Somerset Automobile Club
Chairmans' Chat
December 2024

Your President, Chairman and committee wish you a

and a Happy New Year

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking back over the past 12 months I trust you will agree that we have had a most successful year, the highlight of which was our 120th Anniversary Celebration Lunch held a Leigh Court. Recently, we held another most enjoyable Autumn Lunch at The Batch Country Hotel. The venue really does suit our needs. A pictorial record follows.

Our final 2024 event will be the twin 12th and 17th December visits to the Urbaser 'Energy from Waste' site in Moreton Valance, Gloucester. All attendees have had to complete an on-line Acceptance Form before attending. Parking on site is limited and consequently some car sharing is advised.

In my November Bulletin I commented that your Committee was giving careful attention to our Events Programme for 2025 and I am now pleased to publish the proposals as they currently stand. I thank those who responded to my invitation by volunteering to organise an event. However, I still seek a volunteer to assist with the straight forward task of collating the attendees for our 2025 Tea Party, which will return to the Walton Bay Hotel, Clevedon in May. Those who attended in 2023 will recall that the venue was most suitable and enjoyable. Please contact me if you feel able to help.

It is also appropriate for me to report that it has been necessary to close our Hargreaves Lansdown Fund Investment Account and transfer the proceeds to a Fixed Term Lloyds Deposit Account. The process was long, tedious and time consuming over a period of 6 months. More detailed information will be provided at our 2025 AGM but at this time I would like to acknowledge the very good counsel given by Bruce Grisewood and the support given by your committee.

New Website: As you now know, Jim has created a straightforward 'information' website simply to place on record that the SAC exists. Regular updating will not be required. It is not intended to be a means of seeking new members albeit that may result but membership by invitation will remain in place. We will make it 'ad-free' for a small annual cost.

Future Events:

2024:

- **Thursday 12th and Tuesday 17th December:** Visits to the Urbaser 'Energy from Waste' site, Moreton Valance, Gloucester. I will send attendees 'final instructions' clarifying site access and parking etc beforehand.

2025:

- **Weds 5th March or Thurs 6th March: Yeovilton visit**. Guided tours have been reinstated at the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum. Yeovilton. We will make our own way to the venue. Jim Lott will be the organiser.
- **Wednesday 2nd April: Annual General Meeting and Lunch.** To be held at The Batch Country Hotel, Lympsham, which has become our preferred regular venue. Jim will organise the AGM and I will organise the Lunch arrangements.

- **Tuesday 20th May: Annual Tea Party** to be held at Walton Park Hotel, Clevedon. Moved from the traditional June date because of the following two events.
- **Friday 13th June: Prodrive Visit.** Pauline has arranged a visit to Prodrive, Banbury. Prodrive is 'quote' a 'multi disciplined motor sport' organisation. The facility contains both a museum of important competition cars and a Rally Driving simulator which will be made available to us. This is also planned to be a self-drive visit.
- **Wednesday 18th June: Social Run and Lunch** to be organised by John Clay and Edward Kirkland with, no doubt, help and guidance from Jill and Easter. Starting near Keynsham we will take a 35-mile run to Bruton where we will lunch in the Italian Restaurant at Hauser and Wirth.

Having held two events in June we will not gather in July and our next event will be:

- **First week in August: Social Event.** We seek a social event which a Picnic 'ticks the boxes'. However, as we have learnt in the past two years the uncertainty of our weather introduces the risk of cancellation or postponement.
- **September visit: Visit:** Our intention is to seek guided tours of The Science Museum at Wroughton. Available dates have not yet been released and we await news.
- **Wednesday 15th October: Social Run and Lunch.** Mike and Julie Sanders have kindly offered to arrange a Social Run and Lunch once again to be held in Somerset.
- **Sunday 23rd November: Autumn Lunch.** A booking has been made for a return to The Batch Country Hotel, Lympsham.

Past events:

Visit to Thatchers Cider, Sandford: Thursday 5th September.

Firstly, my thanks to Ann Budd for pleasantly and efficiently organising this trip and for calmly dealing with last minute 'issues'. Twenty-six members and guests booked a place on this very educational visit which was limited to 30 attendees.

The Thatchers business is family owned and run by Martin Thatcher and his daughter. From a turnover of £1 million/annum 25 years ago the business now turns over £174 million/annum and ranks as number 2 in the 'Cider Makers' league table of UK sales. The 'strong' markets are the South-West, Midlands and North-East of England with a developing market in Scotland. Thatchers employs 280 staff which includes those who work on five Thatcher owned farms. The majority of apples are grown by subcontracted farms, mainly located in Somerset, Devon, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, with whom supply contracts of upto 26 years have been agreed.

Having been split into two groups our guides, Phil and Sally, walked us through the cider making process which in essence is:

- **Harvesting:** Apples are gathered from the orchards mainly by shaking the trees and mechanically sweeping/gathering apples from the ground. Harvesting takes place over approximately 5 weeks from mid-August.
- **Delivery:** Apples are delivered to Sandford in bulk by 40ft tipper lorries. They are discharged into a hopper and onto a rising conveyor which has a roller system that separates out any debris and small apples.
- **Pressing:** The apples are pressed in order to extract the juice and the 'arisings' (skin, pips etc), which are then in a dry state, are despatched for animal feed.
- **Reduction/concentration:** Given that cider making is a 12-month process, the juice has to be stored to meet production schedules and market demand. Concentration to 1/7 volume is achieved by heating.
- **Fermenting:** Large stainless steel, or in the case of 'vintage cider' oak barrels, are used for the fermenting process which lasts upto around 14 days. Thatchers own a large number of very large oak barrels which were locally made around 100 years ago which require annual maintenance. Water, from on-site artesian wells or de-chlorinated tap water is added at this stage to adjust the alcohol content.
- **Blending:** Each of Thatchers 10 products, Gold, Haze, Three Counties and fruit flavoured varieties are blended from different combinations of apples. For example Gold contains three apple types and Haze seven all of which are eating apples thereby providing a sweet cider.
- **Filling and packaging:** Is limited to 3 types: Bottles, Kegs and Cans. We were shown the canning line where the cans are filled, CO2 injected, the lid applied and the bottom of the can is identified by batch and date. The rotational speed of the machine that seals the can with a lid works in a 'blur'! Automated packaging systems are employed, for boxed cans and bottles, which incorporate state of the art robots which assemble 1 metre cube pallets of boxed product.

Interestingly, given that the blackcurrant season just precedes the apple season, the Thatchers plant is subcontracted, for 4 weeks, by the makers of Ribena, located in Nailsea, for the preparation of concentrated blackcurrant juice.

Viewing an instructional video

Watching the high-speed canning line

Our visit concluded with a tasting session of 4 ciders following which we gathered and enjoyed lunch at the Thatchers owned Railway Inn.

However, there is another matter we learnt about. Unsurprisingly, it is a myth that Martin Thatcher arrives by hot air balloon on each Friday in order to taste and approve the cider made that week. A good story but a myth. Apparently the TV advert was made at 'huge' cost by Ardman Animations.

Social Run and Lunch: Thursday 17th October.

As I reported in our November Bulletin the Social Run and Lunch organised by Andy Rigler was most successful and undoubtedly enjoyed by all, especially given the unseasonal cloudless sky that allowed 'top down' motoring on the 35-mile tour of the Berkeley Vale. On this occasion we were joined by two cars from the MG Owners Club who contributed to the attendance of 35 diners. Starting from The Pepper Pot, Lower Wick near Dursley, our route took us via the outskirts of Thornbury via Duckhole, Rockhampton, Oldbury on Severn, Shepperdine, Berkeley, Stinchcombe and Damery before returning to the Pepper Pot where we enjoyed a very good pub lunch. Our thanks to Andy and Catherine for an excellent route and for having chosen the most suitable 'Pepper Pot'. Our thanks are also due to Bert and Pam Hurditch who checked Andy's route to good effect.

Autumn Lunch: Sunday 24th November.

On the day when the worse possible storms, flooded roads and prevailing high winds were at their 'height' it was certainly a case of 'intrepid travellers' arriving at The Batch Country Hotel, Lympsham for our annual Autumn Lunch. As ever, The Batch provided excellent food, elegantly served and at an appropriate pace for the 34 attendees.

A Castle Combe Miscellany - 4 stories.

An end of season review

Tim Pearce: AC 's to the Castle Combe Classic. A story of tenacity.

Last September my two sons thought it would be good to take their boys to the Castle Combe Classic reminding us of many happy days racing the Ace Bristol in the Fiscar races with fellow AC Owners Club members the Shepard's Andy, Ted Murray, Justin Beckett and David Cottingham.

We decided to take the two Aces and the Cobra. We set off on a wet Sunday morning the Cobra leading followed by the red Ace and the Cobra with me bringing up the rear in the blue LHD Ace.

Only a mile away from home driving up a hill the blue Ace suddenly stopped. Unlikely to be a fuel problem given that the fuel gauge was working so my immediate reaction was the low-tension wire from the coil to the distributor.

By this time the boys had come back to see what the problem was, we decided they should continue to Castle Combe.

On opening the bonnet and seeing the wire from the coil to the distributor was fine my next step was to remove the distributor cap. Immediately the problem was visible the contact breaker spring had snapped.

Luckly a friend was behind, and we drove home to collect another set of points. On returning I thought 'a few minutes and we will be on our way'.

Unfortunately, I could not remove the rotor arm as I had used silicone while fixing to take up any free play. Eventually using a screwdriver, I broke the rotor arm trying to remove it.

Back home again and fortunately I found two spare rotor arms. Back to the car thinking 'a couple of minutes we will be on our way'. After fitting the new rotor arm the engine failed to start.

Unfortunately, the plug spanner was in the other Ace. There was a spare set of plugs in the glove box so I removed number one plug lead and connected it to a spare plug and held it to the block turned over the engine no spark!

I then removed the HT lead to the distributor cap held to the block turned over the engine with a good spark.

At this stage I was struggling so I rang my good friend Tony Byford early on a Sunday morning and explained the problem. Tony immediately said change the rotor arm as he has experienced some rotor arms breaking down and going to earth. I changed the rotor arm and after pressing the starter button the Bristol six roared into life.

Within a mile we were joining the M4 and the engine was running on five cylinders.

I then realized I had forgot to replace the spare plug. Stopping on the M4 hard shoulder opening the bonnet finding number one plug lead and spare plug resting on the exhaust manifold.

We had a super family day at Castle Combe even though very wet, so sad for the organizers who had put so much effort into organising the event. It is a lovely friendly local circuit which is well supported.

The moral of the story is I always carry a spare set of points and rotor arm as well as plugs in the glove box.

Factory Prepared MGTF Racer. Seen at Castle Combe.

When the Chinese Nanjing Automobile Company (NAC), now SAIC, purchased the residue of MG Rover in 2005 it was not until 2008 that a short-lived period of assembly of the MGTF recommenced at Longbridge using components manufactured in China.

The original batch of 'Chinese' cars were predominately finished in a dramatic orange shade in order to distinguish them from the original UK manufactured models.

Apparently, SAIC built two 1800 cc 'TF's' for track use and this car, pictured at the Bristol Pegasus M C's Pegasus Sprint held at Castle Combe in October is one of those. It was entered in the MGCC Speed Championship class by Jamie Stevens, the current owner. While the phrase 'never raced of rallied' can be heard when private owners are seeking to sell a 'sporty' car, the opposite is the case here. This car has never been driven on the road!

A brief history of 500cc Racing

The Bristol Pegasus Motor Club's annual 'Pegasus Sprint' held at Castle Combe in October is always very well supported by a group of members of the 500 Owners Association. This year was no exception and the attendance of a worthwhile entry of original 500 cc racing cars prompted this article.

From the mid 1930's, in the period just prior to WW2, there was a growing interest in the construction of lightweight single seat competition cars, usually as 'one-offs'. Of those the most well-known was the Alex Issigonis/George Dowson Lightweight Special which incorporated a plywood monocoque construction, rubber suspension (foreseeing the BMC Mini) and initially fitted with a 748 supercharged 4-cylinder engine. Another pre-war, well-known and locally constructed car was the 1 litre Freikaiserwagen built on a lightweight chassis. The name originated from a Germanic corruption of the surnames of Joe Fry and Dick Caesar who constructed of the car.

However, in the period prior to the effective start of WW2 in 1938 a group of amateur enthusiasts in Bristol set about defining a set of technical guidelines for lightweight single seat racing cars with 'low capacity', ideally readily available, 500cc engines. The group consisted of 4 enthusiasts and was named 'CAPA' being an acronym formed from the names of those involved, Dick **C**aesar, **A**ldridge, **P**rice and **A**drian (Butler). WW2 intervened but in 1944, with the concept having remained dormant but not forgotten, members of the newly formed Bristol Aeroplane Company Motor Sports Club revived the pre-war ideas and in March 1946 it issued a set of technical regulations that the defined 500cc racing car formula. The proposals proved widely popular and just after mid-year the 500 Club was formed.

Having published its initial club magazine named IOTA in early 1947 by the end of that year a formal committee consisting of motor sport 'grandees' Lord Howe, SCH Davis, Laurence Pomeroy, Raymond Mays and John Cooper were joined by Dick Caesar to promote the formula.

Progress was rapid and in 1948, with the '500's' becoming initially very popular in hill climbing, further success followed when Stirling Moss won the inaugural 500 race at Goodwood in September. The Cooper Car Company manufactured cars predominated and it became obvious that, to an extent, the initial concept that the formula was intended for amateur constructors was being lost. However, such was the popularity of the formula that a 500 race was held in support of an International Race organised by the RAC at Silverstone in October.

1949 saw further progress with a pattern of Hillclimb success being supported by a series of races including those at Goodwood and the Grand Prix at Silverstone, which was won by Peter Collins in a Cooper. In November of that year, with the club now being named 'The Half Litre Club' the FIA, being international governing body of motor sport, adopted the 500 regulations without amendment thereby creating the International Formula 3 series. Remember that it all started with a small group of foresighted enthusiasts at Filton!

500's at Castle Combe. An early 1950's BMC and LCC event.

In the period up until 1955 the 500-formula thrived in the UK with increasingly well-known competitors such as Stirling Moss, Ken Tyrell, Ivor Bueb, Bob Gerard (who had won the first sprint meeting held in the UK after WW2 on Filton Airfield organised by the BAC club when driving an ERA) and Bernie Ecclestone taking part. It is worth noting that in late 1954 the club changed its name to current British Racing and Sportscar Club.

Interest in 500cc racing had significantly diminished in the UK by 1955 but it was revived in 1968 when the 500 Owners Association was formed by a group of enthusiasts. Then, in 1998 Lord March invited the 500 OA to the inaugural Goodwood Revival meeting and as a consequence the club has been on a strong footing since then.

The following photos were taken at the BPMC's (formerly BACMC) Pegasus Sprint in October.

IOTA CB2

Cooper Mk 5

Arnott 500 (with 1 litre engine!)

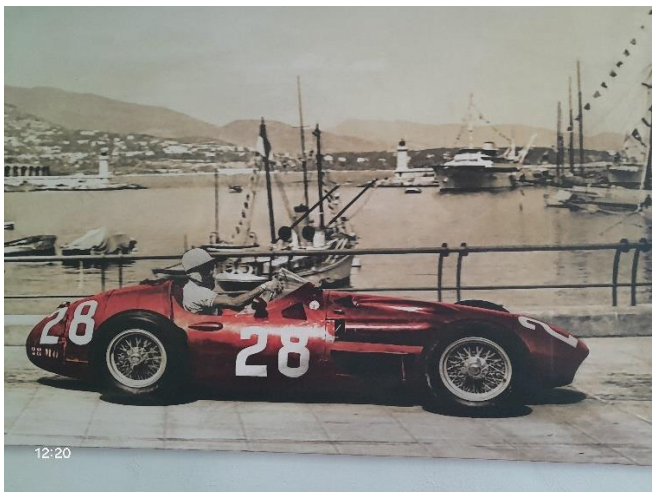
Typical JAP 500cc engine installation.

Cooper Mk 5, Iota CB2 and Cooper Mk X1

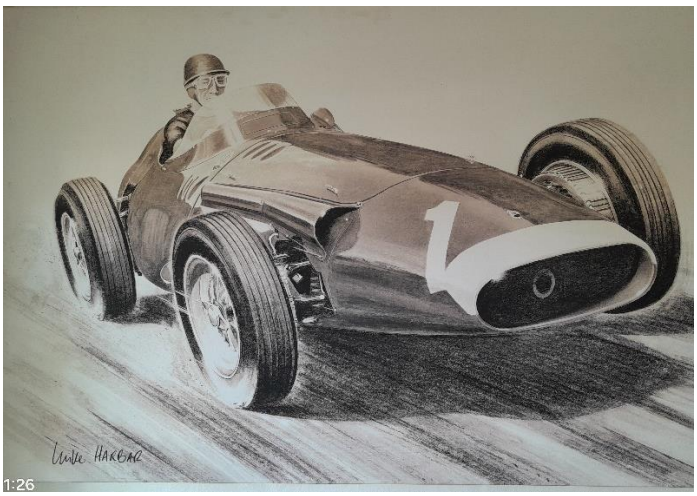
The Maserati 250F

Prompted by pictures taken at 'The Combe'.

These two pictures of the '250F' are currently on display in the Circuit Café (formerly the Tavern) at Castle Combe



Stirling Moss. 1956 Monaco Grand Prix held on 13th May.



Fangio. 1957 German Grand Prix, Nurburgring held on 4th August.

The Maserati 250F was 2.5 litre straight 6-cylinder powered Grand Prix car which was initially introduced in 1954 in time for the newly introduced 2½ litre formula. In total 33 were manufactured between 1954 and 1957 albeit chassis and engine numbers were expediently swapped between cars by the factory when repairs were undertaken. It was also necessary to disguise the true identity of individual cars' as a consequence of the Custom Carnet documentation requirements extant in the 1950's, in order to ease the European cross-border Customs checking procedures. Denis Jenkinson, the respected Motor Sport magazine 'European Correspondent', undertook an investigatory exercise with the objective of tracing the initial identity of many of these cars. He was not entirely successful.

The cars were entered into Grand Prix races by the factory who, because of the superior performance of the design, was able to attract the very best drivers of the day. Two of whom were Stirling Moss and Juan Manuel Fangio. As noted above those of us who have recently visited the Castle Combe restaurant (formerly the Tavern) will have seen the two photo illustrations one being a photograph depicting Moss winning the 1956 Monaco Grand Prix and the second a painting of Fangio winning the 1957 German GP held at the Nurburgring both in 250F's.

As an illustration of the development of/change in Grand Prix races since the mid 1950's, the 1956 Monaco event was a 100-lap race which lasted 3 hours being twice the duration of current GP's.

The cars, which were designed jointly by respected Italian engineers Gioacchino Colombo and Valerio Colotti had a tubular space-frame chassis which incorporated independent front suspension with the rear being of the De Dion pattern. The design featured a combined back axle and gearbox arrangement thereby placing more weight over the driving wheels. The fuel tank was also situated at the rear thereby contributing to a change of handling as a race progressed due to weight reduction. The design of the cars was continually updated and modified'. In 1957, 'lightweight' chassis versions were completed for the works team of Stirling Moss, Jean Behra, Carlos Menditeguy and Juan Fangio that being the year when the factory team won the Manufacturers prize.

Also, in 1957 three V12-engined examples were built, but they were not successful in period.

The Maserati company sold examples of the 250F to private owners, one of who was Bristolian Horace Gould who raced his car internationally, widely in Europe and as far away as New Zealand.

Due to financial difficulties the Officine Alfieri Maserati company withdrew from GP racing in 1958.

In 1958 Colloti formed the Studio Tecnica Meccanica which, under his guidance, produced an 'improved' lightweight 6-cylinder version of the 250F named the 'Tec-Mec'. Financed by Lloyd Casner, owner of the US Camoradi Racing team, the car entered a sole GP race being the 1959 US GP. Along with surviving 'original style' 250F's the Tec-Mec provides exciting racing in the Classic car series. The cars are regularly entered and welcome at classic race meetings.

Horace Gould Maserati 250F

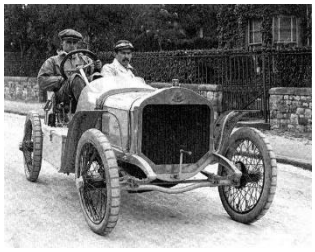
The 1958 Tec-Mec

Sir Albert Hubert Roy Fedden.

Distinguished Bristol Engineer. (June 1885 to November 1973).

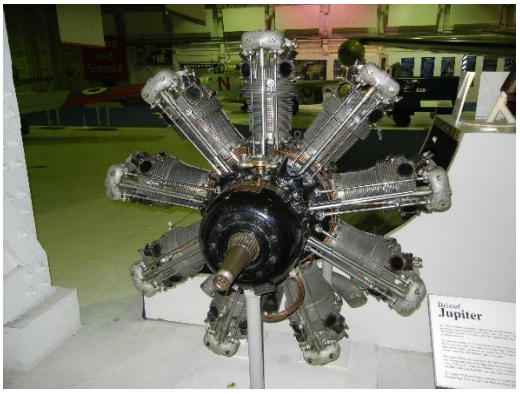
Roy Fedden was born into a distinguished Bristol family whose wealth was accrued following their establishment of a sugar refining business around 1620. In 1869 Henry Fedden purchased the wooden hulled HMS Formidable which he sponsored as a home for disadvantaged and orphaned boys of Portishead. In 1906 the hull was replaced by the Portishead Nautical School with assistance of the Wills and Fry families. The building, on the Nore Road, is now the Fedden Apartment Village. The family owned a Decauville being the 4th car registered in Bristol as AE4. Roy Fedden assisted the family chauffeur thereby learning from necessary maintenance tasks.

Roy Fedden was educated at Clifton College and was far from academically able, preferring to concentrate on sport.



However, on leaving school life he opted to take a practical 3-year apprenticeship with the Bristol Motor Company and during that period he studied Automobile Engineering, as evening classes, under Professor William Morgan at the Merchant Venturers Technical College. In 1906, on completion of his apprenticeship, he convinced the Brazil Straker Company of Fishponds, designers and makers of road vehicles, to employ him whereupon he completed the design of his 2-seater Shamrock car (see right) which was successfully placed into production in 1910. The design was innovative given it incorporated individual half shafts thereby by allowing the straightforward access to troublesome rear mounted differential gears. Initially exhibited at Olympia 1907 the car was an immediate success given that it was priced at around 50% of the cost of similar competitors cars. Production reached a total of 600/year.

In 1914 Fedden was appointed as Technical Director of Brazil Straker. That year he visited Mercedes-Benz in Germany and viewed the manufacture of their straight 6-cylinder aero engine. This was a most fortuitous event that soon led to Brazil Straker being awarded the contract to redesign the unreliable the American Curtiss-Wright 8 litre V8 Aero Engine installed in RNAS training aircraft. The Brazil Straker production was subsequently requisitioned by the Admiralty in order to support WW1 requirements and to assemble and partially manufacture the water-cooled Rolls-Royce vee 12-cylinder Falcon Aero Engine, then installed in the very successful Bristol Fighter.



Favouring air cooled Radial Engines, in 1917 Fedden designed the 14-cylinder (arranged in two rows) 300hp Mercury engine which was followed by the 9 cylinder 450 hp Jupiter (see right) and the 3-cylinder Lucifer engine. While these engines were successfully test flown at the end of WW1 no orders were forthcoming. In anticipation of the ending of the war, Fedden had started the design of a new car but the Brazil Straker business was sold to a Finance company who subsequently sold the car business when Administrators subsequently took control. Fedden was then managing the aero engine business which was somewhat reluctantly purchased by the Bristol Aeroplane Company in 1920 thereby establishing its Aero Engine business.

The BAC was owned by the White family who regarded Fedden as a strong-willed employee who required equally strong control. However, Fedden's employment contract provided a royalty payment from the sale of each engine of his design. He became a very wealthy man given the subsequent success for Bristol Radial Aero Engines. For example, the Jupiter engine was manufactured in quantity in 17 countries. Fedden and his Chief Draughtsman, Leonard Butler, focussed on ensuring quality and interchangeability of components which was the cornerstone of success and durability. They also recognised that Bristol engines had to be correctly installed and consequently they formed an installation team that oversaw the installation in each aircraft design.

The Jupiter engine which remained in production until 1932 powered 50% of the aircraft on display at the international Paris Airshow in 1929. The more powerful Mercury and Pegasus engines, with a smaller frontal area, were developed and a significant milestone was achieved when in 1934 'Press Baron' Lord Rothermere funded the Bristol type 135 being a twin Mercury engined 6-seater monoplane which demonstrated performance somewhat in excess of fighter aircraft then in RAF service. The aircraft became the basis of the exceptional Bristol military aircraft such as the Beaufighter, Beaufort and Brigand.

Bristol engine design continued with modifications required to increase power and accommodate higher 100 octane fuels. Experiments with fuel injection started in 1932 but the system was not adopted given that all Bristol Radial Engines employed Claudel Hobson carburation. For many technical reasons Fedden and his team turned to the development of Sleeve Valve Engines which replaced the Poppet Valve system previously used. The development process was lengthy and expensive, putting a significant strain on the BAC finances but eventually the system entered production in the widely installed 14-cylinder twin row Hercules engine. Production had reached 57,400 having been installed in 28 different aircraft types with a production span from 1938 to 1966. Engine development increased the power output from 1,150 hp to 2,080 hp. The last iteration of the Bristol designs was the 2,625hp (max) larger 18-cylinder Centaurus which powered the Brabazon and the Blackburn Freighter.

Bristol Mercury Gloster Gladiator

Bristol Hercules

Bristol Centaurus

Roy Fedden's relationship with the White family and the Board of the BAC was never harmonious to the extent that he was never appointed as a Director notwithstanding the fact that the Aero Engine Division was 'bigger' than the aircraft Division. In 1942 Roy Fedden was Knighted and later that year the issues between the parties came to a head and Fedden was sacked. The post war development and success of Bristol piston engines declined.

Fedden was subsequently officially employed by the Sir Stafford Crips/UK Government on specialist investigations in Germany during the immediate post war period when he identified the potential on the VW Beatle. He arranged for an example to be flown to the UK where he failed to convince the British car producers that the design had any merit!

Given that he was reputed to be the highest paid British engineer for the period when leading Bristol Aero Engines, he was able to self-finance a car design that incorporated a rear mounted air-cooled sleeve valve radial engine fitted with swing rear suspension influenced by the VW Beetle.

Regrettably, the car was not successful and the project was abandoned.

Sir Roy Fedden died In Buckland, near Usk in November 1973 aged 89.

Bristol Cars. An update following yet more delay.

In the December 2021 edition of our 'Chat' I recounted that 'the saga' of Bristol Cars continued. Regrettably, it still does.

Following the demise of the original, and latterly Tony Crook owned Bristol based company, in 2011, Frazer-Nash Research Ltd, a subsidiary of Kamkorp Autocraft, purchased the Intellectual Property Rights of Bristol Cars. Kamkorp specialised in the design and development of Hybrid drive train systems. In 2016 the company produced the Bristol Bullet (pictured below) being a 'one off' sports car with classic 'early Bristol 405' styling. It was reminiscent of the Bristol Blenheim Speedster of which 10 to 25 had been produced in 2002-2010. The Bristol Bullet was based on the current Morgan chassis and powered by a 4.8 litre, 400 hp V8 BMW engine. The car was demonstrated at the Goodwood Festival of Speed that year thereby recognising the 70th Anniversary of the foundation of the company. Plans for the resumption of production near Chichester or Windlesham was planned. Regrettably, those floundered when the parent company was placed into receivership, due unresolvable cash flow issues, in January 2020.

The 2016 Bristol Bullet

However, the saga of Bristol Cars continued, given that it was subsequently reported that Jason Wharton, an Essex property developer, announced plans to revive the company, now known as Bristol Manufacturing Ltd located in Bolingbroke Road, Filton. Initially, it was announced to be a service centre for existing Bristol cars but leading to the launch of the new Bristol Buccaneer in 2022. Regrettably, that ambition was not achieved, but in November this year a lengthy new 'Vision' was published by Mr Wharton which claimed, 'To revive Bristol Cars as a contemporary coachbuilder for connoisseurs of luxury grand touring automobiles and experiences worldwide in time for the 80th anniversary of the marque's founding in 2026'. Additionally, Bristol Cars will become an 'Electric Vehicle manufacturer by 2026'.

The announcement was published alongside the illustration of a Bristol 411 lookalike with larger road wheels seen here.

However, questions remain over the Intellectual Property Right ownership of Bristol Cars. In 2020 when Kamkorp/Bristol Cars was declared insolvent, the liquidation practitioners stated, 'We can categorically state that whilst [Jason Wharton] has purchased certain tooling and spares at an auction of the company's assets, he has not purchased any IPR '. Hopefully, this issue is now resolved.

SAC Shop

Our popular Navy-Blue baseball hats are currently in stock at a cost of £10.50 each.

High quality Sweatshirts, in a multiplicity of colours, are also available for individual order at a cost of £25.20 each. A link to the suppliers webpage, shown on the email covering this Bulletin, will help your choice.

P&P is extra on both items if required.

Both items are an ideal Christmas present.

I will be pleased to receive your order at craddyrichard@gmail.com. Payment to the SAC Account on delivery to you.

Nostalgia:

The Ford Consul Capri.

A Ford Consul Capri is now a very rare car and the opportunity to take this picture, in the Car Park of the Anchor Inn, Oldbury on Severn in late summer, was not to be missed.

The Capri was styled and produced in the UK in an attempt to 'add glamour' to the range of cars produced by Ford of Britain in the early 1960's. In essence it was a 2-door version of the Ford Classic saloon with strong styling influences taken from the American Ford Thunderbird and Galaxie models, hence the 'pillarless' construction with a sweeping roofline and large boot. The Ford sales literature claimed that it was 'the first Personal Car from Ford of Great Britain' - whatever that means!

The Capri was available for sale from January 1962 and production ended 2½ years later in July 1964 when (only) 19,421 had been sold. Initially the car was powered by the 1340cc, 3 main bearing crankshaft 4 cylinder '109E' engine after which it was replaced, in August 1962, by the somewhat more reliable '116E' 1498cc, 5 main bearing engine, thus also giving increased performance. In February 1963 a GT version powered by a Cosworth developed '116E' engine featuring larger exhaust valves, 4 branch exhaust and Webber twin-choke carburettors etc was introduced. Sales of the GT version were a modest 2002.

Fitted with four headlights, variable speed windscreen wipers, 9.5-inch disc brakes, a 4-speed gearbox, with floor or column change alternatives being available, and a cigar lighter (!) it was very well equipped 'in its day'.

The DVLA information of 17 BOW tells us that it was first registered in June 1962, making it a very early UK car especially given that the first 200 produced were left hand drive versions shipped to Europe and the US. The DVLA information also confirms that it is powered by a 1498cc engine, which indicates that it has been re-engined given that, by date, it was probably initially fitted with the 1340cc version. It would appear that it has been subject to restoration and returned to road use in March 2014.

The body was reportedly complex and expensive to produce, being formed and pre-assembled by the Pressed Steel Company in Swindon with final completion in Dagenham. In 1962 the UK selling price of £915 (including taxes of £288), making it uncompetitive with the offerings of the competition which was a significant factor in the 'disappointing' sales numbers and eventual demise of the model.

The Capri weighed 2,100 lbs (0.94 Tons) which contributed to the performance of the '1500cc' version of a 0-60mph time of 22.6 seconds and a top speed of 79mph.

Seen in Oslo in October:

Nio EV9. Two Seat Electric Sports Car.

This photograph of the Nio EV9 was taken in the Nio Cars Oslo showroom in October. It is a full 'technology demonstrator' electric sports car. It has been extensively tested.

Technically it delivers upto 1 megawatt of power via 4 motors and 4 gearboxes, incorporates advanced Torque Vectoring, Active Ride adjustment (200 calculations/second) and the largest available production Disc Brakes. Aerodynamically the active rear spoiler ensures that the downforce available can be upto twice that of a F1 car.

Basic parameters are:

- Top speed of 313 kmph (194 mph).
- WLTP* range, 427 km (265 miles).
- Full recharge in 45 minutes.
- While not for sale the purchase price would be 1.5 – 2 million Euros.

Driven by Oliver Turvey and Nelson Piquet Jnr. in 2017 it was tested at the Nurburgring, Nordschleiffe where it achieved a lap of 6 minutes 45.19 seconds for the 12.9-mile-long track, at Paul Ricard 1 minute 52.78 seconds (fastest FI lap set in 2019 by Sebastian Vettel, Ferrari: 1.32.740) and at the Circuit of the Americas, in Autonomous (driverless) configuration a lap in 2.40.330 (FI lap record by Valteri Bottas, Mercedes W10 of 1.32.028 in 2019).

Nio is yet another Chinese Electric Car manufacturer with Government backing. Founded in 2014 and with $1 Billion support from state owned companies, the aim is to challenge the market segment firmly occupied by Tesla. Nio has grown rapidly. Initial low production commenced in 2020 and has now grown to in excess of 21,000 vehicles/month in September 2024.

Nio has a vision whereby its cars are integrated into future 'smart cities' hence its prominent showroom in Oslo where this photograph was taken. Oslo has gained the nomination as 'the quiet city' given the predominance of electric cars on its roads. In support of that claim, in September 2024, the total number of Electric cars sold in Norway was 12,460 being 96.4% of all new cars delivered to customers.

Nio cars will be available in the UK in 2025.

Also The XPeng G6

The Xpeng G6 is a mid-sized ‘European styled’, all electric SUV that is equipped with advanced features

Basic parameters are:

- 800 volt supercharging capability of 10% to 80% in 20 minutes.
- WLPT* range: 435 kms(270 miles) or 550 kms (340 miles) with extended range batteries.
- 0 to 100km/hr (62 mph) in 4.1 seconds.
- Interior climate control heating is provided by a Heat Pump.

The Xpeng G6 will also be available in the UK in 2025 as will further Chinese electric cars!

*What is WLTP?

WLTP is the World-wide harmonised Test Vehicle Procedure that measures new car fuel economy, electric driving range and emissions. It is a laboratory test employing a rolling road that seeks to compare the performance of both internal combustion and electric vehicles. Following the emission testing issues, highlighted with VW Group cars, it replicates how the cars are typically used by consumers thereby resulting in more accurate and realistic fuel consumption and emissions figures for non-electric vehicles.

The rolling road test includes typical acceleration, braking and stationary phases of a typical journey. Vehicle weight, aerodynamic and rolling resistance effects are analysed at 4 different speed ‘ranges’ of 81 mph, 60 mph, 47mph and upto 35 mph. The test is applied to all new vehicles and consequently purchasers can make valid comparisons of different vehicles.

Electric cars are put through the same tests as their petrol and diesel-powered counterparts, to work out the rate of electricity consumption and the total driving range, known as the 'WLTP Combined Range' figure.

Unusual Vehicles: The Ditch Witch RT 80 Ride on Trencher

I took this photo on Thornbury Golf Course in the early summer when this Ditch Witch was being employed to lay irrigation pipes and associated electric cabling across the fairways.

As you can see from the photo, on the left side is an inline plough blade and a pipe feeding device combined with ‘shoes’ which return the ground to its former state in one movement. The pipes and/or cables are drawn from reels shown on the righthand side.

The Trencher is powered by a 74.5 Deutz diesel engine. The current ex works price is £150k.

Nigel Adkins' Christmas Quiz.

Once again, I'm pleased to publish a further Christmas Quiz prepared from Nigel's extensive and wide knowledge.

Regrettably there are no prizes, just your personal satisfaction if you succeed.

Answers can be found at the end of this 'Chat'.

1 Packard cars never has a radiator badge showing their company name. Where was it displayed?

2 Which was the first British manufacturer to offer an exchange engine?

3 Where in America, between the first and second World Wars, were Rolls-Royce cars produced?

4 When was the MoT test first introduced as a voluntary test?

5 Can you name the company and model of this 2.1 litre 1939 design with electromagnetically controlled gearbox?

6 The Munsters television show has two cars built for the show. Can you name them and who designed them?

7 Can you name the last front engined GP car?

8 Prior to 1970 can you name the World Championship Grand Prix in which no drivers retired?

9 While Chaparral sports racing cars were built by Jim Hallin America can you sat to what the name Chaparral refers?

10 In Britain windscreen safety glass became a requirement by law. In which year did this happen?

Mystery Car.

The September Mystery Car was a Facel Vega Facellia.

The Facel company, (the name being an acronym of ***F**orges et **A**teliers de **C**onstructions d'Eure-et-Loir*) was founded in 1939 by the Bronzavia company. Bronzavia was a manufacturing subcontractor of metal products in the field of military aeronautics. Initially, Facel was a supplier of pressed steel bodies for automobile applications and in particular those designs that incorporated a separate chassis.

Following WW2, Facel specialised in small batch production of bodies mainly for Simca and, in volume, Panhard for which it designed the body for the Panhard Dyna X. Facel manufactured 45,000 Dyna X bodies. Between 1951 and 1955 Facel also built bodies for the Ford (France) Comète which formed the structural basis of the forthcoming Facel Vega.

The first Facel Vega, the 2 door FV, was powered by a De Soto 4.5 litre 'Hemi' V8 engine. The design was based on a tubular chassis and featured a pillarless design, weighing 1.8 tonnes it had a performance of 0 to 60 mph in 10 seconds with a top speed of 120 mph.

The styling of the Facel Vega was closely based on a 'one off' produced in 1951 by Facel, for a Bentley Mk V1. The FV was updated in 1956 mainly with the installation of a 5.4 litre Chrysler V8 Hemi engine and sundry mechanical improvements. The four door Excellence model was introduced in the same year but the retention of the pillarless design together with rear hinged doors resulted in a less rigid and poorer handling car. In 1959 the Chrysler 6.28 litre V8 was adopted and the final iteration, the Facel Vega 11, was introduced in 1962.

Facel Vega FV

The smaller Facellia was introduced, as an additional model in 1960, that being Facel's attempt to enter into the volume sports car market where it was intended to challenge competitors such as the Mercedes-Benz 190 SL.

Facel Facellia

The Facellia was powered by a bespoke 1.6 litre cylinder engine designed by Carlo Machetti, the former Talbot Lago chief engineer, with the assistance of Harry Westlake the recognised British cylinder head/combustion specialist. Regrettably, the engine was extremely unreliable given that it incorporated only 2 bearing supports for the overhead camshaft (conventionally 4 or 5). Engine failures were frequent and costly. An engine rectification programme failed and while the company replaced damaged engines at no cost, a plan to continue production with Volvo engines came too late and the Facel company passed into administration in October 1964, solely due to the Facellia engine issue.

Facel Vega manufactured around 4,000 'Facel' cars of which 1,100 were Faecllias.

My thanks to Andrew Owst for his 'first hand' knowledge of this model. Andrew wrote:

Facel Vega went onto produce a model called the Facellia and made the mistake of producing their own engine for this model. It was heap of trouble, got through pistons at an incredible rate, and bankrupted the company. However, I had a very brief involvement with one of these, way back in the early 1970s. A Facellia owner in Bristol found that the only person in the motor trade who was prepared to touch this car was that well known MG enthusiast and ex MG dealer, Morgan Marshall of Chapel Green Lane, Redland, Bristol. I happened to visit Morgan on a day when he had already spent a few hours fiddling with the engine of the Facellia and he asked me if I would help him bump start it. So, the Facellia was hitched up to his famous MG ZB Magnette, the Yellow Peril, which I drove around Clyde Road, Hampton Road etc, with Morgan in the Facellia trying to bump start it but to no avail. After several weeks Morgan had to admit defeat. I do not what happened to the car, but I doubt it survived or even worked again.

This Mystery Car prompted eleven correct responses which is more than any other Mystery car so far published.

In addition to Andrew's contribution I received correct identification from Chris Bigwood and Nigel Wills, who correctly compared the Facel Vega with contemporary Bristol Cars given that they shared the small volume production and Chrysler V8 engines, David Webber, Harry Crowther, David Golledge, Tony Allen, John Boddey, Terry Osborne and Sam Budd. My thanks to each of you. Regrettably there is no prize.

The two further cars noted in the text were:

Bentley V1 Cresta by Facel

Panhard Dyna X

The December Mystery Car

Answers to Dick Craddy: craddyrichard@gmail.com

The Microlino

Why would this two-seat electric car that looks like a 1950's Heinkel Bubble Car be on display at the recent Caravan and Camping show held at the NEC?

Well, for those who do not understand the delights of caravanning there is a dilemma when you make your purchase. Do you tow a Touring Caravan or drive a Motorhome?

If you prefer towing a Touring Caravan, then you have the freedom to leave your campsite in your tow car, leaving your caravan on site. If, however, you prefer a Motorhome then there is a need to pack away your belongings before going to the Supermarket etc. Unless……..

This is where the Microlino comes into the equation.

The straightforward way for the Motorhome owners to avoid the disruption of repacking your caravan for a local short journey is to tow a small car. Hence the Microlino being on display at the NEC.

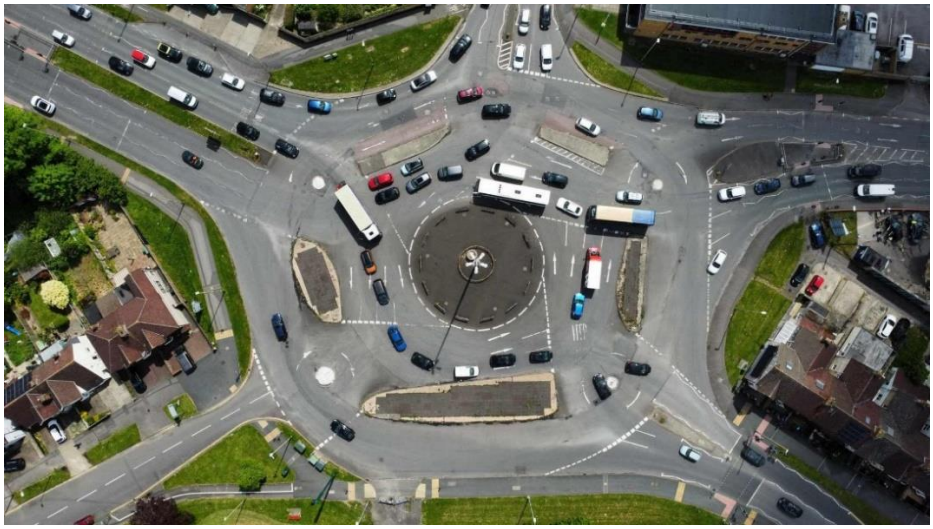
The Microlino is electric powered, built on a steel/aluminium safety cell frame and weights 496 Kgs. Claimed range is 228Km. Performance provides a maximum speed of 90km/hr and acceleration of 0 to 50 km/hr in 5 seconds. Dimensions are Length: 2.519m Width: 1.473m and Height: 1.500m

Designed in Switzerland and built in Turin the current base cost of a Microlino in the UK is £18,000.

Swindon: The Magic Roundabout.

In September the UK's Roundabout Appreciation Society awarded the famed Swindon 'Magic Roundabout' the accolade '2024 Roundabout of the Year'. The citation honoured it as the 'white knuckle ride' of roundabouts.

Initially installed 35 years ago it consists of 5 mini roundabouts surrounding a central island.



When announcing the award, the UK Roundabout Appreciation Society's chairman said that "Something just amazing happens when you approach it. You're dazzled by the choreography of cars". Apparently, some Appreciation Society Committee members prefer 'Titchmarshes' being Roundabouts which feature green foliage and grass in the centre. However, on this occasion the 'Magic Roundabout' won the award.

As with all roundabouts 'accidents happen' but the longevity of this internationally famous design indicates that the challenges presented are not unusually detrimental.

'Click Unsubscribe' but not with the Automobile Magazine.

In June I decided to stop my subscription to 'The Automobile' Magazine simply because I had too many back issues to read. As you know, The Automobile concentrates on classic cars and in my opinion, and to its credit, its editorial policy encourages factual reporting and certainly discourages journalistic 'hype'.

As we know in modern times, we can stop subscriptions and invasive advertising webpages simply by 'unsubscribing' which at the best will result in a 'sorry to see you go' response.

However, with The Automobile the response is somewhat different given that I, unexpectedly, received, by post, the following:

1 Mr Toad is quite sad you will see
And really quite mad with poor me
Your sub has expired
We hope you're not tired
Of the mag you can read with your tea!

2 June was the latest you had
Nothing since-and now I feel bad
If you hop back on board
I'll sure thank the Lord
And Toad will be croaking like mad

3 Our offer to you is quite plain
Renewing your sub you will gain -
Issues straight to your door
6 or 12 months or more
And you're reading our mag once again

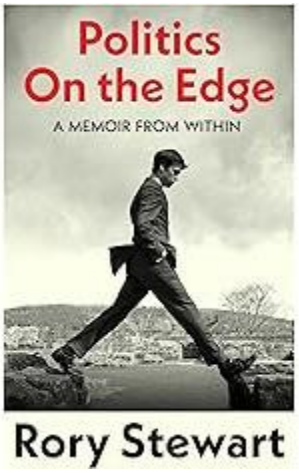
4 For 24 issues the deal is a dream
"it can't be". I hear you scream
The price it astounds
It's saving you pounds
And you'll feel like a cat with the cream

5 The form overleaf you should see
Decide how many issues you choose
Then send it to us
And without any fuss
Your sub will be duly renewed

Yours sincerely,
Jules Clifton,
Subscriptions Manager

From the Bookshelf: Politics on the Edge, Rory Stewart.

I make no apology for including a brief overview of this 'off topic' book which could be a worthy Christmas present.



If you have an interest in national Politics and irrespective of your political preferences then if you decide to read this book, you will gain an experienced insight into UK politics at the highest level. Rory Stewart is a former potential leader of the Conservative Party and therefore also a potential Prime Minister.

If you also have concerns that the structure of political government and its personalities, as distinct from the Civil Service, are rarely 'fit for purpose' then you will not be surprised by the content of this very well-written text.

You may decide that Mr Stewart was naïve in thinking, for example, that his deep knowledge of Afghanistan, gained in the early 2000's, would be embraced or simply consulted by his Government colleagues when significant policy decisions regarding the UK's involvement in that area were being discussed. He was not consulted on this and other matters in which he had worthy experience. Apparently, this was not an unusual mode of operation within government.

When in holding Ministerial appointments Mr Stewart was tasked with tackling briefs on flood response and prison violence, engaging with conflict and poverty abroad as a foreign minister, and Brexit. That background alone makes this book worth reading albeit he had no experience in any of these responsibilities prior to being appointed. You can conclude that this is a typical 'bums on seats' approach to Ministerial appointments.

Finally, you will gain a clear insight into his relationships with and clear views of the 'management' styles of David Cameron, Theresa May and Boris Johnson. Please make of it what you will.

Nigel's Quiz Answers

1 On the Hub Caps
2 Ford of Dagenham announced theirs in July 1934
3 Springfield, Massachusetts in 1920-1931
4 12th September 1960
5 Aston Martin Atom
6 The Drag-u-Bi and Munster Koach by Tom Daniel
7 The Scarab 1960
8 Dutch Grand Prix of 1961
9 A bird common in the south-western states of the USA
10 1937

And finally.

It simply remains for me to wish you a very happy and contented Christmas. We look forward to a hopefully satisfying and interesting 2025 which, I trust will offer much to enjoy for all of us.

Until then travel safely.

Best wishes,

Dick Email: craddyrichard@gmail.com

SAC Bank Account: Bank: Lloyds, Business Account number: 00577513, Sort code: 30.00.01.