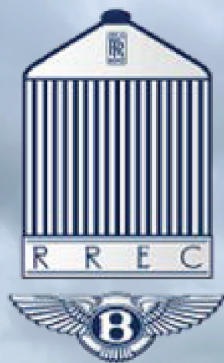


RREC Middlesex Section Magazine



New Year 2024

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2024



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Editor's Ruminations

A very happy NewYear to all Middlesex Section members from the committee.

We have a lot to report on events in the latter part of last year and we have some great events for 2024. After Brooklands we have our January AGM and lunch at The Grovesfield House Hotel. We have been using this excellent venue for many years and the committee would welcome your thoughts on a possible change for 2025.

October saw us in the Garden of England at Penshurst Place where we were joined by several S.E. Section members and had a wonderful time exploring this magnificent house dating from the 14th century. Geoff Newland has provided some extra colourful detail on the Ghost he brought along.

Our usual autumn gathering at N. Sandell's workshop in Isleworth was very well attended and we were able to raise over £1000 for the Shooting Stars hospice for children. Thanks once again to Nigel for his hospitality.



A little later, Nigel Sandell, Michael Marshall-Clarke and I formed part of the club team at the NEC where I displayed B56EF to mark the 90th anniversary of the Derby Bentley. I was pleased to be able to drive a pre-war car to

Birmingham and back after having fractured an ankle over three months earlier.

The number of older cars shown at the NEC show was down again this year, a reflection of a trend towards ever younger cars and the consequential reduction in the market value of older cars. A number of Section members have however seen the phenomenal value to be had from owning and driving a pre 1950s car. If you are offered a chance to drive one, grab it. Then go out and grab a hand-built car bargain and experience real quality!

There was much quality to be seen at the much-expanded British Motor Museum at Gaydon which we visited last month. Many thanks to David for organizing the visit and for his write-up.

We kicked off 2024 in good style with an our customary visit to Brooklands, very well organised for us by Michael, I have included a few of his photographs along with his write up.

Looking ahead, I am looking forward to the first section visit to Stonor Park near Henley on Thames for the first time in early June. This has been arranged for us by Michael. Then there is the RREC National at Burghley, I believe that the club's management have got the message after last year's poor show. A current list of Section events appears on the inside back cover and David will circulate flyers as we go through the year.

Another message learned by the club management is the need for a revival of the technical seminars held at our club headquarters in Northamptonshire. Post-war cars in the early part of 2024, with the pre-war chassis following after the summer, details from Lydia at the Hunt House(marketing@rrec.org.uk).

Committee members have provided some interesting winter reading. Please do send me any articles which are of interest to the readership for inclusion in our summer magazine. In this Magazine, Michael tells us something about the origin of the fine veneers which cover the dashboards of most factory-made postwar cars. Will promotes the benefit of new rubber whilst Richard Skinner tells of the pleasures and perils of wedding duties in a prewar car. Finally, you can, if you wish, read about my travails with my dodgy 20hp heads.

Richard Edgell

Visit to Penshurst Place

Richard Skinner organised a trip to Penshurst Place for us in October and his brief write-up appeared in last month's Spirit & Speed. I thought you might like to learn a little more from Geoff Newland who owns 'Jodhpur No. 3'.



Richard wrote- we had a fantastic turnout for Penshurst Place on the 14th October. This 14th century home was once owned by Henry V. The hall is one of the most original and preserved of the 14th century. A sunny Autumn day greeted us with a total of 17 cars. We were pleased that some of our South Eastern colleagues joined us on the day. Particularly impressive was a Barker-bodied Silver Ghost 40/50 which joined the party, driven by Geoff Newland. Great cars, great company in splendid surroundings.



This car is now owned by Geoff Newland's son Richard, but its first owner was the then Maharaja of Jodhpur.

Geoff has written to me to tell us some more about the car.

The Maharaja owned the Silver Ghost from new and he picked it up at the same time as 4 other R-R at the start of his victorious polo tour of England in 1925 (3 Silver Ghosts and 2x 20hp)!

In total the Maharajas of Jodhpur owned 13 Silver Ghosts over the

Edwardian and Vintage periods.

Its chassis number is 24EU, off test in December 1924 but the original Barker 3 door saloon coachwork (no division) was not finished until 1925. Being a very late Ghost it had 4 wheel brakes and an Autovac from new. It also has adjustable front seats worked by big levers and a "lazy tong" mechanism. The Maharaja was a keen driver, but of rather small stature, as was his wife the Maharani - there is evidence of her driving the car in London behind blue purdah glass (which Triplex certainly produced). The adjustable seats would have been essential for them both to reach the controls.

There is a beautiful vee shaped dashboard (to echo the vee shaped windscreen) with a rev counter ("engine speed indicator") and gradient meter fitted from new.

The spread-eagle mascot was fitted on many but not all of the Maharaja's cars, but a 1925 photo shows 24EU with the mascot fitted. The great Silver

Ghost expert John Fasal tells me he bought it in a Jodhpur market over 40 years ago and the silver plating was black when I bought it off him! Aspreys sold the exact same mascot and as Barker were near to Aspreys in those days they were likely the original supply source. I had a radiator neck extension made for the mascot, to match the original design.

Behind the back seat is an original label saying, "State Garage Jodhpur, Stores Requisition Voucher". The current Maharaja tells me none of his old cars have this voucher today, so it is probably a unique surviving detail. There is also some Indian looking writing behind the seat, probably by mechanics or restorers but I have not been able to get translated - yet.

I have built up a very good History File with many period photos and details - if my son ever wishes to sell the car it will be many thousands for the file and £5 for the car!



Geoff Newland

Show business - NEC Classic Motor Show report by Michael Marshall-Clarke

Thursday 9th November was sunny, crisp and teeth-shatteringly cold. Nigel Sandell, Richard Edgell and I can all attest to that fact, as the giant access doors to the gargantuan NEC complex were open all day while we helped to set up the RREC stand, the wind blowing in a straight line from the arctic to the far corner of Hall 1 – our home for the next 3 days.

We were joining the Hunt House team as part of a contingent of 9 volunteering club members, drafted from all over the country. Middlesex cars were represented by Nigel's 1979 Silver Shadow II and Richard's 1935 Derby Bentley (the one with the seemingly physics-defying James Young parallel doors). They were joined by 4 other club cars of various vintages from the '20s to the '00s.

If you've never visited this show, I highly recommend a trip up to Birmingham next November. Six of the NEC's vast halls are crammed full of cars, bits of cars and all manner of things related to cars. You can buy a car (in the Dealer Hall), sell a car (with Iconic in Hall 2), rummage in containers full of - sometimes rusty - unidentifiable bits of cars (autojumble in Hall 4) and just generally drool over cars of all shapes, sizes and eras.

The days were long but very enjoyable on the RREC stand – what's better than talking about the cars we love all day? – and it was fantastic to meet so many people who have a passion for, or a memory of F.H. Royce's, C.S. Rolls' and W.O Bentley's creations. Richard's Derby – there to celebrate the 90th anniversary of those iconic, R-R built Bentleys – proved to be a hit due to its elegant and inscrutable door mechanism. Other stars were East Anglian member Philip Robinson's 2001 Silver Seraph and Nigel's Shadow, illustrating the appeal that these younger Crewe-built cars now have with the wider classic car enthusiast.

Standout cars for me happened to both be behemoths – beauty and the beast, you might say.



I remember queuing for hours to get close to Jaguar's stunning XJ220 at its unveiling during 1998's NEC Motor Show. Keith Helfet's styling still looks fresh today, 25 years after its debut, and there it was opposite our stand. [For me, some of the gloss was taken off this exhibit because it had to be pushed onto one of the massive transporters the JDC had hired to move the cars back to Gaydon where many are kept. The Rolls-Royce built cars were driven to Birmingham and back,-Ed]



John Dodds is famous for becoming a thorn in Rolls-Royce's side, when he slapped the hallowed Palladian grille onto his 27 litre R-R Merlin-engined car, dubbed 'The Beast'. Crewe were not impressed by the home-built Scimitar-on-steroids and a long legal battle ensued, which Dodds lost. The car survived a fire and rebuild albeit minus an R-R grille, but appeared at the show with a fresh coat of grey paint and a reinstated R-R grille. An expensive car to run, at 2 MPG and on-going astronomical legal fees!

Visit to the British Motor Museum, by David Siegal

Twenty-three hardy souls in twelve club cars braved the Saturday morning chill to meet at Beaconsfield Service Station before heading off in convoy along the M40 to Gaydon.



Steve and Jan Dolan met us there debuting their recently acquired Bentley T1 which was admired by one and all as Steve assumed marshalling duties to get the cars lined up.



After a light lunch we split into two groups and had tours of the Museum and the Collection which lasted about ninety minutes followed by some leisurely browsing and goodbyes as we headed home although an incident on the M40 made that journey home longer than expected for some.



Jan and Stephanie in a Royal Land Rover. Paul and Stephanie trying a 1909 Albon A6 Roi de Belges tourer for size.



The first E-Type roadster.....

And the last E-Type roadster



We found this 2002 Phantom hiding behind the 1976 “Longbridge Tunnel” Mini 1275GT. The Mini was believed to have been parked in one of the tunnels built during the Second World War having been damaged by a falling storage container and subsequently used as a source of spare parts.

New Year's Day at Brooklands

Mach 2(024) Middlesex – Brooklands New Year's Day visit, by Michael Marshall-Clarke

Following the success of our summer 2023 visit to Brooklands, the section made a return visit on 1st January 2024 joining the museum's ever popular 'Classic Gathering' event.

We were lucky enough to secure the coveted Concorde parking space again (with only a little prior good-natured arm twisting) and our wonderful display of both pre and post war Rolls-Royces and Bentleys attracted a lot of interest on the day.



Concorde 'Delta Golf' was in service from 1974 until 1981, so in effect she is an honorary 'SY' being in service at the same time as the Silver Shadow and derivatives, albeit with slightly more powerful 'Olympus' engines!

A fantastic turn out of 18 gleaming club cars braved the NYE hangovers and cold, damp weather to join us around our 'Speedbird' – with cars making the journey from both the East Anglian and Surrey sections too – all in all a supersonic way to welcome in a new year of RREC motoring.



Wood you believe it!

By Michael Marshall-Clarke

Who could tell me what is the oldest part of their Crewe-built Rolls-Royce or Bentley? Your answer might be - depending on the age of your beloved motor car - the chassis or the engine block, hopefully it won't be the oil or the spark plugs! But the actual answer might surprise you. If your car sports walnut waist-rails and/or a walnut dashboard, then I can say with hand on heart that they will be the oldest part in your vehicle. At least 500 years old.



Rolls-Royce prided themselves on using the very best materials and this applied to the wood veneers they used too. Each year a delegation from Crewe would visit the villages outside of Milan, clambering around in dusty, dank cellars to select the very best Lombardy walnut to adorn the interiors of their fine motor cars. R-R chose this region of northern Italy to source their supplies as they believed that “Milan is to veneer what Hatton Garden is to diamonds”, and who’s to argue?



Just as the bluest-white diamonds are the best, burr walnut is the top (or actually bottom, as you'll soon see) of the tree. 'Burr' refers to the knotty inclusions in the wood, the best burrs being found in timber that grows just above and just below the ground.

Over time - 500 years or so - slow, tangled growth creates these beautiful imperfections in the grain. These contorted nodules of walnut are the most highly prized and are matured for up to a century in dark, humid cellars much like those used to age fine wines.

Once back at Pym's Lane, Royce's craftsmen got to work following a tradition that both Chippendale and Sheraton would be proud of. The burr walnut, having been sliced into paper thin sheets, was 'book-matched' across the car. This meant that two identical sheets, from the same nodule of walnut, were laid out so that one was the mirror image of the other down the centreline of the car. More fine furniture than car interior.

I find it incredible to think that the walnut sapling eventually immortalised on my Silver Shadow's dashboard, in 1974, would have been growing in the Lombardy sunshine in the 1470s. A time when Leonardo da Vinci was a youth, and the War of the Roses was being fought in Britain.

So next time you're staring at your gauges, just give a thought to the unique sliver of history that adorns your dashboard. It's a time capsule. If only it could talk, what stories it could tell.

2007 Bentley Arnage T Report, Mileage 61,900

The benefit of new rubber

Following an oil change and fitting of new wiper blades on the Arnage, my next job was to look at replacing the five-year-old Pirelli P-Zero tyres. They had covered 20k miles and had done a sterling job of carrying all 2.7 tons of car around, especially as early tracking and alignment issues wore the edges of the tyres prematurely.



For the purchase, I decided to take advantage of the Pirelli offer as seen in Spirit & Spirt, and after a bit of research, I decided to buy four Pirelli Cinturato P7 255/45Y 19 PNCS tyres at £209 each. (With wheel balancing, TPM stems, and tyre disposal, the total was £826.40). Running the car on the correct tyres is essential to me, and I therefore double-checked the build sheets to confirm the sizes were correct. The new Cinturato would be more supple than the P-Zero tyres and, with added PNCS (Pirelli Noise Cancelling System), should be quieter. The tyres had to be purchased and fitted at a Pirelli performance

centre via the Pirelli website for the offer to apply. I picked Tyre Pros in East Grinstead, who did an excellent job. When I arrived, they went out of their way to reassure me that the car would be looked after and that the tools they were using to remove the tyres wouldn't cause any damage to the rims. Once the wheels were re-fitted, they torqued them correctly at 100NM / 74 lbf ft as requested. After the purchase, Pirelli accepted my claim, and I am currently waiting 'up to 28 days for your reward to be delivered'.

How does the car drive on new rubber? Well, it won't surprise you to hear that the ride is superb; there is far less tyre noise, the grip is better and therefore safer, plus the steering is much lighter.

What about the TPM (Tyre Pressure Monitoring) system, you ask? Rightly or wrongly, as the system has been working fine, I decided to forgo the £852 (in



parts alone) to replace the sensors in all four wheels. These run-off batteries that have a limited life and were last changed in 2016 when the car was nine years old, so only time will tell if that was a sensible choice.

The fitting of new rubber to your car, whether tyres or wiper blades, transforms how a car feels and, in this case, has made the Arnage feel new again.

Some of the next jobs on the list:

Remove condensation from headlamps; Rust repair on the o/s front wing;

Removal of n/s front door interior panel to fix a faulty door locking mechanism; Replace boot struts

Will Bate

7th December 2023

Wedding Duties, by Richard Skinner

I don't know if anybody knows that you can in fact book your classic out for hire on a website called **Book a classic .com**. I'm not quite sure why I did this now (probably after a few drinks, ahem!) but anyway having posted my 25/30 earlier this year I have now completed a few weddings. You can charge whatever you like per hour and book a classic will take 20 percent commission. They pay 2 days after an event without fail. If you like using your car, it's a great way for it to earn its keep too.

I did a wedding in Surbiton mid-summer and it was in the most atrocious conditions. I had to pick up my bride and groom at the church and take them 22 miles to their wedding reception in Ockley. I got to the church in time and it started to rain very heavily. when the couple emerged from church the family and friends made a tunnel from their umbrellas to the car. There was so much cheering I couldn't hear the car was started, but soon we were under way. The rain turned into a monsoon and thunder and lightning ensued! I'm now wondering if we may fail to perform to proceed and I couldn't help noticing a few drops of water onto the bride coming from the sunroof!! *"have you got a blanket?"* She asked- *erm no, but please use my tweed jacket* was my response. Peering through the windscreen with the flat blade 10-inch wipers doing their thing was so stressful- my mouth literally ran dry!! Well anyway, we got there



and the couple were delighted. me, I had a lay down in the back in a lay by to recover before driving home!!

The picture you see here is from The Petersham in Richmond , a beautiful September day. The bride was only an hour and a half late coming down for me, but hey it's their day, right?? We had a wonderful ride to

Putney rowing club with cheers and waves all the way there! On my way back I loosened my tie and relaxed, enjoying the general public giving me the thumbs up and basic happy positive attitudes at seeing the car. I was coming back over Richmond bridge when an elderly man on a bicycle stopped next to me in the traffic and peered in *Smells of fumes doesn't it* " he said I won't tell you my response, but it just shows you, there's always one, isn't there! Happy days

Keep your head on, part one, by Richard Edgell

GEN45 is a 1929 Rolls-Royce 20hp with a unique fabric body built by James Young. The car has 240,000 miles to its name and is known to have had two engine rebuilds, once in 1960 and again in 1985. Travelling to the South of England Rally in 2021 she started popping and banging as we drove down the A3 and by the time we were half way home she was suffering to such an extent I resorted to recovery. On doing a compression test, I found she was running on 4 cylinders. Removing and re-fitting a cylinder head is covered well in the handbook, written at a time when decokes were needed regularly.

So it was 'Off with her head'. This I took to the local engine rebuilder who fitted new exhaust valve guides and new valve seats supplied by Steve Lovatt of Ristes. On his advice, I then took it to a West Midlands firm to have it vacuum impregnated. All was well for over a year, then after the terrible weather late last year, the internal cracks opened, and the tell-tale sign of 'Galaxy' chocolate in the sump and low compression in Nos. 5 and six told me it was curtains for the 93 year iron head. This was weeks after Fiennes had gone broke and no new aluminium 20hp heads would be available from Ardens until sometime late in 2024, at a cost of more than the current £9k!

One of the few advantages of spending all three days at the National is that you get to bump into lots of people. Practically everyone one I met was asked if they knew of the source of a good 20 hp head. I had two leads, first an old head in N.Yorks, and an unused new one in Oxfordshire. Days later I was speeding down the A1 with a s/h head in the boot of the Turbo, then off West to return with a new head. After all, two heads are better than one!

I had the old head pressure tested at 25psi, which proved OK and then it was just a case of cleaning up the valve seats. There then followed one of those 'you had better come and look at this' telephone calls from the local engine man. Most of the combustion chambers showed some micro cracking. I decided I would return the s/h head to Yorkshire, just a 450 mile run in the Turbo. But, before doing this, I fell out of a tree. Whilst interested to be congratulated by the surgeon on doing a thoroughly comprehensive job on an ankle fracture, I was now out of action for months. All I could do was think about the simple job of fitting the new head and getting GEN45 running again. Life, however is not simple, as I regained proper mobility, I was to learn much about small-horsepower heads, for it seems that it was not only the coachwork on GEN 45 that was unusual.

A second and surely final episode will be reported in our Summer magazine.

Subscription

I hope you have enjoyed reading this magazine and the committee look forward to seeing you at the events we have organised. Please don't forget to pay your 2024 subscription which is now due.

In order to cover the costs of running events and producing this little magazine, we are asking for a slightly increased subscription of £15 for a single section member and £20 for couples. Please send payment to:

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It has been brought to my attention that the photographs of the committee members on the inside front cover no longer do justice to all of them. Richard Skinner has kindly provided a very recent of shot of him together with our esteemed treasurer. You can rest assured that the affairs of the section remain in good hands![Ed]

MIDDLESEX SECTION EVENTS 2024



FEBRUARY, Thursday 15th
Visit to Bremont Watches, Henley-on-Thames
Contact Tony O'Brart
tony.obrart@gmail.com



APRIL, Saturday 27th
RREC Middlesex Road Run
Contact Richard Edgell
redgell050@gmail.com



JUNE, Saturday 8th
Private tour & lunch at Stonor Park
Contact Michael Marshall-Clarke
mmc.rrec@gmail.com



JULY, Sunday 28th
Fawley Hill Railway, Henley-on-Thames
Contact David Siegal
david@siegalproperties.co.uk



AUGUST, Sunday 18th
Tewin Classic Car Show, Hertfordshire
Contact Richard Edgell
redgell050@gmail.com



AUGUST, Saturday 31st
Hampton Court Concours, Surrey
Contact Will Bate
will@northpoleit.co.uk



SEPTEMBER, Sunday 29th
Best of British, Beaulieu, Hampshire
Contact Richard Skinner
richardskinner10@btinternet.com

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