis and George Russell, Lewis might gain a tenth or so in the Williams but George would be on the pace in the Mercedes. The chances of anyone doing a Stirling Moss and taking an outdated car to victory are long gone.

I'll finish with his quote which amused me.

There are twenty seats in F1 filled by 19 racing drivers and Lance Stroll.

GTF

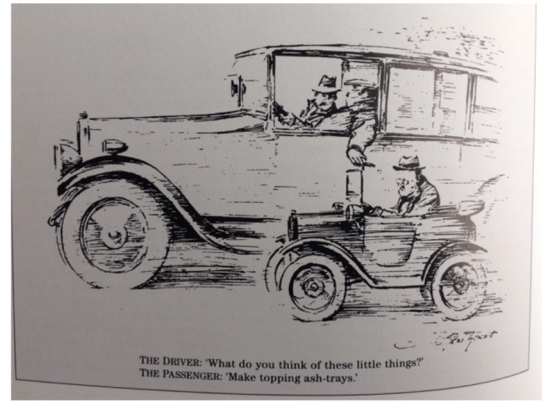
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Classic Punch Cartoons



Thanks to David Roberts for these.

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PG Tips

Chairman Peter Reflects On His Month

Another month in lockdown and it's fair to say despite much head scratching and determination to sort everything before life returns to a more normal state I am not that much further forward. I am still working on the race car RBS's rear wing mount, but what I have sorted is the rear shocks which I sent to AVO and had rebuilt in less than a week – very efficient and friendly and less than half the price of buying new ones. Good to see a British company still working and providing excellent service in tough times.

Despite the apparent Groundhog day feeling as the moment I have achieved a first for myself this month – driven an all electric car. Work have bought a couple, presumably in an effort to look green, and I had a spin out in one the other night. It was a BMW I3 with a two tone paint job and a very airy feeling cabin. The boot was not so good being quite small, but I guess it's not a massive car in the first place. Obviously there was no clutch pedal, just a gear toggle on the dashboard to select what mode to put it in. I've heard many times how instant the acceleration is on electric cars so I was prepared for it to be rapid, but it was actually more rapid and relentless than I'd imagined. Foot down and then almost immediately it shot off and accelerated seamlessly to the speed limit. I guess if I'd carried on the aerodynamics would have slowed the progress but at normal road speeds it seemed as though it was accelerating as fast at 60 as it was at 20, and really very rapid. The internet says 0-60 would be achieved in 6.6 seconds but it felt faster possibly because of the seamless way it accelerates. All this speed happened in near silence, I had the stereo off and the only sound was the sound of tyre roar, which probably seemed louder because it was the only noise. The car was quite wide so it felt very stable but there wasn't a great deal of feedback from the driving experience, the steering felt dead and whilst the acceleration was entertaining I think the novelty would wear off quite quickly without any engine noise or feeling of much involvement. It was quite different to any experience driving a fossil fuelled vehicle – easy, rapid transport but no involvement or driver engagement of note. These days a lot of people seem to want just that – a bland feel free fast car that is cheap to run and has lots of electric gizmos and connectivity to the internet, and infotainment devices.

My efforts to sort the Disastra convertible went from bad to worse. After much head scratching and getting a second opinion on the engine I finally had to accept the rattling must have been coming from the bottom end and the noise was being transferred by the block and chains to sound like it was higher up. Having accepted that this was probably the case I then needed to either rebuild the engine or get another and whilst I was mulling it over a low mileage engine popped up on Fleabay and I hit the 'buy it now' button as fast as I could. It arrived on a pallet 3 days later still attached to the gearbox (which was a freebie apparently) I wrestled the old engine out and transferred all the new chains and parts I'd bought over and given the new engine a health check – it looks very healthy thankfully. One of the good things about the Diastra being a relatively modern car is that it has a very handy set up with the under bonnet wiring – there are 2 looms and they both detach on large connectors so no need to hang wires out of the way during the procedure. I need to thank Paul Bowness for use of his engine lift again.....it's a twice a decade loan that is much appreciated and with any luck I will be giving him it back very soon because it's big, heavy and bulky and takes up a fair bit of space even folded and I've already bashed my head and seen stars on it once! The latest update is that the new set up is in and after a head scratching first attempt at a start-up where the ignition and other items were live as soon as I plugged the battery even without the key being in, I found a significant earth cable underneath the battery and attached it to be greeted by a start up shortly afterwards. Now I just have all the other things to re-attach to make it roadworthy again.....of course the weather just changed today and it will now probably rain until the winter!

IF IT AIN'T BROKE.....

I don't mind admitting it – I'm a bit of a technophobe. I have a very elderly steam driven mobile phone (Nokia if you must know) and every time I produce it people point in horror as if I had inadvertently invoked a manifestation of the very devil himself. I only need it for emergencies and it does actually work - contrary to popular belief.

Which brings me precisely to my point. I just don't get it. Why take a perfectly serviceable and well-designed mechanical lever that has stood the test of time and replace it with.....a button?
The "electronic" handbrake – surely the work of Satan?

The husband has one on his Audi and I DON'T have one on my Defender. The Audi handbrake applies itself automatically when the vehicle stops, the Defender handbrake does not. The problem rears its ugly head when you move from driving one vehicle to driving the other and forget momentarily which is which – you can see where I'm going with this can't you? It happened in the Sloan household recently. No prizes for guessing the result. A big clatter as the husband's golf clubs were scattered to the four winds followed by jaw dropping horror as 2 tons of metal advanced menacingly towards the garage door. I half hoped the husband would do the decent thing and hurl himself prostrate onto the drive to chock the wheels and prevent further mayhem but instead he dived heroically for the door handle – too late. Well he was never going to be a match for gravity, was he? The outcome wasn't pretty but it was reassuringly expensive.

And then, would you believe it, a similar incident occurred a few days later involving an elderly chap in a hideous yellow Nissan Juke. He was waiting a yard or two in front of me on an incline at a road junction. A gap in the traffic appeared, maximum revs were applied and then he promptly rolled back onto my front bumper completely demolishing his own, er, plastic one. The truth of it was, he was new to the car and was totally panicked by the lack of a lever to control his hill start. I rest my case.

And then, of course, you get thinking. Why do we need a 400 page instruction manual to operate a seemingly modest motor vehicle? It is fairly obvious. You need to know what the noise is coming from the dashboard warning you that there is a "pedestrian ahead". Whaaaaat? Should you even be driving if you need a poke in the ribs to slam on the anchors? Or, indeed, a little green light to distract you in order to bring to your attention that you may change to gear number 8 or some other ludicrously high number? Or another annoying warning light telling you that you have lost pressure in the rear off-side tyre? So you panic and pull over – nope – nothing – looks the same as the other three. Set off again and the warning light has gone out and doesn't appear again for another fortnight. So in the meantime you are never just sure if there was an intermittent fault or if the tyre is going to spontaneously burst leaving you high and dry because there is no spare wheel and the offending tyre is now shredded to the point that the substituted sealant "repair" kit is completely and utterly useless. Aaaarrgghhhhh!

And then Volvo has the cheek to put out an advert saying "Everything you need, nothing you don't". And Audi tell you their cars are "Clownproof". Really?

So what do you do? Sigh theatrically to underline the grinding futility of existence? No – you pull yourself together and thank God you bought a Land Rover and drive off into the sunset whilst conveniently forgetting about the £580 annual road tax.....

Cheers!
Marian (aka Maz)

Bangers & Cash

Several months ago, one of your excellent correspondents submitted an entertaining and pretty accurate article regarding junk TV and the kind of 'motoring related' programmes being aired featuring actors or 'celebrities' to front these programmes who knew nowt about the subject.

And on top of this, we'd see cars only suitable for the breakers yard being rebuilt to concours condition in just a couple of weeks at next to no cost - but no mention of the lengthy man hours expended.

You'll all be familiar with these programmes, having sat down to watch but ending up shouting obscenities at the screen.

The real question is, why do TV producers do this?. Do we really need a vacuous show-off to pep up an otherwise interesting programme?. Do they think we are all simple?. Are there no real car buffs who can also be entertaining?. I can list a few right now.

However on the matter of tarring all these programmes with the same brush, I respectfully beg to differ, as there is at least one car programme out there that IMHO (in my humble opinion) doesn't fit the above description.

Having suffered prostate cancer and gone through an operation in 2018 to remove said article, I set up a charity in 2019 called 'Prostate Buddies D & G', to provide moral and emotional support for other men going through Prostate concerns in Dumfries & Galloway. I've since recruited 16 other men who have also 'been there'. It's incredibly rewarding and interestingly, we get calls from guys in Cumbria and beyond. Proudly, we have no real boundaries.

Running a charity almost inevitably requires funding to keep it going but I have to say, this hasn't been a problem for us, as Prostate Cancer touches so many lives and there are lots of supporters out there who will do what they can to help.

I'm now coming to the point of this ramble.



In August 2019, I was Dumfries agricultural show and one of my buddies found me in the crowd, very excited that I should meet his friend William, a fairly elderly retired farmer. William wanted to speak to me personally as he had something important to offer the charity. I had sore feet with walking, I was looking after my two year old grandson who runs on Duracell batteries, It was a very hot day and bless him, William's very thick Irish accent and tendency to go 'off subject' without notice, made it difficult to follow his drift.

All I could make out though was that he wanted to gift the charity a car!. Sorry, did you say a CAR?.

A few days later, myself and my treasurer visited William's farm and there in a rickety old wooden shed was a 1960 Mk II Jag 3.8 automatic in Carmen Red, with leather interior to match. The car had an interesting history but no MOT and TBH (to be honest) it wasn't in the best of condition. But what to do with this old car?. Should we try to sell it or what were the other options?.

I consulted Bob, a friend who has restored many cars and on hearing what we had, got very excited. It was now

October and William was keen for us to do something with the Jag. Time was of the essence but what to do?.

Bob's advice was to auction it, to avoid messing around with private buyers, negotiating deals, getting them to the remote farm in the first place, etc and according to him, without any doubt, it should be

auctioned at Mathewsons in Yorkshire. He reckoned it should sell for at least £3,000. That would certainly be a boost to our funds if it was true.

I have now come to the point of this ramble.

As I had never heard of Mathewsons, Bob suggested I watched a programme on the 'Yesterday' channel, that's on Sky TV and not 'council telly' called 'Bangers and Cash'. I had heard of the programme but it's name had hitherto put me off watching, as it suggested it was about banger racing, which I despise. Many readers will know Mathewsons but for the uninitiated, it's a family run firm headed up by dad, Derek.



I watched it. Each Bangers and Cash programme lasts for an hour and at no time does anyone show off, or say or do anything that's likely to require a missile to be thrown at the TV. I like the programme and respect the producers for that very fact.

Mathewson's run a monthly auction on site, goodness knows how as it's right on the side of the road, there's no space and it's always attended by hundreds of real enthusiasts, eager to buy some of the memorabilia or even a car, bike, lorry, tractor, road roller. You name it!.

Bob had now spoken to Derek and on hearing the car was being sold for charity, he was delighted to accept it as a lot and moreover, offered to sell it for no commission and no VAT. Derek rightly comes across as a genuinely kind and generous man, both on the telly and in real life.

December 3rd was the appointed date for the Jag to be sold and Derek did all he could to build the car up before asking for bids and once two people began to show an interest, he played them against each other up to a wonderful £3,800, a valuable boost for the charity. Our Jag didn't appear on telly

but no matter. I'd been to the famous auction, seen it being sold and came home with a fat cheque. Thank you William, Derek and Mathewsons!.

I've never missed an episode of Bangers and Cash since and that's something I can rarely say about other motoring trash on TV. So your honour, I rest my case. The folk at the Yesterday Channel are doing a good job.

Point made!.

Roly Proudlock. Dumfries.

M-SPORT CAREERS



ALL VACANCIES CAN BE VIEWED ONLINE AT:

WWW.M-SPORT.CO.UK

To apply for any of these roles, please download an Application and Medical History form from the website and forward it to:

Rozalyn Howell, M-Sport Ltd, Dovenby Hall, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0PN

From The Top

News from UK Motorsport, Regions and the WMC Committee

There are no immediate plans for the resumption of events and activities. We will be guided by the following:

- A. Government legislation and advice.
- B. Motorsport UK rules which say no events at least until July 1st
- C. The decision of the committee based on the need for the safety and good health of our members ,whether competitors, organisers or marshals.
- D. Common sense.

Motorsport UK have produced a comprehensive guide to how events could be run at some point while the virus is still with. Please read it MS UK's guidance for your type of event here:

https://www.motorsportuk.org/restart/?mc_cid=e11ef38382&mc_eid=3140f57d71

You will see that even in ideal situations there would be a lot of extra work involved.

Motorsport events, including classic tours are essentially social events and who would want to go to a speed event or autotest for a whole day and not be able to speak to anyone whilst enjoying perhaps ten minutes of sport?

Obviously this is a fast changing situation and government guidance and that of the MS UK will change as time goes on. A decision on the Classic Show will be taken two months in advance of the date. At the moment it seems unlikely that it will run but who knows?



Another of Tony North's photos from the 2008 Cumbria Classic

A few well known folk in the background!

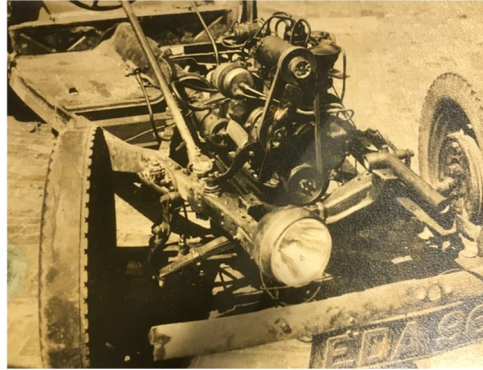


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My First Car

As promised here are a few photos of my first car . As many of us did in the 1960's , I built this on a ford Anglia chassis that my father sourced for me .



I had originally started with an Austin of some description , but once I had removed the body there was nothing left to build on ! I attempted to make the car with no complex panels , other than some fibre glass parts on the corners . The original car had a genuine Jaguar D type windscreen (My Dad was running Jaguars at the time and had friends in the service department at Browns Lane .)This photo was taken in Norway when all roads were gravel with washboard surfaces on corners .

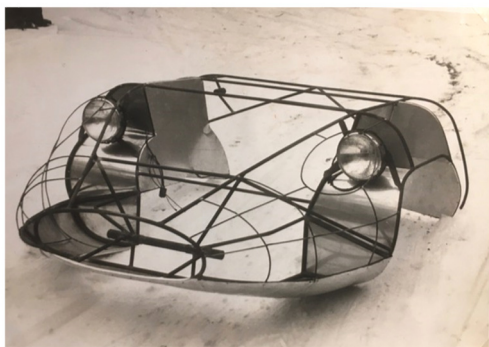
A friend of mine crashed the car by rolling it over a hedge into a field at night . Luckily it landed the right way up ! (I wasn't with him and the story goes that he and the other passenger wandered round the field wondering where the road was , and it was only when another vehicle drove past they realised that they were on the wrong side of the hedge .Dad to the rescue in the Jag with a tow-rope and an axe to cut out a section of the hedge .As a doctor in Stafford he was well known ,and he squared it with the farmer the next day .

It was at this stage I reckoned it was good time to start some modifications . Th next photo shows the engine with some goodies added .



As I remember I fitted twin Solex carbs with a four branch exhaust which made the performance livelier . I also acquired a split front axle conversion which made the handling more predictable except when the steering arms snapped . Those of you who have had a swing axle will know that the gyroscopic forces acting on the front suspension put a great strain on the steering arms . I had numerous incidents with possibly the most alarming occurring while travelling alongside a Norwegian fiord on a narrow twisty section when on our second trip to

Norway (this time with Jacquie) . The car was still steerable but with alarming (until one got used to it) understeer . It was obviously impossible to reverse the car ! We found a helpful garage who allowed us to strip the front suspension and use their oxygen-acetylene equipment to repair the arm . As I remember we also repaired the exhaust , although that may have been at another helpful garage . I eventually fitted a brace between the steering arm and the backplate .



I then decided to go for some bodywork including a roof . Although the original bodywork was galvanised steel sheet over an angle iron frame, I decided to use aluminium for the new roof and bodywork

The framework was thin wire just to give me an idea where to shape the aluminium . I enjoyed the challenge of working in aluminium and it was all done using gas welding for joining panels .

Looking at the shape now I can see the influence of the E Type and Lister body styles . I resprayed the car maroon and we used the car in this form until an XK120 came on the scene but that is another story .

ry .



The last picture below shows the car in finished form . I would not say it was over reliable I went through 6 engines and about the same number of back axles and gearboxes . I had fitted a Buckler close ratio gearbox which was great except when my friend and I went touring on the continent and the during the ascent of the Grosse Glockner pass the clutch failed . Yet another friendly garage the other side of the pass and we were able to fit another clutch . Amazingly a Ford Taunus fitted the E 93 engine and was readily available in Austria . On the same trip we also had

to source another engine in Brussels following a crankshaft breakage in the middle of Brussels , which occasioned the classic remark “ Should 3 of the pistons be at top dead centre ?? “.....{and an axle from the same yard when the back axle locked solid not very far from Brussels .)

We changed the engine in a square just off the main road having been moved on by the police . We had to strip the engine as we wanted to keep the special valve gear . The rear axle problem meant we had to borrow a trolley jack from the very friendly garage owner . He was busy rebuilding an MGA in his garage . We slept that night in a large American car in his yard and I remember listening to Radio Luxenberg and eating my mother’s fruit cake as it was all we had with us .



I had also fitted wheel spacers at the rear , and as you will know , that places quite a strain on the half shafts with the result that half shaft failure was not uncommon . Changing a shaft involved splitting the axle and this is not easy when considering the transfers leaf rear suspension . My long suffering Dad ferried out parts from Stafford to make running repairs at the side of the road . I have many memories of other incidents with the car , many of which I share with my wife Jacquie who has nobly supported me in all our escapades but the Austin 7 saga along with the XK120 and many rally stories will have to wait for another time .

Ian Cowan



Classic Column

News from the Classic and Historic Scene

GSM



South African design by Bob van Niekerk which lasted longer in that country than here. Mechanics Ford: tuned 57bhp 105E engine, and 100E rear axle with coils instead of semi-elliptics.

Coupés had breezeway rear windows like the contemporary Anglia. 100mph and 45mpg claimed: quite a successful club-racer in its day. Subsequently GSM in South Africa came up with the Flamingo, a closed GT powered by Taunus 17M or (latterly) Ford Cortina 1500 engines.

The Dart was a "race bred" production sports car, designed to give maximum comfort and performance. In its day the Dart won just about every race in its class - both in South Africa and the UK (First in the 1000cc Sports Car Race, Brands Hatch April 1960, First in the 100 mile Martini Race for 1000cc Sports Cars, Silverstone April 1960 etc.). At the time fibreglass was a brand new innovation, presenting itself as the solution to rust and weight problems. Bob van Niekerk was the leader in chassis design, introducing new standards in road holding and stability.

We will keep you updated on the progress of Ed Glaister's restoration of his Delta. GSM stood for Glass Sports Motors and was a pioneer in the use of glass fibre for car bodies which produced a huge weight saving.

Joe Norman send me this from one of his friends:

The WMC appears to be a very active organisation

Thank you so much for taking the trouble to call yesterday. It was great to hear your voice and listen to all the news- I imagine your association with the Club goes back many years. I enjoyed all the Stirling Moss My only claim to SCM fame was to have sat next to him in a First Class seat for 7 hours on a 747 courtesy of Virgin. You will be appalled but we did not exchange one word!! I respected his privacy and thought I would leave it to him to make the first move. At JFK he was out of his seat like a rocket and departed again without saying even the customary goodbye. I like to think he was very grateful at being left entirely alone with his thoughts. I do recall staring at his hands - big hands and marvelling at the skill he imparted through them.

A Different View?

This is strange times, but we need to move on forget the negative press we would have lost the world wars if we had succumbed to their hype.

What is wrong with a journey in your classic or super car if no contact is made with a third party. Have we become so insular that we believe media hype. We are strong enough to sort the truth from media fiction sadly we all die. Let's push our hobby and move on. Four weeks ago we returned to work. Since then sanity has returned. Not to say we did not enjoy three weeks of sunshine and mediation in lock down sorry, but life goes on.

In 2018 I had a stroke, but I never gave in I used the period of enforced inactivity to advance JJN etc, purchasing a D Type replica from America collecting it from Felixstowe and the rebuild which assisted my recovery. At the present negative media attitude and lack of enterprise where are we going it is up to you and me to sort the problems not the government.

We can all sort the problems Rallies; follow the route map .Stay in the car .Laugh and enjoy .Can we still do this? Coffee halts support these people. Use common sense .Not so difficult We are here to live love and enjoy .That is the human spirit. Respect each other and enjoy.

Move on we all regret what has happened but worse is the current negative attitude encouraged by the media propaganda, If football is making a comeback why not motor sport? The safest means of moving from a to b is not public transport but the car in your garage. You can go in your Mini or McLaren to anywhere and remain safe. Enjoy cheap fuel and be free. well not quite, the idea is good the practicality is different. We live in a blame culture. We have lost our manufacturing base. We are dependent on others to manufacture whatever. Now is the time to resolve our shortcomings. We remain strong but let us move on. do things.

John Nichol

More photos from 2008 courtesy of Tony North



Auto Jumble

Members sales and wants



Reluctant sale of this well know and much loved 1960
MK1 Austin Healey 3000.

Subject to a complete nut and bolt rebuild, including New Chassis and aluminium body panels.
170 BHP engine with Aluminium Head, Lightened Flywheel etc, etc.

Extensive history file.

Insurance value £45000.

For further details and full specification 07801018901



1979 MG BGT Runs like a dream. About 6 months ago it had new sills fitted together with any remedial welding work. It was resprayed up to the chrome strip. It definitely requires a new bonnet and there are a few rusty spots. It is MoT until November. My telephone number is 07867863050.
John Wilkins. £3000.00 ono

Elderly Utterances

The Voice of Experience!

Ron Palmer has his say



It is a while since the club held a Production Car Trial and the last one I can recall was held at Green Quarries by Chalk Beck at Rosley. Not the most ideal site but could be good fun if the land was dry. This is a branch of motorsport which thrives in some parts of the country and a more specialist discipline - Classic Sporting Trials (local experts are Dickie and Mark Milne) are enjoying a resurgence and long abandoned Ford 1172cc based specials are being dragged out of barns and sheds and brought back into a competition life. Wigton MC has never in recent years in my recollection been involved in Sporting Trials with specials but as a member of the 750MC in the early 1960s I enjoyed my involvement in this branch of our sport.



Being an impecunious youth still attending the Carlisle Grammar School in the late '50s the attractions of the 750MC pulled strongly and they had a nucleus of enthusiasts who befriended me which appealed to a non car owner. My first car was a gift from Peter Cordon, my dear sister Pat's (see photo) boyfriend, later to become her husband. The car was a Ford 1172 special with aspirations of grandeur – a Mk V Jaguar radiator shell – which they used when both were students at Newton Rigg Farm College. In time the attractions of open air motoring in winter lost its appeal and Peter gave 'Flebus' as it was called, to me. In fairness it was not that attractive to me for winter driving either so I bought a 1947 Morris 10 which was as quick and kept the weather out.



Moving on to the early '60s a 750 club member Les Blair who lived at Arthuret Old Vicarage, Longtown decided to build a trials saloon special and I became his gofer for the project and when it was finished I shared the driving on sporting trials. This 1934 Austin 7 saloon was shortened to 1931 dimensions except for the roof which overhung the scuttle and screen aperture like a peak which helped to keep the rain out. The engine was



the standard 747cc but with a branch exhaust manifold, Alta alloy head and twin Solex downdraft carbs. The rear axle was I think from a Ford and as can be seen from the photos had fiddle brakes and Ford wheels. The torque from the engine was incredible and it could climb unbelievable gradients on tests from tickover. It was also reliable and competitive and although Les usually beat me on the shared driving events I did win the saloon class in the Silverstone Trial one year – where we enjoyed the hospitality of no less than Arthur Mallock who lived at Roade, Northampton. The saloons adopted registration number derived names so our car was UG and the Brian Mitton/Mike Telford car was PO.

The saloon trials class in Cumbria was hotly contested with other salooners being Brian Mitton, Mike Telford, Willie Dawson, Ian Wallace and others while Dickie Milne, Geoff Benson, David Bowman and many others had A7 open specials. Ken Burns (Lynda Graham's dad) was also a keen trials competitor. The upper crust, in the form of landowner Ian Walker from Hawick, a nice chap eventually came along with a proper professionally built Cannon and proceeded to show everyone a clean pair of heels. This stimulated some entrants to move into the 1172 class and I sold my road going special to Les who recreated it and changed the registration number, a common practice, which became AVK49 and fitted a forward tilting bonnet etc. For me sporting trials overlapped with rallies and by the mid '60s I'd settled into navigating on a regular basis and Les went sprinting with his Pornot single seater which phoenix-like arose from the wreckage of John Harkness' 356 Porsche and an Arnott race car.

Ron.

Visit the Facebook page for the latest news or the webpage at
www.wigtonmc.co.uk

How Thirty Vintage Bugattis Ended Up on a Train

Around 60 years ago, Fritz Schlumpf purchased a collection of thirty Bugatti models after tough negotiations. He simply adored Bugatti: Schlumpf had to own as many of the vehicles as possible because he wanted to use them as a basis for establishing the biggest Bugatti collection in existence. In fact, it became something of an obsession, as reflected in the negotiations with an American Bugatti owner that went on for at least two years.

Bugatti and Schlumpf are two names that have been linked together for a long time. Fritz Schlumpf bought his first Bugatti at the age of 22 in 1928 and drove it on weekends and in car races. The car enthusiast kept in touch with the Alsace-based company Bugatti over the coming years, although his passion for collecting didn't really develop properly until 1961.

Schlumpf initially worked as a wool broker, and in 1929 his brother Hans — two years his senior — joined the textile company. In 1935, they founded Société Anonyme pour l'Industrie Lainière (SAIL), a limited company trading in wool. After the war, the brothers bought up several factories and spinning mills in Alsace until they almost fully dominated the textile industry in eastern France.

In 1957, they acquired a vacated wool factory in Mulhouse, Alsace, in order to build their own automobile museum: in honour of their beloved mother and Ettore Bugatti, but mainly for Fritz Schlumpf himself. After all, collecting Bugatti cars had long become his obsession. From 1961 onwards, he acquired numerous classic vehicles and eventually became the leading Bugatti collector.

In order to achieve this, Schlumpf wrote to Bugatti owners all over the world in the early 1960s. He obtained the addresses from a register kept by Hugh Conway of the British Bugatti Owners Club, who put him in touch with American collector John W. Shakespeare from Hoffman, Illinois, USA in 1962.

Shakespeare had dedicated himself to collecting Bugatti vehicles since the 1950s: his first car was a 1932 Bugatti Type 55; this was followed by a Type 41 Royale Park Ward, the third and last customer car, twelve Type 57, three Type 55, and Ettore Bugatti's personal electric car Type 56 dating back to 1931. All in all, Shakespeare owned the largest Bugatti collection in the world, comprising some 30 vehicles.

Schlumpf simply had to get hold of these cars and made Shakespeare a lump-sum offer of USD 70,000. But the latter demanded at least USD 105,000, whereupon Schlumpf had the collection assessed by Bugatti connoisseur Bob Shaw from Illinois in 1963.

Shaw arrived at an unflattering conclusion: "Most of the cars are kept in a part of the building with a dirty floor, broken windows, leaking roof and nesting birds. Every car is in some state of disrepair and none of them have been running for at least 18 months."

While Shaw advised against the purchase, Schlumpf was fully committed by this time and offered Shakespeare USD 80,000 for the entire collection. After tough negotiations, mutual threats and blackmail, Schlumpf and Shakespeare finally agreed on a purchase price of 85,000 dollars the following year (equivalent to approximately USD 720,000 today) – including transport to France. From today's point of view, it was more than just a good deal — in fact it was a real bargain.

On 30 March 1964, the thirty historic Bugattis left Illinois on a Southern Railway train heading for New Orleans where they would be loaded onto a Dutch cargo ship. A photo shows the open train with the large number of rare vehicles. A few weeks later, the freighter reached the French port of Le Havre, where Fritz Schlumpf finally received his treasure.



Schlumpf was now one huge step closer to achieving his goal of being the biggest Bugatti collector in the world. It wasn't until 1965 that the Schlumpf brothers publicised their collection in a short press release — and the idea of a museum was born. But Fritz Schlumpf never officially opened it.

The Schlumpf brothers had little opportunity to enjoy their unique car collection, and their pleasure in these wonderful cars was only to last a few years: large-scale strikes occurred after they engaged in questionable business practices, and the decline of the French textile industry in the 1970s eventually meant they were forced to flee to Switzerland. The story of the amazed workers who came across the secretly hoarded treasure in 1977 has gone down in automotive history.

What remains are the exclusive vehicles, showcased in an extraordinary exhibition: the Schlumpf collection is now located in the “Cit  de l’Automobile” national museum in Mulhouse in the heart of Alsace — the largest automobile exhibition in the world. Covering an area of more than 25,000 square metres, the exhibition comprises 400 of the world’s rarest cars — including around 100 Bugatti models, such as two of just six Type 41 Royale ever built. One of them is the former Shakespeare vehicle with the Park Ward bodywork. Other models from the group of 30 vehicles are to be found in their original unrestored condition at the Mullin Automotive Museum in Oxnard, California. There and in Alsace, visitors can admire them after their almost 60-year odyssey.

Courtesy of Sports Car Digest.

Andy's Armchair

Andy Armstrong takes an irreverent look at motoring and motorsport



Both my readers might remember a couple of months ago when I was asking if anyone had photos of the late Eric Smith's racing mini as I was keen to paint a picture of the car being used in anger. Nothing came of these pleas and so as I had no way of getting the details of the car correct I reluctantly shelved the whole idea.

Anyhow last week I went to buy Motorsport (Motoring) News, having missed the previous issue as the shop was closed for some reason, and while I was picking it up my dear wife said "they've still got a copy of the one you missed, we'd better get that one as well".

What a wonderful woman, when we got home I opened the missed copy, and there inside was an article about the long defunct Ingliston circuit in Edinburgh, there was also a very tiny photo of Eric and his mini lined up on the front row of the starting grid. It was miniscule but under a magnifying glass I could get lots of the necessary details and so, once the eye strain has gone the painting can get under way. Talk about lucky, I just hope I can do the lad justice now he's made himself available for me to put brush to paper.

Sad news about Stirling Moss, no doubt the greatest non champion champion and along with JYS probably the best ambassador for the sport our country is ever likely to produce. There's nothing more to say really after what contributors wrote in last month's magazine, that's the penalty of having your copy in too early as he passed away after I'd sent my ramblings into the editor. So all I'll add is thank you Mr Moss, yours was the first racing driver's name I ever heard and as such was the impetus which created a passion for motor sport I'll have for the rest of my days. A pretty good gift from him to me as far as I'm concerned.

Moving on. I haven't competed in any motor sport events since 2005 but being a bit of an old sentimentalist I still have overalls, boots etc in a drawer under the spare bed. I was in there recently, looking for something else and came across a Sparco balaclava. Now this makes a super mask for when we're told to wear them. Don't put the whole thing on mind, they'll think you're a robber, just wear it round your neck and lift up the front as and when required.

On the subject of the virus, what do we all reckon on the likelihood of all the current British circuits surviving? Presumably up to now this year they've made absolutely nothing, and the likes of MSV which is run by Jonathan Palmer and maintains at least 5 venues must be starting to worry! It's a shame as he's certainly pumped a lot of money back into the track's he's taken over, and now his income from them has dried up. You can't help wondering if some current venues will follow the likes of Rockingham, Charterhall and Crystal Palace and join the list of ghost circuits around the country.

And finally what about F1? Much like top flight football it's now more of a business than a sport. Currently it relies on selling TV rights and advertising but can't provide what it's paid to do, can it survive?

In times gone by it would have, the likes of Ken Tyrrell with a tiny staff and similar overheads would have hunkered down and when things improved reappeared at the circuits. The racing would have been just as good, the crowd would have been true enthusiasts and everything would have survived. Nowadays to make a fortune you have to spend one but when the vehicle you're using collapses business plans don't look so clever. I just hope Liberty Media have got contingency plans in place.

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