

# Hare & Hounds

Classic Vehicle Club



JANUARY 2024 | EDITION 384



## **Rob Salter**

Members of the H&HCVC will again be sorry to learn that another of our long-standing members, Rob Salter, passed away over the weekend of 15th/16th December. Many of you will know Rob as "Jane's Dad" but, as a keen member of the Club, he was much more than that. Rob was the owner of a 1976 Austin Allegro Super Estate (featured on the front cover of the October 2023 magazine) that he proudly displayed at various shows throughout the season and always at the annual Club Show. Rob took a great deal of pleasure from his car and chatting to people about it. He also took a lot of pleasure from his H&HCVC membership, the weekend and evening runs (particularly those that went through Derbyshire) and socializing with friends and members at Club Nights. Rob's good humour and pragmatism will be very much missed at these events.

# H&H CVC Ltd

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The Club meets at the Conservative Club, High Lane  
on the **THIRD** Wednesday of each month @ **8.15pm**

Annual Club Subscription - £20

Subscription Payments by Bank Transfer

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### January 2024

Weds 17th January – Club Night – Annual ‘Chairman’s Quiz Night’ (finger food to be offered).

### February 2024

Weds 21st February – Club Night – the Club’s Annual General Meeting (complimentary buffet to be offered).

### March 2024

Weds 20th March – Club Night – Annual ‘Rocker Box Racing’ Event.

### April 2024

Sunday 7th April – The 2nd Online Austin Seven Club’s Pre-War Car Show. To be held, for pre-war cars only, at Hammerwich Cricket Club, midway between Lichfield and Burntwood, Staffordshire. In aid of Lions Charity.

Wednesday 17th April – Club Night.

Sunday 28th April – Drive It Day – The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs’ designated day to dust off your pride and joy, give it a polish and to drive it down the road(s).

### May 2024

Saturday/Sunday 11th & 12th May – Glossop Rotary Club Classic Car & Vehicle Show. Organized by High Peak Classic Car Group at Lyme field Garden Centre, Broadbottom, SK14 6AG. In aid of Willow Wood Hospice & Rotary Foundation.

Wednesday 15th May – Club Night.

Wednesday 22nd May – 1st Evening Run of the year. Details to follow.

Spring Bank Holiday Weekend 24th to 27th May – The Austin A30/A35 Owner’s

Club International Rally. To be held at Chesterfield Panthers RUFC, 2012 Dunster Road, Chesterfield, S41 9BF.

### June 2024

Sunday 16th June – Peaks & Dales Annual Charity Run. Details to follow.

Wednesday 19th June – Club Night.

### July 2024

Wednesday 17th July – Club Night. Annual Club BBQ & Impromptu Car Show.

Wednesday 24th July – 2nd Evening Run of the year. Details to follow.

### August 2024

Wednesday 21st August – Club Night.

Wednesday 28th August – Final Evening Run of the year. Details to follow.

### September 2024

Sunday 1st September – Annual Club Show – Open to members and non-members.

Wednesday 18th September – Club Night.

### October 2024

Wednesday 16th October – Club Night.

### November 2024

Wednesday 20th November – Club Night.

### December 2024

No Planned Activities At This Time.

Keith Yates

To begin with, a happy New Year to all members, readers and their families, I hope that 2024 will turn out to be a good one for you all. I also hope that everybody enjoyed their Christmas breaks and that Santa managed to get what was wanted to whom and to where it was wanted.

Clearly, this is my first editorial of 2024 but it is also a final reminder that the 2024 annual club subscriptions fell due on 1st January. Despite rising costs, the subscription has been pegged at the level of £20pa for another year. Payment/banking details are provided towards the top of Page 3 of this magazine. No doubt Graham and Jean will be more than happy to accept your money so don't delay or you'll forget to pay and then wonder why you're not receiving a copy of this magazine.

There seems to have been a bit of an Austin Seven theme going on over recent months; and no bad thing too I hear you calling. We had the very entertaining Ken Coxy with his Club Night presentation about his own Austin 7, the "Forthcoming Events" page will tell you that the Online Austin Seven Club will be running, after the 2023 success, their second pre-war cars only show and you'll hopefully

stumble across my piece (in this edition) about Jack French and his Austin Seven Special "Simplicity". As the motor car evolves, at pace and with political "persuasion" it would seem, into something that we really couldn't have foreseen 10/20yrs ago, then it's good to remember that these great little machines are an important link in the motor cars evolutionary chain. As an aside, here's a challenge to all of you pre-war car members. How about sharing their stories in the pages of this magazine and/or dusting them all off and taking part on "Drive It" day on Sunday 28th April? Thinking of the Austin Seven, Graham Scattergood recently told me that he had a Nippy one – which is nice!

A bit of good news now. I had a "Christmas" email from from Barrie Rayner (he of the superb DAX Cosworth sports car) just before the festivities. Barrie explained that he hadn't been able to attend club events for several months as he'd recently had a knee replacement operation. I'm pleased to confirm that "Bionic" Barrie is well on the road to recovery now so we'll hopefully see him again in the not too distant future.

On the theme of "Christmas" emails, cards being so yesterday, I

had a good one from Peter Walvin (he of the Jaguar E Type V12 Coupe "Green Machine"). I thought I'd share Peter's accompanying photo as nothing says Christmas like a "big cat's" rear end!!!

I suppose that the majority of car "nuts" will have an all-time favourite car but some, like me, will also have a list of cars for which they have a real liking, a soft spot or perhaps an itch to own. My personal list of "top" cars has always included the Rover (P6) 2000. This was really the first car that I remember having an impact upon me when it was introduced in 1964. It was a very modern car, a very stylish car and certainly a very desirable one too. I can remember going with my Dad to have a look at one just after the launch (at a Rover dealer in Shrewsbury of all places) and, even at my (then) young age, being "wowed" by it. Even now, I still believe that this car represented British auto engineering at its very best; very little came close to it at that time. Over the many years that have followed that first encounter, I have managed to collect together quite a lot of literature about the Rover P6 (things like original press cuttings from the car's launch and brochures etc) so, I was very

pleased to recently acquire some information about a particular and rather special P6, a 1973 Rover 3500S V8 Police car. You can read about this car elsewhere in this edition of the magazine.

Whilst I'm admitting to a small part of my "car stuff" collection(s), I can share the start of a more recent collection that's taken hold, American car registration plates. I have seen these plates at auto-jumbles (and the like) for years but I've only recently taken an interest in them. It is one of those subjects that the more you delve into, the more fascinating and interesting it becomes. There are, of course, 50 USA states and they have all issued their own very individual registration plates over many years – so very colourful and so typically Americana. These plates certainly make UK plates look so very boring and lacking in any sort of pizzazz.

Anyway, I think that's me done for another month. As ever, David and I both hope that you enjoy this first (for 2024) edition of your favourite Car Club magazine – not long now before we can hopefully enjoy some trouble free 'classic' motoring.



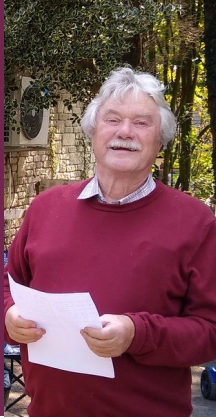
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# CHAIRMAN'S CHAT



## HALL OF FAME AWARD RECIPIENTS

2012 - Chris Parr  
2014 - Bob Plant  
2015 - Ray Etchells  
2016 - Fred Dean  
2020 - David Bowden  
2022 - Jane Harrop

And so, with the arrival of another New Year, albeit a Leap Year and no doubt our Editor has already mentioned it, a Happy New Year to all of our members and readers too. I hope that everything went well for you over the Christmas period and that you got everything you wanted, including socks and other items. This year I did not get and neither do I need it thank you, the last-minute Christmas gift of a classic car book which generally feature cars from the early 1900s that I have seen many times before. Unfortunately, books like these have been received by me more than a few times and usually end up in a Charity shop or similar. Well-meaning friends or relatives, when looking for things to buy me, often see such a book at the last minute and think, or say, 'this is just the thing for Steve'. In truth I would rather they saved their money.

In a previous chat I mentioned the storage of your car battery over the Winter period. I learn from both the AA and RAC that more than half of the vehicle call

outs they get over the winter period are due to battery failure. Your battery should be left in the car with a small lamp connected across the terminals to give it some work and then the battery given a re-charge every couple of weeks or so. Do not under any circumstances take it out of the vehicle and leave it on a cold concrete or similar floor as this will wreck it. If you feel the need to lift it from the vehicle then leave it somewhere warmish like an outside enclosed porch or similar.

At the last Committee meeting the matter of Subscriptions was discussed; which have remained at their present level of £20 per year for sometime. If you have received a renewal note or are about to get one, the subscription will remain at £20 for the year ahead, 2024. At the renewal date in January 2025, this will rise to £24 per annum for all members. This is still good value for money and particularly so when you look at the subscription charges for many other Clubs, particularly one make clubs. Subscriptions must be made to H&H CVC Ltd, preferably



by BACS, or handed or sent to Graham Knowles. Payment by BACS is the much preferred method or by cash on a Club Night. Payment by cheque does present Graham and Jean with several problems, not in the least due to bank closures etc. For any new members, or lapsed ones, the subscription rate will rise to £24 per year, or £2 per full month, for the rest of the year – with renewal in January 2025. If you are paying for someone else then please make this quite clear to Graham.

In the Spring, when it comes the time to prepare your vehicle for use and give it its annual or regular polish, I am reliably told that applying the polish with a soft cloth in a circular motion is not good. A straight line motion is best rather than the easier circular motion which can ultimately damage your paintwork.

At the Club Night meeting in

January (Wednesday 17th), I will present my annual Quiz. As I mentioned last month, I would ask that you bring a writing implement with you. Paper, questions and prizes will be provided (prizes for four people) as usual. For the February meeting we will have our annual AGM with hotpot supper at about 9pm. For the March meeting we will have our annual Rocker Box Race Night, run by Ed Burke and support; more on that in future issues.

As I have mentioned before, the Chairman (me), Deputy Chairman (Mike Coffey) and Club Secretary (Chris Parr) will not be seeking re-election at the AGM in February. These positions, I am pleased to say, will be taken up by Keith Yates, Peter Norbury and Jane Harrop respectively to enable the Club's continuance for the future. And so its goodbye from me and see you in January.

## THIS MONTH'S FRONT COVER

..... has a distinct similarity to the January 2023 (Issue 372) front cover. Members and readers will hopefully recall Alison Morgan's immaculately presented Mercedes Benz SLK and its "Yellowstone" (aka "Sunburst Yellow") colour. Well, as we all battle our way through the dark depths of winter, the editorial team has been working tirelessly to

bring you all a bit of "sunshine" and the hope that spring will bring us longer days, warmer weather and lots of opportunity to get our classic motors out on the road and onto show fields. So, it gives me the greatest of pleasure to introduce you all to Dave Betts' Skoda Felicia "Fun". This car is exactly what its name implies, it's a bit of fun and it's

also very yellow. In fact, Dave's Skoda is so yellow that you don't really realize just how yellow it is until you see it live and in front of you – it seems to almost laughingly scream at you “yes, I'm a bit eccentric, slightly weird and I'm more than a bit yellow too – suck it up and get over it!!!”. It's a car that you can't not love and smile at. Anyway, here's a brief description of the Skoda Felicia “Fun” in Dave's own words – my thanks to him for this piece. (Ed)

This is my 1999 Skoda Felicia “Fun” Special Edition and I have owned it since September 2023. It has replaced my Fiat X1/9 as I needed something more practical (and reliable.....).

The car is in its original “striking”, two-tone yellow paintwork with matching, again original, yellow leather seats, yellow steering wheel, dash and sun-visors and with “Frog Prince” logos on the upholstery and body decals. I can find no reference or reason for the Frog Prince logos but, to me, it just adds to the individuality!

Only 600 right-hand-drive Felicia Fun cars were built. This Special Edition, was produced to celebrate

the merger of Volks Wagon and Skoda and it is based on the VW Caddy pickup which was actually built by Skoda. It is believed that there are about 100 of these cars still on UK roads.

The main difference between the normal VW Caddy/Skoda Felicia pickup and the Felicia Fun is that on the Felicia Fun the rear screen bulkhead section can be moved out into the pickup load bay, allowing an extra rear passenger seat to be folded out and giving “comfortable” seating for four adults, albeit with the rear passengers exposed to the elements! Mine comes with the optional and removable “Truckman” hard top which encloses the rear seats and load bay, making for a more practical bad weather conversion, plus it also has roof bars and a tow-bar.

For me, the car is a mix of dependable VW/Skoda engineering and slightly bonkers styling coupled with individuality, comfort (compared with the X1/9) and huge practicality.

The car is a bit frayed around the edges but I will be gradually improving her and I look forward to taking her to shows and club runs in the new year!



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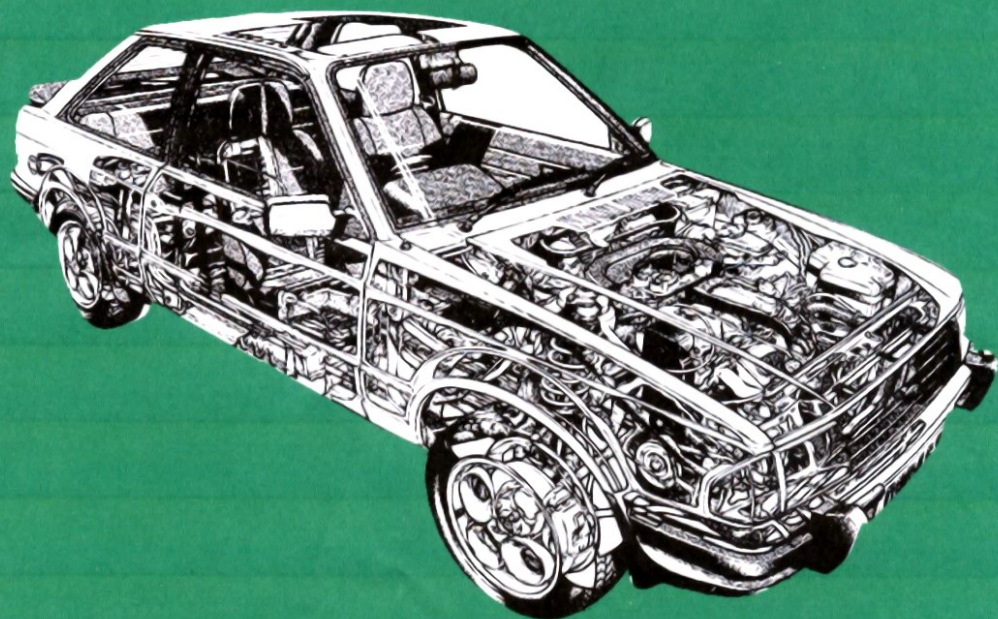
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# MG

## CATCH UP

*Graham Scattergood*

Well everybody, I hope that you all had a very good Christmas and New Year and that the jolly fat guy in the red suit and white beard (no not me!) visited you and yours with some nice goodies and maybe the odd gift for the car too.

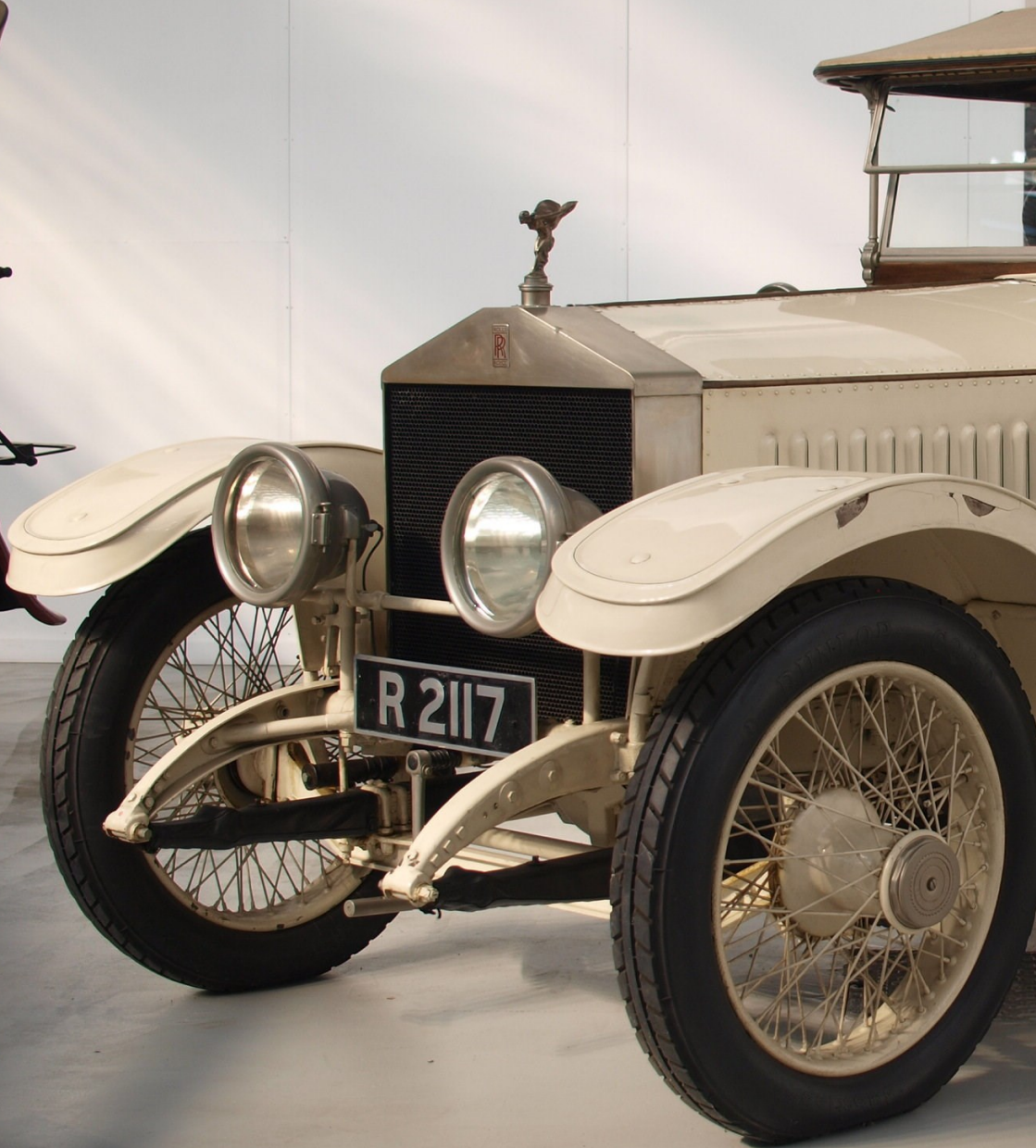
At this time of year we also reflect on years past and, inevitably, our thoughts are drawn to friends, family and club members that we have lost over these times. However, we must try and remember all of the good times that we shared and to celebrate the memories we carry of them.

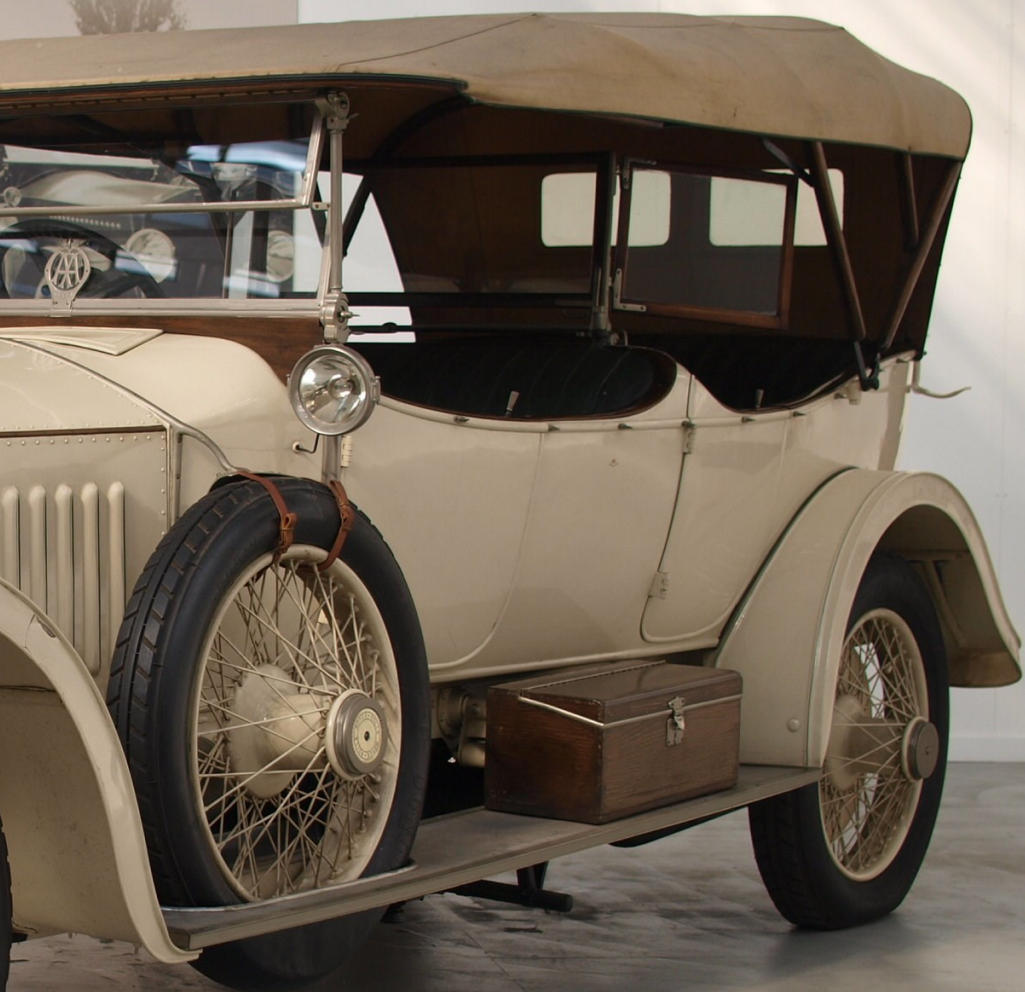
We can all look forward to our Chairman's quiz (January Club Night) and then, the following month (February Club Night), the AGM when we will be heralding in a new hierarchy to guide the Club through-

out, what will be, a challenging year of Classic Car involvement. We still need your input with regards to what you would like to see the Club doing this year to try and make it an enjoyable and entertaining year of events and activities. Before I sign off, has anybody else been subject to the extortionate amounts that the car insurers are charging upon renewal? The insurance for my daily drive car was due in January and my insurers wanted a figure that was exactly double the figure that I had been charged in 2023. The cheapest that I have found to date is 76% more expensive than last time! How can they say that Dick Turpin is dead?! (But at least Turpin had the good grace to wear a mask! ... Ed) I don't know how our Classic Car insurance policies will be affected but BE PREPARED!!

Anyway, I am looking forward to seeing all of your OLD faces again at Club Night so, until then ...

... Toodle Pip.





**ROLLS ROYCE**  
**THE LEGEND**

**THOMAS WARDLE**

## The Rolls Royce “Bumping Machine”

In 1905/6 Henry Royce (later Sir) was working on the 40/50 HP car that was to be later and more famously known as the “Silver Ghost”. The name was created when it was shown at the 1906 Motor Show, it was painted silver and was so quiet it “sounded like a ghost”. In the factory, Royce had created a device known as the “bumping machine”. This had off centre drums under each wheel and these hammered the suspension and the whole car; the idea being to build a car that could not be destroyed on this device. The car was set to run at three quarters maximum speed, in top gear and then they sat and watched.

Eventually, something broke and the car was stopped. The redesigned component was refitted and the car restarted. Slowly and surely practically every component was redesigned and improved. The chassis rivets loosened, these were replaced with nickel steel nuts and bolts. The radiator matrix split so it was mounted on ball joints so that chassis movements could not be transferred to the radiator. Components under stress were held together with lots of small nuts and bolts, rather than a few large ones, as these proved to be more effective. Every leaf in the springs was polished to a mirror finish, allowing

each leaf to “slide” with minimum friction. They were then packed with grease, assembled and wrapped in leather.

Henry Royce and his engineers had created a chassis that would continuously run, non-stop, for one hundred hours and without a problem. The company then bought a quality American chassis and put it on the machine. Within three minutes it was “in bits”.

In 1914, existing Silver Ghost chassis's were commandeered, from across the country, by the government. These chassis's had their bodies removed, an armoured body fitted and were then sent to war. The story is that not one ever broke down, even though the radiator was sometimes protected by a hinged steel plate and the armoured body-work was a lot heavier than the car was designed for. In 1918 the cars were returned to England, their chassis's were refurbished, bodies refitted and were then returned to their owners.

To give you some idea how good these cars were, you could place a three-penny bit, on it's edge, on the rocker cover, start the engine and the coin will remain standing!



## Rolls Royce – At Your Service

Back in the 1960s, my father knew a man who owned an early 1930s Rolls Royce 20/25. During a conversation one day, he told my father about a trip to the (then) Crewe factory because he needed a new rear spring to replace one that he had broken. Armed with the chassis number, he entered the Parts Dept.

Parts Man – “How may I help you Sir?”

Man/Owner – “I need a new rear spring for my car please”, giving the Parts Man the chassis number of his car.

Looking through his records, the Parts Man asked – “do you want the nearside or the offside spring Sir?”

Man/Owner – “What difference does it make?”

Parts Man – “The nearside spring is tensioned three pounds heavier than the offside spring; to allow for the camber of the road Sir”.

Man/Owner – “The nearside spring please”.

Two minutes later the parts man emerged from the store with a new spring in his hands. Instant parts for a thirty year old car.

That is what you call service!



# Jack French and Austin 7 “Simplicity”

**Keith Yates**

Should you be an enthusiast of the Austin 7, the 750 Motor Club and/or racing Austin 7 Specials then you may well be familiar with the name Jack French, a man and a particular machine created by him, that became synonymous with Austin 7 based “specials” and the development of postwar motor racing in Great Britain. If you're not familiar

then let me introduce you.

Firstly, Jack French was an Austin 7 enthusiast who had worked in the aircraft industry (in the Gloucester area) during World War 2. So, he already had an engineering background. Secondly, he was also a founder member of the famous 750 Motor Club for Austin 7 owners and, in 1949, helped to draw up the rules for the 750 Formula. This racing formula was aimed specifically at those racing fans that had very little money but who still wanted to race Austin 7 Specials around the many disused airfields that were situated across the country; the most famous of these was, of course, (ex)





RAF Silverstone. Also in 1949, and used it, the facilities available to Jack built himself a garage out of an old War Department canteen that had travelled over the Atlantic, as aid to a besieged and war-torn Britain, from America. It had no mains electricity supply so all work had to be carried out using only hand tools or 24volt power, generated from accumulators, and with any heating coming from a paraffin stove. Despite the austerity and obvious limitations of the (now) garage, Jack French set to

him and his growing reputation to build 750 Formula Specials and to regrind camshafts so as to transform Austin 7 engines into "racing" engines. He had become one of the, what Enzo Ferrari once scornfully called, British "Garagistas". Jack also created and constructed, at minimal cost, what is quite possibly the most famous Austin 7 Special racer there has ever been; he originally named his creation "Simplicity

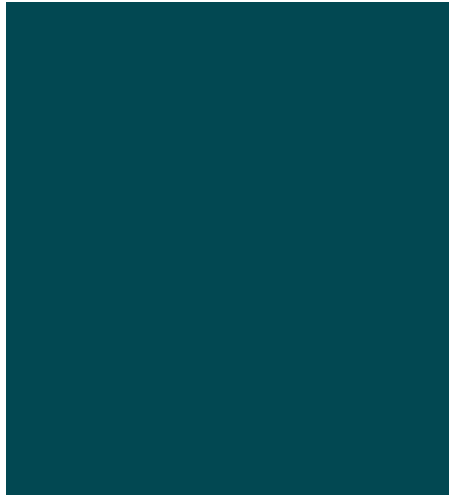
Itself” but it is now better known simply as “Simplicity”.

“Simplicity” (reg EDD 168) was built by Jack French for the 1953 racing season. It was made in something of a hurry during five weeks of late evenings and at weekends. It was relatively cheap, uncomplicated and so successfully driven, by various drivers, that numerous enthusiasts wanted to know how it had been done so that they could copy it and go racing. Unselfishly, Jack wrote several articles about his creation and how he had built it. The car’s chassis was that of a standard 1930 Austin 7 but with Ruby outriggers at the rear. Front axle is centrally divided to give independent suspension whilst the rear axle is a 1931 type with a ratio of 5.25 to 1. Overall weight of “Simplicity” was approx’ 730lbs or 330kgs and with altered valve timing and a small carburettor choke (19mm diameter) it gave an impressive power output at low revs and a good turn of speed. Aside from 750 Formula success, “Simplicity” also held the Austin 7 Prescott Hill Climb record for many years. It is still, carefully, competing today.

The 750 Formula has flourished for many years and will celebrate its 75th anniversary during 2024; this makes it the oldest continuously contested race formula in the World. There have also been quite a

few motorsport “names” that started their careers with Austin 7 Specials, Colin Chapman, John Cooper and Bruce McLaren to name but three.

Jack French’s garage was rediscovered in 2013, still next to his cottage at Farley’s End, near Gloucester. After being saved from demolition, members from the Austin 7 Clubs Association dismantled, stored, repaired and eventually reconstructed the garage at the Atwell Wilson Motor Museum in Calne, Wiltshire. It houses, along with examples of tools etc, a reproduction, in cut-away form, of “Simplicity”. A fitting tribute to Jack French and all of those other British “Garagistas” of the 1950s. Some of them grew to innovate and to dominate Formula 1 and to make Enzo Ferrari eat his own word.



**1972 Rover P6 3500S V8  
(MMC 501L) Police Car  
Keith Yates**

During the 1970s, a re-activated IRA and their terrorist bombing campaigns forced the police to look very seriously at the protection of political and royal VIPs. Protection duties became the responsibility of Special Branch for whom specialist equipment was deemed a necessity for their officers if they were to combat the threat. One such item of equipment was this very special, though seemingly unremarkable, Rover P6 Police Car.

Generally speaking, the Rover P6 wasn't a very popular car in government, ambassadorial or royal circles for the very simple reason that their back seats were deemed too small. Certainly, top politicians much preferred the Rover P5 and Prime Ministers through Heath, Wilson (who had a rear, custom-built armrest that could house his famous pipe), Callaghan and Thatcher could all be regularly seen being driven in P5s until well into the 1980s. Police Forces across mainland Britain just loved the Rover P6 though and couldn't get enough of them – the Metropolitan Police had loads of them – so it's perhaps understandable that the Special Branch Protection Squad chose the P6 as the basis for a "special order" Prime Ministerial and royalty protection car. As a

Police Car, the Rover P6 was ideal. With extremely good handling, thanks in no small part to the 'De Dion' rear axle tube, good driver ergonomics and comfort and, particularly in 3500S V8 form, a powerful turn of speed that could hit 60mph in just over nine seconds. All very well and good but what makes MMC 501L so different/special? At a glance, it's an ordinary looking Rover P6.

Special Branch knew that their own Protection Squad officers would need serious protection if/when they were ever called upon to protect a Prime Minister or a senior royal during an attack. The Special Vehicle Unit was tasked to come up with an attack "proof" P6 and MMC 501L is what they came up with. It is clearly based on the 3500S platform but has a Borg-Warner automatic 'box, is covered with inch-thick armour-plate steel and has armour-glass all around. The car weighs in at circa 2000kg, has an increased 0-60mph time of about 12secs – that the auto 'box struggles with – and returns a maximum of 10mpg. The specs are as follows: -

Steel armour-plates fitted to the under floor/floor pan, wheel arches, doors and bulkheads.

Armour glass fitted to the inside of the front and rear screens. This was fixed in place by specially made clips attached to the stainless steel win-

dow surrounds. Additionally, the side windows were fitted with two-thick armoured glass.

***A factory fitted sunroof for ventilation and an alternative emergency escape route. This also had special mountings at the front to hold a blue "Police" light or a Royal Crest, dependent on the duty to be performed.***

***Illuminated 'POLICE' sign for display behind the front windscreen.***

***Vents linked to an independent oxygen supply – to protect from gas attacks.***

***Boot mounted radio equipment for emergency calls.***

***Sports steering wheel for high-speed driving accuracy. This meant that the steering was very heavy at slow speeds but it was also necessary to stop drivers from getting grazed knuckles from the armour glass whilst steering.***

***Up-rated suspension, larger brake***

***discs and a bigger brake servo.***

***Two-tone horns and a 'Whitworth' bell.***

Apparently, the Rover's extra weight is telling when accelerating but the mighty 3500cc V8 never lets the car feel slow or sluggish, rather, the driver is said to feel confident of adequate performance when/if required.

MMC 501L served on the front-line from 1972 to 1983 and, as part of the Metropolitan Police Force's Historic Vehicle Collection, is the only remaining Rover P6 still officially registered as a Police Car. Throughout its 10yrs of service MMC 501L remained an unobtrusive but ever vigilant shadow of the great and the good. It isn't known if the car was ever actually 'in the line of fire' but 10yrs of shadowing Prime Ministers, Senior Royals and Northern Ireland politicians around 'sensitive' areas would certainly mean some serious action.



# **This & That, Bits & Bobs and a few Odds & Sods**

## **Atwell Wilson Motor Museum**

I'm not sure if this museum will be familiar to members/readers but if it isn't then it should be and if you haven't made a visit then make plans to do so. It's nicely tucked away, in a purpose built building, in Calne, Wiltshire (SN11 0NF – Tel 01249 813119 – [www.atwellwilson.org.uk](http://www.atwellwilson.org.uk) ) and is well worth a visit if you happen to be in striking distance of the area (check opening times before travelling).

The collection was started by the late Richard and Hasell Atwell (they lived in Calne throughout their lives) and the acquisition of a 1937 Buick Albermarle, followed by a 1934 Vauxhall 14/6, then a 1931 Singer Junior; as with all “collectors” though, other cars followed! The hire of cars for weddings started in 1972 and a fleet of classic cars, including some enormous Lincoln and Cadillac American iron, is now a significant part of the museum's collection. The main hall of the building was completed in 1989, extended in 2003 and then again in 2022. This allows the museum to house circa 100 cars and motorcycles, together with a 1930s style garage display and the

exhibition of Jack French's 1940s (Austin 7 Special) garage – see the article elsewhere in this edition. In addition to the cars and motorcycles, there are very good collections of model cars/trucks, car badges, signage and general motor memorabilia; all supported by friendly, welcoming, accommodating and very enthusiastic volunteer staff. What's not to like?

## **Book Review**

Now then, it may just be that Santa couldn't be bothered getting you a present (**Q:** ‘what would you like for Christmas dearest?’ **A:** ‘I don't know, there's nothing I really want’) so, here's a couple of ideas to help you spend that “Christmas money” that you've got stashed at the back of your sock drawer. The first is a follow on from the book that was reviewed in last month's edition.

**“When the Wheels Come Off” – “More Confessions of a 1970s & 80s Car Mechanic”**

**By Brian Cunningham – Published by The History Press 2022**

**ISBN 978 1 8039 9102 3**

“Brian Cunningham's popular first book, Under the Bonnet, was a colourful and humorous collection of memories of his time as a car mechanic in the 1970s and 80s. When he wrote it, he was sure he had put everything of interest down, but it

turns out there were quite a few escapades he'd forgotten to mention. Time, then, for part two ...

*When the Wheels Come Off* is a joyous return, covering what he missed first time round: cars fixed and some broken, fads and crazes, crashes and scrapes and near misses, evolutionary dead-ends in technology, underhand practices and downright skulduggery, run-ins with management, the tools used, the cars 'stolen' and scrapyards visited. A lively and engaging trip back to the workshop."

**"Phoenix" – "The amazing emergence of this Riley Special from a sea of burned out wreckage"**

**By Roger Fountain – Published by Roger Fountain Publishing with Writersworld 2019**

**ISBN 978 1 9161600 1 9**

"For many years, Roger has had an ambition to build a Riley-based Special. He located the burned out remains of a 1934 Riley, destroyed in a barn fire, and decided there was just enough left of the car to use as a basis for his project. Now, after five years' hard work and several major crises, he has turned a few rusty remnants of an 85 year old car into a beautiful piece of automotive art. This book tells that story."

*A copy of this book may not be the easiest to track down (there are plenty on eBay) but, if you can, it's well worth the trouble and a thoroughly good read. Also, this Riley Special is a fabulous looking car and truly, a work of art (Ed)*

**..... and now for something completely different .....**

A man walks into a bar with a roll of tarmac under his arm and says to the barman; "Pint of bitter please and one for the road."

What do you call a penguin with earmuffs on? Whatever you like, it can't hear you anyway.

A man visits his doctor.

Man – "Doctor, I just can't stop singing 'The Green, Green Grass of Home'."

Doctor – "That sounds like a case of Tom Jones Syndrome to me."

Man – "Is it common?"

Doctor – "It's not unusual."

**European Car of the Year – Some Previous Winners**

Here's a little trip down Memory Lane; a reminder of some great (OK, some weren't so great) cars that won the European Car of the Year award during its first six years:

-



**1964** – The **Rover 2000**. The fabulous, the first and an extremely worthy winner of the award.

**1965** – The **Austin 1800**. I'm not sure about this one, limousine comfort but certainly not a looker.

**1966** – The **Renault 16**. The first family hatchback (?). French auto design/engineering at its best.

**1967** – The **FIAT 124**. Yes, we all know they rusted on the showroom floor but it's got Italian brio!

**1968** – The **NSU RO80**. One of the automotive greats! See the May 2023 issue (edition 376).

**1969** – The **Peugeot 504**. The very first "World Car" (?). See the August 2023 issue (edition 379).

The intention is to revisit some of these cars in future editions.

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# BEN'S CHRISTMAS RUN

**THOMAS WARDLE**

*only a small job for Ben but...*

The shop in Bredbury, owned by my parents, sold DIY, cycles and gardening equipment, as well as a few unlikely items. One of these was 28lb (12.7kg) paper bags of coal which, although expensive compared to a one hundred weight sack, would keep the fires burning until your next weekly delivery. For the younger ones, who perhaps don't understand imperial weights and measures, eighty 28lb bags equal one ton.

One of the regulars in the shop was the vicar from Saint Mark's Church. In late November 1966 my Dad said to him, "if you give me the names and addresses of 40 needy old age pensioners then I will give you a ton of coal for Christmas". The list appeared and on December 23rd one ton of coal was collected from the suppliers. Late afternoon on Christmas eve we set off to deliver the coal. The first address was a well kept bungalow and a neatly dressed gentleman wearing leather slippers answered the door. Dad, whilst explaining, thought to himself, this man isn't very needy, so he received one bag. One, two or three bags were delivered to all of the addresses.

At the other end of the scale and nearing the end of the delivery,

we arrived at a run down terrace house and a little old lady answered the door. She was dressed in old clothes and wearing slippers that had more holes in them than material. My Dad explained about the coal and she asked us inside. "Prop them up in the corner of the room" she said. This time three bags were delivered (in those days, the old age pension was a pittance and those that relied on it only just managed to survive). At the end of the run there were three bags left over so Dad back tracked and delivered the remaining bags to the poorest. That little old lady ended up with four!

When we got back into the van I asked "why coal?". Dad replied "Well if nothing else, at least they can have a good fire on Christmas Day".

*This very Christmassy story would clearly have been better if published in the previous December issue (as was recommended by Thomas). Due to an editorial oversight (aka cock-up!!!) by me however, this was unfortunately missed. Anyway, it's still a great story and one that may remind us all that we should keep Christmas well even when 12th night has long since passed. (Ed)*

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