



RREC Middlesex Section Magazine



New Year 2026

The 2026 New Year Middlesex Magazine

Editor Richard Edgell

Contributors Peter Lawrence, Sandy Nicol, Ron Peterson, Nigel Sandell, Will Bate.

The editor is grateful to those who have provided some very interesting material for us to read in the winter evenings. Please keep it coming.

YOUR MIDDLESEX COMMITTEE

Your 2026 committee is as follows:

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2026 MIDDLESEX EVENTS

All planned events are listed inside the back cover

www.rrec-middlesex.co.uk

As before, we are grateful to David Tebbs of D T Printing, Hertford for printing our magazine to such a high standard.

Editors Ruminations

For many of us, the second half of 2025 dominated by what was undoubtedly the Rolls-Royce event of the year- *Silver Shadow 60* at Brooklands, with some 170 cars lined up at the old racetrack for the photos that you will have seen in the September edition of the club magazine. This great event was of course superbly organised over a two year period by Michael Marshall-Clarke, with his team of helpers. Our cover photo was taken by Antonello Russo at the event.

2026 sees the 80th anniversary of car production at Crewe, where most of our cars were made. Let's hope this is marked by the club in suitable style!

Last autumn, as reported in *Spirit & Speed*, we had our usual convivial gathering at Nigel's workshop on 19th October, always a very pleasant way of spending an Autumn Sunday morning. Nigel then kindly organised a November visit to Flying Spares' new 60,000 sq ft facility near Leicester where we were joined by other club members from 'up North'. Nigel was kept busy by rounding off the year with a visit to The British Motor Museum to see the *Beep Beep Yeah* exhibition including the late Mr. J Lennon's white Phantom V.

Antonello has joined us to help with new events, I know he has a number of interesting and prestigious ideas in mind. Also Leroy who will take over the membership secretary role from David. They will represent the committee at the club conference in March. Richard Skinner decided to step down in the autumn to make room for our new blood, while Michael has a lot on his plate as a Club board member and stood down at our AGM. Our thanks to both of them for their contributions.

Lets hope we have a great year of driving!

Richard Edgell

Silver Shadow – an untold part of the story, by Sandy Nicol

Sandy spent many years working for Rolls-Royce Motor Car division in London and has a few tales to tell. He recently told me about a book in the SHRMF Historical series written by David Tod. The book, titled “Clouds and Shadows” is a gold mine of reminiscences about life at Crewe, London and the North in the late fifties to early 1970s, and is highly recommended. Sandy has let us have a few more of his reminiscences from London, which throw some more light on the Silver Shadow era. (Ed)

With the close of the 60th anniversary year of the Silver Shadow (SY) series, a car usually associated exclusively with Crewe in the case of the four-door saloons, it seems timely to reveal the contribution made to the production of these models in our own section territory – the County of Middlesex.

What follows principally relates to the period from the early 1970s until the introduction of the SZ series in 1980. You might well ask whether what follows has been written by a mere researcher into the part played by Hythe Road and Mulliner Park Ward (MPW) in the SY story. Not wholly true! I was there during much of that period and closely involved with the work done on the four-door saloon and division cars. Although my role as Car Sales Coordinator was centred on the MPW coach-built cars, I was also responsible for monitoring the progress of these four-door cars at Hythe Road and acting as liaison with Crewe. This involvement was further enhanced by my direct participation in the plan and performance and the production meetings for senior management. Thus I have drawn on both memory and documentation I retained from that time.

A pilot run of long wheelbase Silver Shadows had been produced in 1967, these having a four-inch extension inserted behind the B/C post. One of these extended cars was supplied to Her Royal Highness, Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon. In consequence, the long wheelbase model was introduced into the model range in 1969. The question arose: where were the extended bodyshells to be manufactured?

The Pilkington Triplex glass factory in Hythe Road, Willesden, immediately adjacent to, and west of the Rolls-Royce London Service Station, closed down in 1971. Rolls-Royce saw the potential of this site for accommodating production of not only the Phantom VI and future DY (Camargue) bodies, but also the lengthening of the Pressed Steel bodyshells for the long wheelbase Silver Shadow. The Triplex factory was acquired and adapted for car body and component manufacture, being christened C-Site (The main service buildings were A-Site and the buildings behind, nestled within its L-plan layout, were B-Site). The long wheelbase bodyshells were cut and new sections welded into place on C-Site before being given a protective modalene coating and then transported to Crewe by the company's own transport fleet until the 1980 introduction of the SZ series, the long wheel base bodyshells for which were manufactured entirely by Pressed Steel. The total of bodyshells lengthened at Hythe Road numbered over 4900.

For some of those long wheelbase bodyshells, however, their departure to Crewe was not so much a goodbye to Hythe Road, but more of an au revoir. How so? In the late 1970s, customer demand for Rolls-Royce and Bentley motor cars was very strong and the Crewe factory was struggling to meet that demand and to generate the profits to sustain the company. Concurrently, the service department at Hythe Road was not paying its way and had surplus

capacity. The answer: have Hythe Road assist with the latter stages of SY production.

Numbers of SY saloons, both standard and long wheelbase cars for a range of markets, were transported down to Hythe Road. Some would be for Stages 1-4 test only (carried out after cars had left the Crewe assembly line) and others for Stages 1-4, final paint, Stage 5 test and finishing. At any one time, there might have been between 20 and 30 of these cars in progress on site. So, you never know, your late-1970s Silver Shadow or Bentley T Series might have been finished at Hythe Road.



Hythe Road main building frontage of A-Site in 1977. The roofs of some of the C-Site buildings can be seen just beyond the second set of entrance pillars and lamps and to the left of the Ford Cortina. Photo Sandy Nicol

Another strand to the Hythe Road/MPW part in the SY story was that of the long wheelbase division cars. From the Crewe assembly line,

these cars would be transported down to Hythe Road for installation of the electric division, Stages 1-4 test, final paint, Stage 5 test and finishing.



A Rolls-Royce Motors press photo of an Athenian Blue Silver Wraith II which would have been completed at Hythe Road. Similar to the car Sandy ran up to Scotland.

Many of these cars were destined for overseas markets and therefore returned to Crewe for shipping and, where applicable, for emissions testing. The division installation was carried out on the south wing, bottom floor, of the main service building alongside the Phantom and the Camargue finishing areas. Camargue production was to move to Crewe during the summer of 1978, so freeing-up more finishing space at Hythe Road.

There were few opportunities to drive these long wheelbase production cars other than on-site but at Easter 1978, there just happened to be a Silver Wraith II division car, finished in Athenian

Blue with black Everflex roof, that had to be delivered to Edinburgh by road.

By happy coincidence, I was planning to travel to Scotland for Easter and 'volunteered' to deliver the car. Of course, as was normal at that time, one made the most of the opportunity. My friend Roddy Young, who worked in Engineering at Crewe, just happened to be going home to Edinburgh for Easter ...

So it was that on the Thursday evening I set off for Nantwich and joined friends there for a meal at our favoured Indian restaurant. After staying the night in Nantwich, I set off for Edinburgh with Roddy happily ensconced in the rear compartment behind the division. On arrival in Edinburgh on a dreich Good Friday, our first task was, naturally, to take Roddy's mother for a drive around the Marchmont district. That done, I had sadly to deliver the car (still in ex-works condition, bar the ravages of the weather) to the selling dealer, Rossleigh of Edinburgh. This went without a hitch. It was then off to Waverley Station to catch the train to Aberdeen for the Easter break.



Carmargues at Brooklands, photo by Antonello Russo

Grease and Brakes (not grease the brakes!)

Words & pictures by Will Bate



1961 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II – SXC503 “Dame Edith Evans”

One of the most satisfying jobs I've so far completed on SXC503 was the replacement of the flexible brake reservoir hoses and brake fluid. Looking at the colour of my brake fluid, it was long overdue.

Step 1 was to drain the old fluid out of both reservoirs using the bleed nipples on the front drums. This was aided by the purchase of a



master cylinder pumping tool which is operated from under the car. No, it's not marmalade, but very old brake fluid!

Step 2 was to remove the dirty reservoirs for a thorough clean (note: you need a good [senior is preferred] apprentice for this job!) and removal of the four old rubber hoses.

Step 3 was re-install of the reservoirs, fit the four new replacement hoses,

clips, gaskets and a good bleed at each wheel. My car was missing the filters in each reservoirs which were replaced at great expense. It took several days of gentle fettling to ensure each joint in the system was 100% leak free.



Crystal clear reservoirs and new RR363 brake fluid before the lids were screwed down.

Grease

Another job which was overdue was the thorough greasing of the front suspension, steering and propeller shaft, which according to the service manual should be completed every 10,000 miles. This is especially important to minimise the wear on these components.

This job is also fairly easily completed by the home mechanic with a grease gun, axle stands and a trolley jack.

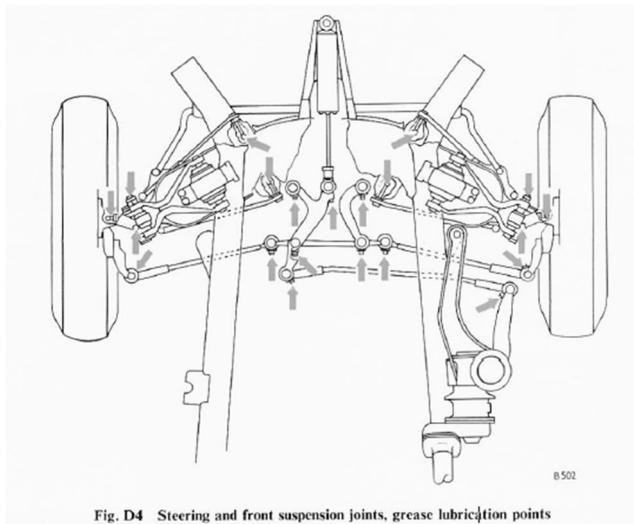


Fig. D4 Steering and front suspension joints, grease lubrication points

Image from the technical service manual/handbook showing the grease points.



A chauffeur's tales by Ron Peterson

In 1953 my father was employed by the author Enid Blyton and her husband Darell Waters as a chauffeur. These are my recollections of my father's exploits.

I'll start with my favourite, on the arrival of a new Rolls or Bentley my father would road test it along the old A40 or Western Avenue as it was known, on one occasion the police were trying to catch him but failed so they put a road block up to stop him. It took several phone calls before he was released. One day, he was waiting outside the Savoy when Alma Cogan a popular singer asked him to move the Rolls. He replied politely that his boss had shares in the Savoy and expected her car to be by exit when she came out.

Wages in the 1950's were poor, so my father was also a retained fireman. A siren was sounded when an incident occurred and the fireman arrived from all directions, as we lived close to the station I used to go out and watch the turnout. Of course the highlight for me was a Bentley turning up at some considerable speed or a Mk 2 Jag also at some speed.

At some point they had a beautiful Empress Line Silver Wraith in black and gold. They had not owned it long, but unfortunately Mr Waters fell on to the pavement when getting out of the rear of car, it was then sold soon after. Mr Waters did not like other cars overtaking them, on one occasion a mini tried to overtake and my father put his foot down, which resulted in the mini getting caught in the slipstream which caused it to change lanes.

Mum and Dad met WW2, they were both drivers in the RAF taking crews out to Lancaster bombers. My father heard a rattle from under dash and asked my mum to drive while he listened which went well until she decided to brake, after he crawled out from under dash swearing asking what she was doing, she said I've driven all sorts of vehicle but I've never driven an automatic! I went out with my father to various garage/coachworks for luxury cars, and my claim to fame was identifying Lady Dockers Daimler, vague recollections but I think it was near Hanger Lane. Then a visit to Weybridge he saw the Beatles and could not believe how ill they looked as they passed in a Phantom.

One Fine Day, words & pictures by Nigel Sandell



In the summer of 2024, whilst on a family holiday in Fuerteventura in Spain, my mobile phone pinged and my friend Richard Skinner alerted me to a Rolls-Royce pickup truck for sale in my favourite shop known as eBay! So I wandered over to eBay to have a look, and sure enough there it is - a 1984 Silver Spirit pickup truck.

I thought to myself 'that's very interesting and that's a bit of me' but not thinking I'd buy it. My holiday progressed and I decided I would mess around with my phone and to my amazement, on the Thursday before we returned on the Saturday, I bought the vehicle! Hotfooting back home from holiday, I travelled to EM Rogers from where Richard Biddulph trades, and drove the pickup truck back to work. On getting it back to work, I found it wasn't quite as good as we had thought but hey ho it's a project, let's get on with it!

The first job was the get her mechanically ship shape and in Bristol fashion. So my two young apprentices spent a couple of weeks renewing all the brake hoses and going through the front suspension.

There was a horrible noise at the front of the engine which turned out to be an idler bearing. So we decided to give the old girl a really good service. At that point at least now we could drive the car or the pick up or the Ute whatever you'd like to call her, and see what she's really like.

In October 2024 the RREC Middlesex Section came for a visit and we unveiled her to the world. Everybody thought that she was a fairly cool thing!

Then we started to get into some of the real heavy lifting where the car didn't have a proper firewall. The petrol tank was held with a



ratchet strap and some of the repairs were just really badly bodged. So we set to, and started to turn this vehicle into a proper Rolls-Royce.



We were invited to go to the Restoration Show in March. The pickup got a fair bit of the fabrication and the interior finished off ready for her to go up to the NEC. The picture shows Sarah from Bangers and Cash on the set up day on Thursday sitting in the pick-up looking rather happy. Again, all weekend people just kept coming up to me asking me: Why, how and who did it, to "Can I open the boot?", "Why would you do that to a Rolls-Royce?", "Who did that to this Rolls-Royce?" and still to this day, we still don't really know! We have now had her for a year and a half and have finished the cabin area .

We've had lots of fun. She's been to the 96 Club in Central London as well where she was well received. She has as yet only been to a few RREC events.

Having loads of fun with this car!

Other cars(or trucks) are available

FROM ONE EXTREME TO THE OTHER words & pictures by Peter Lawrence

Sad though it might sound I've always had an interest in big trucks and indeed started my working life as a management trainee in north west London with a Leyland, AEC, Albion and Scammell distributor. Fortunately it didn't take long to realize that management trainee meant general dogs body and tea maker and I moved on to a less precarious career but not until I had been sponsored on an HGV driving course.

Perhaps fortunately for Julie my wife, the HGV license lapsed or the Shadow and Turbo RL might have shared the barn with a Scammell Crusader or Leyland Road train instead of a rather more humble Model T Ton truck.

Having had Model Ts for a number of years I realized I might never fulfil my ambition of owning a proper British truck not least of all because age and licensing requirements were against me. Nonetheless while flicking through eBay I saw a 1924 Model T Ton Truck advertised not far away in Essex and in need of complete restoration.

It was apparently built or at least assembled in Ford's Trafford Park, Manchester factory, but in need of significant restoration. That was in May 2015 and I thought a good winter project which I would have on the road in 2016. Like many restorations it actually took rather longer and went on the road in March 2019 by which time I'd rebuilt and lengthened the cab by six inches to physically get myself between the steering wheel and seat back, rebuilt the engine, fitted a two speed rear axle, replaced the solid rear wheels and tyres with

pneumatic ones and painted it. It's first proper run was in the 2019 Lord Mayor's Show in which it again took part in 2024.

How tall men drove these trucks I will never know as before I rebuilt the cab I struggled to get between the steering wheel and backrest and my knees were hard up against the underneath of the steering wheel. Fortunately lengthening the cab by six inches saved me having to drop the floor but as another owner said the truck as built was probably luxury, the driver's previous commercial being a horse and cart.

The good news was that the rebuild was very simple. The cab was timber framed and covered in mild steel which in spite of being 100 years old was in good condition although much had to be replaced to facilitate the extended cab. Mechanically the engine was stripped down and rebored as one of the bores had been scored but apart from that and new pistons it was in pretty good shape. Ironically although Ts are now one hundred plus years old new parts are still being manufactured and readily available through the UK club which imports them and a private specialist who stocks a huge range of second-hand bits some of which look destined for the scrap yard but because of their simplicity can often be refurbished and used. An operation a bit like Flying Spares but based in a farm yard and without the finesse.

Although the Ton Truck has a longer and heavier chassis than the cars the engine and transmission are identical, the difference being in the torque tube and rear axle which is worm drive as opposed to a crown wheel and pinion in the cars. As a result the truck is much lower geared and slower, speed typically being between 15 to 20 mph as opposed to 30 to 35 in a car. Fortunately I was able to source a second hand, high ratio worm drive and two speed rear axle which

have dramatically reduced my ability to generate a queue of irate following motorists, although I'm still slower than a standard car which is probably just as well as like a standard car the only brake is a single band in the gearbox. That said you can always use the reverse pedal to slow down but if you do it's imperative to take your foot off the pedal when you stop for obvious reasons.

For those who may be wondering, the torque tube is akin to a prop shaft but a rod which connects the gearbox and axle inside and concealed by a static tube.

The other alterations were relocation of the fuel tank from under the seat to a box on the rear bed. Apart from not sitting on a six gallon tank of petrol the advantage of this was that it made refuelling much easier as it was no longer necessary to decamp and lift the front seat to get to the tank.

Having broken my arm in attempting to start another T when the handle kicked back I was also keen to install an electric starter. Again the motor and electrics were available off the shelf but in addition a different "hogs head" was required. Fortunately, being a later engine it already had a ring gear which was in perfect condition as although later cars were all electric start, trucks were not. The hogs head is the cast aluminium top half of the gearbox casing which differs from earlier crank start cars in that the casting is designed to accept a starter motor. Again such parts are easily available second hand so much so I inadvertently ended up with two.

So what happened in March 2019 when we finally put fuel in, connected the battery and pressed the starter? Well it whirred round a few times, leaked fuel from the carb, sort of caught, banged two or three times and died.

Despondence set in but as it was nearly midnight there was only one thing to do – go to bed and look at it again in the morning. About half three I woke and had a premonition that all might not be right with the timing so for fear of waking Julie I quietly got out of bed, put on a dressing gown and set off to the barn. I checked everything but then looked at another T which I knew worked. Especially at 4.30 in the morning it's immensely satisfying to return to bed after hearing a rebuilt engine burst into life after correcting the firing order.

Since then IXY, named after its Irish registration number IX 391, has done a Model T two day tour, been to the pub and garden centre several times, but more importantly has twice taken part in the Lord Mayor's Show. Apart from that he doesn't get much use as although he's reliable he's slow and not very comfortable.

So back to the title From One Extreme To The Other. With advancing years the appeal of a slow, noisy, bone shaking ride diminishes in favour of the fast, quiet, smooth one associated with Rolls-Royce built cars so maybe it's time to compromise. Does anyone know where I can get a tow bar for a Turbo RL?

A final thought. My oldest T is 111 years old but has a self-changing two speed gearbox and four coil boxes, one per cylinder. My modern BMW changes gear automatically although in fairness it has more than two gears and an individual coil box for each cylinder / plug. Has engineering really progressed that far or was Henry a man of great foresight?



Preparing for the 2019 Lord Mayor's Show

The Finished Truck



As Bought (Woodworm in wheel spokes not visible)



New panels about to go on



Just back from road test bonnet left off to give better view of bits falling off or leaks

RREC MIDDLESEX SECTION

2026 EVENTS

H. Forman & Son - Salmon Smokery, East London (Sun 22nd February) **Richard Edgell**

Nuclear Bunker, Kelvedon, Essex (Sat 14th March) **Will Bate**

The Middlesex Road Run (Sat 25th April) **Richard Edgell**

Crossness Pumping Station (Sun 17th May) **Richard Edgell**

RREC South of England Rally, Stansted Park (Sun 24th May)

Polo at Ham , Ham (Sun 14th June) **Antonello Russo**

RREC Annual Rally, Kelmarsh (Fri 26th - Sun 28th June)

Fawley Hill Railway, Henley(Sun 26th July) **David Siegal**

Tewin Classic Car Show (Sun 16th August) **Richard Edgell**

N. Sandell Ltd. Open Day (October) **Nigel Sandell**

Further events later in the year will be posted on our website

Please also join us for our monthly meetings at The Winning Post which are typically held on the last Thursday of each month. Apart from section events, members regularly attend the informal monthly meetings at The Black Swan in Ockenden, The Wimbledon

South Side Hustle and The Goat in Hertford Heath. All well worth a visit.

<https://www.blackswanockham.com/>

<https://goathertfordheath.co.uk/>

<https://www.instagram.com/southsidehustle.carmeet/?hl=en>

Please let us know which non-club events you go to and can recommend so David Siegal can circulate to the members.

www.rrec-middlesex.co.uk

CAPTION COMPETITION



Printable suggestions please to the editor!



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