



OWNER

CLUB

The Bulletin

No. 487 May/June 2004



THE BULLETIN

No. 487

MAY/JUNE 2004

Contents

Alvivacity	194
Per Alvis Ad Solem De Novo	196
"Fag Packets In The Horsehair"	209
Not For You	221
Letters to the Editor	226
Memories of a 12/70	236
Inter-Section Shield	239
Sussex By The Sea Weekend	240
The New Rolls-Royce Factory	245
Follett's Four Fireflies	247
Fuel Pick Up and Reserve Unit Service Issues	252
A Speed 25 In Switzerland	255
"Double Take"	261
Research	264
Archive	269
Alvis On Malta	274
DVLA News	275
Book Reviews	277
Interesting Drop-Head Coupé	280
Section Notes	285

Cover Picture : A classic vintage garage interior. A photograph taken by a friend of mine, in Aldeburgh in 1989.
Photo: Ken Martin

Centre Spread : The two/five seater sports Firefly offered by Charles Follet Ltd as pictured in The Motor of 9th May 1933. The body was built by John Charles of Kew Gardens. See article on page 247.
Photo: via Derek Tourle

Display Advertisements: available on a per issue or annual (six issue) basis. Annual rates: £450.00 per full page, £275.00 per half page and £150.00 per quarter page. Per issue rates are £100.00 per page; £60.00 per half page and £35.00 per quarter page except for quarter page advertisements for personal car sales for which a special rate of £7.50 applies Artwork costs extra if not supplied.

ALVISCITY-

One of the very interesting things to come out of John Wheeley's research for the Jubilee Book, or so I thought, were the details of cars that have completely vanished over the years. I am not entirely surprised by this. When I was a young lad, I came across many people with interesting cars tucked away in garages and at that age I just could not understand why these people were not beavering away to restore them. At the time I had no understanding of the responsibilities of adults with respect to family, career and business. I am now only too aware of these responsibilities and I am now in the position of having an Alvis, in a garage, more or less untouched for thirty years. There must be a great many cars in storage awaiting the day when the owner has the time, money and energy to do something about it. I am in no way criticising anyone far having a car off the road, hidden in a garage; after all I am as guilty as anyone. However I would like to think that members with cars that, for various reasons, are unused, might like let to us know about some of these "lost" cars, so at least the Club might keep track of them.

The news that Alvis may be taken over by the American company, General Dynamics, has featured prominently in the news. Alvis seems to be small beer in comparison with the General Dynamics empire, so if one take-over comes into effect we may not see much change. It is interesting to view, from the twenty-first century, the progress made by T.G. John's fledgling company since its birth just after the First World War. We can only wait and see what the future will bring.

In recent months, the news that another 4.3 Litre saloon is to be turned into another ersatz tourer, has caused great agony to many members who see preservation as the mainstay of our Alvis owning ethic nowadays. It is not for me, or anyone else, to criticise what a member does with his or her Alvis but I am certainly a great supporter of the saloon. Many if not all pre-war Alvis saloons are extraordinarily elegant and practical cars and their preservation and restoration is to be encouraged. I am very pleased to say that I shall be publishing several restoration articles in *The Bulletin*, the subject of which is the restoration of pre-war saloon bodies. The first of these appears in this issue and I am grateful to the author, Stanley Paine, for sharing his experiences of restoring his 12/50 saloon with us. In subsequent issues of *The Bulletin* you will be able to read accounts of the restoration of a Firebird and a Bertelli bodied 3½ Litre.

Dave Culshaw's whimsical piece in a recent Bulletin about the luggage used in Alvis publicity photographs has raised far more interest than I had first expected and the letters that I have printed show member's impressive expertise in the matter of faking photographs. The letter in this issue from Richard Townsend identifies further trickery with photographs used by Alvis. This indicates to me that there is an interesting research project here for someone to go through Alvis sales literature and to identify instances of "artistic licence". Any volunteers?

Alvis over the years produced a huge volume of sales literature, hand books, and spare parts lists. This seems to me to be a most interesting avenue of research and collecting. I know that many members collect Alvis sales literature and other Alvis related printed ephemera and I think that a series of articles on the literature pertaining to individual models would be most welcome. Again, any volunteers?

J.N.B.C.

PER ALVIS AD SOLEM DE NOVO

—Graham Keighley and Sandy Grey attempt to recreate a trip that was made to the South of France in a Speed 25 in 1937—



Outside the Grand Hotel de l'Aigle Noir, Fontainebleau.

Photo: Graham Keighley

The Plan

It seemed such a simple idea when the original 1937 article from *The Autocar* was reprinted in *The Bulletin* (No. 476 July/August 2002), and I suggested to my trusty navigator/co-driver, Sandy Grey, that we should try to recreate the journey made to Monte Carlo sixty-six years ago in a then new Alvis Speed 25 Saloon, but instead using my 1964 TE21 Drophead Coupé.

However, there was clearly an international conspiracy to discourage our attempt: the Brits had withdrawn the Folkestone/Boulogne ferry; the French had carefully camouflaged the route; and the Germans had blown up a key viaduct. But we persisted...

At first, we planned to follow the exact route taken by our predecessors, staying at the same hotels (where they still existed), taking photographs of exactly the same views, and recording all expenses. It was quickly realised however that certain changes would have to be made, if only to make allowance for present traffic conditions in France. The original route, for instance, was based mainly on the old N1 ('N' = *Route Nationale*, or main road) to Paris, and then the N6/N75/N85 to Nice, but that journey had been accomplished at a time when the roads were all but deserted and hardly a lorry

existed; the prospect of competing with all those camions on the equivalent roads today did not appeal. It was therefore resolved to use 'D' roads ('D' = *Route Départementale*, or secondary road) as much as possible, whilst following the general direction of the earlier itinerary.

The first problem of course was the ferry—or lack of it—so a little cheating was in order, and as we were starting from my home in Oxfordshire, it was decided to use the very comfortable and convenient overnight ferry from Portsmouth to Caen, and then proceed directly to our first halt in Fontainebleau where we would start the route proper. This also enabled us to at least stay at one of the hotels used by the Speed 25 crew, the Grand Hôtel de l'Aigle Noir (where I too had previously stayed with my parents back in the 1950s).

Finding some of the original picture locations also proved to be a major challenge. Over the last seventy years or so the French have covered all the barren bits with trees, hiding many of the more obvious landmarks and, worse still, have moved the roads—not just by a few metres, but sometimes by a kilometre or more. One 1937 picture had been taken from the original N6, which now turned out to be a quiet lane used only by local farm traffic, while the new road soared away on a ridge in the distance.

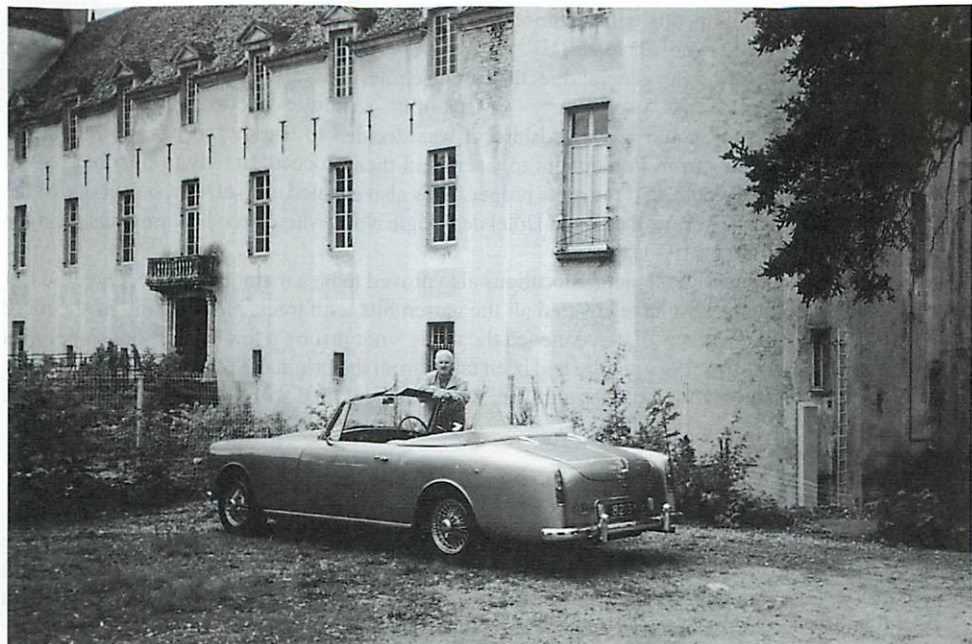
The Departure

We set off for Portsmouth on an overcast Sunday afternoon towards the end of May, with the capacious boot of the TE21 filled to the brim with luggage, tools, spares, and folding picnic table and chairs. The drive to the port was uneventful, and as the ferry did not sail until 2230 hrs, we had an excellent dinner at Tang's Chinese Restaurant in Southsea—good food, pleasantly served, but rather pricey we thought at £62.10 for two. The drive from my house to Portsmouth (via Southsea) was a distance of 109 miles.

After a smooth overnight crossing, we left Ouistreham (the port for Caen) in bright sunshine at 0720 hrs and immediately headed east over the Pegasus Bridge of WWII fame (of which more later) towards Évreux. At Pacy-sur-Eure we turned south off the N13 on to country roads through the Forêt de Dreux to Étampes. At Milly-la-Forêt a brief detour was made to the remarkable 15th century market hall in the town centre, and from there it was an easy run to our overnight destination of Fontainebleau. Total distance for the day was 217 miles.

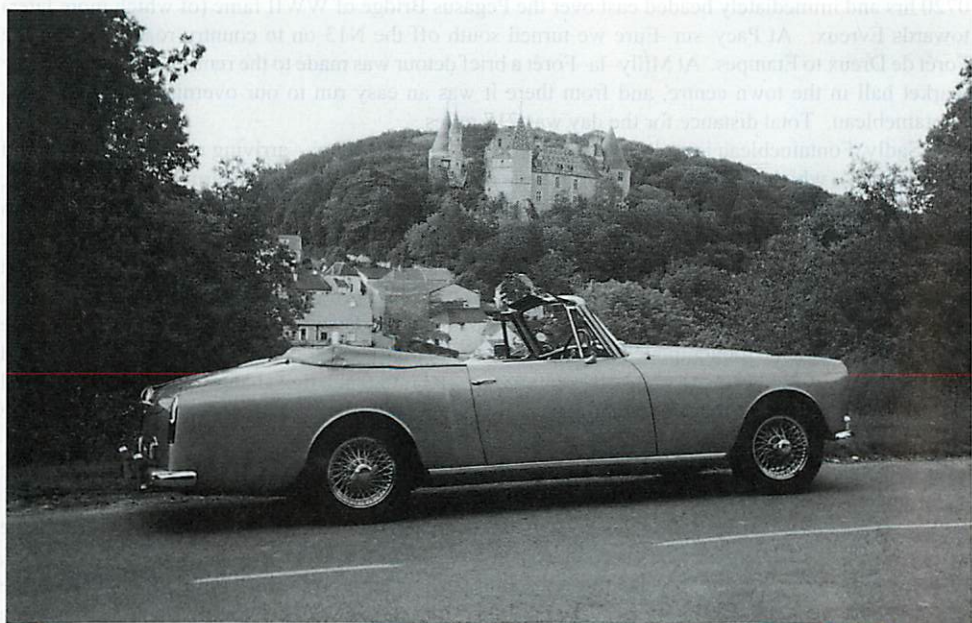
Sadly, Fontainebleau is no longer the staging post for travellers—arriving in style in their grand automobiles—which it once was, when it was *de rigueur* to enjoy the faded charms of the Aigle Noir, situated at the very gates of the Royal Palace. Unfortunately, arriving at 1630 hrs we were too late to tour the interior of the palace, but at least we were able to enjoy a stroll around its magnificent grounds. It seems however that today's visitors to Fontainebleau arrive by coach, spend half a day there, and then return to their hotels in Paris or wherever. And it is indeed a sign of the times that the hotel restaurant can no longer justify opening on Mondays or Tuesdays, obliging us to eat instead at the excellent Restaurant Croquemouche nearby. The total cost for our stay in Fontainebleau (dinner, bed and breakfast for two) came to €322.50 (£240.48); in 1937, the rate of exchange was FF105 = £1, and £1 in 1937 would be worth roughly £50 today. So the FF312 bill in 1937 for four people at the Aigle Noir is equivalent to about £150 today, or just £37.50 per head!

Leaving Fontainebleau in bright sunshine the following morning, having taken a photograph of the TE21 outside the hotel just to prove we had been there, we drove south-east on mainly country roads—with occasional short stretches on the N6 to Auxerre and Savigny-les-Beaune, where we visited the Musée du Château de Savigny. This contains a huge collection of Abarth prototypes and racing cars, together with over 200 motorcycles (all housed in various parts of the château), and outside in the grounds there is a vast display of post-war military aircraft of every nationality (most in desperate need of a little TLC), including examples of the Vampire jet fighters that Sandy trained on during his



Musée du Château de Savigny.

Photo: Sandy Grey



Near the village of La Rocheptot.

Photo: Graham Keighley



Key to routes:
 1937 route —————
 2003 route (where this differs from 1937 route) - - - - -

National Service with the RAF.

Apart from the few unavoidable stretches of the N6, the roads were quiet and in the main picturesque, and we enjoyed a picnic lunch on the edge of the Lac de St-Agnan near Saulieu. Next task was to try to retake the photograph of the village of La Rochepot (see p324 of Bulletin No 476); guessing that the original crew had taken it from the N6, we thought it would be easy to locate the exact spot, but half an hour was wasted driving up and down until we discovered a quiet stretch of road—complete with tall-tale poplar trees down both sides—which had obviously been the N6 before that stretch was rebuilt some distance away. Even then, many of the houses that had been visible in the original photo were now completely hidden by the trees that have grown up in the meantime. But at least our mission was accomplished, and we felt quite inordinately pleased with ourselves.

We continued to our next overnight stop at the Hôtel le Dracy, at Dracy-le-Fort near Chalon-sur-Saône, with a total mileage for the day of 226 miles. This hotel had been selected from the VFB À la Carte brochure, purely on its convenient location (we tried to limit the mileage to 220–250 miles a day), but unfortunately it proved to be a bit of a disappointment, situated as it was in a modern building on a new edge-of-town housing estate that was totally without charm and whose dominant feature was a row of colossal electricity pylons marching relentlessly through it. Total cost of dinner, bed and breakfast for two came to a modest £98.81.

Leaving Dracy-le-Fort on the D981 heading due south the next morning, we soon had our first taste of hills; nothing serious you understand, a mere 2–300m (650–1,000ft), but enough to give us a taste of what was to come. We passed through Azé, where the *Vignes du Maynes* at Cruzille is reputed to be the oldest vineyard in France. Continuing southeast, we skirted round Macon and Bourg-en-Bresse, all the time avoiding ‘N’ roads and large towns wherever possible, until we were forced on to the N504 to Belley for want of an alternative. From there we continued towards Chambéry via the *Col du Chat* (638m = 2,093ft), even though the original crew used the then newly opened, electrically lit mile-long tunnel at the summit. The beautiful view over the *Lac du Bourget* as we breasted the summit, however, with Aix-les-Bains clearly visible on the far side, remains one of the highlights of our trip.

Continuing ever southwards, we left the main road again at St-Laurent-du-Pont to head over the mountains to St-Pierre-de-Chartreuse and Grenoble, via the *Col de Porte* (1,326m = 4,350ft). The TE21 seemed perfectly happy at this altitude, but it was not so impressed when we tried to exit Grenoble on the main N75 south; in contrast to an additional photo which appeared in the original article in *The Autocar*, showing the Speed 25 with not another vehicle in sight on the long avenue through Grenoble, we suffered nose-to-tail traffic throughout the 10km length of this road, and it took us nearly an hour to clear the town. Our overnight stop was at the Hôtel Au Sans Souci (which roughly translates as “No worries, mate”) at St-Paul-lès-Monestier (selected at random from the *Michelin Guide*), which turned out to be a delightful mountain retreat with comfortable beds and really excellent food. Distance driven that day was 219 miles, and the bill for this excellent hotel was €138.00 (£102.36), which I think compares reasonably well with the Hotel de France at Chambéry, where the Speed 25 crew paid FF201 for three—equivalent to about £96 today.

Early the next morning we carried on south down the N75 in bright sunshine, and soon passed over the *Col de la Croix Haute* (1,179m = 3,868ft). At this point we were following the original crew’s route through Sisteron, Digne-lès-Bains and Castellane to Grasse. Annoyingly, it started to rain shortly after we had had our usual picnic lunch high in the mountains; just a light shower to begin with, and we thought we might get away without having to put hood up if we only could maintain a minimum of 40 mph, but this became increasingly difficult on the mountainous roads and as the intensity of the rain increased, we were forced to dive into a makeshift lay-by to erect the hood. As our journey to the south progressed, the weather became increasingly unsettled each afternoon, and we became very adept at whipping off the tonneau cover and putting up the hood in record time.



On the Col du Chat (638m) Photo: Graham Keighley



The TE21 somewhere in the High Alps. Photo: Graham Keighley

Arrival in the Côte d'Azur

Our destination was the *Auberge du Rédier* in Colomars, high in the hills above Nice. This hotel had been selected from the VFB brochure because the one we really wanted to stay at was fully booked for one of the Grand Prix teams, and unfortunately our second choice proved to be a bit of a disaster: it even took us twenty minutes of hammering on the front door to gain admittance! The restaurant arrangements were also hopeless, and if it hadn't been the weekend of the Monaco Grand Prix (when virtually all hotels are full), we would have looked elsewhere for accommodation. Total mileage for the day was 237 miles.

As the next day was 'free', we elected to do an anti-clockwise tour of the Alpes Maritimes to the north of Nice, in order to try to take some of the photographs we had missed the previous day. From Colomars, we headed north along narrow, twisting roads as far as St-Martin-Vésubie before turning west to Guillaumes over some of the highest passes in the Alpes, including the *Col de la Couillole* (1,678m = 5,505ft). The TE21 seemed completely unfazed by such altitudes, and never missed a beat. Descending back through Castellane, we attempted to reproduce as many of the original photographs as possible along the *Route Napoléon*, but our task was not made any easier by the number of trees that had been planted or had reached maturity in the meantime, and by the fact that the caption on one of the photos identified it as having been taken on the *Col du Pilon*, whereas it had actually been taken on the nearby *Pas de la Faye*. I wonder if *The Autocar* would care to publish a correction after an interval of 67 years?

Thence to the *Gorges du Loup* where we attempted to photograph the stumps of the famous Draguignan-Nice railway viaduct, which once crossed the entrance to the *Gorges* (see photos on pages 325 & 326 of Bulletin No.476), but which sadly had been blown up by the Germans in 1944; it must have been a magnificent sight in its heyday. *The Hôtel La Reserve* featured in one of those photos had obviously been closed for years, and was due to be demolished shortly after our visit, so we only just got there in time... Total mileage for the day was 206 miles.

For our second 'free' day, we set off very early in the morning to motor east to Monte Carlo (where we could hear but not see practice for the Monaco Grand Prix), and then continued on to Ventimiglia and San Remo in Italy. Frankly, this excursion was not worth the hassle, what with the traffic and the lack of anything worthwhile to see, so we decided to cut our losses and return to Nice for lunch (Salade Niçoise, naturally) via the *autoroute*, soaring over some amazing viaducts and avoiding the streams of cars and motorbikes all heading for the Grand Prix below us. In the late afternoon, we called on an acquaintance who has a beautiful apartment high in St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, with fantastic views over Beaulieu-sur-Mer and all the luxury yachts moored in the bay, where we were treated to champagne and delicious canapés. Returning to our grotty hotel was a bit of an anti climax, but by now the weather had improved and we were able to dine outside somehow, the sun had even cheered up the dismal staff, and the service improved immeasurably. Total cost for our three-night stay here came to £311.60. Mileage on our second free day was a 'mere' 121 miles.

The Return Journey

Leaving the French Riviera the next morning, we began our return trip following the original crew's route through Cannes, past all the beautiful yachts moored in the harbour, to Fréjus and then Aix-en-Provence, where a brief detour was made along the pleasant shaded boulevard of the Cours Mirabeau. From Aix it was only a short drive along the N7 to Avignon and its famous bridge, the Pont St-Bénézet. Begun in 1177, according to legend, by the shepherd-boy Bénézet (founder of the Bridge Brotherhood) himself, it was originally the only stone bridge across the Rhône; eighteen of its arches were carried away by floodwaters in the 17th century, leaving the familiar foreshortened structure with its three



On the Col de la Couillole (1,678m)

Photo: Sandy Grey



In the Basses Alpes. The tree has grown somewhat!

Photo: Sandy Grey

remaining arches.

After leaving Avignon, we diverged from the original route and headed for Pont–St–Esprit, where we followed the Gorges de l’Ardèche to Vallon–Pont–d’Arc; here a gigantic natural bridge spans the river Ardèche, below which hundreds of canoes wend their way down the Gorges. Our overnight stop was quite close by at the *Mas de l’Espaire* near Les Vans. This simple but pleasant hotel, another VFB selection was a big improvement on the last one, and as the car park extended over a grassy area, I took the opportunity of lying on my back under the TE21 in order to grease the front suspension, which had taken quite a hammering in the mountains over the previous few days. Total distance for the day was 257 miles, and the cost of dinner, bed and breakfast for two came to £94.57.

From Les Vans we continued due west for a while along quiet, twisty roads to Mende, la Canourgue and Rodez, where we turned north-west to Figeac and Rocamadour, the latter clinging dramatically to the cliffs of the gorge cut by the river Alzou; however, we had explored this medieval town on a previous trip, so we hurried on to our next hotel, Le Pont de l’Ouyse at Lacave. Having stayed here two years previously, we knew to expect first class service and fantastic food, and we were not disappointed; I can recommend this Michelin–starred hotel in its picturesque setting by the river Ouyse to anyone, even if it did work out a little expensive at £161.15 for dinner, bed and breakfast for two. Total mileage for the day was 206 miles.

We now headed due north (and took advantage of one of the few toll–free sections of *autoroute* past the busy town of Brive–la–Gaillarde) to Uzerche, where we left the motorway and reverted to ‘D’ roads towards Eymoutiers and Bourgueuf through some very pretty countryside. Continuing in a northerly direction past Argenton–sur–Creuse, we soon entered the Loire Valley and headed for Montrichard, where we made a detour to Amboise, in order to visit Le Clos–Lucé, the manor house which was the last home of Leonardo da Vinci, as a guest of François I; it is rumoured that a secret passage connected the house to the Château of Amboise nearby, so that the King could visit his protégé during the night for stimulating conversations, without the knowledge of his courtiers. In addition to the suite of rooms used by Leonardo da Vinci, there are numerous models on display of what some of his inventions might have looked like if they had ever come to fruition.

As this was to be our last night in France, I had booked us into the Domaine de la Tortinière in Montbazou, a hotel where I had previously stayed some fifteen years ago with my late wife Anna, and which I knew was rather special. A *Relais de Silence*, it offers very comfortable accommodation, superb views of the Loire Valley, and gourmet cuisine; Sandy and I were shown to a spacious suite on the first floor of a small house opposite (that was obviously used for conferences), but Sandy couldn’t understand where they had room in the tiny château itself for the all–important restaurant, until I led him down the underground passage to the modern *orangerie* built below the terrace, with panoramic views of the valley. The hotel was expensive at £202.08 for dinner, bed and breakfast for two, but well worth it in my view. Total mileage for the day was two hundred and sixty four miles (including the detour to Le Clos–Lucé).

Our first port of call the following morning was to collect my wine “allowance” from Domaine de la Chevalerie near Restigné (I always arrange for us to collect the wine on the last day of any tour, as it has to be stowed on the back seat of the car). For several years now, I have rented a row of vines at this vineyard, and this entitles me to four cases of Bourgeuil at a preferential price which is supposed to represent only the cost of turning the grapes into wine; needless to say, this amount seems to have escalated over the years, although I can’t complain too much as the wine is still as delicious as ever.

Trouble with the Electrics

It was when we left the vineyard for the final drive to the coast that I first noticed an excessive positive charge on the ammeter. This rose steadily during the day to more than 20A, and when we were



Approaching Grasse on the Pas de la Faye.

Photo: Sandy Grey



In the Gorges du Loup.

Photo: Graham Keighley

forced to stop for a cup of tea because of near nil visibility in a torrential downpour around Domfront, I took the opportunity of 'phoning Brian Chrimes at Red Triangle to ask for advice; he explained that the problem could only be caused by either the regulator having failed and mistakenly calling for more amps, or the battery being about to expire. The regulator having been renewed only a few years previously, I suspected the latter, as the battery was more than six years old. Brian advised us to keep the headlamps and heater motor on in order to reduce the charge, and to use the wiper motor whenever possible—not difficult, in view of the fact that it was raining cats and dogs at this point.

We continued on our route towards Caen, and made a short detour to the *Musée de la Belle Époque de l'Automobile* at the Château de Belleville near Pont-l'Éveque, where over a hundred cars plus motorcycles and trucks are displayed in a purpose-built extension to the château. A magnificent 1960s mechanical and animated band plays in the entrance hall every quarter of an hour or so.

As we still had time to kill before boarding our ferry, we called in at the museum beside the Pegasus Bridge (which I referred to earlier) on the Caen–Ouistreham canal. Here British troops from just three gliders attacked and secured the bridge on 6th June 1944 after heavy fighting, and held it until commando reinforcements led by Lord Lovat, who had been fighting their way inland from Sword Beach, arrived exactly two-and-a-half minutes behind schedule. The museum is well worth a detour, and at the time of our visit a veterans' reunion was in full swing.

Our Brittany Ferries vessel was not due to depart until 2230 hrs, and we therefore had dinner at an excellent fish restaurant, Le Channel, in the centre of Ouistreham, where the traditional seafood selection—washed down with a bottle of Muscadet—cost a modest €50.50 (£35.61). Total mileage for the day was 278 miles.

After a comfortable night in a Commodore Class twin-bedded cabin, with breakfast served in the cabin (well, somebody had to try it), we disembarked at 0700 hrs and headed up the M27, M3, A34 towards Oxford. Approaching the roundabout at the junction with the M4, we experienced a curious clicking noise from the nearside rear wheel under braking; a quick inspection revealed nothing obviously amiss, so we continued gingerly on our way to my home in Oxfordshire, arriving there at 0900 hrs. Mileage from the port was 99 miles.

Price Comparisons

Price comparisons are particularly difficult to make after a gap of sixty-six years, unless you are really sure that you are comparing like with like. As previously mentioned, £1 in 1937 is roughly equivalent to £50 in 2003, so the ferry costs referred to in the original article in *The Autocar* of £5 each way = £10 in total, is equivalent to £500 today; in our particular case, the price we paid of £326 excluding the Commodore Class cabin both ways which cost an additional £166, represents extremely good value when compared to 1937, although it has to be remembered that back then the ferry would have only carried a handful of cars, whereas each of today's ferries carries literally hundreds of cars.

Petrol at 2s. 6d. per gallon in 1937 equates to £6.25 per gallon today; we actually paid an average of €0.985 = 69.5p per litre, or £3.16 per gallon just over half the price in 1937. It is the hotel and ancillary expenses that seem to have increased out of proportion over the years. The original article mentioned that a first-class hotel in the South of France would put you up for less than a £1 a day, i.e. £50 at today's prices; I doubt if you would find anywhere for less than two or even three times that amount in 2003. The total cost of our whole trip, including Commodore Class cabin on the ferry each way, all hotels, petrol, meals and incidental items (refreshments, sightseeing, etc.), totalled £2,372.50, or £1,186.25 each.

Mileage for the whole tour (door to door) totalled 2,439 miles. The TE21 used 2 litres of Castrol Classic XL 20w/50 oil, and 119.60 gallons of unleaded petrol, which worked out at 20.39 mpg. not bad considering the amount of motoring in mountainous regions in the southern half of France.



The stubs of the viaduct at the Pont du Loup.

Photo: Graham Keighley

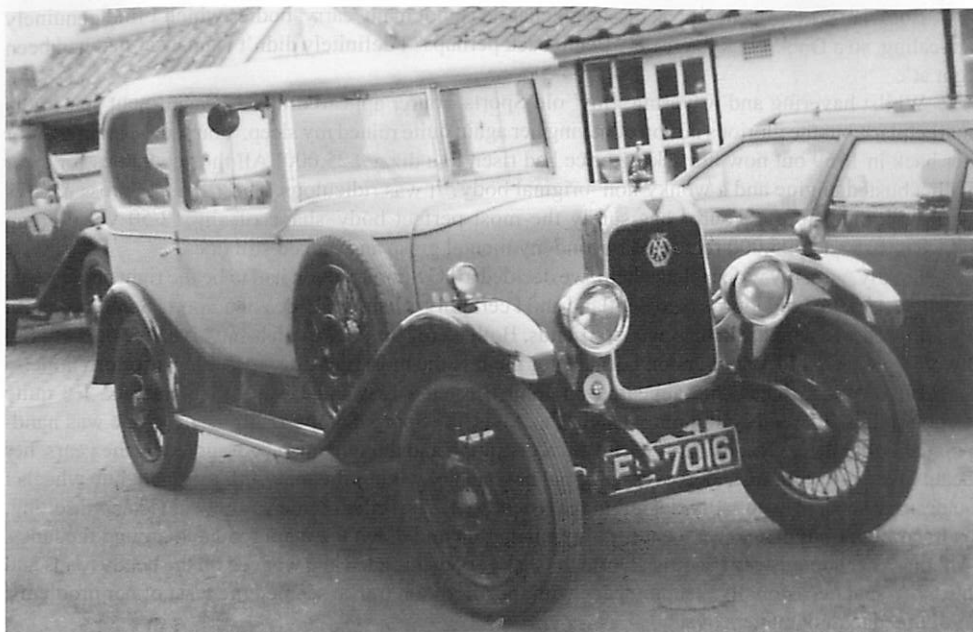
It was perhaps a little more motoring than I would have wished (averaging more than two hundred miles a day for twelve days), but all in all it was a very satisfying tour. This was an honest attempt to recreate the kind of continental motoring that my parents' generation was able to enjoy in the 1950s, and one that we were able to do in reasonable style. We couldn't follow the exact route of our predecessors for the reasons previously stated, but we did follow it—in spirit at least from Fontainebleau to the South of France, and from there as far as Avignon on the return journey, where we turned west to motor through Dordogne and the Loire Valley. Largely traffic-free roads (apart from when we were in Grenoble and on the Côte d'Azur), lashings of stunning scenery, mouth-watering food, agreeable wines (usually local to each area), and generally comfortable hotels all contributed to a really memorable holiday and I know the TE21 enjoyed it too!

GRAHAM KEIGHLEY

P.S. Having stowed the car in its garage on returning home, when I tried to get it out again the next morning to give it a well-deserved wash, it stubbornly refused to start the battery was as flat as the proverbial pancake and it remained resolutely immobile until I gave in and purchased it a new battery the following week; fortunately this had occurred after returning home, whereas our predecessors had suffered similar battery failure on arriving in Nice. And the clicking noise? That turned out to be a broken spoke, as I am sure many of you will have guessed.

Terrific—Alvis motoring in the Grand Manner—J.N.B.C.

"FAG PACKETS IN THE HORSEHAIR"



My first sight of her in Suffolk, hand-painted pale blue and black.

Photo: Stanley Paine

Why Restore A 12/50?

Because to my mind the 12/50 Alvis was the first proper British motor car. Fast, simple, robust and reliable and not prohibitively expensive, Alvis got it right for the driver, for the mechanic and thankfully for the restorer too. Certainly I would never have considered restoring a car which did not possess these attributes, and of course she would have to be beautiful too.

Genesis

To be frank, I'd assumed the word 'Alvis' was part of my youth until Donovan Hailstone rang me in 1997. Forty-odd years ago we both had 12/50's. Now Donovan wanted help to find another. It seemed an extraordinary request because I hadn't seen a 12/50 since I sold mine back in 1972. We soon of course discovered the wonderful world of Alvis alive and well but finding the 12/50 Donovan wanted enough to buy took some time. However, while searching, the realisation gradually dawned upon me that I also badly wanted a 12/50 so suddenly there was friendly competition. Donovan eventually found himself a very fine 1927 TG Doctor's Coupe' which doubtless he will tell you about one day. In the meantime, this is my story.

The Quest

Having already restored a 12/50 Sports Tourer years ago, I well understood what might lie ahead. YO 8649 had been a dreadful wreck and needed three years hard labour to put her right. In 1998 the only Alvis I ever wanted was still a 12/50.

But what sort? As elegant as the 12/50 chassis is, not many carry bodies which I find genuinely appealing, so a Ducksback maybe? A Beetleback perhaps? I definitely didn't want a car that had been 'got at'.

Whilst hawing and wavering, 'my' old Sports Tourer appeared like a heaven-sent star in the marketplace but the glorious notion of having her again quite ruined my sleep. You see, I'd paid £15 for her back in 1959 but now her asking price had risen to a dizzy £25,000! All those potatoes for a car with a busted engine and a wonky non-original body? It was ridiculous. The 1926 TE Cross & Ellis narrow-bodied Sports Tourer has surely the most perfect body-shape of any 12/50 yet the gap between £15 and £25,000 remained beyond my mental grasp and indeed still does.

Finally, with my wife Helen's help, we decided a TG Sports Saloon had to be the right choice. She recalled our long cold journeys to Scotland and I certainly relished the idea of a Sports Saloon because I'd admired two which had belonged to friends. Both were late 1927 models but given the opportunity I would go for a mid 1927 version because for me it is the most pleasing. It seemed a forlorn hope.

But I was in luck. One appeared on John Burnell's List and I was off to Suffolk. I'd quite forgotten how incredibly stunning a sight the Alvis TG Sports Saloon really is. This one was hand-painted light blue and black, had a Grimsby registration and though much bedraggled by the years, her beauty was as undiminished as ever. Original beyond my wildest dreams, with the open-hub wheels I so desired, she had been sadly 'let go' in the recent past. The seller seemed as undecided about selling, as I was about buying, so we went for a spin in her up and down the main road and around the lanes. Although her shoogly old (Scottish Doric for shaky) body groaned and weaved on the bendy roads and the SU's spat occasionally, keeping pace with the afternoon traffic seemed the least of her problems. We agreed to mull matters over.

My quest intensified but nothing appealed quite like that Suffolk car. I found myself continually reassessing and returning to the fact that, though far from pristine, this Alvis had a quality which I prized above all else; her astonishing originality. The unlikelihood of finding another concentrated the mind wonderfully.

I find it impossible not to be overwhelmed by the beauty of one of these Sports Saloon bodies. But one can so easily be lead astray. The conundrum is ascertaining the true condition of the coach-built frame beneath the aluminium skin because, internally, it is all masked by built-in upholstery. I realised time, worm and rot must have wreaked their havoc and that buying such a car would always be a pig-in-a-poke.

The interior was filthy. The once rich purple-blue headcloth was moth-eaten and kippered by years of tobacco smoke. The blinds and all the decorative piping and pasting lace were likewise ingrained and stained but all the leather upholstery however brittle, cracked and deteriorated, had all survived. It was a miracle.

However, viewed from a distance, the colour scheme did nothing for this vehicle's superb proportions. She had departed Holyhead Road handsome in "Light Pastel Blue with Dark Pastel Blue upper portion and wings". What a mouth-watering prospect.

I also noticed how effective the roof-skin had been, keeping the upper half of the body watertight, but the doors had dropped and I understood why. Nevertheless, both were in surprisingly good condition even if their shut profiles no longer matched the body's. I had no idea how I might correct this.

A pair of brass-bodied SU's glared up at me as I opened the bonnet. Together with the big-port

head and manifold they were a recent modification but surprisingly I saw no SU pump to overcome the higher fuel level required by their float chambers. Small wonder they had spat so viciously out on the road. Would these two rude protruders really perform better than the introverted old Solex?

A weaving coach-built body invariably means the bulkhead needs looking at and sure enough the plywood had separated.

The thought of a scuttle tank full of fuel suspended from this frail defunct horrified me. And the tumble-weed wiring looked suspect too, though the electrics worked.

Scanning this restoration comedy so far, even I'm puzzled why I persisted in wanting this car. She certainly had her problems but despite all my reservations when the opportunity came, right or wrong, I went for her lock, stock and barrel.

Arrival

So, on an extremely hot April day, Alvis TG 12/50 Sports Saloon, car no 10404, despatched on the 22nd March 1927 and registered EE 7016 four days later in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, was delivered to my garage door in deepest Kent. The seller had driven her over from Suffolk. His wife's Citroen with the spares had expired en-route.

To Work

Decades had passed since I last held a spanner in anger, since when my standards had increased and my dexterity decreased one thousandfold. I dreaded that the task ahead might be like living through "War and Peace". I'd have to sing "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" when trouble loomed or repeat old George Stephenson's motto "Never Give Up". I'd certainly need George's stickability but "Could one physical wreck really restore another?" I asked myself. I wasn't at all sure.

I didn't keep a diary or take many photographs so what follows is a selection, albeit fragmentary, of what I found most interesting. Anybody can ship a car off to the restorers but where's the fun in that? The experience would hardly be worth recording. Like anybody else mad enough to restore an ancient vehicle, I had to sense what I could and what I could not do. If I could not, then I'd bite the bullet and pay somebody else to do it. But I'd keep control.

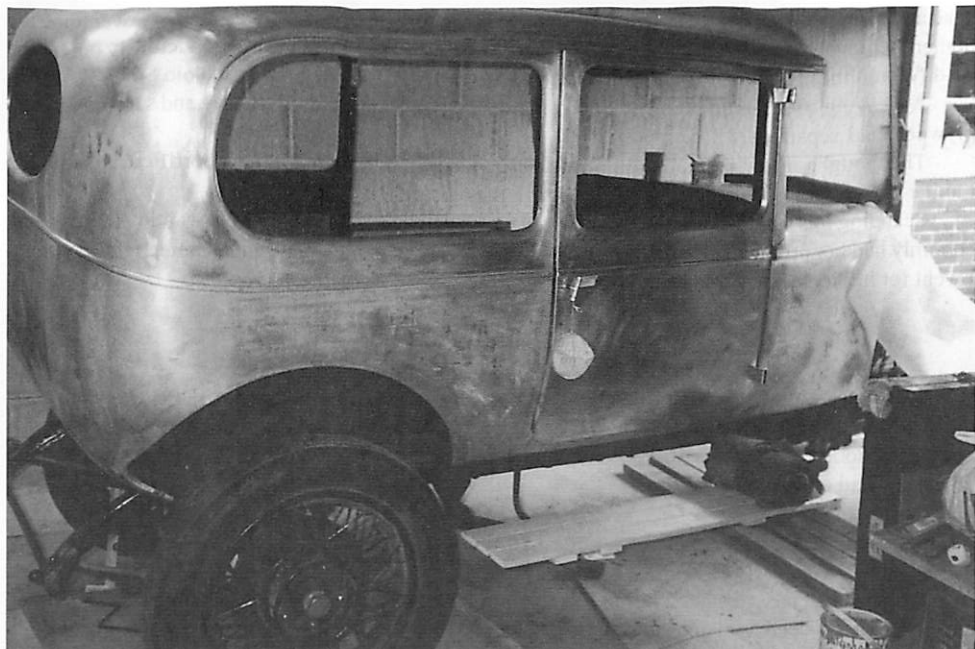
Dismantling

The most enjoyable phase of all. Endorphins flow, you progress like a house on fire, the pile of bits grows higher and higher. These are the salad days. I removed the mag and dynamo and had them rebuilt. It was all easy-peezy and I was on my way.

The Body

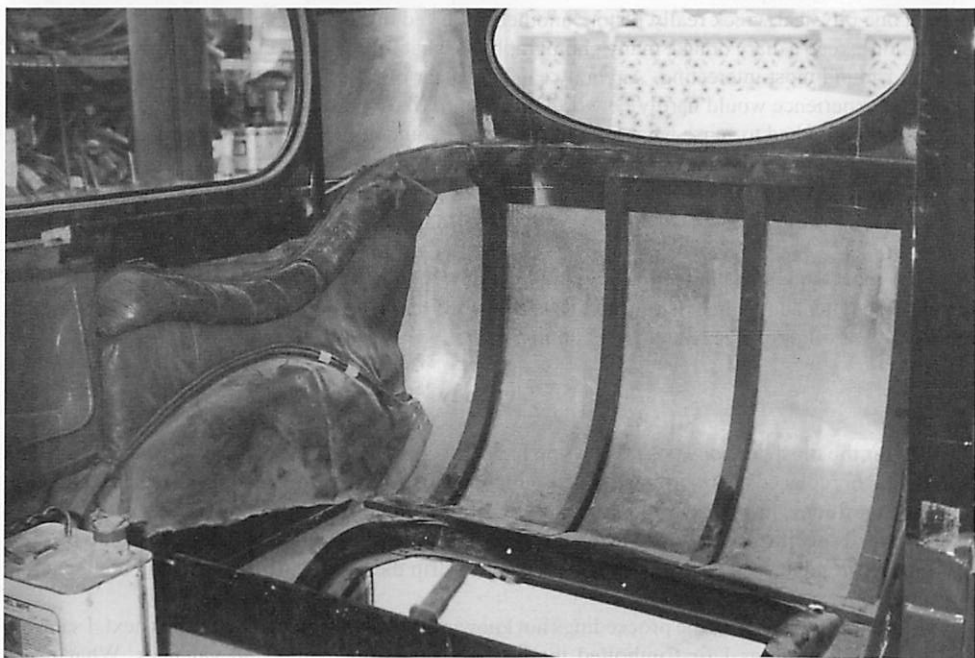
By far the most precious possession you have. Mechanical items, whatever their condition, can be repaired or replaced but returning a coach-built body to health is altogether a different kettle of fish. Slapping on filler is just no answer. Unlike present day rigid unit-construction, the coach-built body was designed specifically to flex in sympathy with chassis movements so all repairs have to be done bearing this in mind. The task ahead was therefore to strip the body bare of everything both external and internal.

It adds definite edge to the proceedings not knowing what horror will reveal itself next. I sang the Monty Python thing as I first unbolted the badly-fitting front wings and valences. What was I worrying about? It all seemed easy enough. These items were sand-blasted clean and handed over to



Revealed in all her glorious nakedness.

Photo: Stanley Paine



A major task completed. Instead of two, four pillars now support the rear of the body.

Photo: Stanley Paine

Barry for repair.

But unknowingly I had made my first mistake. Instead of blaming the previous owner for the wings fitting badly, I should instead have asked myself, "Why didn't the so-and-so wings fit?" Alas, Barry repaired them and a nasty surprise lay in wait.

Being a dyed-in-the-wool Porsche man, Barry was unfamiliar with vintage cars but he soon interested himself in the Alvis. Endlessly helpful and patient, he responded brilliantly to my every peculiar request, tackling things I could never tackle. When the time came, Barry would paint the car too. We became firm friends and I learned a lot. The year was 1999.

Entering The Tomb

Having stripped the body externally, I prepared myself mentally to enter the interior. It was a sacred moment and Lord Carnarvon can have felt no different. I spied tatters of the original old blue carpet beneath the front seats and so with masking tape I performed my first archaeological job and prised them carefully from the floorboards.

Initially my intention had been to remove, repair and then return as much of the original interior fabric as possible but already I could sense the impracticality of this approach. Everything resembled Miss Haversham's wedding breakfast. It was beyond sensible saving. However, I continued removing the sad remnants and making careful notes which would one day be invaluable to my future upholsterer.

Pre-History

It mystifies me why some show little interest in their car's history. I'm a sucker for such things and I was soon into the detective work. Fortunately, the last of EE 7016's buff log-books came with the car and it was Dave Culshaw who kindly provided the name of the first owner, a Mrs Sarah Glover, 4, Freeman Street, Grimsby. Then Tony Phillips-Smith discovered the Alvis agency that made the transaction; The Pavilion Garage, Doncaster Road, Scunthorpe; prop. Mr Rounce.

The millennium had arrived and I was impatient to know more. I placed a picture and appeal in the Grimsby Evening Telegraph and received a letter from Alan Dixon who had accompanied his father, Mr Gladstone Dixon, when he bought EE 7016 second-hand from Mrs Glover in 1937. Seemingly Mrs Glover was a butcher. Actually, it turned out that only her husband was the butcher, for Sarah was a lady. Never was she seen to disturb the sawdust in the shop above which she and her husband lived with their son. But I was disappointed to find that neither Mrs nor Mr Glover drove the Alvis. Their son acted as chauffeur.

I also learned that in 1927 much rivalry existed amongst the local butchers as to who owned the smartest car in town for herein lies the reason why an otherwise conventional lady from Grimsby should have purchased such a colourful and sporting mode of transport. Pure, unadulterated snobbery is the only answer but Sarah had good taste too!

Rejuvenation

I'll gloss over replacing the bulkhead, my nickel-plating in the kitchen sink and numerous other struggles. Instead I'll relate my attempt to halt the ravages of time.

2001 had crept in and I couldn't postpone the job any longer. The problem was, viewed from the inside, almost the entire weight of the rear half of the body relies upon the integrity of two curved pillars inserted vertically between the rear waist-rail and the rear base cross-member. Made from 1 3/4" square section ash and positioned approx. 30" apart, they dictate the curvature of the back lower half



Masked up and awaiting her "Two Blues".

Photo: Stanley Paine



Not unlike a ripe fruit.

Photo: Stanley Paine

of the body. Half-lapped into the base cross-member, Carbodies fixed each joint with just a single 3" screw which was not nearly good enough. When these joints failed, the body failed.

Small surprise Alvis received more complaints from customers about bodywork than anything else and the history of what happened to my Sports Saloon would have been typical. From day one, road water had become sucked up into the exposed end-grains of the pillar bottom-ends, the wood eventually became permanently soggy and failure inevitable. The body first inclined rearwards, then detached itself on its rear underside. The door openings no longer accommodated the doors and fractures appeared across the aluminium roof. It was a serious fault.

That nobody else succeeded in curing this Achilles Heel of the coach-built car body does not absolve Carbodies. As with their bulkhead, apart from a cursory lick of cheap paint Carbodies made not the slightest attempt to protect these vulnerable areas from the elements. They simply turned a blind eye. However, to be fair, Carbodies must have got something right because no fewer than twenty-six Sports Saloons have journeyed on through the millennium complete with their bodies.

Without de-skinning the body this fault is almost impossible to rectify. Well, I say 'almost' because I somehow succeeded without de-skinning mine but only time will tell. This excruciating task took me forever and though I've now forgotten the details, here in a nutshell is how, advised by Laurie Eccles, I did it.

I inserted a stout plank underneath the substantial nearside and offside waist-rails and, together with more vertical scaffolding to support the roof, with wedges and a couple of housebricks. I painstakingly chocked the body frame back to its original geometry. I then cut the rotten parts off the pillars and, incorporating a step in the joint to give additional support, grafted on new ends. Then, from outside, I screwed the re-cut joints home into the base cross-member through holes purpose-bored through the aluminium body-skin. For further support I inserted two more pillars between them. Finally, I screw-plated each joint and crossed my fingers it would all hold together. And I'd done everything with the scaffolding in place. I'd also amazed myself.

Two Troublesome Doors

With the body upright once more, the doors now fitted perfectly but their bottom edges still refused to tuck themselves in. Short of rebuilding, this ugliness seemed impossible to correct. It is a perennial fault with coach-built doors and Laurie Eccles blames gravity, damp and Carbodies for using an inferior cut of timber. Then, one day as I was gloomily reading how Laurie had de-skinned and rebuilt his doors, Barry breezed by with a bright suggestion. Why not install a transverse wire and tensioner across each glove-pocket box and tension the wires till the door shut-profiles match those of the body? And it worked.

Plate Glass

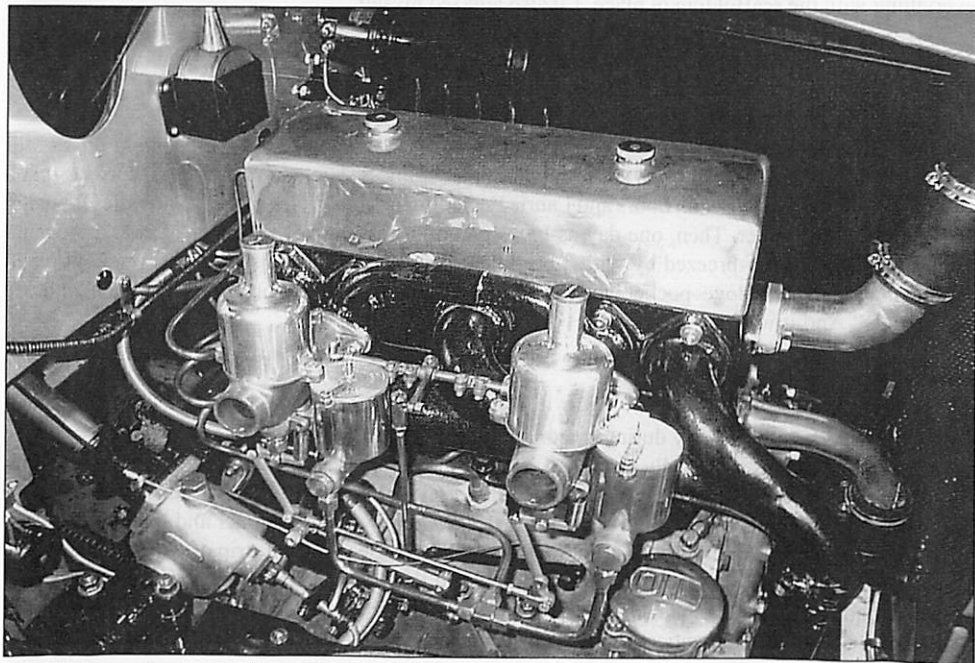
To maintain body rigidity during major surgery, I thought it best to leave the window-glass in place. All the windows were badly scratched so when the time came, I removed and stacked the panes neatly against the wall. I then tried lifting the lot and failed miserably. I had no idea ¼" plate glass could be so astonishingly heavy. Fortunately its replacement was both thinner and lighter.

To secure each pane in place, Carbodies pinned on a single retaining strip of ¼" x ½" ash, saw-nicked at ½" or 1" intervals to allow it to bend around the various curves. Unbelievably, the oval window required no fewer than 112 individual saw-nicks for its retaining strip. How I pitied the unfortunate Carbodies' apprentice as I laboriously and hesitatingly sawed each nick. He probably only received a farthing per car.



Reassembly commences. Barry at work.

Photo: Stanley Paine



I doubt the engine bay will remain clean for long.

Photo: Nick Sloan

Two Dark Blues

I'd held visions of re-creating my Sports Saloon's original "Two Pastel Blues" livery but lack of confidence that I'd ever get the body permanently straight again forced a re-think. My first Suffolk sighting of her painted pale blue with a black waistline moulding was a lesson in what not to do for emphasising this moulding betrayed every fault in the body. Unfortunately, the original contrasting "Two Pastel Blues" also failed in this respect so I had to devise a livery which deflected the eye away from this otherwise graceful moulding. I finally decided upon two close-toned dark blues arranged as per the 1927 Alvis Sports Saloon colour brochure.

Body Painting

One thing's clear, the coachbuilt saloon body was never designed to be spray-painted. Its an impossible conglomerate of unreachable corners and awkward edges, each ideally fashioned to collect as much overblow as possible. Vintage cars definitely look best in coach-finish because, unlike spray-finish, it generally masks the minor body faults, but the inconvenience of transporting my semi-complete car to a coach-painter stopped the idea. I had hoped Barry might paint my car with cellulose but as all his previous experience had been with Two Pack so Two Pack it would have to be.

To prepare for a spray-paint finish, a saloon car body has first to be completely masked from the inside and, once masked, the masker has then to make good his escape. In my instance, the engine was blocking one exit, so Barry's only way out was through the small trap over the rear axle. It's as well he's built like a string bean because few humans could have squeezed through such an orifice. And it's fortunate indeed that Barry wasn't emerging when I took a picture. Any midwife would have been fascinated.

"Two Dark Blues" is not so startling as the original colour scheme but it suits the car well. Later I was to discover my colour combination was similar to the one Alvis chose for Mike Appleton's late 1927 TG Sports Saloon. Miraculously Mike's car still carries her original coach-finish.

Piping And Pasting Lace

Almost impossible to buy nowadays. After much enquiry, I discovered the last person making the genuine article was living in East Germany. On his Jaquard loom he could reproduce my original for £40 per metre and my Sports Saloon required 47 metres! So what to do? A Canterbury shop sold a good range of French haberdashery and though none resembled my originals, I selected a similar medium- blue patterned edging and piping to match. My local shirt factory then produced ersatz pasting lace for me by machining the edging on to a backing strip. It was OK but it won't be nearly as hard-wearing as the original.

To The Upholsterer

Recently he'd restored the State Coach. Now he wanted to retire but the Alvis changed his mind.

As I desired to avoid a 'modern interpretation' of my 1927 upholstery, I produced a twenty-page document with photographs explaining exactly how every piece of upholstery once looked and fitted in its rightful place. For example, Carbodies upholstered the rear leather seat back and arm-rest roll directly on to the body structure, similarly the door panels. I wanted my upholsterer to do likewise. Not for me the crude practice of attaching pre-upholstered panels with Phillips screws and chromium plated cup-washers.

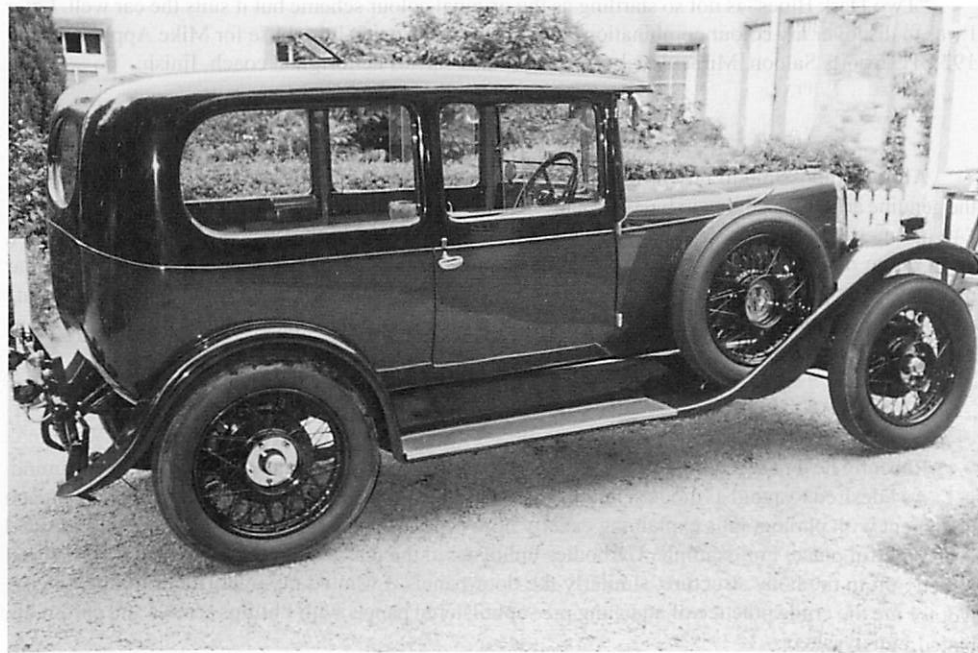
Selecting the right type and colour leather, head-cloth and carpet to replace the originals caused

me much heartache. My choice had to be compatible with the “Two Dark Blues” colour scheme and the piping and pasting lace had also somehow to reflect the ambience of an Alvis originally decked-out “For the 1927 Season.” Although Alvis colour combinations were more cheerful than most at that time, the relative sobriety of even the brightest materials available was a far cry from today’s plasticised excesses. A post-Victorian darkness lingered still in 1927 and I wanted my livery and upholstery and fabrics to recapture it. A medium-blue leather together with a dark grey headcloth above a dark blue leather-bound carpet was the combination I finally chose.

Raised-Head Screws

I considered myself lucky to have found so many still in place. Becoming suddenly semi-anorak, I noted and packeted each group of screws and re-nickelled the lot. For me, it was worthwhile taking this extra trouble because some sizes are no longer obtainable and the genuine article has a flatter head than today’s imposters. Carbodies maybe didn’t bother but I like to see these bright and handsome slotted screw-heads lined up.

With my newly upholstered interior installed, I was then able to enjoy myself returning all the refurbished ‘fancy extras’; the blue watered-silk blinds, blue silk rope-pulls, blue silk parcel-net and all the polished mahogany work which so beautifully sets off the beautifully designed nickelled instruments, switches, grab-handles etc to such advantage. At long long last my Sports Saloon was beginning to live again even if this warm pleasure had to be tempered by a sadness that the old ambience had gone for ever. Never more could I place my hand where Sarah Glover once sat. But I had her vanity mirror.



In Scotland, ticking over and almost complete.

Photo: Stanley Paine

Two Troublesome Wings

One would assume putting back a carefully restored pair of front wings would be like falling off a log. Alas, if it was only so. Unwrapping them from their blankets, I admired the lovely job Barry had made. Like choice pieces of Dresden. But when I offered them up, neither fitted. In disbelief, I tried again. I had learned a very hard lesson:

Vintage wings should always be repaired ON the car, not off it! Off the car, their instability encourages every built-in distortion imaginable and mine had been repaired off the car twice. Sucking air through my teeth, it was time again to sing "Look on the Bright Side of Life". China wings permit only the most minor of tweakings so packing became my only option. The process took a very long time.

Escape

In 2002, for sanity's sake, Helen and I unplugged from the South East of England and moved to the far North East of Scotland. Unless you're of a like mind, you'll never know the pleasure of grinding the M25 for the final time.

Although the car was now running, 2003 arrived and I was still assuming there wasn't much more to do. Alas, I'd totally misjudged the time needed for rebuilding the SU's, completing the wiring, stopping the hand-brake flying off unexpectedly and the thousand and one other niggly jobs that frustrate the final days of all restorations. Though the end was in sight, my increasingly appalling work rate brought home to me the phenomenal day-in-day-out effort "Tommy" John required of his men. He'd have sacked me on the spot.

Conclusion

I'm still undecided whether restoring an Alvis today is easier than it was forty years ago. Then, Alvis sold me brand new spares over the counter at very reasonable cost and I had a complete set of wings, valances and a bonnet made that were cheap and fitted first time of asking. But getting the radiator re-honeycombed seemed impossible so it was gill-type or nothing. Poverty dictated I bought not a new tyre, battery nor any proper upholstery throughout my many years of everyday vintage motoring so cost-effectiveness was always a consideration. Wheatley & Morgan was written for somebody else, the Register an infant and the AOC like The Reform Club.

Today, Register Spares and Red Triangle supply every need and the AOC and Register advice network excellent and infinite. The Register Manual is an invaluable fountainhead but what is missing are the old fashioned skills and the guys who could turn their hands to anything. How I treasure their memory. These days, Barry Beer and Tony Leech who rebuilt the engine so beautifully deserve my special accolade. Likewise Laurie Eccles who helped me so much, though we've yet to meet and Val Dunnett too who first enthused me all those years ago.

Reducing a five year restoration to words has not been easy. It extended the incarceration. However, if along the way I have stated the blindingly obvious or taught too many grandmothers to suck eggs, I apologise because I've enjoyed playing motor engineer. I'd have enjoyed playing Tolstoy too but my restoration experience didn't turn out quite like "War & Peace". Much more like casting myself adrift in an open boat. First touch of the button and my Sports Saloon is away with us up into the hills. So am I pleased with her? Well, I've certainly put in enough work to be pleased both visually and mechanically and indeed she looks ravishing and handles well. The SU's seem OK but are too complicated and though it's early days, not many obvious rattles or squeeks have become obvious. On



Scotland. Away for a spin in the hills.

Photo: Lesley Ann Parker

the downside, she sits too high at the front, a door has dropped and the brakes need to improve themselves and the off-side rear-inner... but then that's par for the car restorer's course.

Vignette

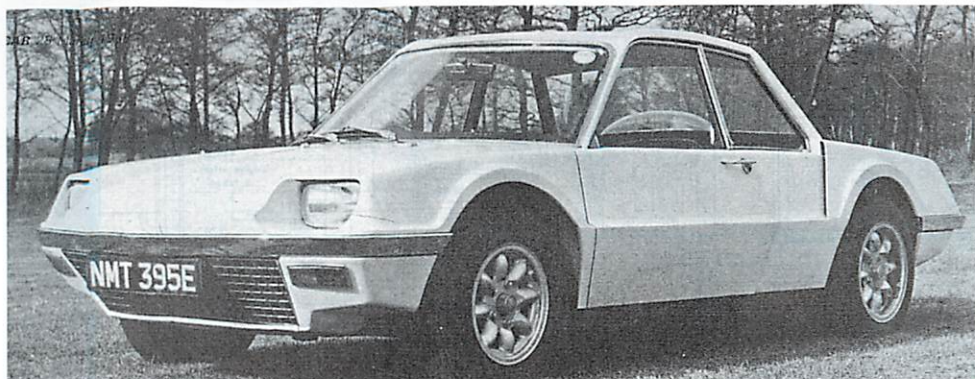
On the 26th of February 1927, my chassis was delivered to Carbodies. On the 12th March it returned to Alvis carrying a shiny new Sports Saloon body. Whilst at Carbodies, the gaffer very nearly collared two employees smoking in the upholstery shop. How do I know? Well, tucked up behind a wheel-arch I found a couple of old fag packets stuffed into the horsehair.

STANLEY PAINE

An absolutely splendid tale by Stanley Paine and another inspiration to would-be restorers.—J.N.B.C.

NOT FOR YOU

—AN ADVANCED BUT PRACTICAL SPORTS
CAR DESIGN FROM THE ROVER AND
ALVIS MEMBERS OF THE LEYLAND GROUP—



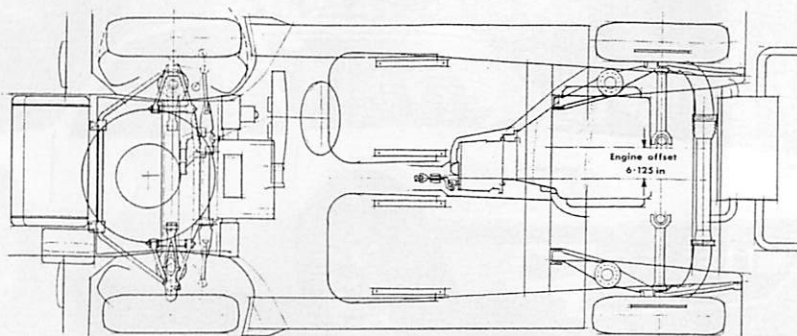
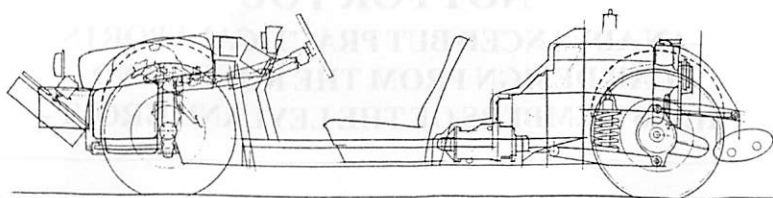
The angular styling is not brought out to best advantage in a photograph. Apertures in the front edge of the rear wheel panels duct fresh air to the carburetors which protrude into a clear plastic cover.

As an experimental exercise with production possibilities Rover have designed and Alvis have built a new mid-engined sports coupe with a novel transmission giving adequate luggage space and with de Dion rear suspension. It is powered by a version of the Rover 3.5-litre vee-8 engine and fitted with a 4-speed manual gearbox.

At the New York Show the Leyland Group will reveal for the first time the Rover-designed P6BS mid-engined sports car powered by the Rover 3.5-litre vee-8 engine and with de Dion rear suspension. This car has been developed in such secrecy that all testing has been done in the dark or at weekends on a private circuit, the car even being transported in a pantechicon to and from the factory. To emphasise the Group aspect it should be said that the basic design is the work of Spencer King and Gordon Bashford of Rover Engineering, but that the car was built by the Alvis works at Coventry who also detailed the novel transmission system.

Although this is purely a one-off experimental car, it is not a dream car, having been built to a production requirement. The Leyland Group decision not to go ahead with it, because of the production commitments of the Rover Company, is regretted; but it was felt that the design was of such interest that it should be made known to the public, if only to allow testing to proceed in the open. It may come as a relief to Continental sports car manufacturers that the car will not go into production.

Although sports-racing cars and GT prototypes are now built with the engine behind the driver and ahead of the rear axle, pundits have always maintained that this layout was impractical for an everyday sports car, because of the lack of luggage room and toeboard constriction. The latter argument is scarcely valid in these days of front wheel-arch intrusion in family cars. Nor has luggage accommo-



ation ever been a factor to over-influence most sports car designers, although some of our latest models are good in this respect. However, the Rover design team demonstrate that adequate foot room and a decent boot are possible with the mid-engine layout (a fact incidentally, that Matra have already demonstrated with their M530) and Ferrari with his mid-engined Dino.

In cars with the engine in front of the rear axle and the gearbox behind it there is still a weight bias towards the rear wheels. To move the weight farther forward the designers have turned the engine back to front and put the gearbox at the front of the engine, offsetting the clutch-to-gearbox drive by means of a Morse Hi-Vo drive to allow them to run a small diameter propeller shaft alongside the sump and back to the final drive. The extra complication is offset by using the complete Rover 2000 de Dion suspension with only a 1.5 in. spacer inserted in the de Dion tube. Also the lack of a gearbox protrusion allowed them to place a fair-sized luggage boot behind the axle without increasing the rear overhang beyond acceptable limits.

A modified 2000 gearbox is used, laid on its side. Power from the clutch is transmitted by a Morse Hi-Vo chain to a sprocket on the end of what was previously the lay-shaft, and taken out of the gearbox from the front end of a one-piece mainshaft to the propeller shaft alongside the sump. The final-drive casing is cast integral with the sump—a common lubricant is not used—which also incorporates the propeller-shaft front bearing housing. Standard 2000 type drive-shafts transmit the drive to the wheels.

The Rover-GM vee-8 engine is in normal trim except for having 2 in. SU carburetors in place of the standard 1¾ in. instruments; no air silencer is fitted.

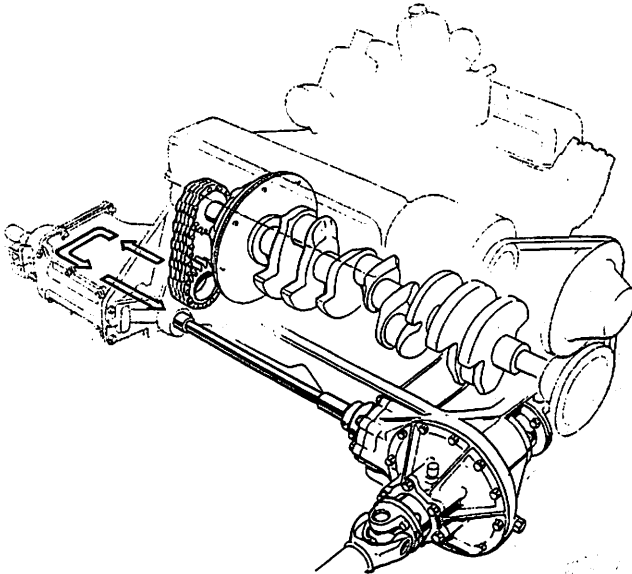
Although absent from the Show car Rover have devised for it a new exhaust system which gives equal pulses without the need for cross-over pipes. The firing order with a two-plane crankshaft is 1, 8, 4, 3, 6, 5, 7 with the cylinders numbered from front to back in connecting rod sequence, that is number 1 is front left and number 2 is front right and so on. Pairs of cylinders exhaust into four two-

branch pipes, the pairs being 8 and 6, 3 and 7, 5 and 1, 2 and 4. By making the branch pipes of adequate length, cross-feeding is eliminated and the firing pulses are evenly spaced, thereby eliminating the familiar vee-8 beat.

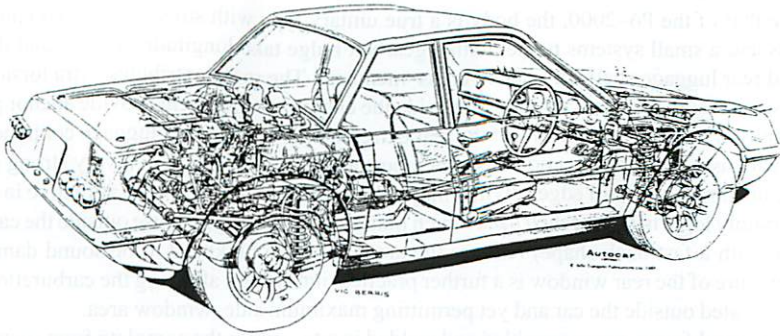
Unlike that of the P6-2000, the body is a true unitary type with stressed external panels. Box-section sills and a small systems tunnel with a gearbox bulge take longitudinal loads and the scuttle firewall and rear luggage shelf act as main cross-members. The roof contributes extra torsional stiffness. Box-section side members running alongside the engine compartment provide anchor points for the Watts links of the rear suspension. At the rear extremity the box-shaped luggage container and the rear panel with associated box section cross members and wheel arches form a very strong structure.

While the three-box hard edged styling may not please everyone it is very attractive in the flesh. There is certainly logic in the notched back which puts most of the engine noise outside the car and (by comparison with a fast back shape) reduces the area of engine bulkhead to be sound damped. The reverse curvature of the rear window is a further practical innovation allowing the carburettor air inlet bulge to be located outside the car and yet permitting maximum side-window area.

A separate subframe, pre-assembled and welded in situ, carries the complete front suspension. It consists of a box-section cross-member with vertical pillars at its extremities and with forward extensions carrying the front roll-bar bearings. The upper wishbone is a bolted-up assembly swept back to give castor angle, the lower wishbone being formed by a transverse link with the roll-bar acting as a radius arm. Steering is by rack-and-pinion gear mounted behind the axle. Wheel posts, fabricated from sheet steel and incorporating the steering arms, swivel on heavy duty ball-joints; co-axial springs and dampers are used. Front roll height is 4½ in. and the rear roll height has a mean of 13 in.



Assemble the final-drive in unit with the sump, and a very rigid transmission results.

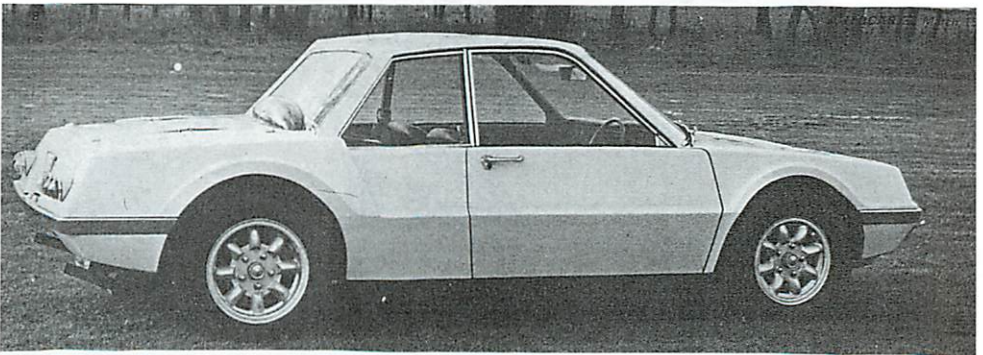


Rover engineers on this Leyland project have shown that a mid-engined car is a practical even proportion. The novel transmission gives good luggage accommodation and there is an ample boot while entry presents no problem.

In the interests of traction, handling and load bearing, large-section low-profile rear tyres on wide-rim wheels are fitted. Tyres are Dunlop radial ply, size 185-15in. on 7.5in. rims at the rear, and 185-14in. on 5.5in. rims in front. Minilite supply the wheels.

The problem of mounting the engine softly and yet locating the axle precisely is not too difficult with the smooth, eight-cylinder engine so there is a normal three-point system—two rubbers alongside the engine and one on the gearbox—with the addition of a short transverse stay with rubber bushes between the final drive casing and the frame.

A further problem with the Rover variable track de Dion suspension, in which the wheels are located by the half-shafts, is that asymmetric handling results if the half-shafts are of unequal length. To prevent this, the engine is offset to the right. The penalty of 10 per cent extra weight on the right-



The novel Rover exhaust system dispenses with transfer pipes.

MAIN DIMENSIONS

Length overall	. . . . .	13ft 8in.	(648cm)
Width	. . . . .	5ft 6in.	(250cm)
Height	. . . . .	4ft 0in.	(189cm)
Wheelbase	. . . . .	7ft 11in.	(375cm)
Track, front	. . . . .	4ft 6.5in.	(215cm)
Track, rear	. . . . .	4ft 8in.	(221cm)
Ground clearance	. . . . .	6in.	(24cm)

PERFORMANCE (Manufacturer's figures)

Speeds in gears:		Acceleration:	
Top	140 mph (225 kph)	0-60	7.0sec
Third	108 mph (174 kph)	0-80	11.2sec
Second	73 mph (118 kph)	0-100	18.5sec
First	48 mph (77 kph)	Standing $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile	15.5sec

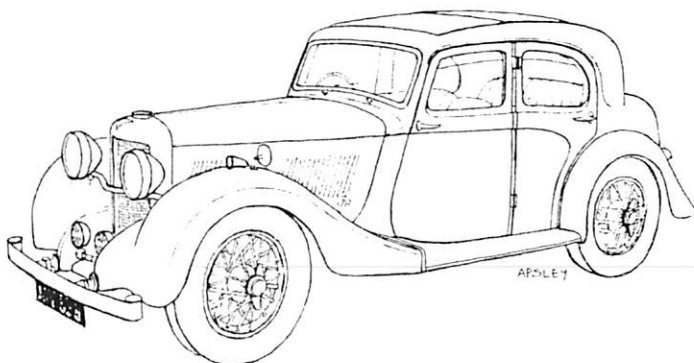
hand rear wheel and 2 per cent extra on the right front is not significant in left-hand rule of the road countries, while left-hand-drive cars with only the driver on board would have an ideal weight distribution. Front-to-rear weight distribution is 47 :53 with 5 gallons (35 lb) of fuel. This represents left-hand and right-hand wheel loads of 649.5 : 655lb front and 714 :783lb rear.

The water radiator is mounted below bumper height at the front of the car in an inclined position. A thermostatically controlled electric fan provides a forced

draught in slow motoring conditions. Hot air is discharged directly into the front compartment in which the spare wheel is stowed, and extracted by louvres on the top of the nose. No doubt a duct to keep hot air away from the tyre will be a later refinement.

This car demonstrates, as our racing car designers have already shown, that the ability exists in this country to produce advanced sports cars which are well ahead of the somewhat prosaic machinery which now makes up the bulk of our sports car exports. It seems to us that it will be difficult for Leyland to ward off the demand which is bound to follow its showing.

This article first appeared in The Autocar 28th March 1968 and is reproduced with due acknowledgement and thanks. This most interesting car appeared shortly after the end of motor car manufacture by Alvis and was the last experimental car ever built by Alvis. It is one of those fascinating "Might have beens" of history.—J.N.B.C.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



38 Copsewood Road
Bitterne Park
Southampton
Hants SO1 8 1QU

Dear Julian

I refer to "The Case of All Cases" (Bulletin–Nov/Dec 2003). The theme of the article was that Alvis had retained a set of luggage for use in publicity shots of succeeding generations of TD and TE cars. On re-examining the photographs, however, it is clear that the luggage is indeed the same because, so far as the luggage is concerned, it is the same photograph.

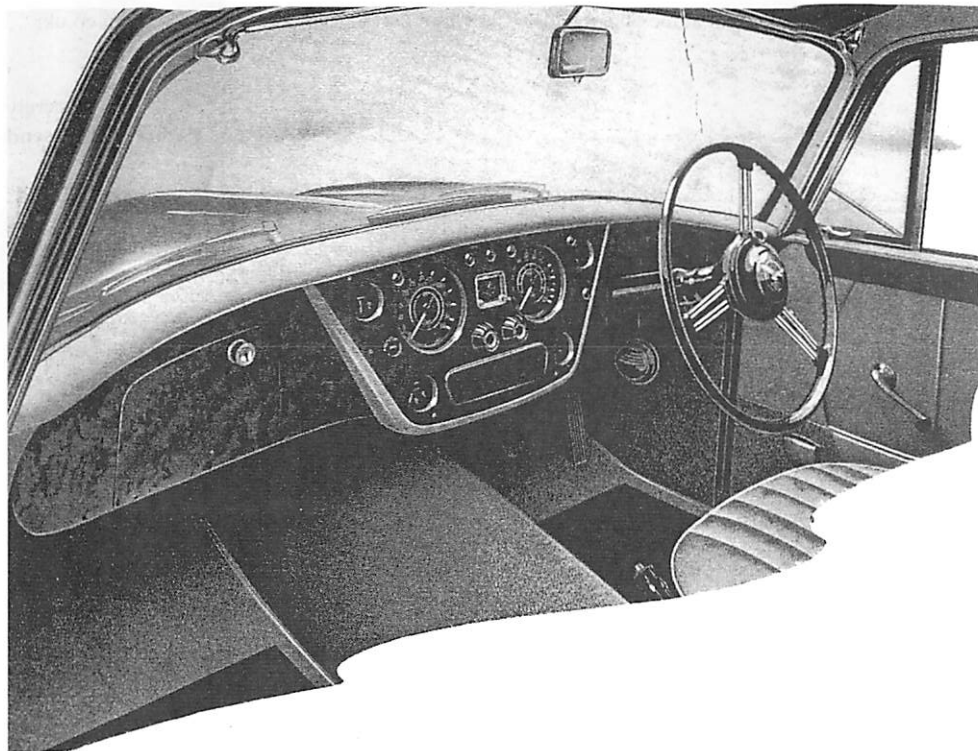
The first photograph (from 1958) is of a TD21 series 1 and shows five cases on the ground together with two golf club sets and a valise held by the female model.

The 1962 shot purports to be a TD21 series 2 but it seems clear that this is in fact another shot from the 1958 session. The cases are all in exactly the same position as four years earlier and the model has the same hairstyle and coat. The number plate panel is different of course but I would suggest that this has been airbrushed in, along with a cover board over the underside of the boot lid.

The 1963 photograph also looks like an adaptation of a 1958 shot. The cases and the golf clubs are quite clearly a (literally) cut and paste job. Even the valise held by the model is held at an identical angle to its appearance in 1958. The car has the appearance of being the 1958 car again airbrushed (rather crudely in fact) around the number plate panel. The model looks altogether better photographed than the other elements of this picture. She was probably photographed in 1963 and may have been inserted because the earlier model would, by then, have looked noticeably dated.

The final picture from 1966 comprises two elements. The model and car are "modern" but the luggage is again from 1958. The golf clubs have been pasted on to this picture and the cases pasted on top of the clubs. The valise has disappeared presumably because it was simpler to leave it out and, of course, the black handbag is a better match with the rest of the model's outfit.

This last picture also shows how airbrushing could get out of control. The rear wing has been artistically extended downwards to a physically impossible extent. A similar example of someone "improving" on reality occurs in the TD21 series 2 sales leaflet (see enclosed copy) in which the interior shot has been airbrushed to remove the gear change mechanism!



The airbrushed interior from the Series 2 TD21 sales leaflet.

So why all this jiggery pokery? One can only assume that paying someone to play with scissors, paste and spray ink was cheaper than faffing about with assorted luggage in the course of a photo shoot.

Of course, Alvis are not the only company to do odd things in their literature. MG produced a brochure for the 1500 Midget which includes an overhead shot of a young lady in a striped top seated in the car. This comes in two versions both with the same camera position, same car parked in the same place and the same clothes but, in each case, with a different young lady inside them!

On a more contemporary note, I would like to pass on my thanks to David Larkin for his organisation of the 3 Litre technical weekend held in January. This was an event which was useful and also inspiring in that it has prompted me to finally get moving on a "dream project" I have had in mind for some time. So I hereby commit myself, in print, to getting started on writing a full workshop manual for the TD/TE/TF models. At this early stage I have all sorts of ambitious ideas about how I want it to look—however I am anticipating that the task will take about a year by the end of which my plans may have altered...

In the next few months I may have cause to appeal to the membership for elucidation of certain points although, for the moment I have more than enough material to digest. In the meantime, however, I would be glad to hear from anyone who has a car fitted with an original overdrive installation. Contact

may be made either by mail at the above address or email via mouse@themousehole.fsnet.co.uk.

Yours sincerely
Richard Townsend

More interesting comment on Alvis photographs trickery. A workshop manual for the TD/TE/TF sounds really interesting. I hope Richard receives plenty of support—J.N.B.C.

Broadlawn
Lower Row
Holt
Wimborne
Dorset BH21 7DZ

Dear Julian

I set out below an update in respect of the registration and use of our cars in France and would be grateful if you could include this in *The Bulletin* when you have space.

Registration and Use of our Cars in France

Since my reference to this in Bulletin 484, November/December 2003, I am pleased to say that I am able report some progress following my approach to the Federation Francaise des Vehicules d'Epoque.

Not surprisingly there is not going to be an immediate change in the situation and it will remain virtually impossible for us to obtain a Carte Grise Normale for our cars. However in the year 2007 the restrictions placed on the Carte Grise de Collection will be changed and instead of cars registered under this Carte being restricted to the department in which it is registered and adjoining departments, it will allow full use of the car throughout France at all times. When this takes place it will be necessary for cars so registered to undergo a Contrôle Technique (French MOT) every five years in addition to the initial examination required at present.

We need therefore to be patient a little longer with the present system but at least steps are being taken in the right direction which from 2007 should enable us to use our cars as we require.

Yours sincerely
Derek Bradbury

Well, some progress at least. Let's see what happens in three years time. Three years is not long in the life of an Alvis—J.N.B.C.

21 Queen Annes Grove
Bedford Park
London W4 1HW
Email: gb@butlin-design.co.uk

Dear Julian

I am fortunate in needing to make regular business trips to the island of Malta. I recently found that a local businessman, who now intends to join the Club, has bought a Speed 20 SA Cross and Ellis Tourer, registration KV 4844.

This prompted me to call Peter Nops, a longstanding Club member, who owned a similar Speed 20 while living on Malta in the early 1960s; Peter was a friend of my wife's parents who also lived there at the time.

Peter has sent me the attached recollections of his Maltese Alvis experiences which I hope may be of interest to you for *The Bulletin*.

In spite of its small size and lack of suitable roads, I was amazed to learn from the owner of one, that there are nineteen Ferraris on Malta! Many of the owners meet on Sunday mornings on a quiet road to the West of the island.

Yours sincerely
George Butlin

Peter Nop's article appears elsewhere in this issue—J.N.B.C.

Orchard Croft
Warstone Road
Saredon
Nr Wolverhampton
WV10 7LX
Email: mikep.mpaltd@virgin.net

Dear Julian

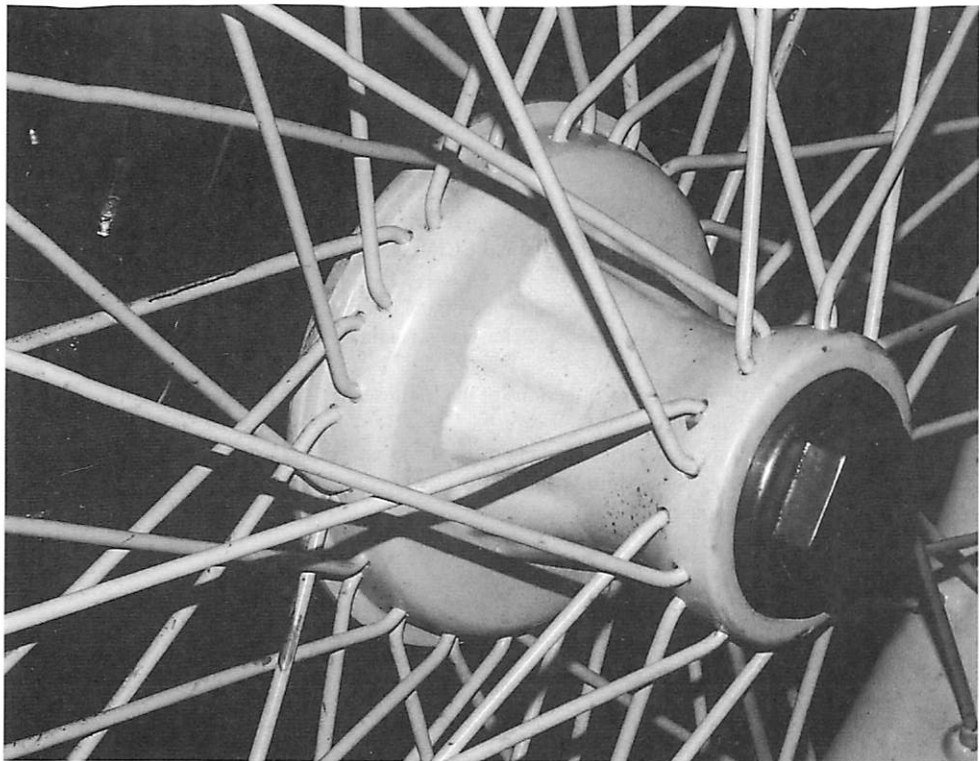
I too had help from Peter Blair Richley in trying to research the Buffalo Wire Wheels on my Ford 'T's. The hubs and shells are clearly "House" type. The rims are beaded edge.

They are generally regarded in 'T' circles as a 'period' extra—presumably because they were available during the production life of the 'T' i.e. up to 1928.

However both of the cars that I have running on them are Edwardian.

Yours sincerely
Mike Palfreyman

I confess that I never expected to find Jellymould hubs on a Model T Ford. Many thanks for this interesting piece of information—J.N.B.C.



Jellymould hubs on a Model T Ford. See letter from Mike Palfreyman

Photo: Mike Palfreyman

Ereprijs 12
6721 ZA Bennekom
The Netherlands
Email: mary.hoogeveen@wanadoo.nl

Dear Julian

In the history of Alvis, the origin of the name has always been a bit of a mystery. It came from Mr Geoffrey de Freville, who used it as a trade name for his aluminium pistons. Some assume that it comes from the word aluminium and from a Latin word for strength, others assume that it is a Dutch surname. Nobody knows the true origin.

In my position as coordinator of the editing team for the magazine *Triangel* of the AOCN, I am always on the look-out for interesting articles. So I was surfing on the internet and I came across a Dutch site with details on Germanic mythology. There I also found the name Alvis! The facts are as follows.

There is a dwarf or troll with the name Alvis. This name means "all wise", a very wise troll. He

forges excellent weapons for Thor. Thor promised his daughter Thrud to be Alvis' wife as a reward for his services. After a while Thor gets second thoughts and he regrets his promise. So he decides to ask Alvis to come to the castle Asgard to test his proverbial wisdom, before he can marry Thrud. Thor continues all night asking all sorts of questions. Alvis forgets the time. Unfortunately trolls cannot stand daylight. At daybreak it is too late and Alvis turns into a rock, discharging Thor conveniently from his promise.

With a bit of imagination one can assume the following to be the case. Mr de Freville must have known a lot about Germanic mythology. He was a man of many parts and he was known to be fluent in German and French. With the German language comes the Germanic mythology. So he must have known that Thor's weapon, which was so skilfully forged by Alvis, was the hammer. Thor used to kill his enemies by banging them violently on their heads with his hammer. A motion, which very much resembles the up and down movement of the piston in an engine. Nothing could ever surpass the hammer of Thor and Mr de Freville must have suggested to potential buyers by indirectly referring to Thor's hammer, that the quality of his pistons is equally unrivalled.

However, maybe Mr de Freville did not have such considerations, and he picked this name because he decided it sounded right.

Thus one could draw the conclusion that the name Alvis is of Teutonic origin.

Yours faithfully
Teun Hoogeveen

A very nice story from Teun. Although I have heard it before there must be many Alvis enthusiasts who are not aware of this possible mythological origin of the name Alvis—J.N.B.C.

Norman Webster
74 Damley Street Gordon
NSW 2072
Australia

Dear Malcolm

No, we've never met, but many years ago we did exchange letters, I then had TA21 25329 which is now in the hands of Mick Matterson. (I now have TC21 25714. A176) I simply had to write to say how much I enjoyed reading your account of the MSA 2003 Euro–Classic, in Bulletin 485. We have some great rallies in this country but nothing quite in this style. Thank you for taking the trouble to write your story.

Yours sincerely
Norman Webster

The Laurels
2 The Front
Middleton One Row
Nr Darlington
Co Durham DL2 1AP
Email: james-carol@jedwards.fsbusiness.co.uk

Dear Julian

Just a minor 'snippet' that I noticed and wondered if there was any mileage in it. The Daily Telegraph of last Wednesday, 25th, carried an obituary of The Marquess of Downshire, Robin Hill.

"As a young man, Hill was a cornerstone of many a party, known to have driven from Kelso to London for an evening and later straight back, albeit in an Alvis. He was regularly stopped by police for speeding, prompting one magistrate to inquire whether he regarded the MI as his private race track."

He was born 1929 so I guess he would be in the late 70s or early 80s. He married in 1957 which is generally seen as when one might 'settle down'.

Forgotten days?

I will send article to David Culshaw in case he can throw any light on what cars he had.

Yours sincerely
James Edwards

Another aristocratic Alvis owner. I hope that someone can provide printing details—J.N.B.C.

36 Anlaby Road
Teddington
Middlesex TW11 0PU

Dear Julian,

In Charles Mackonochie's splendid article, in the last Bulletin, about the Swedish Tour, 2003 he tells us about a double dose of trouble from errant rotor-arms.

I too have experienced similar misbehaviour whilst driving a newly-wed couple to their marital home at the end of their wedding day. TD 21 RCH112 conked out literally, at our intended destination. The bride went up to bed (as they do on their wedding nights) and the groom....helped me with my car. Well, they had lived together for a few years.

When the Footman James inspired breakdown man arrived, it turned out that the trouble was the rotor-arm shorting through the bakelite or whatever they are made of. The next day the brave groom and I set off to track down (Sorry about the pun) a new rotor-man— alas no joy.

Then inspiration from the noble groom. Put a large blob of silicone sealant in the bottom of the rotor-arm and don't press it home too hard, he said. It worked for months.

This groom obviously knew that a little rubber would help avoid a load of trouble.

Yours sincerely
Richard Hollis

Wayne Brooks
P O Box 46
140 Race Street
Bainbridge, PA 17502
Email: waynealvis@aol.com

Dear Julian

Last December I had a call from Brian Lowes of Edmonton, Alberta who is looking for a good TD21. I told him of a couple of cars for sale. During the conversation Brian mentioned that as a young man in England he had owned a 12/70 saloon and was able to supply the registration, XG 5545. I couldn't identify the car from the registration. However, a call to super sleuth Dave Culshaw soon narrowed the hunt to probably chassis 15671, despatched 14 December 1937 to Middlesborough, first owner Pollie Patchett of Numthorpe, Middlesborough. The next time I spoke with Brian he confirmed that the first owner of his 12/70 was Pollie Patchett. He then sent me photos, one of him with the Alvis.

Brian has joined the AOC and is still looking for a TD21.

Yours for longer bonnets

Wayne Brooks

*Brian Lowes has kindly written his memoirs, of the 12/70 which appear elsewhere in this issue—
J.N.B.C.*

Coombe Tye
Coombe Hill Road
East Grinstead
West Sussex RH19 4LY

Dear Julian

Just a little bit of nonsense which is by no means unique. The photograph was taken by a friend of mine whilst on holiday in Berlin; he thought that I might be amused.

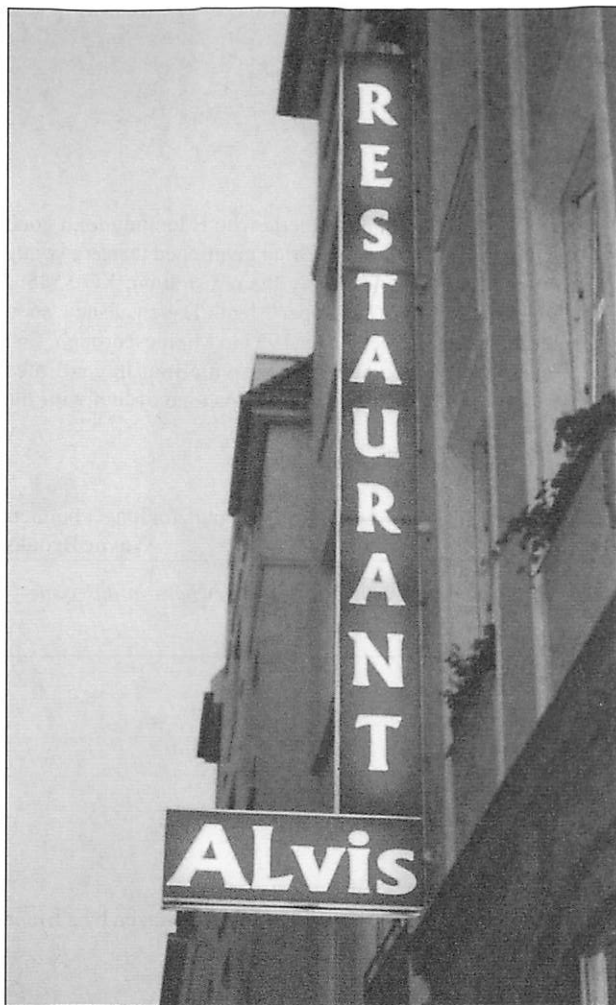
Yours sincerely,

Brian Neale

See next page for the photograph of the Restaurant Alvis—J.N.B.C.

Gatehouse Farm Cottage
Ranters Lane
Goudhurst
Kent TN17 1HL
Email: nayandsue@gatehousefarmcott.freemove.co.uk

Dear Julian



Restaurant Alvis seen in Berlin.

Photo: via Brian Neale

I have been reading *Fifty Years Of Alvis Enthusiasm*. It is a most fascinating book, I have enjoyed reading about the early days of the club and the following years. The book nicely picks up the club highlights and anecdotes. It really is a super read—congratulations to all those involved.

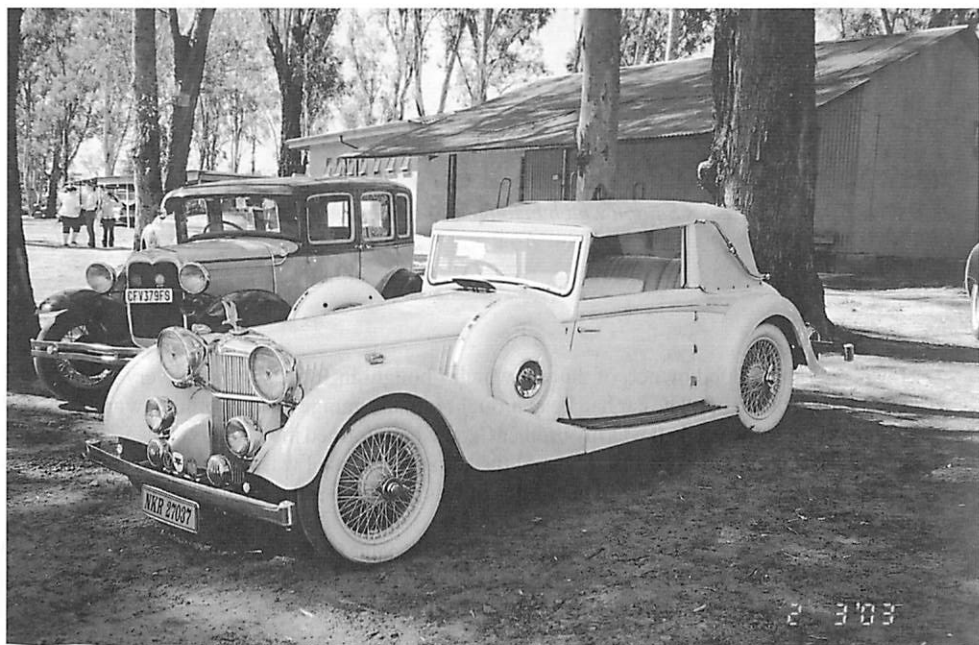
Yours sincerely
Nayland Smith

Copies of this must-have book are still available—J.N.B.C.



Hamish Grant sent me this lovely picture of his Firefly on the New Zealand Tour.

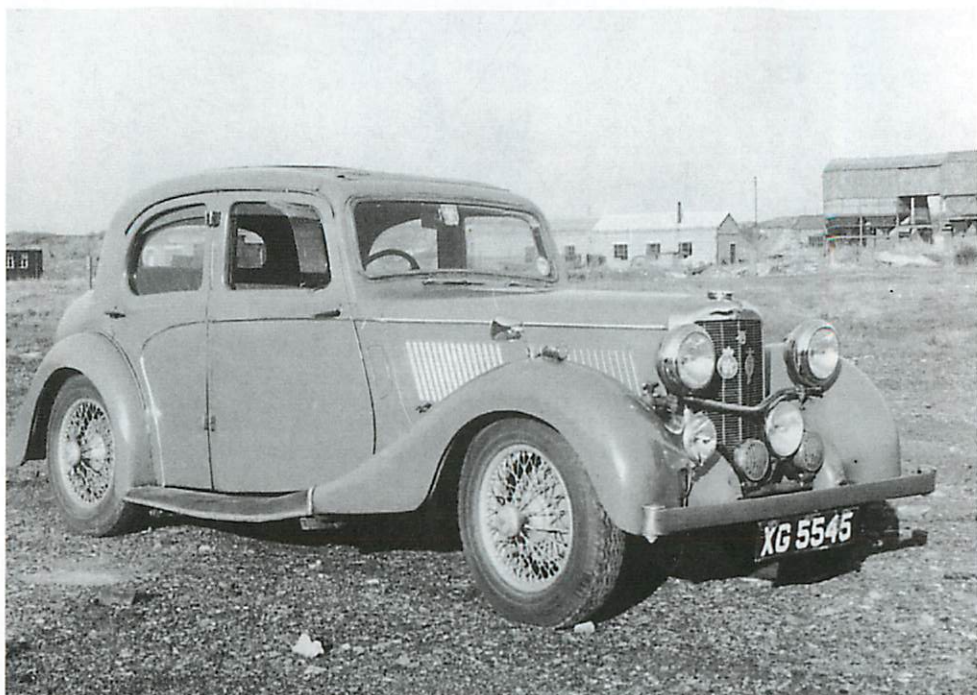
Photo: Hamish Grant



A friend of mine sent me this picture of a Speed 25 he saw at a museum in South Africa. No further details unfortunately.

Photo: John Tarring

MEMORIES OF A 12/70



The 1937 12/70 SC Mulliner's Saloon which belonged to Brian Lowes, photographed circa 1961.

Photo: Brian Lowes

I was only the second owner, of this car which I bought in 1958. It was my very first car and what a car it turned out to be. The car had been brought into the garage that my brother worked at, and had been unused for some years. It was my brother Cecil who informed me that this car was for sale and he thought it was a good buy for £150. I bought the car and because I was not yet 18 years old, Cecil brought it home for me to look at. With his advice it was a car worth the money and with some work could be a classic car again.

The 12/70 was in need of much attention, mostly the paint work. It did have some rust and the sliding roof had a leak which also had damaged the head lining. Cecil put the engine in top running order. When I bought the car in 1958, I think the mileage was about 130,000.

The major task was to scrape off the old paint on the body with whatever tools were available, wood chisel, knife, screwdriver, file or whatever. It took months of hard work and consumed all my spare time to remove the Midnight Blue and Gold pinstripping. Then after removing and then rebuilding the running boards, boot, rear wheel arches and reassembling them up to the standard as we thought it



What the smart young 12/70 driver wore in 1961.

Photo: Brian Lowes

should be, we set about painting (spraying) the Alvis. It was taken into my brother's garage and given six coats of primer (rubbed down after each coat) and then four coats of Light Grey on the top half and Burgundy on the bottom half, following the body lines. I bought light grey felt and replaced the head lining inside. I completely removed the dashboard which had some damage and made a new dashboard from a solid piece of Walnut, I used all the original instruments from the old dashboard and added more switches and lights.

After running the car for about two years, my brothers using it for long trips all over England and Scotland, the engine was producing some noises that my brother did not like and was concerned about. So we decided to rebuild the engine.

New everything we thought. However when the engine block was sent for rebore, when the engineer looked at and measured the cylinders he then phoned my brother and informed him that he would not bore out the cylinders but felt that they only needed polishing and we would supply one thou oversize rings for the new pistons. The rebore shop could not believe that this engine had almost 300,000 miles on it.

The engine and gearbox were put back and run in for 2,000 miles. While the engine was being rebuilt and a new exhaust installed, we also decided to repaint the car again, this time Pacific Blue (which is the colour in the photos.) After rubbing down the old paint we added four more coats of primer and then four coats of finish colour. On a regular basis I painted the wire wheels with aluminum paint and the same with the brake drums. It was outstanding in any place we took it and was the talk of the town.

The car was fast and rarely to be outdone by anything on the road. For example my friend owned a 1949 M.G. and the speedo on his car was up to 120mph, and the Alvis speedo only went up to 80mph. He informed me later that I had passed him doing 110mph, going about 5mph faster than he.

I met the first owner one Sunday while driving over the Yorkshire Moors. I was being followed by a Bristol 407 and he passed me and waved me down. I stopped and talked for some time with the gentleman. He was very pleased to see the car again and remarked how well the car looked and how well it was running as he had followed me for about 10 miles.

I sold the Alvis and bought a 1954 Armstrong-Siddeley. The worst decision I ever made in the car world.

I understand the 12/70 was bought and used for racing and was eventually and unfortunately wrecked.

What I would give to have it back again?

BRIAN LOWES

Brian lives in Canada and has recently joined the Club, looking for a TD21. The 12/70 is probably chassis No.15681 and the first owner was Pollie Patchett—J.N.B.C.

**THE ALVIS BRINGS A NEW
DELIGHT TO MOTORING**

INTER-SECTION SHIELD

The results of the Inter-Section Shield for 2003 are as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Vehicle</u>	
Jim Oakman	M	TC 21/100	40
Trevor Hirst	SW	Speed 20	31
Jonathan Tracy	EA	12/70	27
Jack Clover	EA	TD 21 sp	23
Chris Holt	N	TJ 300	23
Stuart Nell	M	TE 21	22
Eileen Eve	SE	TA 14	19
David Little	EA	TC 21/100	18
Chris Podger	SW	Silver Eagle	18
Roger Pulham	M	TF 21	18

Intersection Shield

1st (Midland
(East Anglia
3rd South West

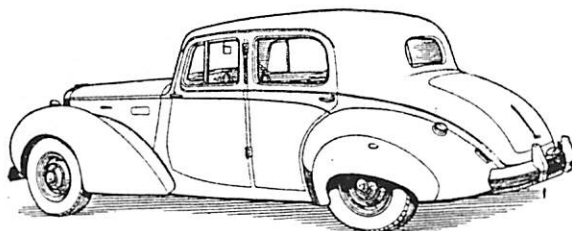
Best Individual Performance

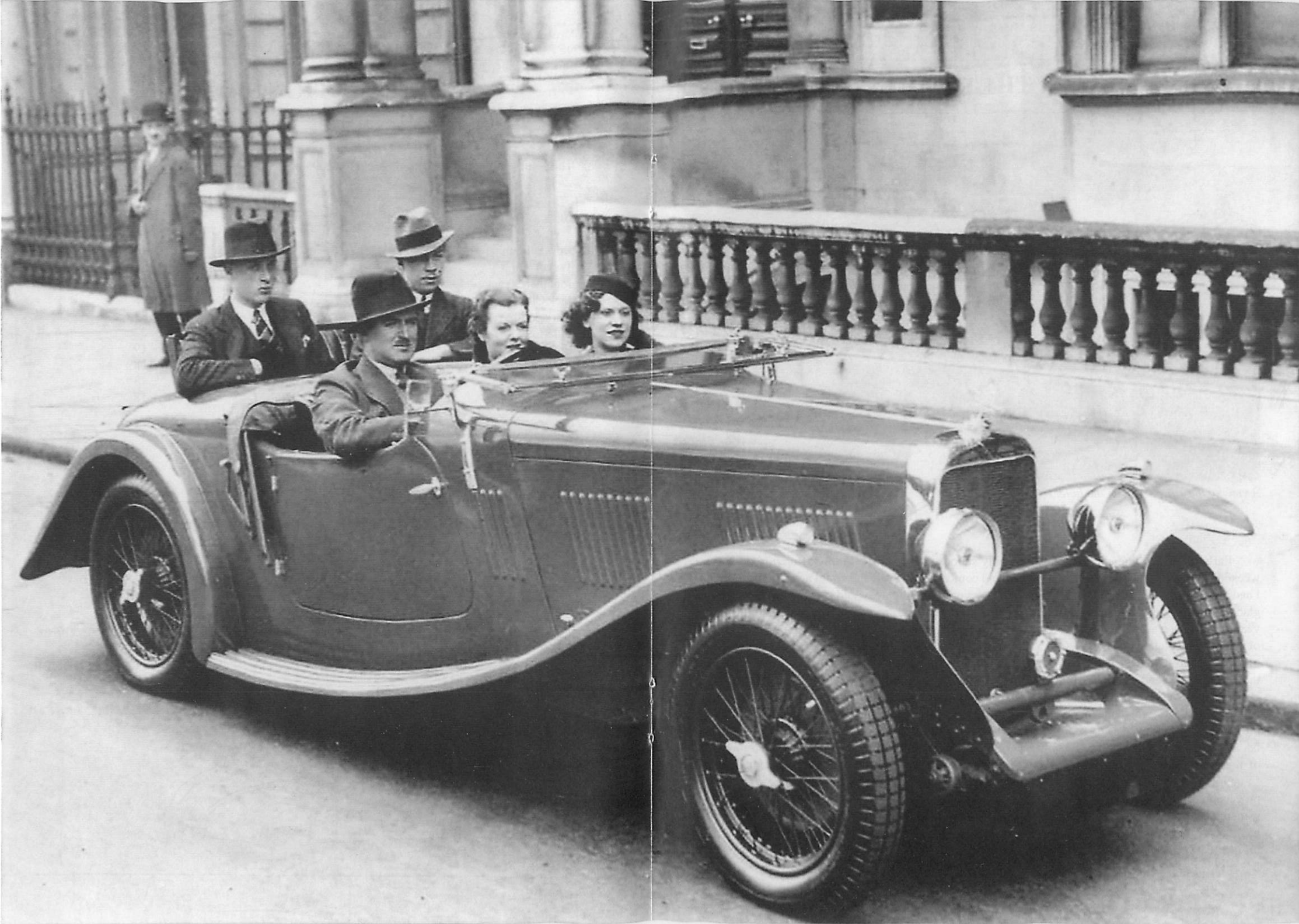
Jim Oakman

Ladies' Plate

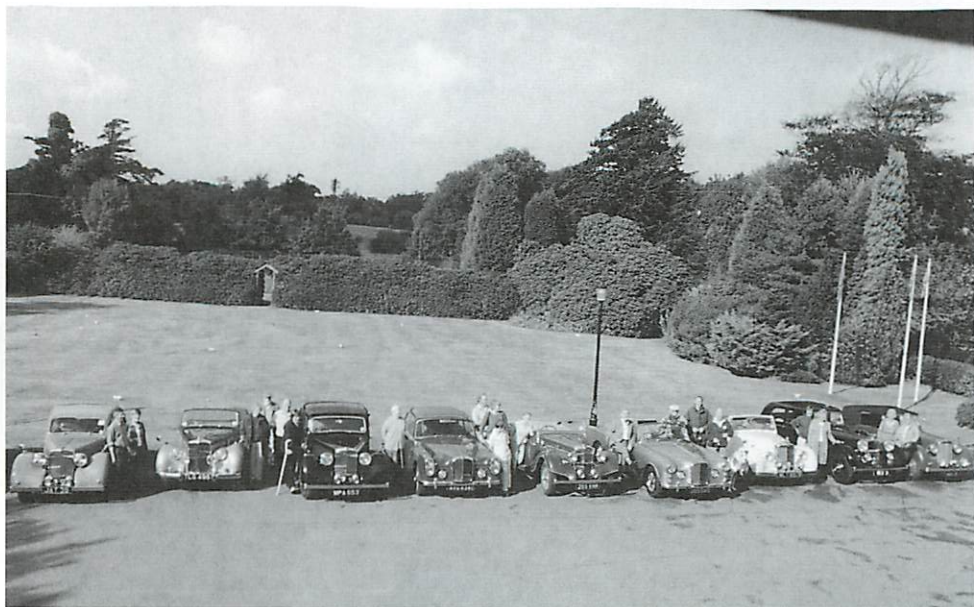
Eileen Eve

CHRIS PODGER





SUSSEX BY THE SEA WEEKEND



A view of the car park from the hotel.

Photo: Malcolm Davey

Early in 2002, John and Sandra Bernet, ably supported by Maisie, kindly offered to organise a weekend based on a hotel in Battle which they had come to know well and could heartily recommend. I had also known of it from my childhood but had never thought that I would stay there. The offer was gladly accepted but due to a series of unexpected circumstances, the event could not be arranged that year, so the idea was temporary shelved and resurrected a year later. Thus it was that on the afternoon of Friday 26 September last, we set off to travel all of twenty miles to the *Beauport Hotel* where some nine Alvises from diverse parts of the country were assembling in the car park which was set between the putting green and the front of the hotel.

Having checked in, we found Mum's (Ena Whitton) room to be very comfortable and well furnished and ours, which the three of us were to share, equally well equipped and of simply enormous proportions. We enjoyed a cup of tea before getting changed, then set off for a pre-dinner drink in the bar where we met Mike and Jan Baker. Over the next few minutes, we were joined by other members of the party until we were around twenty strong. Martin and Joan Wickham's entrance caused something of a stir as poor Joan had broken her ankle just a day or so before. She was gamely proceeding with the aid of crutches and a plaster cast which made mounting and dismounting the TA14 something of a challenge. John distributed a sheet of questions which got everyone scratching their heads and caused much discussion. Dinner, which was served in a private room, was excellent as was the discreet yet attentive service. John also announced the answers to the questions which added to the frivolity. I seem to remember spending most of the meal laughing with June and Ian Smith. The



Malcolm taking last minute instructions from Maisie.

Photo: Janet Davey

atmosphere, the setting and the company ensured a most convivial evening until, eventually, we retired to bed in suitably mellow mood.

After a relaxed and traditional breakfast, served in the conservatory overlooking the garden, cars were started and most people set off on a circular tour which Malcolm and I had prepared. The route took in some of the best countryside around and followed a route which allowed time to stop off at such attractions as Battle Abbey, Bodiam Castle, several pretty villages, the Royal Military Canal, etc and ended in the historic Cinque Port of Rye, just in time for lunch. We were joined on the trip by local members Chris Cooper and his wife in their delightful and very early 12/50. Chris lives in Rye and had generously offered their home for parking; an offer we were pleased to accept as this commodity is in somewhat short supply in 12th century towns. Saturday afternoon was left free for sightseeing, shopping or whatever before making the short journey back to the hotel for dinner. This time we ate in the hotel's main restaurant. Again the food and the service were exemplary and an excellent band enabled the more active among us to dance into the small hours. We were joined by the Treasurer and his party who were first seen enjoying an aperitif in the garden.

Sunday morning started with a relaxed and traditional breakfast. Although the weekend officially ended here, we had organised another run aimed at giving members an interesting route which would take them in the general direction of the A23/M25. Coincidentally, the route ended at a hostelry in Ardingly about 1.00pm. Obviously the direction of the route did not suit everyone. Sadly, Sarah Westwood's TA14 had elected to produce ominous noises during the previous day's run which the resident experts had diagnosed as a blown head gasket and was now awaiting the recovery truck but a number of cars set off as suggested. We allowed the majority to leave before setting out ourselves. Imagine the embarrassment therefore when a mere 4½ miles from the hotel we discovered that Malcolm

had made an error when typing up the directions and missed out a right turn. We realised the mistake just too late to stop a well known Speed 25 from sailing grandly past the turn but did manage to redirect the Littles who were the one car to leave after us. On arrival in Ardingly we made our shamefaced entry into the pub and were delighted to find that most people were already there and the remainder turned up shortly after. Indeed even Sarah arrived, TA14, recovery truck and all.

Despite Sunday's deliberate mistake, the whole weekend was a great success, enjoyed by all concerned. So much so, in fact, that John and Sandra were prevailed upon to do it again next year. Full details will appear in *The Bulletin* in due course. Given that accommodation is limited, avoid disappointment and book early.

JANET DAVEY



"HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW THE HEADLAMPS FOLLOW YOU ROUND THE ROOM?"

THE NEW ROLLS-ROYCE FACTORY

—A Visit By Members

The establishment of a new factory for the manufacture of motor cars is always a major event and when it is in the heart of a rural area, designed by an architect of world repute and is to make a brand new car for perhaps the most famous marque ever, it must command serious attention.

The manufacturer is of course Rolls-Royce, now owned by BMW, and the factory is dedicated to the manufacture of the new Phantom and is located in the lea of the South Downs on the Goodwood estate of the Duke of Richmond near Chichester, and Nicholas Grimshaw, designer of projects as varied as the new Lords Grandstand and the Eden Project, was the architect.

The Rolls-Royce motor car business has had a complicated recent past and the financial intrigue of its acquisition by BMW and the splitting with Bentley, now owned by Volkswagen, has passed into motoring history. Nevertheless it was with a degree of trepidation that I approached Rolls-Royce to enquire if a visit to the new factory was possible. I was met with a most courteous response and an invitation for a party of no more than twenty for a morning tour which was duly arranged for early March. Inevitably this proved to be a most popular event and I know that many were disappointed that their application was not successful—hopefully we can arrange another tour in due course.

First impressions, despite a dull and damp March morning, often prove to be correct; despite being a site of over forty acres with buildings of some 500,000 sq.ft this new facility was cunningly designed to blend in with the scenery with the innovative use of grass covered roofs tapering down to ground level, natural wood cladding to the exterior of the buildings and an abundance of planting and water features—hardly the dark satanic mills typically associated with car manufacture of yesterday in the Midlands. Even the car parks offered another clue—full of BMW and Minis many with German registration plates. From entering the spacious double height reception area, complete with Phantoms from 2004 and 1938, we were taken to a conference room and required to don a gabardine covercoat with a discreet RR logo, the purpose being to readily identify us as visitors.

The tour commenced with a general introduction to the world of Messrs Rolls and Royce commencing with their meeting 100 years ago in May 1904 at the Manchester Midland Hotel and followed the development of the marque culminating in the relatively recent change of ownership leading to the completely new model and the move to Goodwood. We were told that Goodwood was one of seven sites considered and the personal intervention of the Earl of March had been critical. Other important factors included the facilities of Goodwood racing circuit and integral aerodrome, the availability of specialist labour from the South Coast boat-building industry for wood veneer work and final trimming and of course the wonderful scenery around the plant and the general quality of life.

Club members were made to feel most welcome and the special relationship between Alvis and Rolls-Royce subsidiary Park Ward as coachbuilder to the TD, TE and TF was highlighted. Our tour commenced with an inspection of the body shell which arrives as a complete preformed monocoque sprayed in primer, from Germany. The shell is manufactured in a special discrete area in one of BMW's factories and once at Goodwood proceeds through painting and polishing to installation of engine, transmission and suspension, these units all being manufactured off site and delivered to the production line 'just in time'. The engine and transmission is one complete unit and only requires sixteen bolts to attach it to the vehicle.

This is all a far cry from the traditional idea of a car manufacturing plant. I remember visiting the Ford factory at Dagenham in the 1960s which included an on site foundry, massive metal presses and virtually nothing coming to the plant pre-manufactured. However, the difference in the quality of the

working environment could not be more extreme. Gone is the extreme noise and dirt and sense of organised chaos with operatives in filthy overalls doing the same repetitive job day in, day out to be replaced by almost hospital cleanliness and a relaxed air of quiet efficiency. No wonder we were asked to wear covercoats to differentiate us; most of the staff on the line were dressed as if for a visit to the pub on Sunday lunchtime! This emphasis on a rigorous commitment to quality was always visible as was the adoption of the latest technology and to environmentally sensitive processes. For example, no solvents are used and all paint is water soluble.

The real input to the assembly process comes at the stage of 'trimming' and fitting of the leather and woodwork and again the latest technology was seamlessly blended with traditional craftwork. For example some seven skins of leather are required for each car; each is minutely examined by human eye for faults and blemishes and these are marked on the skin before it is transferred to a flatbed where a laser superimposes the patterns and cuts required and these are juggled around like a massive jigsaw puzzle and then cut to ensure there is minimum waste but the maximum match of different leathers in adjacent areas. The process of applying veneers uses a similar process of combining the latest high-tech equipment and process and centuries old skills.

Once the manufacture is completed and currently six Phantoms are produced every day a rigorous process of testing follows. First each wheel of the car is placed on an elevated pedestal rising some two feet in the air and then each pedestal is independently gyrated every which way for some 15 minutes to detect any rattles or vibrations. Then the car is subjected to the equivalent of a tropical rainstorm of amazing ferocity and then a long road test is taken through a mix of roads followed by further meticulous examination before the car is finally passed as being fit for a customer. For those being exported there is an amazing machine which completely 'bubble wraps' the car to ensure protection in transit.

Our two hour tour was concluded by passing through the beautifully appointed staff restaurant with stunning views over the South Downs and whetted our appetite for lunch which was held in the convivial surroundings of the Halfway Bridge Inn near Petworth.

Undoubtedly we all felt very privileged to have such close access to the manufacture of one of the world's great motor cars; if there was any criticism it was that we had limited time, many could have watched the cutting of the leather or production of the beautiful veneers on dashboards and door-caps all day! Perhaps we were most surprised at just how much was made off site but what was always evident was the words of Sir Henry Royce "Strive for perfection in everything you do. Take the best that exists and make it better. When it does not exist, design it". The ownership may have changed but the values have not. Personally now all I need is the little matter of just over £250,000 to buy one.

DAVID LARKIN

"The Car for the Connoisseur"



There is no car
"just as good"
at the price.



ALVIS "FIREFLY TWELVE" from £475

"MASTER OF THE KING'S HIGHWAY"

FOLLETT'S FOUR FIREFLIES

The vast majority of Fireflies were sold with bodies commissioned by the factory, mainly to catalogued designs. Many of these were sold by Charles Follett Ltd, who were the London agents for Alvis at the time.

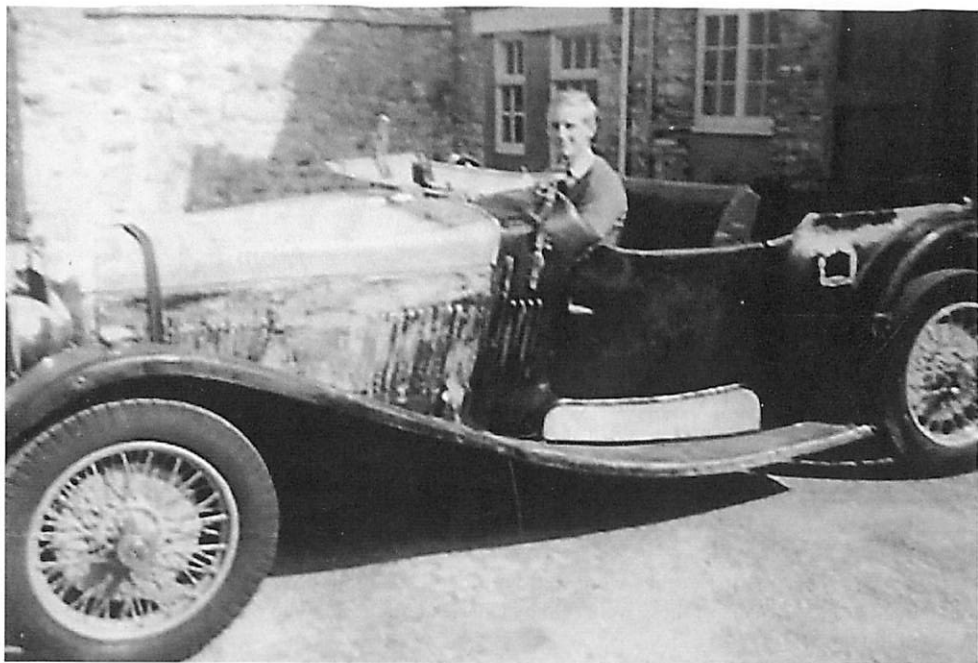
Just fourteen of the 871 Fireflies produced were sold as "Chassis only". The records show that one of these went to Australia, two went to the Northampton coach building firm, Grose Ltd, and at least one of the others also had a Grose body fitted to it, although despatched to Henlys in Manchester. But four Fireflies chassis were delivered to Charles Follett Ltd in 1933, and it is those that form the subject of this article, since some information on them has recently come to light.

From the Car Records we know that the four chassis were despatched from the factory on the following dates:

10341	7th February 1933
10466	13th April 1933
10472	12th April 1933
10473	13th April 1933.

The factory Guarantee Cards, which have also survived, tell us that 10341 was sold on 18th May 1933 to G.W. Shields of Surbiton; 10466 was sold on 10th June 1933 to Mrs A.K. Woolley of Stafford; and 10472 was sold on 19th February 1934 to R.H. Rooksby in Yorkshire, whilst there is a note that the guarantee started to run from 12th October 1933. Perhaps this indicates that Follett used it as a demonstrator for a few months. 10472 was later sold to a Dr Cockburn of Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool in March 1937. Although a Guarantee Card exists for 10473, it gives no indication of the car ever having been sold by Follett.

The trail started with the centre-spread photograph, which was recently forwarded to me by Derek Tourle from John Whiting, but which Nick Walker (VSCC Librarian as well as our Chairman) has pointed out had been published in the Motor of 9th May 1933. A smaller picture of, it would seem, the same car, had been published in *The Autocar* of 7th April 1933, described as a 2-seater built by John Charles of Kew Gardens for Charles Follett Ltd. Since it had been built by 7th April, this body must have been fitted on chassis number 10341.



A teenaged George Butlin pictured in his pride and joy, a John Charles bodied Firefly, circa 1962. Sadly the body was scrapped in the mid sixties although the chassis and windscreen survive.

Photo: George Butlin

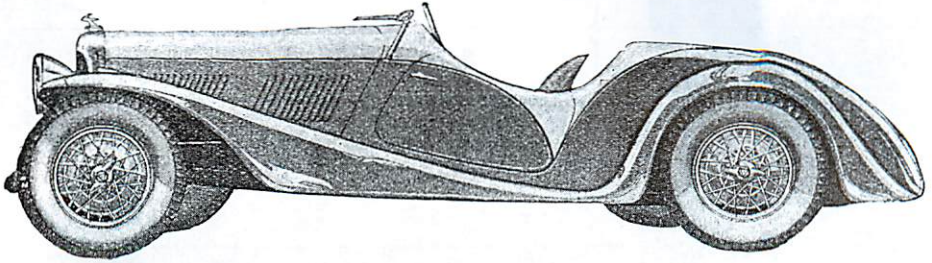


SOLE DISTRIBUTORS FOR LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

*Charles Follett Ltd,
18, Berkeley Street, London, W.1.*

PHONE: MAYFAIR 6266

LONDON SERVICE STATION:- JUBILEE PLACE, KINGS ROAD, CHELSEA, S.W



The Ranalah sports 2-seater on the Firefly chassis is another example of coachwork by John Charles Ltd. An illustration published in The Motor 29th August 1933.

The centre-spread photograph is interesting in that the driver is Jack Warner, later to achieve fame as Dixon of Dock Green in the TV series, but in 1933 he was a part time salesman for Charles Follett Ltd. Behind him is George Bowthorpe, Follett's Accountant, and next to him is a Mr Frazer, Follett's mechanic. The names of the two ladies are not known, but they were probably also staff of Charles Follett Ltd. The accompanying caption claimed that the car has excellent weather protection, but surely this did not apply to the passengers in the dickey seat!

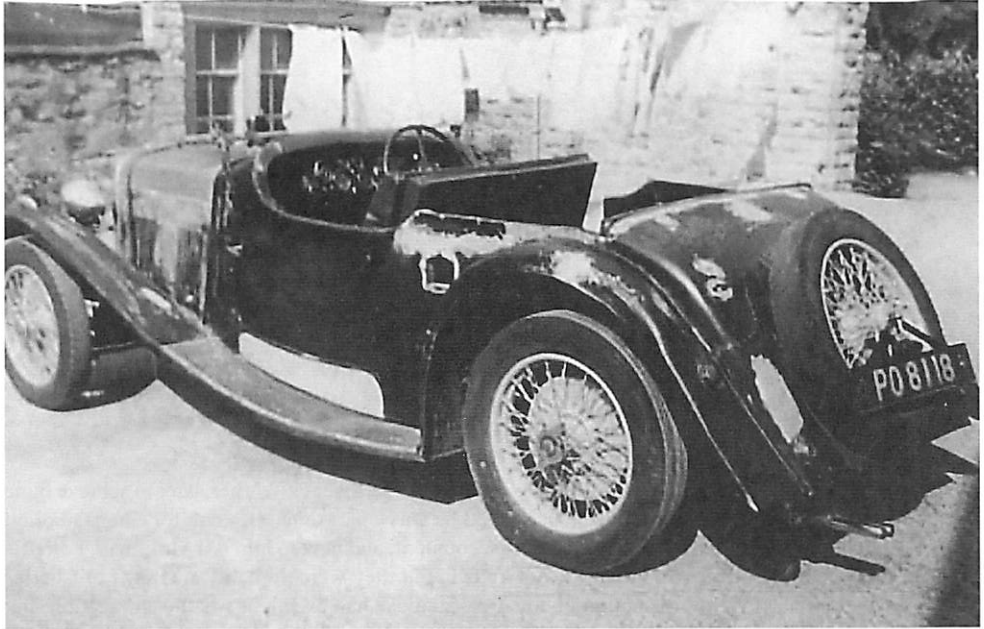
Sadly there is no record of this car's existence beyond 1937, when G.W. Shields notified Alvis of his change of address, from Surbiton to Dolphin Square.

Around the same time that I received the Centre Spread photograph, George Butlin (now our Speed 25 Secretary) got in touch with me to confirm that he had owned 10473 (PO 8118) in the early nineteen sixties, when it still had its John Charles bodywork. One of the accompanying photographs shows a teenage George Butlin sitting in his pride and joy. From this it can be seen that his car was very similar, but not identical, to the 'Jack Warner' car. The door hinges are noticeably lower and there is a recess in the body panel ahead of the rear wheel, which is presumably a foot hole for use in clambering into the dickey seat, which, incidentally, had been opened up into a full rear seat by the time George bought the car. A distinctive feature of both cars is the louvres cut into the body just behind the bonnet.

Having painted the body, George sold the car in 1963. There the trail went cold until very recently, when new member (but longstanding Firefly enthusiast) David Webster reported that he had bought the chassis for spares from one Eddie Rowlands on 13 July 1967. In this short interval of four years the body had disappeared altogether, except for the rather unusual windscreen that David still has. Not only that, but someone had cut the chassis into four 'quarters' with a hacksaw to save a bit of space! The things people did in the sixties!

The accompanying picture of a "Ranalah" sports 2-seater built by John Charles Ltd was published in *The Motor* on 29th August 1933. The bodywork is very dashing, with cutaway doors and a curvaceous rump, and completely different from 'Jack Warner's' or George Butlin's car. One has to acknowledge that this car does not look like a Firefly. There are two possibilities: either the picture is just an artist's impression, not a photograph; or it is a photograph of a car that is not a Firefly. I tend to favour the latter, but either way we cannot be sure that such a body was ever built on a Firefly chassis. If it was, then it would have to have been built on either 10466 or 10472, since we have already identified the other two chassis. Isn't it a lovely car? Surely building a replica of it would make a satisfying project for someone with a Firefly rolling chassis and no body?

By chance, in the same edition of *The Motor* I recently noticed that Charles Follett Ltd were



Another view of George Butlin's Firefly (10473). The recess into which the spare wheel should fit has been skinned over and the dickery seat looks as though it has been cut open to turn the car into a full four-seater.

Photo: George Butlin

advertising a (new) "Firefly Special 2-5 by John Charles". I was a bit foxed by the "2-5" at first, but can only assume that this refers to a car that is really a two seater, but can accommodate five at a pinch, a description which could apply to Jack Warner's or George's car. Since 10341 and 10466 had already been sold by August 1933, this advert must relate to 10472 or 10473. Despite all this detective work, frustratingly I cannot authoritatively say that more than two of the Follett Fireflies were bodied by John Charles Ltd, since the Ranalah sports 2-seater may never have been built, and the advertisement could have been for George's 10473. Again frustratingly, some remains of 10472 survived and were purchased by Michael Warner in 1994, but the bodywork was scrapped many years ago, so we may never know what it was.

In the last few months yet another mystery involving Follett's Fireflies has, I believe, been solved. I had long been mystified by Bill Boddy's reference, in his History of Brooklands, to "Humphreys in Charles Follett's Alvis Firefly" coming third in the Merrow Junior Short Handicap at the Whitsun B.A.R.C. Meeting in 1934, and then "Humphreys won at 87.2 m.p.h. in Follett's Alvis" (which one would naturally assume is referring to the same Firefly) in the Junior Long at the August Bank Holiday Meeting 1934. Could a Firefly really have lapped Brooklands at 87 m.p.h.? Sadly, the answer is almost certainly "no".

If this racing car was a Firefly it would surely have been one of the four "chassis only" delivered to Charles Follett Ltd. Since the other three had been sold before Whitsun 1934, it could only have been 10473. Maybe the John Charles body was fitted after its racing career was over, which would at

least explain why nothing was recorded on the Guarantee Card.

As part of my research for a book on the Firefly that I am hoping to publish, I again sought the help of Nick Walker. He was able to produce from the VSCC Library, by return, a photograph from *The Autocar* of 10th August 1934 of W.E. Humphreys sitting in the Alvis. This was more a portrait of Humphreys and showed very little of the Alvis except for an aero screen. Then by an amazing coincidence a photograph of what I believe to be the same Alvis (although the photograph was taken in 1935) appeared on the cover of *The Automobile* for January 2004. My first reaction was that the brake drums were too small to belong to a Firefly.

Nick suggested that I contact the Brooklands Museum. They responded very quickly by sending me copies of the race cards for the relevant races. These do not refer to models, just describing the car entered by Follett and driven by Humphreys as an Alvis, but they do show the bore, stroke, and cubic capacity. I immediately realised that the bore of 68 mm and stroke of 103 mm were not those of a Firefly, but of a pre-1931 12/50, although the capacity was the same, at 1,496 c.c. So I can only surmise that Bill Boddy saw that an Alvis of 1,496 c.c. was racing in 1934 and assumed that it was a Firefly, whereas in fact Follett must have been campaigning a by then rather long-in-the-tooth 12/50.

So sadly two of Follett's Fireflies remain unidentified. Can anyone help with further clues?

SIMON FISHER

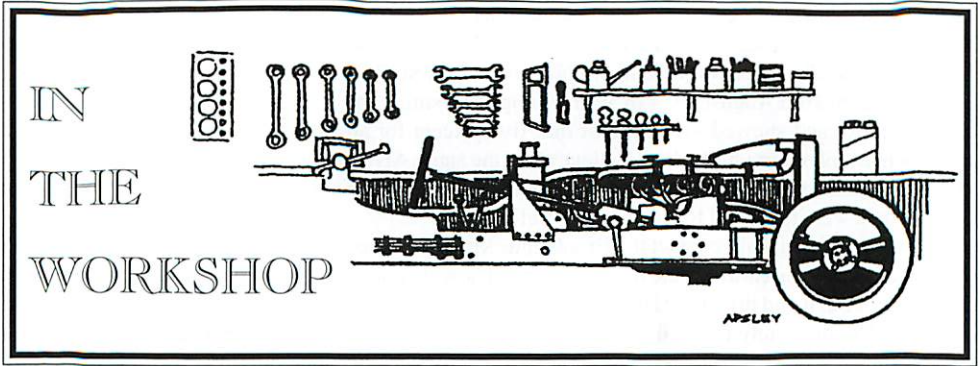
My thanks go to Derek Tourle, George Butlin, Nick Walker, Dave Culshaw, David Webster, and the Brooklands Museum for their help with my research.

THE LATEST **ALVIS** TRIUMPH !

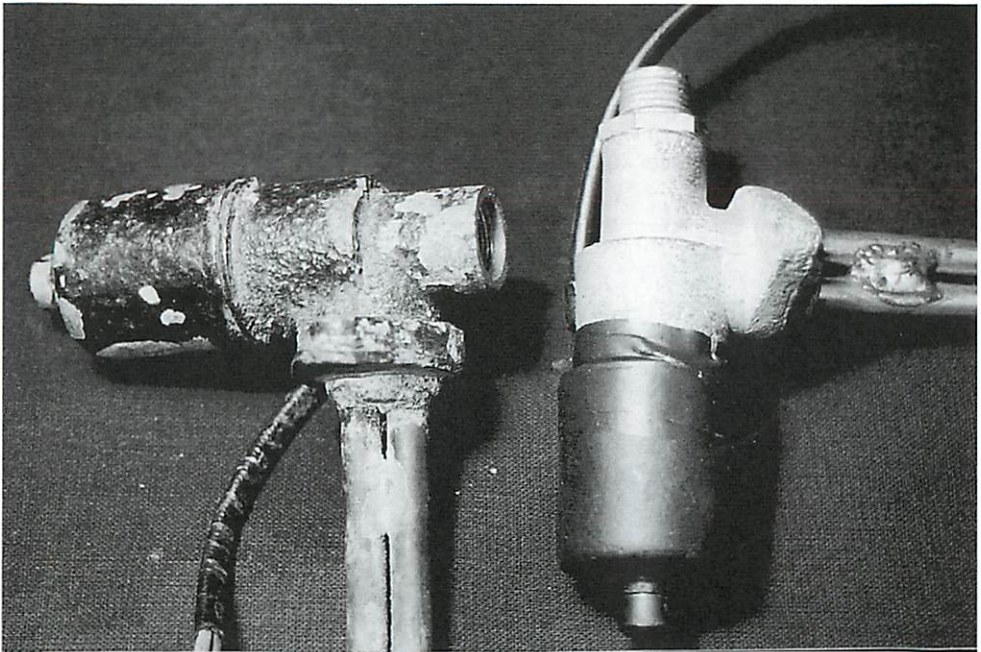


Imagine a light car with the speed and performance of a car twice its size.

A four - cylinder engine—smoother and more powerful than the average six.



FUEL PICK UP AND RESERVE UNIT SERVICE ISSUES



The 3 Litre fuel pick-up unit. On the left an original unit. On the right a rebuilt one.

Photo: Red Triangle

The most serious faults on a vehicle are often those small niggling items that are easy to ignore. They can actually leave you by the side of the road, a little more cheaply, but just as effectively, as a broken gearbox and are especially common on cars that are only used occasionally. It is only a matter of time before that component you have been meaning to check for some years makes its bid for fame

and loving attention; usually outside the Church on the day of your business partner's daughter's best friend's wedding...

The fuel pick-up unit, fitted in slightly differing forms to all post war Alvis cars, is one such component and a very common item for us to be repairing here at Red Triangle.

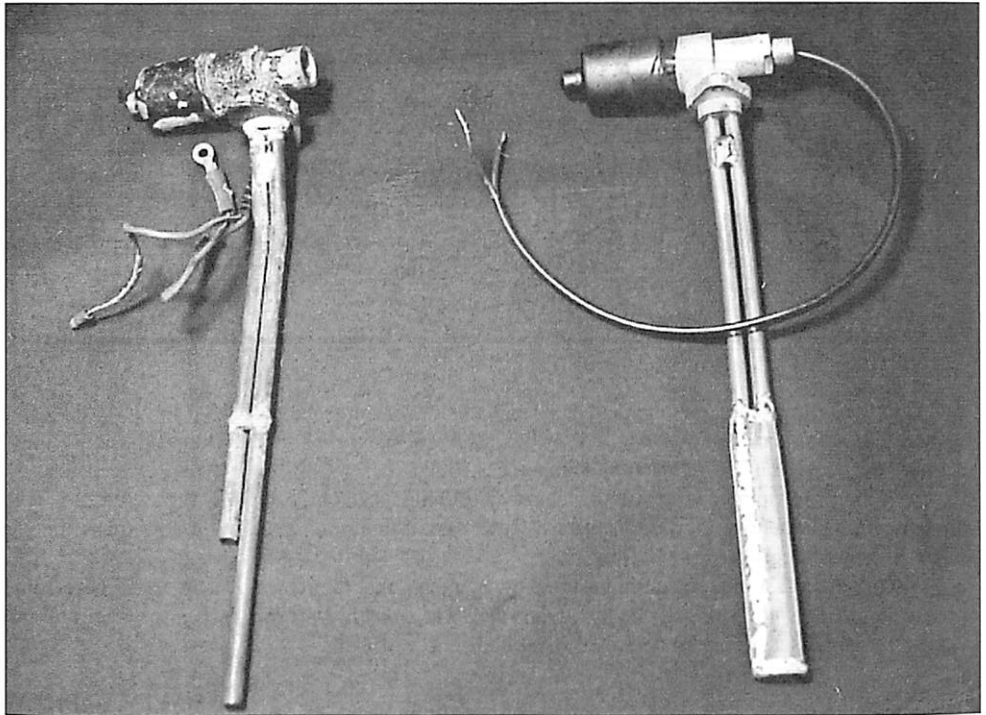
First of all let us debunk the myth that surrounds these components; yes there are two pipes and yes the 'fuel tank reserve' switch does change the way they operate. However it does not switch them from one to the other. In normal running both pipes are being used to supply fuel simultaneously. If you switch to 'fuel tank reserve' the shorter pipe ceases to function leaving only the longer pipe in operation. This longer pipe is then dredging fuel from the depths of the tank; fuel likely to carry with it the detritus that always accumulates in the bottom of fuel tanks.

The longer tube has two and a half inches of extra length over the shorter one but both tend to crack. If you bear in mind that the youngest components are now thirty-seven years old, this is not surprising.

As long as the fuel level stays above the cracks, the car's performance will be unaffected.

However once the fuel level drops below the first crack air will enter the fuel pipe and be drawn through with the petrol, there by starving the engine of the fuel it needs to perform. At the very least the engine would struggle to run smoothly; most would cut out almost immediately. So if you have ever owned an Alvis that only ran properly when the tank was nearly full...

Hairline fractures in the pipes can be soldered satisfactorily providing you have the correct



The whole unit including the pick-up pipes. An unrestored unit on the left and a restored one on the right.

Photo: Red Triangle

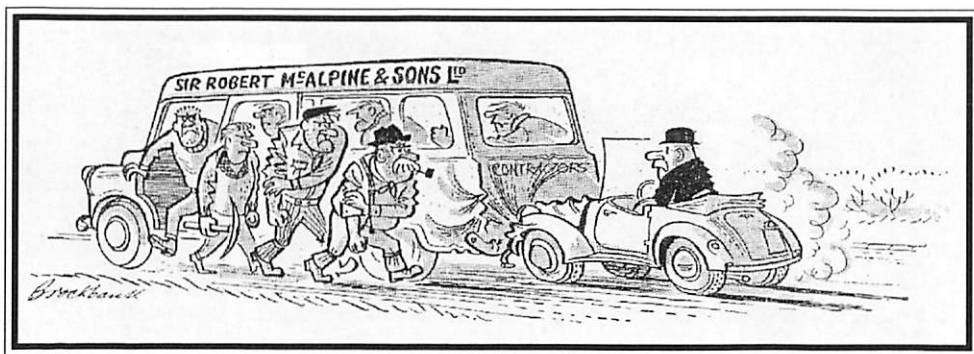
equipment. Larger fractures obviously necessitate the fitment of new pipes. When repairing pipes the gauze filter must be removed as cracks can be hidden behind the gauze. It is also certainly advisable to do a complete rebuild of the solenoid and plunger whilst it is removed from the car; perhaps this is a subject for a future article.

Before you start stripping the pick-up unit have a look at the fuel pump bowl, which is easily accessible under the bonnet. Fine sediment will always get through the filters to some extent and work its way to the pump bowl. Once there it will be deposited among its old sediment friends; friends it may not have seen since they were cruelly sucked apart by the fuel pickup unit some years ago. A bowl full of 'reunited' sediment is a good indication that your reserve unit is struggling to lift fuel through blocked or partially blocked filter gauze. This could again lead to a loss of performance, especially when the engine is working hard.

So if you have not already done so, spend an hour in the company of a radio drama, removing and checking the condition of the fuel pump bowl and pick-up unit. At the very least clean the gauze filter. It might save you, and the bride, from a great deal of embarrassment.

BRIAN CHRIMES

Technical Director Red Triangle



At the risk of puzzling members who can take my more whimsical pieces too seriously, I'll offer another—the significance of which will probably be lost on most except David Larkin, and Kevin Buley.

The explanation of this Russell Brockbank cartoon?

Sir Robert McAlpine was the first owner of TD21 chassis 26735, originally registered "2 FOO", which is on the Celebrity Owners Register, which David monitors, and Kevin now owns the car which became re-registered AAB 461A.

I seem to recall someone pointing out many years ago that the reason Austin Eight tourers had become so rare was not so much enemy action (they were mostly wartime staff car production), but because Major Upsett, depicted here, had written-off most of them.

DAVE CULSHAW

A SPEED 25 IN SWITZERLAND AND AT THE SCHLUMPF MUSEUM



Phil Owen's Speed 25 drophead coupé.

Photo: Phil Owen

When most people move to another country they take with them their vital household possessions, dogs, cats and beer making equipment. When we moved to Switzerland we also took with us our most cherished possessions, the Alvis TC21/100 Grey Lady and Speed 25 dropheads.

After many run-ins with the Swiss licensing authorities who regard even a drop of oil on their highways and byways as an affront to a Sauber Switzerland, the Grey Lady has now been registered in the Canton of Zug (yes, really!). Whilst the Grey Lady was reasonably frugal in terms of the amount of expensive Castrol 20/50 she donated to the Swiss highway system, the Speed 25 on the other hand seemed impervious to such cost concerns. When stationary it provides an oil sprinkler system from every part of the underside that would be the envy of every Texas wild-catter. As a result we had no choice but to keep the car on British plates. That poses a problem for insurance as, regardless of where they are kept, cars must be taxed in the homeland where their plates are current. Indeed in the past year, the main Lloyds brokers have refused to insure a car that spends over 40% of its time outside the country. We've now found an alternative but at great expense.

Over the past five years since we have been in Switzerland we have made an annual trip to the UK for the MoT and some cosmetic attention—a distance of about 2000km for each round trip. The Speed 25 has never missed a beat and is now a regular visitor to our half way house near Reims, the *Hotel Cheval Blanc* at Sept Saulx. (This hotel is incidentally to be recommended as it is in a quiet village two kilometres from the Route Nationale and has a walled enclosure for cars that is gated every night. The

restaurant is good and friendly and it's much less expensive than the one Michelin rosette Arms de Champagne a short distance away at l'Epine).

Our French trips usually involve some diversions depending on the time of year we make the crossing. We have motored through Paris during the 14th of July celebrations with never a murmur coming from the engine compartment, and also stayed at B&B chateaux in France where the Countess has occasionally been disappointed to learn that no, it was not a Bentley and slightly mystified when we went on to explain that it was in fact better than a Bentley of the same period. As EVC 561 was built in 1940, I'm not entirely sure whether there were any Bentley's built that year. But after a pre-dinner trip in the Speed 25 on this occasion our hostess was convinced and we benefited from a glass of champagne with the compliments of the House in celebration of her conversion to the Alvis marque.

The hills of Switzerland however have presented an altogether different problem for EVC 561. The steepest hills it can easily manage with two up but when we participated in last year's Klausen Rennen with four up and a boot full of raincoats, picnics and mountain boots it boiled over after the first climb and we were forced to sit out the events in a nearby gasthaus while the falling rain cooled off the radiator sufficiently for us to replenish the water supply. The Klausen Retro (wonderfully organised until this year by Bernhard Braegger) is an event that should not be missed. It takes place every three to four years amidst some of the most spectacular scenery in Switzerland. Entries come from all over Europe and many of the Swiss cars are brought out from secret garages where they're hidden away from the taxman's prying eyes. There one can see Alvis, Bentley, Invicta, SS Jaguar and Lagonda cars that have long disappeared from British registers. Even Bernhard Braegger has admitted that he may still own a Speed 25 Charlesworth saloon. It is very possible that there are at least twenty pre-war Alvis cars in Switzerland that not even Daniel Fischlin, the indefatigable President of the Swiss Owners Club is aware of.

Daniel is a tireless champion of Alvis cars, and his enthusiasm is bolstered by his wife, Yvionne



The Grey Lady in Switzerland.

Photo: Phil Owen

who once lived in Leamington Spa just down the road from the Alvis works. They have a Speed 20 which is campaigned hard throughout the year in sunshine and snow, as well as a Graber. Besides being probably the most eloquent speaker on the subject of Alvis cars in English as well as French, Daniel has a wonderfully dry sense of humour. When we went on a summer picnic with the Alvis Club of the Swiss Romande region, I was unable to participate as I was suffering from a bout of heat exhaustion caused by the day's drive to Geneva in 43 degree temperatures. Daniel, who is a doctor—actually a dentist—after giving me a cursory examination drove off on the rally, to return three hours later politely asking me how I felt. When I replied, “Much better now” his response was “What a pity, I was hoping to buy one of your cars”.

Another tireless Swiss champion of Alvis is Werner Graf who is President of the Graber Freunde in Zurich, enthusiastically supported by his wife Danielle. Werner has restored many cars and always has time for those less mechanically minded than himself. He is one of the key contributors to the Swiss Car Register's archives housed in a small town near Zurich. The curator and founder of this museum, Urs Ramseier, comes from a well known family of car and bus coach builders and besides being President of the Swiss Car Club has also amassed a remarkable collection of material relating to almost every aspect of motoring and the car industry in Switzerland.

In the Club's archives you can find enormous detail on every individual car modified or coach built in Switzerland. Every Graber is listed regardless of the chassis manufacturer but the largest file is Alvis with whom Hermann Graber of course had a long and constructive relationship. The spiritual father of Alvis Graber cars in the UK, John Fox, lengthened his recent stay in Switzerland by two days just to luxuriate in all the information that is housed in the archive storage. Besides information, there appear also to be negatives and photographs of every Graber car as well as many others.

The Swiss have a well deserved reputation for being great engineers and although their car manufacture could not compete in economies of scale with companies from the larger countries in Europe, the finer points of their engineering excellence is demonstrated in these archives. Hermann Graber undoubtedly helped prolong car production at Alvis with his coachwork suggestions but it was also his advice and recommendations on the engineering detail of the T series cars that helped make them just that little bit better to operate and maintain. He was to Alvis post-war cars what Charles Follett was to Alvis pre-war Speed models - an influential adviser on improvements to an excellent basic design as well as being a very good sales and marketing person.

EVC 561, our Speed 25, appears each month at a car rally held in the town of Zug that attracts upwards of 200 cars from all over the German speaking parts of Switzerland. My German is non-existent but there seems to be a method of communication between all old car owners that transcends language barriers. I am sure that all of the Alvis Owner Club members who have been on trips to Lapland, Portugal or Eastern Europe have found this out. The usual sounds of meshing gears, changing exhaust note pitches and irregular and probably expensive engine noises can all be replicated fairly accurately in any language. Such noises may be accompanied by optional arm waving and high speed shuffling of the feet to simulate rapid gear changes when approaching a particularly nasty downward left hand bend. It may even be highlighted by mock beads of sweat appearing on the forehead to emphasise the description of a potentially calamitous near-miss while driving in error on the left hand side of the road down a steep mountain pass. I do not however recommend this thespian approach to language problems with the Swiss police who take their responsibilities very seriously and who may well conclude that you are suffering from the affects of an alcoholic lunch and promptly confiscate the car.

As taxes in Switzerland are in part based on one's assets, many of the more expensive classic cars are kept out of sight of the prying eyes of the tax authorities. However, on special occasions, the temptation is too great to resist, and they are brought out for a rally or special event. The number of beautifully restored English cars is astounding. SS Jaguars abound, there are a goodly number of Invicta

tourers, 1930s Singer, Riley and Aston Martin one and a half litres, MG J and K types, as well as a good assortment of more modern English cars such as Jaguar XK models, Allards, Aston Martins and Austin Healeys.

The German part of Switzerland is quite different from the French and Italian speaking parts. Apart from the "oil on our roads" problem, old cars in this part of Switzerland tend to be more exotic, immaculately restored and driven very carefully. Those in the French part, though also well restored are campaigned vigorously so that the inevitable dings and bruises to the bodywork eventually become part of the coachwork. In Ticino, the cars are both lovingly restored and when the occasion allows—raced at great speed along straight roads under dry sunny conditions. In the Romanche speaking parts of Switzerland such as in the Graubunden or Engardine, the roads are so steep and narrow that old cars are regarded as a passion only practised by eccentric foreigners who usually pass through the valleys in the depths of winter up to their axles in snow on their way to Monte Carlo. But throughout the whole of Switzerland old cars are a hobby that soon becomes an obsession; sound familiar?

Switzerland is a wonderful motoring country. Besides having distinctly fewer cars on the roads, most of the road surfaces are well prepared and smooth, the country roads being especially enjoyable due to the fast changing vistas that open up as you sweep round one curve after another. Petrol is also affordable, and at present exchange rates, is priced at between 53p and 57p a litre. But the roads are built to get from A to B in the most efficient manner, so there are not the lay-bys and stopping places which we experience in England and France. So if you must stop for a breather make sure you plan the route well in advance.

Yes, there is a fair amount of snow on the Swiss highways in the winter, but the roads are kept clear almost twenty-four hours a day by the local farmers and the cantonal highways departments. Swiss farmers work very hard almost every day of the year, and if they are not milking the cows at 9 am or 5pm, can be seen clearing the roads of snow at midnight or installing ski-lifts in January when the official ski season begins. Some of them even repair old cars.

Both of our Alvis cars have been maintained by a neighbouring farmer who has twenty eight cows, four tractors, a licence to hunt and prepare venison on his farm for sale to the public, grows 1,200 turkeys a year and is the principle mechanic for at least two classic car dealers in the Zurich region. He prefers to work on British pre-war cars because as he says, they remind him of the other agricultural machinery he maintains, robust, well engineered, easy to access and well documented with good diagrams. At least Alvis cars are in a different class as they present him with more challenges than the rest, having many extra interesting bits of engineering and the occasional requirement for mechanics with small hands or very long fingers. He also enjoys the lines of the Speed 25 which he regards as more elegant than the Derby Bentleys of the period as well as being swifter than their Rolls-Royce counterparts.

The big news for EVC 561 is that after three years of negotiation, I have finally succeeded in getting the car into the Schlumpf Museum in Mulhouse. The car is on display in the Hall of Fame opposite one of the Bugatti Royales and in between a Hispano Suiza and an Isotta Fraschini of the period. It is the very first Alvis that the museum has had on display and is already attracting a lot of attention. It gets to leave the museum up to twice a year each for extended periods and it will take part in the museum's parade weekend of old cars in Mulhouse held in July each year.

The museum is particularly anxious to have as much of its collection as possible in running condition and there are plans to build a running track around the museum much like the one that exists at Beaulieu. As with all museums, funding is a problem and we are working together to find ways in which it can become more international in content and support. New facilities badly needed are a library of the History of the Automobile in Europe, better dining and conference facilities, workshops for restoration and seminars and facilities offered to enthusiasts over weekends and complete weeks in the summer. If it were nearer the UK they could do a "Brooklands" and invite helpers to clear the track



The Speed 2.5 in the Schlumpf Collection.

Photo: Phil Owen

and building sites for future expansion whilst offering free weekend accommodation and honorary life-time membership. But this whole saga of Schlumpf merits another article on the parlous state of Europe's automobile museums and the essential requirement to make them five, rather than two dimensional; the extra dimensions being movement, sound and smell.

EVC 561 has an interesting history. It was the last Alvis car out of the factory designated as a drophead for the Charlesworth factory across the road (Ron Buck's Speed 25 being the last Alvis drop head actually completed before the war ended production).

It has been exhibited at the first two Louis Vuitton Concours d'Elegance, one held in the UK and one in Paris. The car represented the year 1940 in the opening ceremonies of the Channel Tunnel in which fifty French and fifty English cars participated. For three years it was used as a ceremonial car by Sir Michael Grading, Chief of the Air Staff to mark events such as Battle of Britain Day and the Royal Tournament. It also welcomed the Chief of the French Air Force when he signed the first post-war Fighter Command agreement on combined fighter ops after the end of the war. This latter event provoked an exchange that illustrated some of the differences between our two countries. When the French general asked for the age of the car, the Chief of the Air Staff proudly replied "August 1940, Battle of Britain". To which the general mournfully replied, "Ah, Fall of France".

Both our Alvis cars will be on the roads in Italy, France and Switzerland this year, with the top down in icy weather as well as warm sunshine. The Speed 25 comes back to the UK in May for its MOT, and a chance to boil merrily in the traffic congestion. Does anyone know of a good fan that can co-exist with the standard bladed fan on the Speed 25?

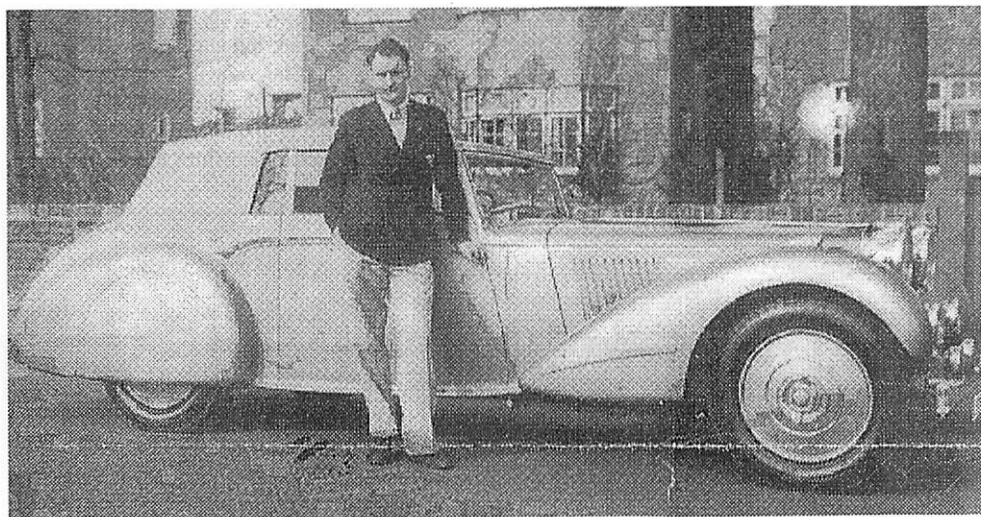
PHILIP OWEN

POSED, PROBED AND SOLVED

– The Registrar's Column –



"DOUBLE TAKE"



Arthur Bickerstaffe Woods with his unique Speed 25.

The year 2004 will be the centenary of the birth of the first owner of a particularly unusual Speed 25, and one which has raised its fair share of queries over the years, not all of which have been entirely resolved. Let's start with the owner, a man with a life story as fascinating as the car—but tragically shorter. Arthur Bickerstaffe Woods was born 17th August 1904, son of a Liverpool shipping magnate.

Although a worthy career would have beckoned had his medical studies at Cambridge continued, he 'dropped out', and became an actor with an as yet unidentified repertory company, so his roles remain a mystery.

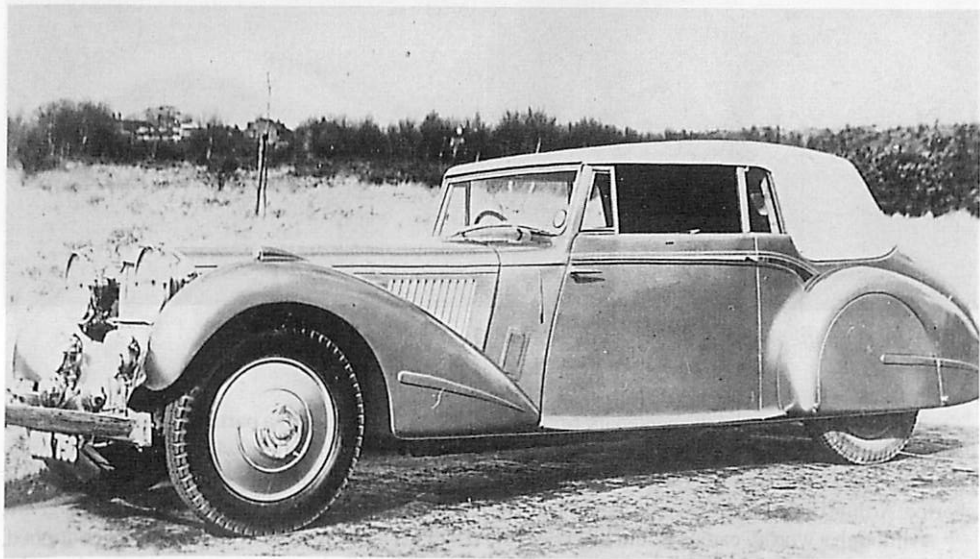
By 1926 he had transferred to the movies as the cutter of a series of documentary programmes,

progressing to assistant director in 1930, and becoming a director himself in 1933. Sources differ as to the actual number of movies that Woods was variously involved in, but perhaps 'over 20' would not be an unreasonable estimate. Clearly he was a man who was on the way up, and success, then, as now, can be expressed in one's choice of conveyance. In Woods' case, shortly after his thirty-second birthday, this took the form of an order for a Speed 25, not the catalogued variety, but a special coachbuilt drop head coupé on chassis 13380, laid down in November 1936, and completed and delivered on the 15th March 1937. A poor photograph of Woods with the car has survived. It does not show the registration plate, but does however display such features as a small quarter light in the hood, a trafficator in the A-post, rubbing strakes on the front and rear wings, and spats on the latter.

Sadly Woods was to have comparatively little time to enjoy this one-off, as when war broke out he joined the Royal Navy and was killed in action in 1942. Those conversant with such matters reckon that had he survived the war and resumed his movie career, his name would by now be as well-known and respected as that of Alfred Hitchcock.

The Guarantee Card for 13380 has the car in 1945 transferred to a J.B. Moor of Hellidon, Daventry, and later to a firm of hosiery manufacturers in Leicester. It was subsequently exported to the United States and its presence there has been confirmed by Wayne Brooks, but up to comparatively recently, there was no record of its U.K. registration number.

So let us now turn to the Alvis—its identification and its remarkable specification. It is true to say that this car would have been identified much sooner but for a bureaucratic slip in the records of the Buckinghamshire Motor Taxation Office. It is now several years since a check of this source by Nick Walker netted reference to an Alvis 25.63 h.p. Saloon: DKX 756, but subsequent delving by myself, Mike Newman and George Butlin failed to connect any such saloon with any Speed 25 (or Crested Eagle come to that). There the matter might still rest but for the chance acquisition by Dan Geoghegan of a photograph showing an unusual Speed 25 drop head coupé bearing the registration plate—DKX 756, which not only connected us to the red herring Buckinghamshire source, but to the known

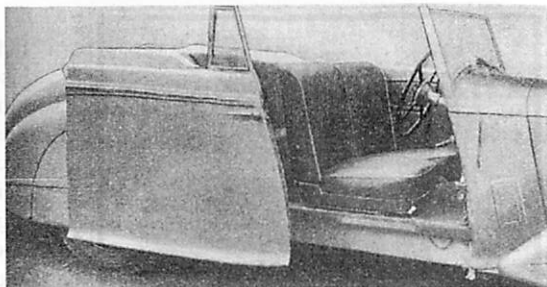


The Bertelli bodied Speed 25, Chassis 13380, Registration Number DKX 756.

Photo: D. Geoghegan Collection

photograph of Woods with the Speed 25 of unusual features.

Attempts to establish the coachbuilder remained thwarted however, with only VDP being firmly ruled out as the chassis 13380 did not figure in their listings, and the next likely source appeared to point to Offord. The final solution came in my chance perusal of a copy of *The Autocar* for April 9th 1937, wherein is a feature on coachbuilding trends. The particularly significant photograph of an Alvis drop head coupé is followed by the pertinent description quoted below:



A detail of the unusual and advance parallel door opening.

"Since it was first introduced over a year ago, the safety door which utilises a parallel action instead of the usual hinges has been adapted to many cars, and one of the more recent examples to be so fitted is an Alvis drop head coupé of distinguished appearance with coachwork by E. Bertelli Ltd."

The fact that *The Autocar's* description occurred just three weeks after Woods took delivery of DKX 756, is now fairly substantial proof that they are of one and the same car. There is not a great deal more left to solve except (given the presumed survival of this car in the United States) that examination in the fullness of time might reveal whether the car retains its parallel doors, or was subsequently converted to the conventional, and in the meantime whenever one observes a family disgorging itself from any one of several makes of people carrier, one might pause to reflect on some pioneering development work done on this type of door by Bertelli and other notable contemporaries.

Finally, knowing that movie directors have been known to use their own cars in their movies, begs the question. Did DKX 756 ever thus appear? Only a viewing of Woods' films for 1937, 1938, 1939 and 1940 would tell us and I conclude with a list of these in the pursuit of memory-jogging in both the long and short term.

1937 Mayfair Melody
 The Windmill
 Don't get me Wrong
 The Compulsory Wife
 You live and Learn

1939 They Drive by Night
 Q-Planes
 The Nursemaid who Disappeared
 Confidential Lady

1938 The Singing Cop
 The Dark Stairway
 Mr. Satan
 Glamour Girl
 Thistledown
 The Return of Carol Deane
 Dangerous Medicine

1940 Busman's Honeymoon

DAVE CULSHAW

RESEARCH



A letter to me from Peter Barratt enclosed a copy of an article from *The Light Car*, September 24 1937. It is part of "Affairs of the Moment", a pot pourri of news and views by the editor, F.J. Findon, and makes most interesting reading.

"When Stanley Horsfield invited me to attend an Alvis party in London last week, I told him that I could not gate-crash a meeting of which the main function was to introduce a 14 h.p. model. However, for old time's sake (not forgetting that there are some 12,000 four-cylinder Alvis light cars on the road), he urged me to go and I am glad I did.

First of all, I renewed acquaintance with Mr. T.G. John, who stands for the name of Alvis itself, and then I met Sir Malcolm Campbell, who, at a later function on Tuesday last, as the guest of honour of British Movietone News, thrilled me by describing very vividly all his adventures when breaking the water speed record.

Reverting to the function at the Savoy last week, Mr. T.G. John recalled their first big gamble in the sporting line which resulted in such a sensational success, that is, winning the 200 Miles Race in 1923. Before the night of that race, the car, intended to take part in it caught fire. It was practically burnt out. They resurrected the pieces, fitted it with a practically standard touring engine of the 12.50 h.p. class and, on the same plugs that were in the block at the time of the transference, it was brought up to the starting line, ran in the race—and won it.

Mr. John firmly believes that the four-cylinder car has come back again into its own. He also believes—and many of us will agree with him—that there is to-day a need for cars that fit the road. He said, half seriously: "It is almost a social sin to make cars for roads which are not built to take them," and in forceful language he urged that extreme pressure should be brought upon the Government to force them to look ahead instead of building roads for the requirements of the moment.

The next speaker, Stanley Horsfield, sales director of Alvis, also adopted the slogan of four-cylinder motoring. He pointed out that the increasing popularity of foreign touring, involving, as it did, the use of long stretches of specially constructed motor roads, was calling for the introduction of something new in motorcars, something that was good for acceleration and for a burst of maximum speed, but, of even more importance, something that would stand up to the sustained high-speed motoring which modern touring invited."

I found the following paragraph in *The Autocar* January 29th 1943.

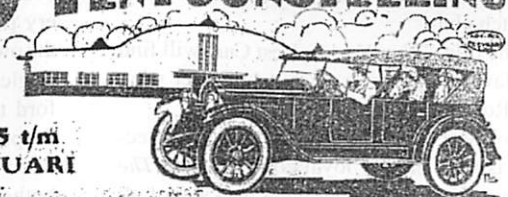
"Sub. Lt. Norman Riddle, R.N.V.R., from whom I have been hearing again just lately, mentions a breaker's, Lines, at a place called Wooton, near Silsted, between Canterbury and Folkestone, where he saw not long ago an Austin Seven with an underslung Ulster axle and spring, and good cycle wings, though the body was no good. Apparently, a lot of other useful things can be found at that establishment. Riddle himself coming across a 1931 12-50 Alvis engine, and also spotting a front-drive Alvis engine, gear box, front axles and a set of near-side front springs; but it is not everyone of course, who can get that way these days."

I suppose it might be worth still going to have a look for these items!

Coen van der Weiden of the Dutch Alvis Club is a regular contributor to *The Bulletin* and I received an email from him some time ago with a very interesting period Dutch Alvis advertisement. Coen wrote, "I received a copy of an advertisement in the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* Friday 15 January 1926,

AUTO TENTOONSTELLING

VAN 15 t/m
24 JANUARI



SPECIAAL NUMMER VOOR DE R. A. I.-TENTOONSTELLING

„THE WORLD'S BEST CAR”



ALLE MODELLEN
o.a. FRONT WHEEL DRIVE
RACE WAGEN.

ZIJN GEËXPOSEERD

OP

STAND
65

Prijzen enorm verlaagd.

12/60 P.K. chassis 4 cyl.	£ 400
2/3 Seatte Coupé double dicky seat £	400
4/6 pers. Torpedo m. All-Weathercap £	400
2/3 pers. Cabriolet m. dbl. dicky seat £	385
4/6 pers. Ondelste Interieurs.....	£ 385
2/3 pers. Super sport	£ 350
4 pers. Super sport	£ 350
12/30 P.K. Front wheel drive motor with compressor; snelheid gepieciast diesl. 150 K.M. per uur.....	£ 1000

Volledige uitrusting, vierwielenremmen,
snelheidsregulator, verhoorzak enz.

PLAATSELIJKE OF DISTRICTAGENTEN
GEVRAAGD



IMPORTRICE:

N.V. AUTOMOBIEL IMPORT & HANDELSONDERNEMING

RUNSTRAAT 86, ARNHEM. TEL. 3241.

Agent v. Limburg: GARAGE MERCURIUS, HEERLEN.

which I attach. It was sent to me by our member Erik Glasius who, as a director of the Amsterdam RAI, has direct access to the archives of RAI and often comes up with interesting Alvis material. Until now this material was not known in the Dutch club."

The title, "The World's Best Car" will find much favour among us all, but I wonder what Rolls-Royce thought of this?

Bob Merrill, the Crested Eagle Model Secretary, is also another loyal contributor to *The Bulletin*. He recently sent me a package of all manner of interesting material. First he sent me an extract from the forward of the 1935-6 AA Handbook, and I quote:

"With road manners, particularly, as with life itself, it's the little things that count.

Every unimportant moment we concede to fellow travellers is an investment in the Bank of Good Nature, returning interest a hundredfold.

We must school ourselves readily to concede that unimportant, moment—to allow to others their right and proper share of the Road. Courtesy begets Courtesy."

How true and how I wish that modern road users could follow this advise.

Of even more relevance to Alvis enthusiasts, is this extract from the Instruction Book for the Crested Eagle.

On being
"CAR PROUD"
a message to the New Owner

When you visit a friend's house for the first time you notice, though perhaps unconsciously, that it is spotlessly clean, that there are flowers in the rooms, and that much care and thought have obviously been spent on choosing the carpets and curtains. The owner of the house shows you round with pride, speaking enthusiastically of this or that attraction of the place, or of various labour-saving devices that have been installed. In a word, your friend is "house proud."

The keen, knowledgeable motorist should be "car proud," taking a real pride in the brilliant design and beautiful workmanship of the car he drives and in its "Alvivacity," a word

coined to epitomise the speed and power and liveliness, the charm and controllability of this wonderful vehicle.

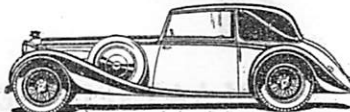
To be "car proud" there is no need to talk boastfully of high speeds attained or to take every possible opportunity of "putting it across" the owners of other cars. The driver of a "Crested Eagle" knows what his car can do, and can afford to sit back while others "cut-in" in their desperate attempts to gain a few yards, for he knows that on the next hill, without fuss or bother, simply by depressing the accelerator, he will leave them all standing.

It is impossible to be proud of a car for which one must always apologise. Keep the engine at concert pitch, have the car washed and polished whenever you have time. See to it that those who watch you pass exclaim "There goes a fine car!"

Absolutely wonderful.

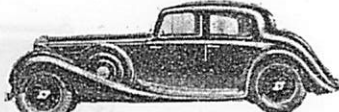
Bob also sent me a copy of an advertisement which appeared in *The Autocar* July 16 1937. Lex Garages Limited were selling a 1933 Speed 20 for £195 and a 1937 SS Jaguar 2' Litre for £315. Both were elegant cars but the new prices of Alvis and Jaguar would be quite different. What would you have bought in 1937? The Jaguar or the Speed 20?

ALVIS



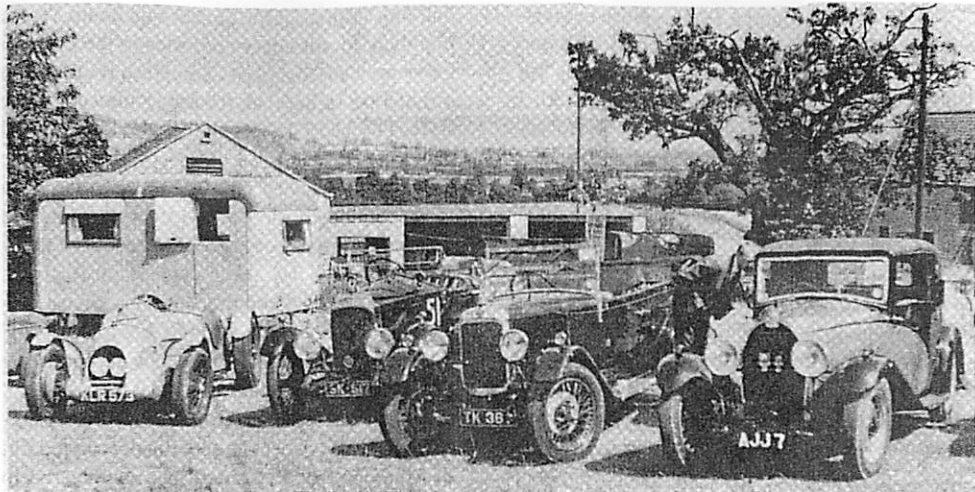
1933 Alvis Speed 20 Drophead Four-seater Coupé. Whole car in 1937 condition. Very pretty shade of Azure Blue..... **£195**

S.S. JAGUAR



1937 S.S. JAGUAR 2-litre Sports Saloon. Run genuine 2,000 miles only and indistinguishable from new..... **£315**

LEX GARAGES LIMITED,
LEXINGTON STREET,
Top of GT. WINDMILL STREET,
PICCADILLY, W.1. GER. 8600



A photograph from the August 18 1963 issue of *Antique Automobile*. The Chevell Special presents no difficulties and Dave Culshaw has identified the 12/50.

The *Autocar*

7 OCTOBER 1955

1,955 MORE MILES PER PINT OF OIL!

Vintage Model Rejuvenated With Duaflex Rings

Mileage per pint of oil increased from 45 miles to over 2,000 miles! That's what a set of Duaflex rings achieved in Mr. A. S. Lewis' 1930 Alvis Silver Eagle.

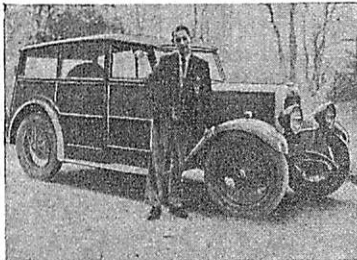
"On a 1,264-mile tour of Scotland last August it consumed no less than 28 pints of oil—a pint every 45 miles," he writes from Derwen Fawr, Swansea. "As soon as I returned I had Duaflex rings fitted. With oil consumption what it was, I did not expect more than some small improvement, but am delighted to report almost total elimination of oil 'burning'. I changed the oil within the thousand *without* topping-up and have since added less than 3 pints for over 6,000 miles."

Is Your Car 'Eating' Oil?

Is oil consumption beginning to worry you? And petrol, too? Then it means that cylinder wear is nearing danger point and that your engine efficiency will deteriorate more and more rapidly. Why? Because when cylinder walls start to wear, oil seeps up into the combustion chamber and burns away, and oil consumption goes up by leaps and bounds. But even more is happening. The explosive gases, too, leak past the piston—wasting both power and petrol.

Duaflex Restore Original Efficiency

A set of Duaflex rings will restore the engine to its original efficiency—even if the cylinders are quite badly worn. Self-adjusting, they take up wear in cylinders, automatically adapting themselves to irregularities in cylinder walls, maintaining a gas-tight seal all the time. You'll find Duaflex rings restore the power and defer the need for a rebore until such time as a major overhaul becomes necessary through bearing wear, burnt out valves, etc. It would pay you to find out more about Duaflex *now!*



How Duaflex Rings Work

- 1 The vertical sealing spring keeps the rails firmly in the ring groove, forming a perfect seal.
- 2 The expander maintains an even outward pressure on cylinder walls.
- 3 The rails 'wipe' oil from cylinder walls, avoid scraping and wear.

For the best results: At the same time as Duaflex Oil Control Rings are fitted, also fit Wellworthy Pistons with Matched Sets of Wellworthy Rings.



Your local garage will give you details and quote for fitting

**WELLWORTHY
DUAFLEX**

OIL CONTROL RINGS

"The Choice of the Expert"

**REDUCE OIL CONSUMPTION
INCREASE COMPRESSION - DEFER RE-BORES**

Write for literature to:

WELLWORTHY LIMITED · LYMINGTON · HANTS

Bob Merrill found a 1963 picture in an issue of *Antique Automobile*. (See previous page) The Chevell Special presents no problems but Bob wondered about the identity of the 12/50. I sent the picture to Dave Culshaw who responded, thus, "Obscured number plates in photographs have incurred the Registrar's ire on more than one occasion, but this one, for once seems to present little difficulty. It is almost certainly TK 361, a Dorset-registered 12/50 TG of March 1928, and known to us as chassis 6527. At the time the photograph was taken it was probably in the ownership of P.Blakeney-Edwards, and is so referred to in the first edition of the 'V.A'. Thankfully this is one car which has stood the test of time as it is presently recorded in the ownership of Register Member, H.M. Gregory."

Bob provided another small mystery with this advertisement for Wellworthy Duaflex Oil Control Rings which appeared in *The Autocar* October 7 1955.(See previous page) For once, Dave Culshaw was stumped and his note to me said;

"This is a long-standing 'mystery car', and the identification of it is no nearer now than it was in 1955.

The name of A.S. Lewis has never figured in the Alvis Owner Club's membership enrollments (which recently passed the 10,000 mark). Neither does Lewis appear to have joined the Register, as that source has just been checked. The task is doubly difficult as since the original body has been detached, not even a short-list of possibles can be prepared. Sadly the only re-

maining course is for one of our South Wales members to volunteer enquiries in the Derwen Fawr area of Swansea. Someone round there might just remember the most unusual body style. The 1955 Electoral Roll would be a good place to start."

Finally Dave Culshaw wrote to me with identification of the Three Litres illustrated in the Centre Spread of issue 485, January/February 2004. The DHC is almost certainly Car No. 25443, body AL4 and the Saloon is almost certainly Car No. 25462, body M 3251.

The Registrar Dave Culshaw, reports some fine-tuning to the team of Model Secretaries.

For the first time, owners of the Alvis-engined Healey are to be specifically catered for, as Member Roger Crouch has volunteered to take on this office.

Roger will be found at Slades Paddock, East Coker, Nr. Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 9JY. Tel: 01935 863061, Email: rogercrouch@crouch.co.uk

There is to be some separation with regard to some of the later models.

John Fox will continue as Model Secretary for the TC108/G Model in particular, and for all the Swiss-bodied Alvis in general.

There is now a new Model Secretary for the TD21 Series 1 and 2, and it is Member Norman Silk who has volunteered to take on this office.

Norman will be found at Carrickness, Oldfield Drive, Heswall, Wirral L60 6SS, Tel: 01513 423103.

J.N.B.C.

ALVIS CARS

ALVIS CAR & ENGINEERING COMPANY LTD., COVENTRY.

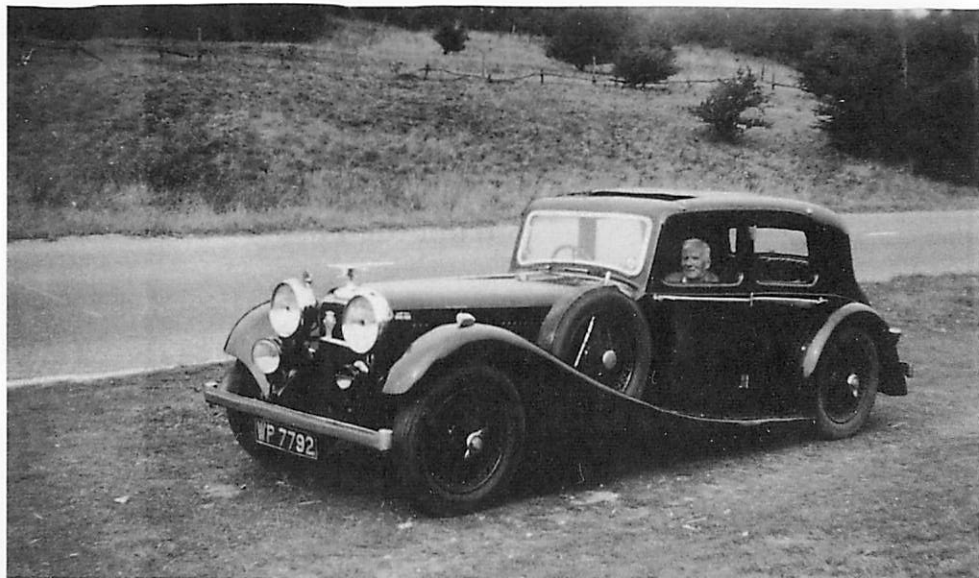


ARCHIVE
— A Selection of Pictures
from the Past —

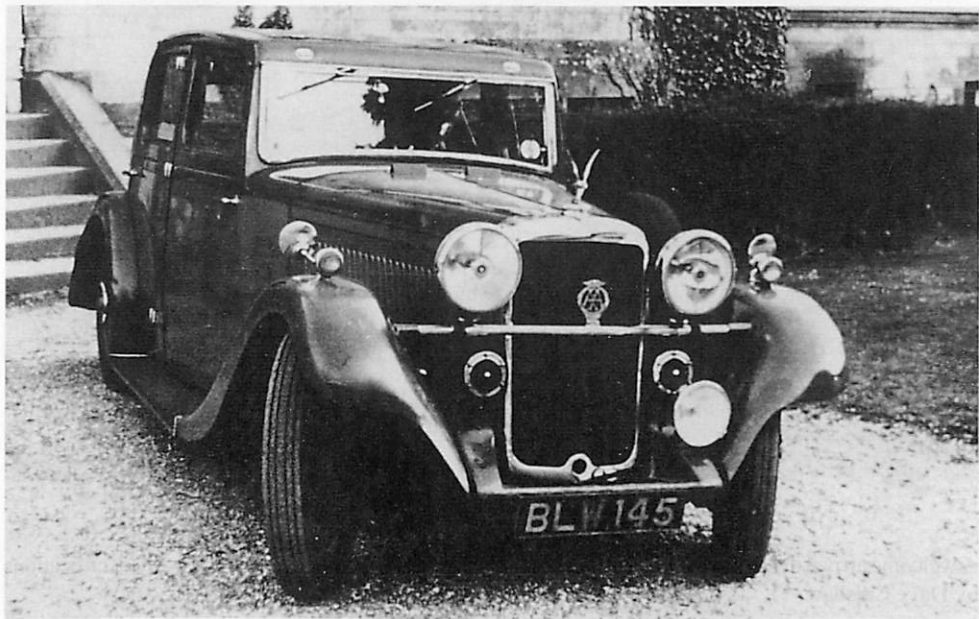


A welcome arrival in my mail was a package of photographs sent to me by Bob Merrill. All identifications by Dave Culshaw.

The Merriott Speed 20, an SB Model chassis 11190, has a distinguished provenance for when new it was campaigned in a number of events by its first owner, Miss Dorothy Patten, including the 1934 Alpine Trial. (See *The Motor* Aug 14th 1934).



Also Merriott-owned, this is an SC Speed 20, chassis 11990, supplied new to a Major F.W. Smith Derrington House, Redditch, and subsequently acquired by member 3403, J.F. Organ, of Stroud. No recent history.



This Silver Eagle is chassis 12406. When this photograph was taken it was probably in the ownership of member 853, T.J. Kuyl, who apparently got it from P.H. Mitchell, Member 679.



Above and below: AOC meeting in 1957. See next page for notes.



The Alvis Owner Club meeting of April 14th 1957 is undoubtedly the Annual General Meeting of that Year, which took place at the Bulls Head, Wooton Wawen, near Stratford, and if one looks at page 55 of the newly-published Jubilee Book one will see a group photograph of the Club Officials attending on that day. Only two Alvises are identifiable by their number plates. DGW 600 is SD20 13304, then owned by member 1351, G.E. Cadbury, whilst ELT 382 is the 4.3-litre chassis 14321, which then belonged to Northern Section Secretary Alwyn Ellison. This car was some time later involved in a serious accident with some injury to Mr. Ellison.

The report of the gathering, from *The Bulletin* No.46 of May 1957 is interesting on two counts. There is mention of Jock Stephen attending in his 4.3-litre engined Speed 20, and also of the intention of the *Bull's Head* proprietors, Mitchell and Butler Ltd., to feature this gathering in their house magazine. Could there perhaps be some further footage of this Alvis gathering, lodged in a brewery archive somewhere? Research for an inebriate?



North American Alvis Day 1975.

Photo: Bob Merrill



"CRESTED EAGLE"

ALVIS ON MALTA

After two years in the invigorating cold of Arbroath, two years in the eternal mists of Londonderry, a frightening flight on two seemingly inadequate planks from a Belfast jetty to a cargo ferry to Liverpool, a two year garage rest and recuperation, OJ 7199 undertook a sea journey to Malta in an RFA (Royal Fleet Auxiliary). The car was delivered undamaged and started without hesitation for a drive to a new home at the top of Prince of Wales Road at the end of Rudolph Street in Sliema. Very unusually, a garage was attached to the house. This made a useful shelter from the almost continuous sunshine. The car was used for a 3 mile daily commuting trip to the Dockyard. Here again it was sheltered in a tunnel.

Having no fan, slow progress with 0730 bus, lorry and private car competition and intrepid young Maltese drivers in the centre of the road coming in the opposite direction, and very warm air, even at this hour, the Alvis coolant was soon boiling.

After a kind warning from the policeman on duty at the dockyard gate that smoke was appearing under the front of the car, OJ 7199 was parked in the tunnel confirming that the smoke was in fact steam. This had been noticed by more knowledgeable observers than the policeman.

A series of calls to my office all requested details of this steam car and polite enquiries whether an inspection or even a short journey could be arranged. Despite the disappointing reply that the steam came from boiling coolant, there was continuing interest in the car with the strange name. An enthusiastic submarine fitter soon became a firm friend and weekend volunteer for any Alvis maintenance. He was the proud owner from new of an immaculate Austin Devon, which was taken on Sundays from its carpeted garage for a short trip for the benefit of friends or his sister. It must have been a huge sacrifice on a Maltese fitter's wages to buy a new car. Not only was he a very competent machine tool operator but also a skilled fitter with hand tools.

OJ 7199 is a Speed 20SA Tourer with coachwork by Cross & Ellis, acquired from the specialist Alvis dealership, Alton Garage in Upbrook Mews, Paddington. The proprietor was the late Guy Griffiths, famed motor racing photographer.

Malta is a small island about 16 x 8 miles (about half the area of the Isle of Wight), so the short distances and poor road surfaces did not encourage fast Alvis touring. However, the reliable sunshine and little-visited countryside were ideal in an open car for weekend picnics with two small fighting sons. We often visited very small villages to admire the beautiful churches. The villagers in their turn surrounded the car to admire it and query the strange name on the radiator. Perhaps I was making history owning the first Alvis to visit Malta, or more certainly the first Speed 20.

Very little repair work was required and when it was, perhaps repacking the water pump gland or making a replacement round metal radiator cap to replace the stolen original, all was beautifully carried out. Sadly, making a replacement eagle was beyond our scope. Local repairers made a fine job of a new hood and replating tarnished chromium-plated items. Being an Alvis, the car worked faultlessly for over two years with accurately timed maintenance and occasional tuning of the three SUs.

The return to England, on yet another sea journey, practically its last journey in my ownership, was from Kent to Dartmouth in January. Snow and ice on the road made it a very cold and sometimes hazardous journey. A large diameter duct collected hot air from the radiator and fed to the driver's feet. It had been stolen from a scrap aircraft, where it was designed for the same purpose, with equally little effect. The passengers were kept from frost bite with rugs and hot water bottles. The latter had to be refilled every hour (roughly 35 miles!)

PETER NOPS RN

DVLA NEWS

From the volume of calls and mail received it seems there are many myths and concerns, some genuine, surrounding the tightening of SORN regulations and the issue of new V5C logbooks. One of the confusions seems to be in use of the words 'registered/registration' and 'licensed/licensing' which have quite specific meanings depending upon the context, they are not interchangeable. We asked DVLA to reply to these concerns and received a helpful reply.

The Vehicle Registration Certificate (V5C) is simply an official document confirming that the vehicle is registered: after July 2005 it will be the only form of document that will be accepted as confirmation of registration, but that does not affect the underlying registration itself. Registration is the requirement to have the vehicle details recorded on the register, evidenced formerly by old-style RF60 logbooks or V5 printouts and now by the new V5C. When a vehicle is used on the road it needs to be licensed and, from 31 January 1998, this requirement is extended to include those vehicles that are taken off the road (SORN) provided that they had held a valid licence at that date. There has been no change to this legislation.

As SORN only applies to vehicles where a licence was in force on or after 31 January 1998 'off road' projects will only fall within SORN requirements when they are put back on the road and take out a new licence. If you change address or sell your project there is no requirement to declare SORN, neither is there a requirement if an off road project is the subject of a successful V765 application to reclaim a 'lost' number prior to being made roadworthy. Any other instruction from an official source is incorrect and you should, politely, ask them to obtain clarification from the SORN unit at DVLA Swansea.

The legislation was introduced to ensure that the vehicle register is kept up-to-date at least once per year and there will be a penalty if one does not do so. Thus while all historic classification vehicles are on the register (excluding those that missed the 1983 'cut' or closure of the Swansea Register to inactive records) only those that are both registered and licensed/ or covered by SORN are subject to the annual declaration with consequent penalties for non-compliance.

It is recognised that some motorists, especially those who may be abroad for extended periods, may find it difficult to declare SORN on time. Prior to this legislation those people usually let an existing licence expire (or applied for a refund) and then took out a new licence upon their return. There is no longer an option to do nothing: however, you can apply up to six weeks in advance of a current SORN expiring using a V890 SORN Declaration. This must be supported by a written explanation of the circumstances and both sent to DVLA. For those motorists taking extended breaks they should either arrange for someone to submit the relevant forms or contact DVLA in advance of departure and explain their particular circumstances. It is also possible to return a tax disc at any time using form V14 which also provides the opportunity to declare SORN as well as claiming a refund (if applicable) for any complete months of unexpired Vehicle Excise Duty.

DVLA tries to ensure that vehicle keepers receive an up-to-date reminder (V11) to enable them to re-licence with the minimum of disruption but there is no statutory obligation to do so. Full responsibility for ensuring that vehicles are currently licensed, or subject to SORN where applicable, rests with the keeper. Absence or late receipt of a V11 does not alter or release a keeper from this responsibility so we suggest that keepers make a note of all relevant declarations and monitor the list regularly. One final point on SORN, a valid declaration is not transferred with change of ownership (unlike an unexpired licence disc) and a new keeper of an untaxed vehicle must take steps to ascertain the SORN status. He/she has two options, either a new licence is obtained or he/she must declare

SORN immediately. This will be enforced but DVLA will treat each case on merit and does retain the right to exercise discretion.

The new V5C documents do not point out the obligation to declare SORN immediately upon acquisition although this lack may be corrected at a future revision. Anyone unsure whether SORN applies to a vehicle (lack of documents or an uncooperative owner) there is an enquiry line at 09067 657585 to establish the date of last licensing. Note that this is a premium rate line that costs 49p/minute.

The new V5C documents have generated many queries in their short life. At present they are only being issued to newly registered vehicles or upon notification of a change of particulars. Anyone applying for a duplicate document will also receive the new format but will now have to pay a fee for the replacement. Starting in July all keepers applying for a replacement licence or declaring/renewing SORN will receive a new V5C some six weeks after renewal. This process will continue until June 2005 when the exercise is expected to be completed for all registered and licensed vehicles, in excess of 30 million. This process does not include those non-SORN vehicles that were off road prior to 31 January 1998 and, at present, plans have not been finalised to enable them to obtain new V5C logbooks although we have been promised that arrangements will be made to allow this to happen.

At 1 July 2005 all old style documents will cease to have legal validity. This does not mean that keepers will lose entitlement to their marks nor that these marks will have any restrictions placed upon them. If you wish to licence your vehicle that has been off the road prior to 1998, to sell your project or advise changed details then these can only be recorded after you have applied for a new V5C at a local DVLA office. It is quite possible that keepers in this category will receive a mailing encouraging them to apply for a new V5C but we are assured there will be no compulsion and that new documents will NOT be sent unsolicited. At the risk of being repetitive this probable process will not trigger SORN if there is no existing obligation to do so.

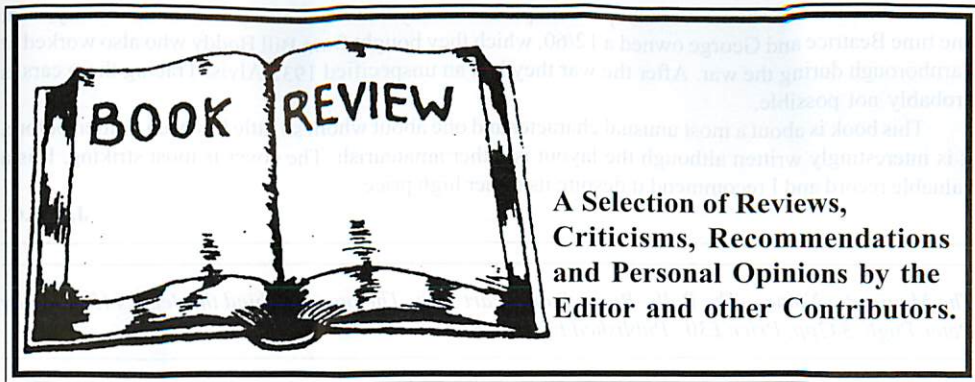
Many enquirers have made the point that while they support the principles behind the new legislation they have the impression that it is only the law-abiding who will suffer penalties due to lack of relevant information or through genuine inability to meet seemingly arbitrary deadlines. We have been assured that it is not the Agency's intention to persecute honest motorists but to crack down on offenders who repeatedly abuse the system. Long-term evaders will be targeted through increased roadside enforcement, in particular through wheel-clamping and removal (either by DVLA or joint operations with Local Authorities) and that tough targets have been set by ministers. DVLA will also be working closely with the twenty-three police forces operating APNR cameras (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) which are reportedly very effective in detecting these vehicles.

Some of the confusion arising from these two issues may be due to an excess of enthusiasm by DVLA customer enquiry responders. Perhaps the complexity of the two issues and the volume of changes being simultaneously introduced caused a few divergences from the agreed script. Everyone who contacted me, without exception, mentioned that their telephone enquiry had been answered promptly and in a polite and friendly manner. Long may that continue.

One further item relates to the registration marks allocated to those vehicles manufactured between 1906–30. Until now, the letters SV followed by four numbers have been used but this series is now exhausted. All vehicles manufactured prior to 1930 will now be allocated registration marks in the BS series which had formerly been reserved only for those vehicles manufactured prior to 1906.

SANDY HAMILTON

This article comes from the FBHVC Newsletter No 2, 2004, and was brought to my attention by an representative, Martin Boothman—J.N.B.C.



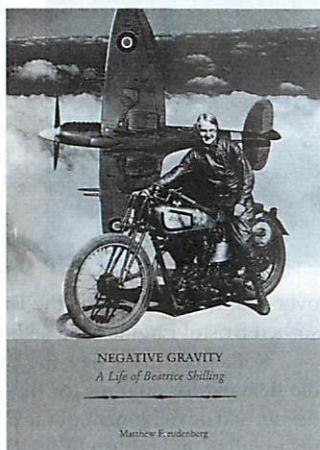
**A Selection of Reviews,
Criticisms, Recommendations
and Personal Opinions by the
Editor and other Contributors.**

Negative Gravity—A Life of Beatrice Shilling by Matthew Freudenberg. 136pp. Price £14.99. Published by Charlton Publications. Card Covers.

Publications, which I particularly enjoy, are monographs on slightly obscure subjects, like those written by Sherlock Holmes. This is one such monograph. The name Beatrice Shilling will probably be familiar only to those members who are interested in aeronautical history. Beatrice worked at the Royal Aeronautical Establishment at Farnborough and during the Second World War became famous for designing a restricting washer for the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine carburettor, which allowed pilots of Spitfires and Hurricanes to dive suddenly in combat, something that they could not previously do. German pilots with fuel injected engines did not have the same problem. This device was always known as “Miss Shilling’s Orifice”.

That was the sum total of my knowledge about Miss Shilling, so I was delighted to be able to buy this slim volume which records her interesting and unusual life. Most unusually for an Edwardian girl, Beatrice Shilling wanted to be an engineer and she is an example of how a person may achieve their ambitions when the odds are stacked against them. Beatrice Shilling first went into electrical engineering and then to Manchester University, after which she was able to get work at Farnborough where she stayed for the rest of her working life. She rose to high positions despite being a woman, and despite often being at loggerheads with authority. She was involved with all manner of research including rockets and ram jets after the war. Her husband, George Naylor, also a Farnborough scientist and when war broke out, became a bomber pilot and survived many missions over Germany.

It might be thought that Beatrice Shilling’s intrusion into the male dominated world of the British scientific establishment would be enough of a challenge, but she was also a successful racing motorcyclist, riding at Brooklands, winning races at over 100mph on her Norton. Not only did she race the bike, but she was the one who tuned and modified the engine. She was an accomplished machinist too. One of her experiments was to supercharge the Norton engine with a centrifugal blower. George also raced bikes and after the war they built a special based on a Lagonda Rapier which was extensively

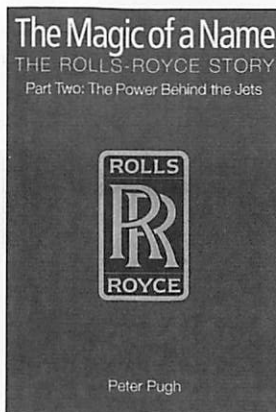


modified in their home workshops. I am pleased to say that Alvis also comes into the story, as at one time Beatrice and George owned a 12/60, which they bought from Bill Boddy who also worked at Farnborough during the war. After the war they had an unspecified 1932 Alvis. Tracing these cars is probably not possible.

This book is about a most unusual character and one about whom so little has been written before. It is interestingly written although the layout is rather amateurish. The cover is most striking. It is a valuable record and I recommend it despite its rather high price.

J.N.B.C.

The Magic of a Name—The Rolls–Royce Story. Part Two: The power Behind the Jets 1945–1987 by Peter Pugh. 342pp. Price £30. Published by Icon Books.



This is the second volume of Peter Pugh's trilogy of Rolls–Royce history. During the latter part of the Second World War Rolls–Royce took over the development of the Whittle jet engine from the Rover company and soon had designed and constructed a practical and powerful engine. This was the start of an entirely new aspect of Rolls–Royce engineering prowess. The majority of this book concerns the history of Rolls–Royces' relationship with the jet engine and the aviation industry.

The first Rolls–Royce engines, the Welland, Nene and Derwent were followed by such immensely successful engines as the Avon and then the Conway and Spey not to mention the turbo–prop Trent and Tyne. This is a company and business story and is not, I think, in any way supposed to be a technical history. Certainly there is no technical content in the book. The author delves into the intense politics of post–war engine manufacture as well as Rolls–Royce's licence deals

overseas. In the fifties, as the British aviation industry shrank, mergers meant that Rolls–Royce absorbed Bristol Engines and so became responsible for the Olympus and Pegasus engines.

Rather late in the day, the British firms realised the coming importance of commercial flying and the demand for engines for these aircraft. The great tragedy of Rolls–Royce's bankruptcy over the design and development of the RB211 engine for the Lockheed Tristar, is dealt with in detail, and the resurrection and rebirth of the company afterwards.

This is an immensely important story and yet this is, in my opinion, a very dull book. The author tells the story almost entirely by quoting directly from other works and the result is a stodgy book and one that cannot be read easily. There is a considerable amount of information in the book but little comment. The author gives no opinions and does not analyse the events in this history. This is, I understand, an official history, but even so a bit more analysis would be welcome and is needed in a volume of this sort.

Roy Nockolds' original book, of the same name, about Rolls–Royce was a "romantic" story of the company and its history. This is almost the opposite. A mass of facts, without any attempt at telling a story. I understand only too well that modern business is rather dull, but I feel that another writer might have been able to give the reader rather more pleasure.

If you need a comprehensive history of Rolls–Royce, these three volumes are the ones to have but you may doze off reading them.

J.N.B.C.

Frank Whittle is a great British hero. The legend of the invention of the jet engine by Whittle is well known; a lone genius battling, with insufficient funds, against grey men from the ministry. As so often, the truth behind the legend is quite different.

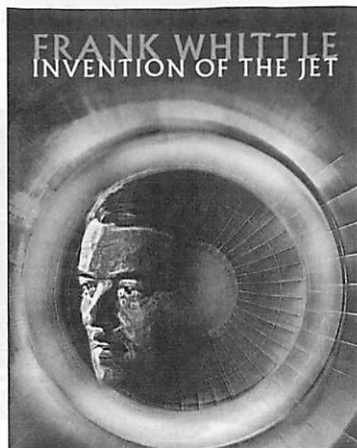
The legend of Frank Whittle was established by Whittle's own biography *Jet*, published in 1953. I read this book when I was a young lad and was completely convinced by Whittle's story. The account of his tiny company, Power Jets, battling against authority appealed to a twenty-year old. The other main feature of Whittle's book was the animosity between himself and the Rover company, whom were attempting to put his engine into production. The basis of this bad feeling was that the Rover engineers had started to design a slightly different (and to be honest better) engine. Whittle would not have anything to do with this design but the fact is that it was this engine that Rolls-Royce later developed so successfully into the Nene. Reading Whittle's book prejudiced me against Rover for very many years, a situation which was not improved by the news of the merger with Alvis. As I read Andrew Nahum's book, I wondered, when a partner for Power Jets was being sought, if Alvis had been considered. The history of Alvis and the jet engine might have been very different if this had happened.

Andrew Nahum has written this history of the development of the jet engine from the perspective of modern research and newly available documentation and he examines the business decisions and politics of the birth of the jet engine. The result is an enormously interesting and important work, which throws a great deal of new light on the subject.

Andrew Nahum unfolds a rather different history to that told by Whittle himself. He reveals that in fact Whittle was treated rather well. The RAF allowed him to continue his research without interference as well as promoting him regularly. The business arrangements of Power Jets, Whittle's company, are well detailed. It was actually quite well funded from merchant banks as well as receiving funds from the government. Far from being ignored, the development of the jet engine was closely watched. Whittle's personality was such that he tended to see persecution where none existed and he was apparently a very difficult man to deal with and had no sense of humour.

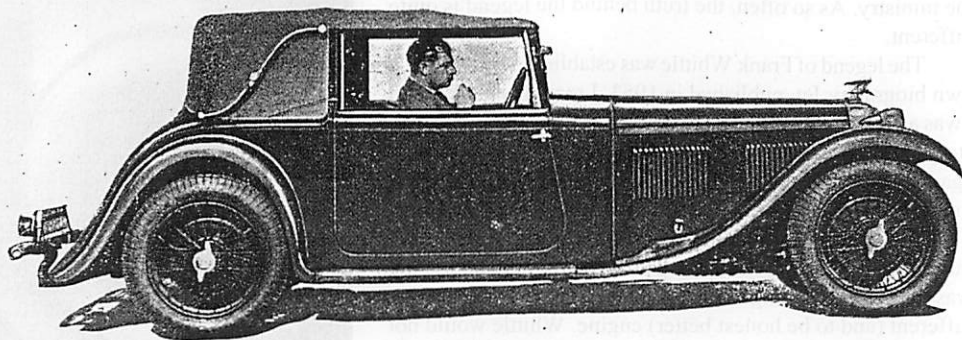
Although Whittle was, to use a cliché, a genius, it is now admitted that the jet engine would have come into being without his involvement. The German work on axial engines was in many cases in advance of Whittle's work and both Frank Halford, one time Alvis racing driver and designer of de Havilland engines very soon made himself master of the jet engine.

I found this history of the British invention of the jet engine quite enthralling. The author handles the complex political and financial aspects of the story with great ease and makes the whole thing completely understandable. An invaluable addition to jet engine literature. Although the text of this book is first class unfortunately the publisher has seen fit to produce the book in small size and although with hard covers, to paperback standards. It deserves very much better than this.



INTERESTING DROP-HEAD COUPÉ

—Low-built Foursome Coachwork of Practical Design and
Attractive Lines on an Alvis Speed Twenty Chassis—



Fleet lines characterize the side view of this drop-head foursome coupé by the Mayfair Carriage Co., Ltd, 75 Kilburn Lane, London, W.10, on an Alvis Speed Twenty chassis.

The accompanying illustrations depict one of the very few drop-head foursome coupés that have been produced for the Alvis Speed Twenty chassis. The design is intended to provide the owner with a completely open or closed car at will; that is to say, without a single obstruction in the form of window frames or pillars when the vehicle is used open. It is not a type of body that is relished by the coach-builder, for meticulous care is required in construction to ensure a shapely outline when closed. Again, when used as an open car the folding head joints and head mechanism have to be made very accurately in order to avoid the possibility of rattle.

Adequate Protection Afforded

The design in question was evolved by the Mayfair Carriage Co., in conjunction with the staff of *The Motor*, to the order of Mr. Roland E. Dangerfield, a director of Temple Press Ltd., and is worthy of consideration by those owners who, while liking all the freedom of the open car, desire adequate protection from the elements during the winter months and on wet days during the summer.

Despite the fact that hood sticks have to be employed in this type of body, they have not detracted from the appearance. Whether viewed from the side or the back, it is extremely shapely. The back panelling is a particularly fine example of coachcraft, being beautifully curved with flowing lines from the waistline, with the back mudguards swept rearwards at exactly the same angle as the boot.

Even the fitting of a full-width bumper does not detract from the general symmetry. The boot, incidentally, provides accommodation for the starting and jack handles, and will hold two medium-sized suitcases.

The side view of the car will show that the bonnet line has been taken in an unbroken fashion right through to the rear. The waistline has a relieving moulding of red to match the colour adopted for the

wheels. The actual brake drums are black. The colour scheme is also black, which is nicely relieved by the use of grey head material, with the lining in cloth to tone.

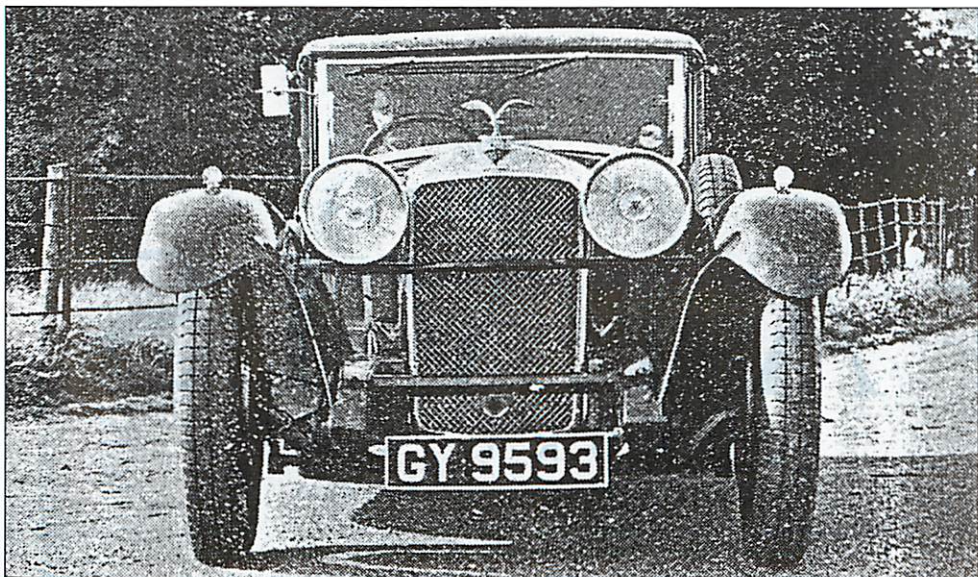
As the car is likely to be used more open than closed, special provision has been made to protect the head covering and lining and the seats of the rear compartment. When the head is down it is normally enclosed in a grey envelope of the same material as the head, and when only two passengers are carried the back is entirely closed in by a tonneau cover made of similar material; thus all the head joints are entirely hidden.

Special pains have been taken to ensure unrestricted visibility all round. There is a sensible-sized rear window for this type of body and the very wide doors ensure that the driver can, even with the hood up, see practically all round him. In a forward direction visibility could scarcely be improved upon, for the screen is framed with exceptionally light pillars. The top of the frame is also of small dimensions and the outlook is again improved by the fitting of the screen-wiper box on the near side. The waistline, although high enough to be fashionable, is low enough to impart an impression of freedom, and the driver can, if he so desires, rest his arm on the side of the body, although armrests are incorporated on each of the doors.

Both front seats are mounted on Leveroll slides and have tipping backs, so that it is a particularly easy matter to get into or out of the rear seats. The body, although of the close-coupled type, is not so close-coupled as to be uncomfortable. The headroom is ample for persons of over normal stature, and good legroom has been attained by taking the two wide wells right underneath the front seats. Generally, close-coupled bodies are only suitable for taking the rear passengers on short journeys, but in this case the comfort as regards legroom and width of seating is such that long journeys can be undertaken without discomfort.

The upholstery is carried out in russet-brown antique hide, with the doors trimmed in the same material and with carpets to match. All the woodwork is of burr walnut.

The car is even lower than the photographs suggest, for with the hood up it is possible for a



A front view of the Alvis Mayfair drop-head foursome coupé, showing the low overall height and the thin screen pillars.

person of 5 ft. 10 ins. in height to look right over the top without any difficulty, and, owing to the low build of the chassis, it is an ideal car for getting into and out of with comfort.

This article first appeared in "The Motor" August 23 1932 and is reproduced with due thanks and acknowledgements—J.N.B.C

The Registrar Comments: This Mayfair-bodied drop-head coupé is known to the Register as an SA type Speed Twenty, translating as chassis 9862, engine 10312, and Car Number 14564. It is, as can be surmised from the text, almost certainly the first Mayfair drop head coupé body on a Speed Twenty chassis. It is difficult to be definitive as to just how many of the type were put on SA chassis. Only three are absolute certainties, but there may be one or two more as the disposition of a number of SA20 "chassis-only" deliveries, particularly to Follett, remain to be explained. It is thus a somewhat elusive version, and whilst the styling was continued through into the SB model it is similarly exclusive there with only about six examples known to have been built.

Little is known of its fate following its departure from the Roland Dangerfield stable. It certainly survived the war, as it is listed in a number of the Alvis Owner Club's earliest Year Books, with Member 292, a Mr. E.F. Clark of Glasgow, Clark evidently had a penchant for the SA Model, as he is known to have a tourer, chassis 9885 as well.

DAVE CULSHAW

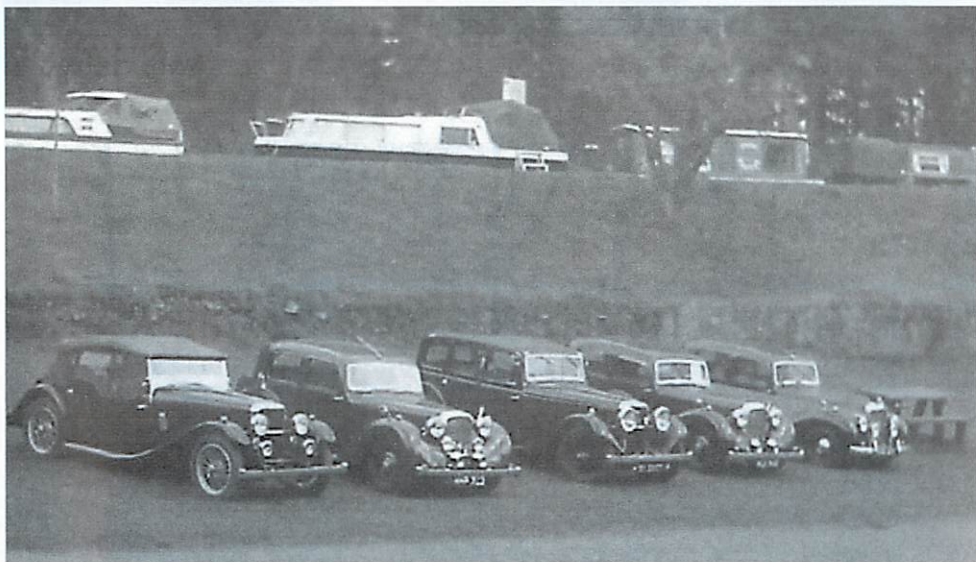
The
INAUDIBLE
ALVIS
LUXURY CARS
BRITISH — FROM RADIATOR TO REAR LAMP



SECTION NOTES

– Alvis Activities From Around The World –

SOUTH WEST AND WALES SECTION
CARS, BOATS AND TRAINS, SUNDAY 4TH APRIL 2004



Line up at Goytre Wharf with narrow boats in the background.

Photo: Paul de Geus

The attractions of Goytre Wharf on the Newport and Brecon Canal, Monmouthshire never diminish whatever the weather and we had both rain and shine as seven Alvises and two RM series Rileys reprised part of last year's Monmouthshire meander.



Members' cars at the railway museum.

Photo: Paul de Geus



Paul de Geus' Firebird and Phil Robertson's Crested Eagle at the Griffithstown Railway Museum.

Photo: Paul de Geus

We had reserved sufficient tables at the Waterside Rest Cafe and Bar, Goytre Wharf and everyone seemed to enjoy their reasonably priced and (mostly) freshly prepared traditional Sunday lunch. A few members helped generate an appetite or abate the effects of three courses by strolling along the picturesque canal tow path.

After lunch a short drive south took us to Griffithstown Railway Museum. This splendid little enterprise is one rail enthusiast's collection of railwayana and housed in a former G.W.R. goods shed between Cwmbran and Pontypool. No live steam but plenty to occupy half an hour or so, and with an entry fee of £1 per person something of a bargain.

Mugs of railwaymans' tea in a very snug café area, still surrounded by exhibits, rounded off a pleasant afternoon.

My thanks to Paul de Geus (Firebird), Terry Donnelly (Firefly), Tony Moore (TA21 and TA14), Phil Robertson (Silver Eagle), William and Sara Whitehead (TC21), and John Harris and his pal Brian, as ever supporting Welsh Alvis outings in their 1½ and 2½ Litre RM Rileys, for attending.

ANDREW ROBISON



*Outstanding in a
year of great
development —*

