

KEMPSFORD

CLASSIC CAR & MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Newsletter
Autumn 2007

I must have really upset the rain gods with my comments in the Summer Newsletter. Would it ever stop raining, I wondered. Little did I know! A number of KCCMC members were caught in the July floods, including your scribe. Fortunately my MG was safely tucked up in its nice dry garage, so although we had a foot of water in the house the car was safe. Johnny Ockwell had a similar experience: house flooded but barely more than wet wheels on his Austin. Unfortunately, not everyone was so lucky and Bill Williams lost his motorcycle (which I think was a Moto Guzzi, or perhaps a Vincent?). It was already damaged in the February floods and had been completely repaired. Those of you who saw it on display at Filkins will appreciate what a great bike it was

But there's always someone worse of than yourself: I read in last weekend's paper of Andreas Hess, a resident of southern California who lost two TR6's and a Jaguar in the recent bush fires, narrowly escaping with his life!

Most of us will soon be putting our classics to bed for the winter, if we haven't done so already, and the November meeting will be the last until next March. Let's hope it will be an early spring, followed by a long hot summer and a golden autumn. Meanwhile you can while away the long winter evenings with the latest edition of the Club Newsletter. Thanks to Tony Alden for another amusing episode with the law, and to Dave Hitchings for a very interesting contribution about Marlin cars and particularly his own Berlinetta which he built himself. Thanks too, to Dan Hawse, who runs the Kempsford website, for putting Club details and copies of the Newsletter on the website. You can find us on the Clubs and Societies page which is at <http://www.kempsford.net/clubs/>. If you don't know the Kempsford website it's well worth looking at. Among other things you'll find lots of photographs of the July floods at http://kempsford.net/photo_index/floods_07-07. As ever, we thank Terry for all his hard work in organising the Club and all our outings, not to mention the fabulous prize raffle at every Club meeting!



While I'm thanking people I ought not to forget Roy Sansom, our host at the George, who looks after us so well. Roy's Triumph TR3A has featured in past issues of the Newsletter and its restoration is the subject of a series of occasional articles. Progress over the past year has been somewhat patchy, and that's hardly surprising when you think of the improvements he's made in the pub. But help is on its way in the shape of Bill Tudor who has taken up the challenge. His first task is to complete the dismantling process started by a barbed wire fence and a tree a few years ago. Once the body is off the restoration can begin and we'll follow it every step of the way.

A letter of thanks has been received from Pamela for our display at the Church Fete. Over £2,000 was raised again this year, and it's good to know we played our part.

Any of you who have visited www.petrolprices.com recently will know that the cheapest petrol station within 10 miles of Kempford is the Shell station between Fairford and Lechlade. Their unleaded is 96.9p per litre. The same petrol station was also the cheapest a year ago. The big difference was the price: 83.9p per litre. That's an increase of 13p, or a staggering 15.5%, in just one year!

Steve Wilson's regularly features Kempford Club cars in his column in Classic Car Mart. The latest is Peter Townsend's 1972 Jensen-Healy in the September issue, with Johnny Ockwell's 1946 Austin 10 in the September issue. This brings the total of KCMCC cars featured to nine. The other seven are: Terry's Vauxhall Velox; Ron Cowley's Rover P6; Terry's Triumph 2500S and his Humber Hawk Estate MkVI; Martin Randall's Vauxhall Cresta PA; Janet Lucas's Triumph TR6, and my MGA. The only question is, who's next?

UNRESTORED CLASSICS

Last time I promised you a closer look at Steven Blackwells Jaguar, and here it is, photographed on a misty November morning. The car is a 1985 Jaguar XJS HE with the 5.3 litre V12 engine and automatic transmission.

Steven's father Ron bought the car from Sudburys in 1989. It was his 'second' car and he only used it in dry weather for drives in the country or trips to the coast. When Ron decided to sell the car in 2000 Steven very wisely bought it. The car, which is now 22 years old, has clearly been very carefully looked after and is hard to fault in any way. It is in superb unrestored condition, both inside and out, as you can see from the



photographs. The car has a big bonnet and an equally spacious engine bay, but that big V12 completely fills it, with no wasted space at all.

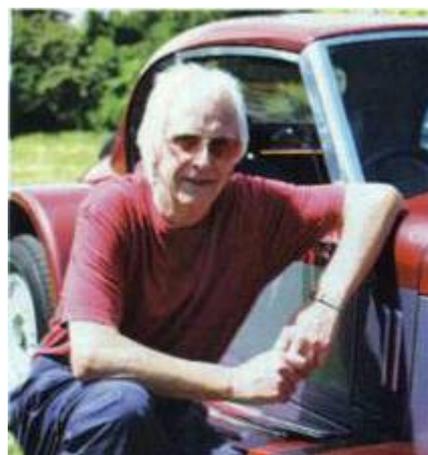
Steven only uses the car for Sunday afternoon trips out and for visits to classic car shows. He'd like to use it more often but describes it as 'superb to drive and own, but not the most practical of cars,' but of course classics rarely are. The car draws admiring looks and compliments wherever he takes it. Everyone, he says, seems to want to know about the fuel consumption, and before you ask, it's 16 m.p.g.

BUILDING A MARLIN BERLINETTA

My love affair with cars started in the mid 1950's whilst at school. During which time I acquired an interest for the Austin 7 and Ford 8 specials. In 1985 I purchased a component car magazine, which re-kindled my desire to build a car. Over the next three years I read articles, looked at pictures and attended various shows to talk to the manufactures and clubs.

I was drawn towards the Marlin. I liked the 1930's style and Marlin had established a good reputation for their quality of work. In 1988 we visited the factory in Plymouth and I had a test run in the demonstrator. The introduction of independent rear suspension in 1989 finally swayed me to place an order.

Marlin cars were designed by Paul Moorhouse who had studied Engineering and worked as an apprentice with Rolls Royce at Derby.



He also had an interest in building "one off" specials, designing and building several in the early nineteen seventies. Three of these are still in existence today. In 1974 he created a car using Triumph Herald parts. It was designed for road use and trailing, and was to become the prototype for the Marlin Roadster.

In 1979 Marlin Engineering was launched in Plymouth commencing with the production of the Roadster in component form. The Cortina based Berlinetta followed in 1984 and by 1986 the company had supplied over one thousand vehicles. In 1989 the Berlinetta was re-designed to accommodate the Ford Sierra independent rear suspension and Marlin's own front end. Only seventeen were built. The model reverted to Cortina parts in favour of a new model, the Cabrio.



The company was sold in 1994, became Marlin Cars based in Crediton, and Paul went on to build mini submarines: "Marlin" of course.

With the order placed on the 30th July and a collection date of 11th November, it was time to start looking for parts to complete the car, which was to be number 4 out of a run of only seventeen produced. I was fortunate enough to purchase the rear axle, front suspension and steering parts from a new, unregistered vehicle that had been written off for insurance purposes because of bodywork damage. I bought

a reconditioned V8 engine and gearbox from Rover. Then the preparatory work commenced. Each part was given two coats of red oxide and three coats of black gloss. Lynda carried out this task in a spare bedroom, which had been turned into a temporary workshop. As I was using new gauges, switches, lights and other electrical components around the car, I decided to make up the wiring loom from scratch.

A great deal of thought has gone into safety aspects of the Berlinetta design. The basis of the car is an immensely strong ladder frame chassis, made from 80 x 80 x 3mm box section steel side rails, which is air tight to prevent internal corrosion. To prevent external corrosion the first job was to prepare and paint the chassis with two coats of red oxide and five of black. The same treatment was given to the floorboards and other parts.

Having moved into a new house at the same time as purchasing the Marlin. I was only able to work on the car initially during the winter months. Things like landscaping the gardening, etc. took priority during the summer. It was a hard task to go out into the garage every night after a days work. Especially in the winter with no heating, sometimes until midnight. However, the build progressed slowly through 1990, 1991 until it was finally on the road in June 1993.



There were lots of challenges along the way. One of the problems that required some thought was the braking system. Due to the fact that I was fitting a V8 engine it did not leave enough room for the master cylinder and servo. So alternatives had to be made. The next problem the V8 caused was cooling. Unable to find a suitable radiator, I was left with no option but to make one. This in turn created another problem of where to place the fan. Then that had a knock on effect towards the grille. I had to extend the grille forward by a couple of inches. (The grille comes as a strip of aluminium and a handful of preformed wires you have to drill then "knit" the wires together. I did this on the kitchen table!)

I kept a log of all the hours spent to build the car: by December 1990 we had logged 300 hours. 1991 it was up to 500 hours.

In 1992 work alternated between mechanical, electrical, body panels and the making up and fitting of various plywood interior panels. One of the time consuming jobs was the dash. You start with a blank piece of

plywood. Once you have decided which instruments and switches etc you are going to use you can then start to design the layout to suit your needs. The car was now starting to take shape as the body panels were assembled, the chassis or panels are not pre-drilled so it is a matter of offering up the panels and marking and drilling and then fitting, all of the panels were fitted before painting. At the end of 1992, 850 hours had been logged.

1993. This was the worst stage, with the panels on it looks like a car but there's still lots of jobs to be done. All of the body panels had to be removed and prepared for priming. Where do you keep seventeen panels clean and dry? In the living room of course! Lynda was and is very understanding. The panels were sent for priming, then painting. After painting where did they live?? You've got it! Eventually the car was ready for registration. It was June 1993 and we had logged over 1300 hours. To date the car has covered 55,000 miles. A considerable amount on motoring holidays abroad.

Was it worth it? Yes. We still enjoy the car every time we go out in it.
Was it finished? No. There is always something to be done or improve on.

MORE MOTORING MAYHEM BY TONY ALDEN

It was about fifteen years after my first motoring brush with the law that I managed to get locked up again—mostly my own fault for giving an honest answer to a stupid question.



Life had moved on from the heady days at the Morris, Wolseley distributors. I had now got my costing qualifications and my management diploma and was quite happily working for a BMC dealer in Northampton as Cost Office/ Parts Manager. I was also quite adept at breaking into locked vehicles. I'm not quite sure how this expertise developed but I was occasionally in demand to help little old ladies who had locked their pooches in the car and mislaid the keys.

One bright sunny morning I was asked by our Service Manager to retrieve the car belonging to the M.D. of a large shoe company in Northampton. He had driven to a local park near where he lived to take his dog for a walk. He had shut the door of his Vauxhall Ventura with the keys inside on the drivers' seat. As he had an urgent meeting to get to at work he left the car and rang us about an hour after he had left it. I was dispatched in the sign written company mini-van, which in big bold gold lettering said "Cooper & Lines Ltd" Motor engineers, complete with welding rods, pliers, screwdrivers, etc. to open the car.

I set off to the car park about a couple of miles from the garage just off the A43 and found the car opposite parking spaces for some local houses. I assume that some good citizen in a nearby house must have been suspicious as I had just wiggled the sill lock free and opened the drivers door when a Morris 1000 panda car came tearing into the car park with blue light flashing. The Plod almost hit the van, pinned me to the side of the Vauxhall, jumped out of the panda and said, "What do you think your doing". Stupidly, thinking that the Plod was a normal human being with a some sort of sense of humour (and a brain) and could read the sign writing on the van, I said "breaking into this car."

"I think you had better come with me" he said. I was manhandled into the Panda car, the plod locked my van and slammed the door on the Vauxhall with the keys still on the seat and took me to the Police headquarters about four miles from the park and about three miles from the garage. I was put in a room with two Plods and the conversation went something like:



"Name? Address? DOB? Can we see your driving licence? WHERE DO YOU WORK? Why were you breaking into the car? Do you know the owner? WHOSE Van was it that you were in?" and best of all, "Do you do this for a living?" The answer to this was "No, actually I am a cost accountant."

“What are YOU doing breaking into cars when you should be pushing a pencil round a desk?” I answered all the questions except where do you work, to which I told them if the Plod that brought me here could read and write you could have saved yourself some breath because it is written on both sides of the van.”

“What Van”?

“The van that your officer nearly hit. Please ring my boss and he will explain all.” Would they ring? Would they b*****ks.

It took them two hours to “complete their investigations” after which I was told I could go. “Do I get a lift back to my van or at least the garage?” To which the reply came, “We are not a taxi service sir.” SIR?. Ten minutes before I was a criminal. I don’t think my request for a lift helped the situation, but they all seemed like something out of the Sweeny to me. In all it took about five hours to get the Vauxhall back to its owner. Since then I seem to have developed a severe dislike for FE Victors, panda cars and the police. My boss actually wrote to the police and politely complained about the treatment and the cost of wasting so much time. To my knowledge he is still waiting for a reply.



TO PORT WENN BY E-TYPE BY ALISTAIR KENNEDY

To men of my age, and lots of women too for that matter, there is one car that stands out as an icon of the 60’s. It embodies, more than any other car of the period, all the excitement, élan and the thrill of the new which that decade stood for. I can only be referring to the Jaguar E-Type.

I was 13 years old when the E-Type was launched at the Geneva Motor Show in 1961. It’s no exaggeration to say that it took the car world by storm, winning praise from all quarters of the motoring press and admiration from the public. I well recall my friends and I pouring over road tests and photos in Autocar and Motor Sport magazines and falling hook line and sinker for those fabulous sleek lines (fortunately I don’t think any of us had heard of Dr Freud at that age!).

Now fast forward 47 years to my 60th birthday, or rather the Friday after, when I found myself pulling into the oddly named Smiler’s Cottage in Brimpsfield to pick up my present from my wife, Celia: three days hire of a 4.2 litre silver-grey E-Type roadster. And that was not all, we were on our way to Cornwall for the weekend. Half an hour later and we were on our way, top down, that long louvred bonnet stretching out in front of us and the throaty roar of the big straight-six under it. Who wouldn’t smile? Was that how the cottage got its name?



Off down the A417, past the Air Balloon and onto the M5. Now, I’m of the opinion that classics and motorways don’t mix, but we just had to get some miles behind us if we were get to Port Isaac in reasonable time. Besides, it gave me a chance to open her up. Suffice to say that the acceleration was continuous and the speedo was soon into three figures.

We left the motorway at Bridgwater and headed for the North Somerset coast, through Nether Stowey, where Coleridge wrote the Ancient Mariner, through Watchet, past Minehead and Porlock and on to Lynton.

Surprisingly few classics on the road, but a Rover Coupé whose passenger, a lady of a certain age, waved energetically and fairly beamed at us as we passed, made up for it. Slow roads by contrast to the motorway, but offering the E-Type an opportunity to show-off its incredible torque. The current owner had fitted a 5 speed gearbox, but that long slow stretch of the A39 could be taken virtually in third. The car would willingly pull away in second and, just to see if it would, I found a quiet stretch of level road and, yes, it did pull away in third! But when you did use the gears the acceleration was thrilling. Celia said it felt as if we were going to take off.

And it just kept on accelerating. And what a glorious noise it made! On through the afternoon, hood down in the September sun through Devon, past Widemouth Bay and on to Port Isaac.



Criticisms? Yes, a few. The mechanical noise from the engine has to be heard to be believed. Oddly perhaps, it's much worse with the hood down and even in 5th it makes you want to change up. When you get on the revs it sounds like someone pouring a bucket full of washers into a tin bath! For me, and I suspect most people who drive sports cars, there is a strange delight in changing down for a corner under breaking but without coming off the break. Heel-and-toe. To do it you need to be able to operate the accelerator with the heel of your right foot while breaking with the toe. It's not difficult, but in the E-Type it was impossible. It was probably a quirk of that particular car, but the combined

effect of there being at least an inch of movement in the accelerator before anything happened and its being mounted well forward of the brake pedal, meant you had to get off the break to get on the gas. Also, even my size 7½ feet only just fitted between the break and the right hand kick panel. A change of shoes cured this the following day, but someone with large feet might have to go in for more radical alterations (to the car, I mean, not their feet!). But you'd get used to the engine clatter, and you'd adjust the pedal positions to suit you, and then you'd have the ultimate 60's icon.

Saturday morning. The September sun continued to make good on its promise. We leisurely explored the beautiful little fishing village of Port Isaac, better known as Port Wenn in ITV's Doc Martin series, and on to neighbouring Port Gaverne which we had first visited 40 years ago. The hotel we had stayed in then was empty and dilapidated. We, and the car, had fared better. Padstow was not far, so off we went in search of lunch, and what better place to find it than Rick Stein's. Come to think of it, he seems to own most of Padstow. But lunch was superb and surprisingly reasonably priced (for a telly chef). Then on to Newquay and a chance to watch the surfers. As expected there were a couple of VW camper vans on the beach.



There's so much more to the E-Type than speed and acceleration. Is there a more beautiful car? I don't think so. And the view from behind that famous bonnet is amazing. The central bulge looks much higher from the cockpit and you are constantly aware of the fact that there is about eighteen inches of bonnet that you simply cannot see. And I don't know of another car which has such an effect on passers-by. Heads turn, people gaze, everybody loves the E-Type. I thought the dash board rather uninspiring and rather 70's in character. Not surprising in a 1969 car. It failed to match the sheer beauty of the body and lacked the

charm of earlier vintages. As an MGA driver I'm well used to heat blasting through from the engine bay, but the E-Type takes this to another level. The foot-well was roasting and at even moderate speed the gap round the top of the gear-stick gaiter emitted a jet of hot air like a hair dryer. No resting your left hand on the gear knob in this car!

Sunday, and the road home. The weather had turned somewhat for the worse and we were plagued by showers all the way home. Some were heavy enough for us to put the hood up, a measure of last resort. Finally the time came for me to pilot that long bonnet back down the winding single track road to Smiler's Cottage, hand back the keys and say goodbye. As I drove away I was still smiling, I still am.

NEWS FROM THE FBHVC

Did you know that we are now affiliated to the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs? There are a couple of copies of their newsletter circulating but I suspect that they will not get to all members so here are a couple of bits of interesting information culled from the current issue.

Firstly, you may be aware that some classic paints do not comply with current VOC (volatile organic compound) limits. It seems that a consultation document has been drafted and is awaiting ministerial approval before being published. It is expected to propose a licensing system to allow these products to continue to be sold.

How old are your tyres? Most of us think about tread depth and physical condition when assessing whether we need to replace our tyres. Well, it turns out that the synthetic rubber they are made of is prone to oxidation and this causes the compound to become harder and less flexible. Additives are used to reduce this effect but these are harmful to human health and the quantities permitted are limited. The deterioration starts from day one but will not cause a problem for several years. Usually they wear out first. A well maintained tyre should be good for 10 years. However if the car is left standing for months on end the tyre wall can stiffen. When the tyre is used this will cause the compound to heat-up more than normal and can result in overheating. When the temperature reaches a critical level the molecular structure of the compound starts to change making it increasingly less flexible. At this point the tyre starts to break up. This was the tragic fate of an MGB driver earlier this year, who died when his car overturned after just such a blow-out.

STOP PRESS!

The annual men-vs-women skittle match and bean feast will go ahead after all on December 8th, in spite of the closure of The Axe & Compass. The new venue will be Fairford Football Club but the format will be the same as before: free skittles and food, buy your own beer. Kick-off is at 8 o'clock.



CONTACT:

If you have any stories, photos or information you think ought to be included in the next Newsletter, or would like to comment on anything in this edition, please contact me, Alistair Kennedy, as follows:

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