

## RREC Middlesex Magazine



**New Year 2025**

# MIDDLESEX SECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## 2024



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## **A note from the Chairman**

I think that 2024 was a very good year for our group. We had some very memorable events, such as two road runs, Michael Marshall -Clarke taking us to Stonor Park, the National Rally at Burleigh House where we were presented with the trophy for Section of the Year, 28 cars went to Beaulieu in September for which thanks go to Richard Skinner. In December my 25/30 had the honour of being the centrepiece at the Grosvenor House Hotel for the book launch. A big thank you to the committee for all of your work this year a fabulous year to come, well done.

Thanks Nigel

## **Editor's Ruminations**

It will not have escaped Section members' notice that our new Club chairman and his board have been getting on with it over the last six months. There has been a new Affiliate Agreement which confirms the financial and constitutional independence of the sections, this has required reams of draft documents and countless hours' work. It has also brought clearer section boundaries and will provide for a disbursement of ten per cent of the net club subscription to be made available to sections if called for.

The tidying-up of boundaries has occasioned your committee's proposal that we rename the section to the London Section. We feel this gives a better idea of the area covered, it will of course continue to encompass Hertfordshire and parts of South Buckinghamshire. This proposal will be put to our section AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> January.

There has been the board's controversial decision to move the club staff to a serviced office in Silverstone at an annual cost of around £26,000. A joint RREC and Sir Henry Royce Foundation meeting later this month will consider the way forward in terms of our club's base and how its many activities can be housed.

A recent survey by a firm of chartered surveyors has produced a lengthy list of remedial work needed at the Hunt House, with the interior work being the responsibility of the club and the exterior being for the SHRMF which owns the buildings. I have been privileged to visit the Hunt House many times this year and have never ceased to be amazed at the extent of the facilities we have. The majority of RREC members have not visited our splendid base to see the

archives, the exhibits, the lecture hall, the workshop and seminar classroom, the library and the superb Royce Room with many fascinating exhibits from the life of Sir Henry Royce. I hope we shall have the opportunity to visit the Hunt House during this year, no other car club has anything remotely like it.

In this magazine we have Michael Marshall Clarke's report on the visit by many brave souls who disregarded the weather and brought suitable clothing to bring in the New Year at Brooklands.

Richard Skinner tells us a little about the Middlesex motor industry at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Last November we had two section visits. At the beginning of the month Tony O'Brart took us to the superb, if rather cold new De Havilland Museum near St. Albans and at the end of the month David Siegal had arranged for us to see the Mini factory at Cowley. Here we learned that it will be 2027 before electric Minis roll down the Oxfordshire lines. They can take as long as they like as far as I am concerned! Tony and I have provided brief reports.

A little earlier, we had a relaxed and enjoyable Road Run in the Surrey hills organised by Richard Skinner. Naturally we had our visit to Nigel Sandell's workshop, but rather than a report on that visit, we can read about Nigel's latest, slightly crazy acquisition. On 10<sup>th</sup> December, Nigel's daughter Vicky was without a doubt The Belle of the Ball at Grosvenor House with her own wonderful couture. Less glamorous is the spanner work, which is in hand in several garages, Will tells us what he has been up to with my old Derby.

Naturally our provisional events list for 2025 appears at the end of the magazine. It does of course include the celebration of a major anniversary, not the Phantom I (100yrs old), nor the glorious Silver Cloud (60 years) nor the fabulous Turbo (40 years), **but THE 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE SILVER SHADOW at Brooklands. SY car owners book now at [silvershadow60event@gmail.com](mailto:silvershadow60event@gmail.com).**

Happy motoring, Richard

This magazine's cover car is of course chassis number GWN23, a 1936 25/30 with a Park Ward touring limousine, belonging to Nigel Sandell.

## **Brrr...ooklands New Year's gathering 2025 – A snowy supersonic Saturday. By Michael Marshall-Clarke**



High class travel- a James Young P11 Continental and an even faster mode of travel from forty years later -photo Richard Skinner

The New Year's Day gathering at Surrey's Brooklands Museum is always a popular event and a brilliant way for petrolheads to see in the new year. Due to our on-going relationship with the museum, we'd managed to reserve the much sought after 'Concorde' parking position for an unprecedented third time and were looking forward to another bumper turnout of gleaming Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, from both Middlesex and Surrey sections, to see in 2025.

This year however the weather had other ideas and due to adverse forecasts for 1<sup>st</sup> January Brooklands took the decision to postpone the gathering, with a last-minute date change to Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>. The event day dawned bitterly cold and icy with even the occasional snow flurry, but Rolls-Royce and Bentley owners are made of stern stuff – a little cold and a bit of salt on the roads



wasn't going to deter our band of members making a fantastic display under the delta wings of Concorde G-BBDG 'Delta Golf'.



The Pedler's 20/25 Freestone & Webb Sedanca Coupe is now a Brooklands regular' photo Michael Marshall-Clarke



Richard's William Arnold 25/30 was there of course, photo Richard Skinner

22 pre- and post-war club cars made a wonderful display spanning the years from Derby-to-Crewe-to-Willesden. Many thanks to all those from the Middlesex and Surrey sections who braved the cold to make our magnificent line-up around Brooklands' very own '*Speedbird*'. A super(sonic) way to usher in our 2025 RREC season!

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## 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twickenham Motor Industry, By Richard Skinner

A few months ago, my friend Michael Webster called me to say that his son's friends' father Robin Hunter had written a book about the history of cars and motorcycles in and around Twickenham and the London Borough of Richmond.



an advert from Grace's Guide

I had no idea that there was indeed any such history, but there absolutely is and not only that he is exclusively inviting 15 lucky people to a private book signing at the Eel Pie Museum in Twickenham. That evening Michael, Richard Edgell, Nigel Sandell and I arrived at a very convivial reception for us lucky few. Looking around the Eel Pie Museum is fascinating and has the most amazing artifacts about when all the bands played on the Eel Pie Island. We sat as an audience and Robin gave us some background of a car called The Orleans which was built on a site in Orleans Road next to Marble Hill House in Twickenham.

There was a very interesting Q&A session which gave an insight into how, where and when cars, including racing cars and motorcycles were produced around the borough. The book is a fascinating read and will be available to purchase at the 125th anniversary event. Robin lives quite a lot in France, but hopefully we can work out the details for an event which is potentially September of this year.



**Paul and Tom Edwards on board an Edwardian Orleans (photos, P Edwards via R Hunter)**





## De Havilland Museum visit, by Tony O'Brart

On 3<sup>rd</sup> November, a total of 33 brave souls brought out their treasured Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars to view a Museum holding and displaying some of the oldest British airplanes that helped us achieve success in both World Wars.



Johnny Vercoutra brought along his lovely Park Ward Derby, B178FB, photo Paul Brittlebank

Secure parking on hard standing in front of one of the Mosquitoes making a good photo opportunity for all of us.



The tour started with tea & coffee in a dining area overlooking a small number of the many aircraft on view.

We then split into two groups with excellent knowledgeable guides explaining in detail just how these planes were built, glued together, fitted out with machine guns, loaded with bombs and crew to prepare them for the ensuing battle.

In the years before WW2, the Air Ministry wanted large heavy bombers, but Geoffrey de Havilland did not agree. The actual history of the Mosquito and the reason behind its success in battle was because of its lightness and speed plus the bravery of the people who flew them. This was explained in detail, and standing alongside the actual airplane made it quite real.

Looking at the engines displayed, the bouncing bomb that broke the German dams , 633 Squadron with historic films in the background all added to the experience. Seeing the plane that Amy Johnson and her husband flew to Bagdad in a race that she won alongside the story of the race made it quite amazing for all of us .

The number of airplanes on display in and outside made the visit well worthwhile, except perhaps for the weather turning freezing cold but a hot drink and the warmth of our club members made it a great day.



GEN 45 enjoyed her little run to London Colney

**Tony O'Brart**

## Visit to the Mini assembly factory by Richard Edgell, Photos Michael Marshall-Clarke



We are grateful to David Siegal for organizing a fascinating group tour of the Mini factory at Cowley on 28<sup>th</sup> November. Twenty-three section members and friends braved the frosty weather and traffic jams to arrive in time for our tour.

After a quick look at the Mini Museum, we donned Hi-Viz jackets and safety goggles and handed in our 'phones ready for a 90-minute tour of much of the plant. The 'body in white' hall is a much-expanded part of the old building and houses many of the 1250 robots in use in the plant. Seventy lorry-loads of zinc-coated steel pressings come from the Swindon pressing plant each working day. The small staff of associates load the small individual panels into stacks next to numerous cells where a group of robots gather, clean and weld them before passing to the robots in the next cell. All the cells work to the same timing of 60 seconds. Once completed the body shells for 3 door, 5 door and



convertibles pass to the paint shop. We were intrigued to learn that the panels in primer are swept clean by rotary brush of ostrich feathers.

Once painted, the body shells are given a VIN number and process into the production line where more human manual work is involved, with robots doing all the heavy work. The moving platforms on which the cars progress raise and lower to the appropriate ergonomically arranged working height. In the assembly halls each process is timed at a uniform 67 seconds. The total elapsed time from the start of the 'body in white process' to the complete car being started up and driven is 22 hours. Most cars are then shipped abroad to some 110 countries.

The Cowley plant is one of the oldest and yet most efficient car plants in the country, which received over £750m investment from BMW about ten years ago, and massive new construction work is in progress to enable the transfer of electric Mini assembly from China to the UK within the next three years. All rather different from the processes used in building a prewar car!



Photo: MINI

**Richard Edgell**



## Autumn Road Run by Richard Skinner



We usually have a spring road run organised by Richard Edgell, and very popular it is too. We talked about an Autumn Road run to satisfy demand for the end of season, after all cars are there to be driven, aren't they? I designed a relatively straightforward loop around the Surrey hills and into West Sussex. The run was limited the entry to 15 cars and we eventually had 12 cars with 20 people in attendance. Unfortunately, the night before returning from holiday in Greece, I went down with a stomach bug – so I couldn't attend my own event- doh!! However, all the other runners and riders met at the beauty spot that is Newlands Corner for a brief at 10.00am.





The first stop was at Denbies Vinyard near Dorking where samples of wine and English champagne were to be had. After purchases, our group left and on to the lunch stop at five oaks (Billys on the road) this is a very popular diner and run by the fantastic Billy and her gang!



Once fed and watered back on the road and heading towards Petworth house the final destination- some visited the house -but others decided to take the scenic A283 back up towards Guildford and the motorway network. A full day of fun and driving was had by all!



**Richard Skinner**

## **The Beatles Bentley by Will' I try with a little help from my friends' Bate**

In 1963, Beatles manager Brian Epstein was driving his much-loved second-hand Bentley S1, and being a man who knew a good thing when he saw it, decided he liked the S1 so much that he'd treat himself to the very latest Bentley on offer, an S3. His car, chassis no. B266EC was duly delivered in early 1964 and registered AJB 400B, a number it still wears to this day.

Following a trip with the Beatles to the USA in February 1964, AJB 400B had its first outing to meet Brain Epstein and the Beatles at London airport.



*Brian Epstein and his Bentley S3, a Rolls-Royce, and many Beatles fans at the airport. Photo credit: Pinterest*

At 7.00 am in the morning, they were met by an estimated 10, 000 fans and were interviewed by Pathe News:

Q "I hear that the four of you are going to be millionaires by the end of the year. Have you got time to actually spend this money?"

Beatles replied in unison: "What money?"

Q: "Doesn't he (Brian Epstein) give any to you?"

George Harrison retorted: "No, no. Have you seen that car of his?"

George was referring to the new Bentley S3 sitting outside the airport's VIP suite.



*Epstein pictured with his S3. Credit Shutterstock*

Sadly, Brian Epstein passed away in 1967, but he'd moved the S3 on before that in October 1965. It had several owners before in 2014, my great friends and restorers of historic houses, Peter Sheppard and Keith Day bought the car.



*Summer 2020: AJB400B at Wolterton Hall in Norfolk in the good company of a 2014 Bentley Mulsanne(aka Fire Engine Ed.) and a 2016 Bentley Flying Spur. Photo Will Bate*

In December 2024, Peter asked me to give the S3 a little TLC. Some jobs on the list include:

Oil and coolant change, a tune-up, new tyres, electrical repairs, and lots of polish.

**What's it like to drive?**

Overall, it's superb and a very pleasant place to be. Looking along the bonnet at the flying 'B' perched on top of the rounded grill of the Bentley, in many ways the Bentley grill seems to suit the design of the body perhaps a little more than the more straight-edged grill of the Silver Cloud's, but it's all personal preference.

The steering is light and precise on this car, and the brakes are also light to operate and pull strongly. Both these things will be due to recent mechanical work as when they are unloved and worn the steering can be woolly and brakes



harder to operate. The seat in this car is comfortable, and the black leather interior is a nice contrast to the dark blue paintwork.

As for creature comforts, importantly in this current cold weather, the Upper and Lower heaters both work well and the split level design means you can drive along with nice warm feet while having a supply of nice fresh air on your face. On the S3, Rolls-Royce sensibly moved the rear window demister switch from the rear parcel shelf to in front of the driver. The rear ride control works from a switch on the steering column and hardens up the rear nicely for those long motorway corners.

The ride is softer than my trusty Arnage T, and as a result. I'd say it's probably an easier car to drive over the potholed roads and speed humps of London. As for performance, acceleration is strong, and it's very happy on the motorway at 70mph – at that speed these days, you'll still pass most other traffic. With the automatic gear selector set in position 4, which is D in most other cars, the car will change up to top gear at 26mph, so keeping the lever in position 3 works best for town work. With mixed driving, she'll return 14 mpg from the 99-octane fuel you'll be putting in every 220 miles or so.



*AJB 400B in  
December 2024.  
Photo Will Bate*

## The RREC 2024 Book Launch at Grosvenor House Hotel, by Nigel Sandell



Paul Brittlebank and I were asked by the RREC if we could provide cars for this year's Book Launch. If you have never been before to the ballroom, it is two floors down inside the building. Cars have to be put in a lift and taken down the two floors. When cars arrive at the ballroom, they then must be pushed into position.



Unfortunately, Paul's 2013 Rolls-Royce Ghost was just a bit too big to get in the lift (Sorry Paul).

The 25/30 was still a very, very tight fit! The Book Launch was a great success! It was so good to see so many RREC members and friends. A very long day but well worth it!

Nigel was accompanied by his daughter Vicky. Jackie Sandell writes that Vicky is wearing a dress that she made from a collection she designed for

her final piece at the Fashion Retail Academy where she studied for 2 years. She has now moved onto a Fashion Design degree at The London College of Fashion. She has two very proud parents.





# 1934 Derby Benley – B129BL, by Will Bate

## Part 1. What are friends for?

The answer to this question is of course to help you remove the engine from your car!



The car in question is my 1934 3 ½ litre Derby Bentley (pictured on the front cover of our Winter 2023 magazine).

The car has covered 140k miles and we believe the engine to be largely original.

After some alarming noises coming from deep within the engine in early 2024, and following a visit from pre-war expert Glen Grindrod, we decided that it was an engine out job. The engine removal task was completed at home in about 2.5 days and the engine is now receiving the care it requires.

Day 1: Richard Edgell and I removed the undertrays (no easy task), radiator and the front of the exhaust.

Day 2: I removed the engine to gearbox nuts and bolts, engine mounting bolts, plus all of the intricate throttle linkages and various electrical cables.

Day 3: Rob Pedler arrived with his engine crane, Nigel Sandell arrived in his van, that we would lower the engine into later. Richard appeared in a hard hat, had extra spanners at hand, a special wooden transit stand and brought a superb

picnic provided by his wife Shobha. We removed the carbs, dynamo and a few other parts and extracted the engine in 4 hours.



*The engine removal crew working in a fresh 5°C in late December 2024. R to L (Rob Pedler, Nigel Sandell, Richard Edgell, and your author.*

## **Part 2. What's a 1934 3.5Litre Derby Bentley like to drive?**

Wonderful is the short answer! Though there is no synchromesh on 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> gear, so those need patience and care to operate. Getting into 2<sup>nd</sup> gear while moving is a real skill, but joyful when and if you manage it. Various reports from the 1930s suggest that owners would keep the cars in 3<sup>rd</sup> gear and slip the clutch as they couldn't get the cars into 2<sup>nd</sup>! Not recommended with a Rolls-Royce clutch which can be burned out if slipped in a matter of minutes! Rolls-Royce later went 'outside' to find harder wearing clutches with better heat dissipation. Moving on, the brakes are excellent, and the 3 ½ litre engine will happily purr along at 55-60mph on the motorway. On such roads, I typically find a lorry to follow which gets up to 56mph on the straights and downhills but slows on gradients. Such habits should keep your Derby 3 ½ happy.

In summary, the car is perfectly capable of modern motoring, London driving and touring.

Stay tuned for the next instalments.

**Will Bate. 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025.**

## Does one *really* need another Rolls-Royce? By Nigel Sandell

The Sandells were holidaying in Fuerteventura at a very nice hotel. It was a restful holiday but there was a lot of downtime. Plenty of time to get up to mischief on eBay!! Richard Skinner sent me a link on eBay to a 1984 Rolls-Royce pickup truck which looked very interesting! I started following this Together with 2400 other people!! It was being sold by Vintage and Prestige (Richard Biddulph). The listing finished at 7:40 on the 29th of August.

Being egged on by Vicky, I did not think that we would be buying a pickup! Much to Jackie 's dismay, we won the pickup! I rang Richard Biddulph the next day to say it was me who had won it! I don't ever buy cars unseen - well I do now!

On my return from holiday a week later, with fear and trepidation, off to Northampton I went to pick up this new project. What had I done?

She drove back from Northampton fine with windows working, air-conditioning working and speed hold all working. Whoopee! This is better than I thought.

She is a bit of a 'doer upper' so on the 19th of October at my open day, she was unveiled to the Middlesex group. I think she was a hit. She is a work in progress, but we are getting there. A lot of people have never seen anything like it before. She will be coming to some RREC events next year and turning some heads!



## Be part of the largest gathering of SY cars EVER!, by Michael Marshall-Clarke

**Calling all SY owners** – We're holding a unique event in 2025 to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow at the historic Brooklands Museum, taking place over the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2025.

The innovative SY cars represented a monumental step change for Crewe and because of their long sales success undoubtedly became the company's saviour in the dark days of the 1970s and '80s.

To celebrate 60 years since their launch, we're aiming to gather the largest number of SY cars EVER...and places are filling up fast. So far, we've 160 cars pre-registered from all over the UK and Europe – so don't delay, register today!

### Event programme.

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August** – Highlight of day one will be the recreation of the iconic '100 Shadows' photo, on the old finishing straight at Brooklands. Attendees will have full access to the museum site which is packed full of food outlets, facilities and of course motoring and aviation exhibits – including Concorde.

In the evening, there will be a black tie celebratory dinner, in honour of our SY cars, to be held in the historic Brooklands members clubhouse (limited tickets available). We're currently finalising special overnight rates with local hotels – full details will be sent to all pre-registered attendees soon.

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> August** – The second day will see us assemble for a 'Diamond Anniversary Road Run' for all Silver Shadow and derivative SY models, with a route through the picturesque Surrey Hills into Sussex.

You're welcome to attend for the whole weekend or just for a day, but pre-registration is essential in order to take part.

### 100 Shadows – a recreation.

In the '70s, 100 Shadows a month passed out through the gates of Crewe. This number was represented in a period advertising shot (pictured here) which we aim to recreate at the event, with as many SY cars as possible. Wouldn't you



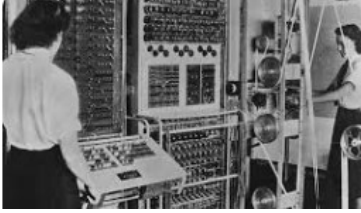
like your SY pride and joy to be a part of history and be in the '100 Shadows' recreation?



The event is open to all SY cars – Silver Shadow/Shadow II, Bentley T/T2, MPW/Corniche, Silver Wraith II and Camargue (2025 also being the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this SY-based, Pininfarina-styled model) – and both club members and non-members and their cars are very welcome, but all cars must be pre-registered. Please spread the word locally to help make this event a success.



# MIDDLESEX SECTION EVENTS 2025



**FEBRUARY**, Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>

Bletchley Park

Contact Tony O'Brart

[tony.obrart@gmail.com](mailto:tony.obrart@gmail.com)



**MARCH**, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>

Visit to P&A Wood

Contact Will Bate

[wbate@wbis.co.uk](mailto:wbate@wbis.co.uk)



**MAY**, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>

Road Run

Contact Richard Edgell

[redgell050@gmail.com](mailto:redgell050@gmail.com)



**JULY**, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>

Goodwood Drive Out Day

Contact Richard Skinner

[richardskinner10@btinternet.com](mailto:richardskinner10@btinternet.com)



**AUGUST**, Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>

Silver Shadow 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Contact Michael Marshall-Clarke

[silvershadow60event@gmail.com](mailto:silvershadow60event@gmail.com)



CONCOURS OF ELEGANCE  
HAMPTON COURT PALACE

**SEPTEMBER**, Saturday 6<sup>th</sup>

Hampton Court Concours

Contact Will Bate

[wbate@wbis.co.uk](mailto:wbate@wbis.co.uk)



**SEPTEMBER**, Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>

International Auto Jumble at Beaulieu

Contact Richard Skinner

[richardskinner10@btinternet.com](mailto:richardskinner10@btinternet.com)



**NOVEMBER**, Friday 21<sup>st</sup>

Visit to Bentley Motors

Contact Nigel Sandell

[information@nsandell.com](mailto:information@nsandell.com)



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