Somerset Automobile Club
Chairman's Chat
December 2025

Your President, Chairman and committee wish you a

Ladies and gentlemen,

Looking back over the past 12 months I'm sure you will agree that by the end of the year we will have completed a varied programme of enjoyable events. Regrettably, 2025 was marked by the sad passing of our President, Chris Bigwood in March. A celebration of his life, which was held at St Mary Magdalene Church, Stoke Bishop in April, was commendably well supported by friends and colleagues from each aspect of his work and widely varied interests.

Our first event was the long-awaited and fascinating March visit to the Royal Naval Air Service Museum at Yeovilton, organised by Jim Lott. Our AGM followed in April, once again held at The Batch Country Hotel in Lympsham. While we held our special 120th Anniversary celebration at Leigh Court in 2024, we returned to the Walton Park Hotel, Clevedon for a well-supported Tea Party when Janis was pleased to hand over the Presidents Chain of Office to our newly elected President, David Franklin.

In June we were able to enjoyed the Social Run carefully devised by John Clay and Edward Kirkland. The route which took us via the 'country route', from Keynsham to the Hauser and Wirth restaurant in Bruton was enjoyed by a pleasing number of members, many driving their 'toy' cars. In August, with the encouragement of Dave Blatchford, we also enjoyed lunch at Hartham Park, Corsham. The venue can offer the opportunity for a picnic but given the unpredictable nature of our weather we opted, correctly, for a light lunch in excellent surroundings. We will return in 2026.

Our visit to the RNLI Training College, Poole in September was our first coach trip for some long time. Held in part as acknowledgement of the outcome provided by our Members Survey held in 2023, which clearly indicated that visits to 'non motoring' establishments would be attractive, the visit was well supported. A report follows. We returned to Somerset in October when Mike and Julie Sanders had taken great care in organising our second Social Run, starting near Shipham and finishing for lunch at the Brean Golf and Country Club. The Route Card was augmented by a detailed and historic commentary of places of interest passed en-route. I was pleased to publish their interesting text with the November Bulletin along with a brief report. A photographic record is published later in this 'Chat'.

On 23rd November 50 members and guests enjoyed our annual Autumn Lunch once again at The Batch Country Hotel, at Lympsham. The attendance was the highest recorded for an SAC event in recent memory and therefore clearly confirms that the SAC serves a strong purpose in our community. To complete the year, a select number of members and guests will take a guided tour of the St Nicholas Market and adjacent WW2 Air Raid Shelters.

Membership at the end of the year stands at 68 Ordinary Members and additionally 2 Honorary Members. Recruitment in 2025 has been pleasingly successful. As you know, while we always seek applications from new members your committee acknowledges that a proposal very much relies on the judgement of the proposer and seconder. If possible, it is preferrable and courteous that the potential member experiences one or more of our meetings beforehand. It is pleasing to report at 65% of our membership supported at least one event in 2025.

It is timely to remind you that Full Members £10 Annual Membership Fees will be due for renewal on 1st January (except new recruits who have joined since 1st October). Please mark your transfer with your Name and 'Membership'.

Future Events.

Remaining for 2025.

Thursday 11th December: St Nicholas Market and Air Raid Walking Tour.

Given that we have now booked for the Public Tour there are still places available. Lasting 2 hours a local guide/personal air raid warden will take us on a unique tour from the origins of Bristol's trading past, through the terrifying nights of the Blitz, into the swinging 60's and onto the city's vibrant present. See: https://www.st-nickstours.com/

The cost/head is £15. The tour starts promptly at 11.00am from the Corn Exchange entry in Corn Street BS1 1JQ. Please let me know promptly if you wish to join the group.

Calendar for 2026. Dates marked * are provisional.

Date TBA*. Visit to Aerospace Bristol.

This visit to the Aerospace museum will include a Guided tour of the newly introduced R-R 'Bristol' aero engine collection. Roger Perrin is currently investigating this opportunity.

Thursday 5th March or TBD*. Guided Tour Visit.

Phil Rumney continues to pursue the possibility of a visit to the Science Museum collection at Wroughton, date TBD, (see: https://www.scienceinnovationpark.org.uk/. However, if that does not become available we will take a coach trip on 5th March, with guided tour, to the National War Museum at RAF Cosford (see: https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands/) on Thursday 5th March. I will be your contact. The Cosford Museum has been substantially revised since our earlier visit nearly 10 years ago.

Wednesday 1st April: AGM and Lunch:

Once again we return to The Batch Country Hotel, Lympsham. Jim Lott will organise the AGM I will be your contact for the lunch.

Tuesday 12th May: Social Run and Lunch. This event will start on the English side of the River Severn before we enjoy a scenic drive in the Wye Valley before finishing for lunch at Trellech. Pam and Alan Williams will be your contacts.

Tuesday 16th June: Tea Party at the Walton Park Hotel Clevedon.

We return to Clevedon for our annual Tea Party which, this year returns to its traditional date marking the anniversary of the foundation of the SAC. Pauline Gullick will be your contact.

Thursday 6th August: Lunch.

Following a 'make you own way' drive we plan to return Hartham Park, Corsham following our enjoyable 2025 visit. Dave Blatchford will be your contact.

Monday 7th September.

Provisionally a visit to Cosford or Wroughton depending on which is not held in March.

Thursday 15th October: Social Run.

Please consider volunteering to organise this event.

Sunday 22nd November: Autumn Lunch to be held at The Batch Country Hotel, Lympsham.

So, here is my usual plea. In thanking those who helped ensuring a completion of a full events programme in 2025, I'm sure you realise that we do not require too many volunteers to ensure success, please consider carefully if you could be willing to help with the organisation of one or other of the events in 2026. Without your help and enthusiasm the enjoyment that our programme of events obviously provides will not be readily continued. I look forward to hearing from you.

Visit to the RNLI Training College, Poole. Tuesday 9th September 2025.

Attended by 22 members and guests this coach trip proved to be a very worthwhile, enjoyable and educational visit.

Given that the RNLI limits guided tours to dates when training is not being held, the extensive premises provided the opportunity for uninterrupted tours for each of our two groups. Our guides were able to demonstrate the wide capability and capacity for the college staff to train both UK and International lifeboat personnel from initial to senior level courses and for the necessary and regular competence training. The scope of the training covers class room and practical courses in a wide range of lifeboat handling skills, medical and lifeboat maintenance techniques and crew fitness.

A particular highlight was the opportunity for some of our party to 'drive' the 3-axis lifeboat simulator. The scene was Dover Harbour where a crippled, on fire, tanker was drifting outside the harbour wall. A tanker crew member, who was floundering in the sea, required rescuing and the task was to position the lifeboat in a suitably to affect a rescue. Initially the sea state was calm but given that all such simulators incorporate a stimulator, the guides notably increased the sea state to make the task impossible for untrained visitors.

In addition the RNLI designs, builds and maintains Lifeboats for both UK and overseas customers at Poole. All weather boats typically have a range of 250 miles and inshore have been designed to cope with shore hazards.

There are currently 5,700 trained lifeboat crew in the UK and in addition the RNLI has trained 1600 lifeguards for 240 UK beaches. These photos were taken by Jim Lott.

Trevor and Roger in the Simulator Driving Seat!

Mike and Julie Sanders Avalon Amble. Wednesday 15th October.

Starting at the Lillipool Café near Shipham and finishing at the Brean Golf and Country Club, this delightful event was reported in our November Bulletin. Here are some photos taken at lunch, once again by Jim Lott.

Autumn Lunch. Sunday 23rd November.

As noted above once again we returned to The Batch Country Hotel at Lympsham for this very well supported and much enjoyed annual gathering. Once again The Batch did not disappoint.

The occasion gave me the opportunity to introduce our newly elected members Peter and Julie Colman and Alan and Pam Williams to the attendees. Photos by Jim Lott – again!

UK Driving Licence Update: New Rules for Over-62s from 13th September 2025.

Hopefully we are all aware that the UK introduced significant changes to driving licence rules for senior motorists from October 2025. Driven by an awareness of the increasing number of 'senior' drivers and the health issues that can prevail, the following changes have been made.

Currently, drivers must renew their licence at the age of 70 and then every three years afterwards. While this rule will remain, new obligations will be introduced:

- Senior drivers will need to provide an updated health declaration, confirming their eyesight, medical condition, and overall fitness to drive.
- In certain cases, a medical examination may be mandatory before licence renewal approval.
- The DVLA will also implement additional checks on drivers with known medical conditions such as diabetes, heart issues, or neurological problems.
- Failure to comply with the new rules could result in a suspended licence or heavy fines.
- If you are turning 70 before October 2025, you will continue under the current renewal system until your next renewal falls after the change.

However, from October 2025 the process will require extra steps:

1. Complete the online renewal form via the DVLA website or request a paper form.
2. Provide a health declaration regarding your eyesight, mobility, and any relevant medical conditions.

Towing with Electric Vehicles – again!

This is an ongoing and repeating topic to be found in publications dedicated to caravan owners.

Range limitation (range anxiety) remains a continuing issue. The Caravan and Camping Club recently undertook tests of a range of cars from various manufacturers for their 2025 Tow Car of the Year Awards.

The BMW i4, kerb side weight 2015 kgs, for which the makers claim a range of 380 miles under 'normal' agreed test criteria driving conditions (albeit it is noted that 'real world' driving will limit the range to 320 miles) achieved 113 miles when towing a caravan weighing 1760 kgs, being matched to the recommended 85% of the cars kerbside weight.

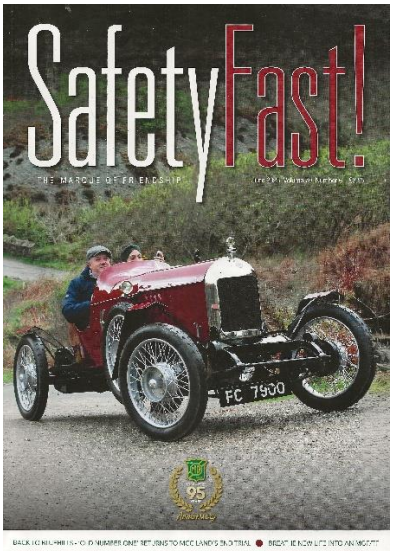
In the practical sense a range of 100 miles is the maximum, provided that charging points are suitably available.

N.B. Electric cars are, due to battery weight, heavier than petrol or diesel powered vehicles and consequently they are suitable for towing larger/heavier trailers.

Lands' End Trial Celebrations April 2025.

Easter Kirkland recounts the occasion.

Easter weekend this year marked a very special anniversary for MG enthusiasts, as it was 100 years since Cecil Kimber won a gold medal on the Lands' End Trial over the weekend of 10-11 April 1925 driving "Old Number One". This car was arguably the first MG sports car built by the newly created MG Car Company under the leadership of Cecil Kimber and was very much a one off special. The car itself had a chequered life after its Lands' End success having been sold on by the company soon after the event. In 1932 an employee discovered the car languishing in a Birmingham scrapyard and thankfully had the foresight to recover it. To this day it has remained in the custody of the MG Car Company and subsequently the British Motor Museum, where it is one of their prize exhibits at Gaydon.



The centenary did not go unnoticed and, under the leadership of Rob Constant from the MG Car Club, a series of events were organised in Cornwall to celebrate this occasion. Most importantly Rob was able to persuade the British Motor Museum to bring the car to the Lands' End Trial. With the added cooperation of the Motor Cycling Club (organisers of the Trial since 1908) it was arranged for Old Number One to drive up Blue Hills Mine in advance of the 300 or so competitors entered in this year's event. This gave a great opportunity for the many spectators there to photograph the car in action and reproduce a photo taken in 1925 of the car in exactly the same location. A truly memorable moment!

The celebrations started in earnest on Good Friday evening when Hawkins MG in Truro organised an exceptional reception in their splendid showroom. This was the first opportunity for everybody to see Old Number One and for one or two people to actually sit in the driver's seat. Saturday morning was the Trial day and so to Blue Hills Mine to watch the car make several successful climbs of the hill in the hands of the Curator and the Head of Collections at Gaydon, who were clearly enjoying the moment just as much as all of many the spectators were.

In the evening many of us were invited to the Alverton Hotel in Truro where Old Number One tool pride of place in the entrance. An excellent buffet meal had been arranged and the evening closed with speeches from the Chair of the MG Car Club, the President of the Motor Cycle Club and the Head of Collections from the British Motor Museum.

On a personal note, the event was very special to me, as some 50 years ago my grandmother, who was Cecil Kimber's second wife, had given me the gold medal that her late husband had won back in 1925. It was an opportunity to reunite the car and the medal for possibly the first time in 100 years and it was touching to see how much all of those who saw the medal appreciated what a special weekend it had been.

Easter Kirkland alongside 'Old Number One' with the Kimber 1925 MCC Land's End Trial gold medal

The 1925 medal is mounted on a silver match box, something that has always intrigued me. I often wondered whether this was something Cecil Kimber had arranged himself.

After this year's Trial the MCC archivist did some research and was able to confirm that in those early years, gold medal winners were given the choice of mounted metal or engraved cufflinks. How times have changed! Interestingly, my brother has a set of cufflinks which Cecil Kimber won driving a Morris Cowley on the 1923 Lands' End Trial.

The Mazda 6 stroke engine.

Mazda is well known for its pioneering and unconventional approaches to the design of engines. As a consequence of significant development effort, required to overcome the sealing of the trapezoidal rotor tips, Mazda eventually perfected the Wankel Rotary engine. It has also produced an efficient petrol engine that runs at high diesel engine compression ratios of 14:1 without preignition (conventional petrol engines run lower at 8:1 or slightly higher).

Here, in a development that seeks to recognise the environmental damage created by conventional petrol engines, the engineers at Mazda have developed patented a six-stroke engine that eliminates carbon from the emitted exhaust gas.

As we know a conventional petrol engine has 4 strokes: Induction, Compression, Combustion (via a spark), and Exhaust. This is, of course, known as the Otto Cycle named after its inventor Nicolas Otto.

The Mazda 6 Stroke Engine

The 6 stroke Mazda engine burns hydrogen that it extracts from petrol combustion after the 4th stroke and burns it during the '5th and 6th strokes'. This process ensures that a unit quantity of hydrogen, burnt in the final combustion process, creates the same quantity of non-polluting water, which is conventionally exhausted.

How is that achieved? The Mazda patent achieves its objective by splitting burnt petrol into its constituents of carbon and hydrogen during the combustion process.

This is facilitated by directing the conventional exhaust gasses from the 4th stroke into a decomposing valve. Here further petrol is sprayed into the hot gas whereupon heat and a catalyst separates the hydrogen gas and carbon. The hydrogen is directed into a small storage chamber, awaiting reuse, and the carbon is trapped in a form that can be stored for later recovery during engine servicing.

Then follows a 5th expansion stroke where the hydrogen gas returns to the cylinder prior the final 6th exhaust stroke. Therefore, no carbon is exhausted.

However, given that each gallon of petrol, weighing 7.2 pounds produces 6.5 pounds of carbon, it is an obvious conclusion that servicing intervals will be very short given the quantity of carbon produced.

We can conclude that while this is obviously an interesting technical achievement, perhaps, it is one which does not have a practical application.

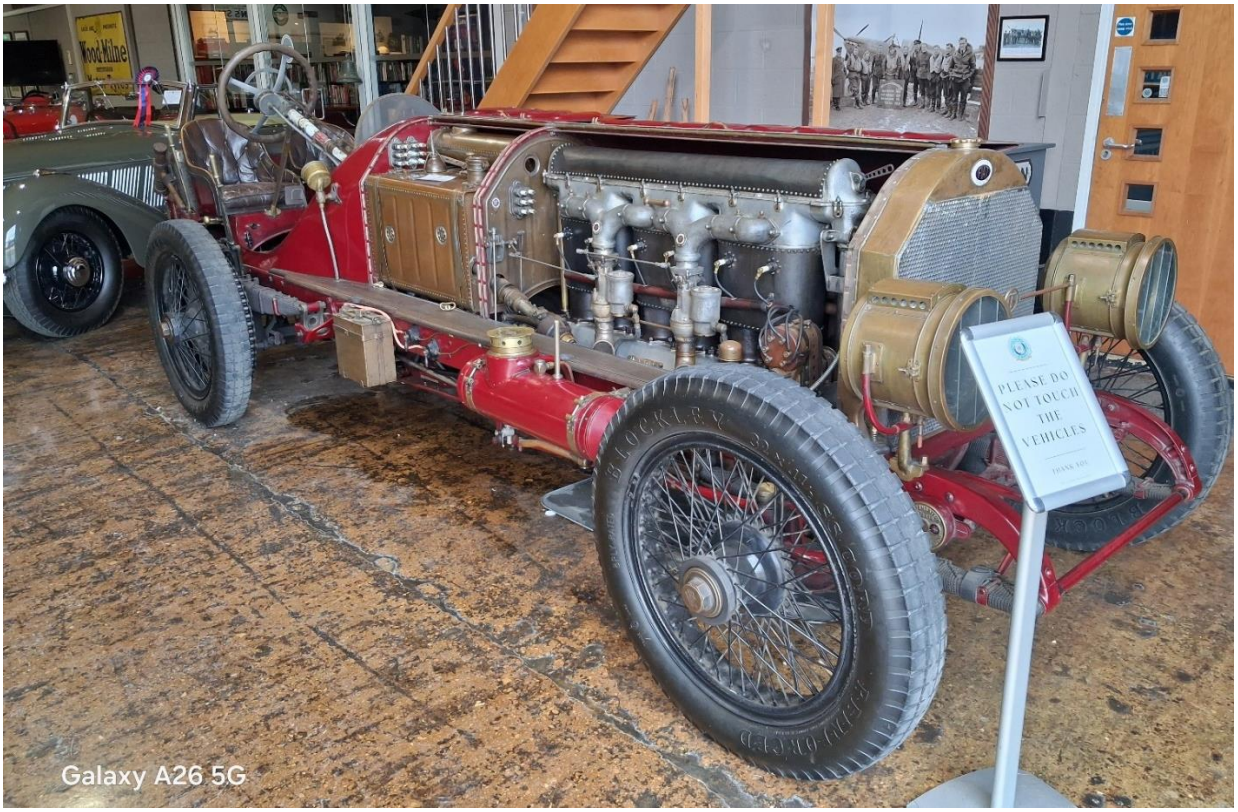
Mazda, however, is not the only car manufacturer seeking to reduce or eliminate carbon emissions. In 2024 Porsche filed a patent application whereby a 5th and 6th stroke is also introduced into a full cycle. In that case, however, the two extra stokes are designed to extract further energy from the gasses, therefore reducing emissions from each cycle.

Seen at the Bibury Motor Hub in September.

The 1905 FIAT Isotta-Fraschini

In 1905 FIAT decided to build a car for a Land Speed Record attempt. The design was to have featured two 100hp four-cylinder engines installed in tandem. However, in 1905 Herbert L Bowden driving a car powered by two Mercedes 9.25 litre engines, also mounted in tandem, achieved a record-breaking two-way average speed of 109.75 mph at Ormond Beach, Daytona, Florida. Apparently, the record was not recognised because the engine configuration was not in accordance with the extant regulations.

As a consequence of that decision FIAT did not pursue its tandem engined design but instead planned to build a car with a single 6.8 litre engine as installed in the racing cars of the same period. That car was also never constructed but, as we know, a 28.3 litre 1910 FIAT S96 has been reconstructed and raced by Duncan Pittaway the well-known local enthusiast. The S96 was also built for a Land Speed Record attempt but having achieved 132.27mph at Ostend in December 2013 in a one way run it failed to complete the mandatory second run and the record was, again, not recognised.



In the 1990's British enthusiast Graham Rankin, having obtained access to the original 1905 FIAT design drawings began the construction of a 'replica' of the intended 1905 Land Speed Record car. It has to be said that the result is an assembly of period components such that the finished car only 'resembles' the original FIAT Design intention. It is a hybrid or 'bitza' but one that provides an exciting insight into ambitious Edwardian engineering. While Rankin started the project, it was Mike Vardy who brought it to fruition.

The engine, as the name of the car confirms, is not of FIAT origin but it is a 16.6 litre Isotta-Fraschini in-line six-cylinder aero engine of the type installed in the winning 1921 Italian Macchi Schneider Trophy entry. (The Schneider Trophy was the pre-WW2 air racing contest for seaplanes and flying boats, eventually retained in 1931 by a Supermarine design that was the forerunner of the Spitfire fighter). The engine, which was designed late in WW1 (1917) produced 250 bhp and 3,000 lb-ft torque.

Other salient car details are:

- Weight: 2,220kgs (4850 lbs)
- Length: 6.72metres (22.1 ft)
- Width: 1.92 Metres (6.33 ft)
- Height: 1.50 Metres (59 inches)

The transmission/gearbox is a 1912 Dennis lorry unit.

The length of the car corresponds to the original FIAT design. However, given that the single engine is shorter than the original tandem FIAT installation the specially constructed copper fuel tank is placed in front of the driver and passenger. The tank is constructed such that the steering column passes through it (see photo)!

Construction of the car took eight full years and, in December 2012, being 91 years since the engine last ran, the work came to fruition with the first successful run. Since then the car has regularly been seen in competition on UK Hillclimbs and, of course, at Goodwood. Likewise it has competed in events in France and Germany having been driven to the venues.

Foot note: The original Isotta-Fraschini company was founded in 1900 essentially as an importer of Renault cars into Italy. It then became a designer and manufacturer of luxury cars until production ceased in 1949. Having merged, in 1955, with the engine manufacturing Breda company it was declared bankrupt in 1999. The name was revived in 2022 as an Endurance Racing Car entrant. Numerous competition entries were made in the LMP Hypercar class designed by Michelotto with Williams Advanced Engineering aerodynamic input until 2024, when 14th place was achieved in the Le Mans 24 Hour race. However, planned entries in 2025 did not materialise reportedly due to financial disputes with contracted racing teams.

Emeryson: 1961 Sports Car (also seen at the Bibury Motor Hub)

The Emeryson family can undoubtedly be considered to have been a competent British constructor of competition cars.

The founder of the company was George Emery, who in partnership with his sons Peter and Paul, (hence the name Emeryson) started to build specials in the 1930's. The first Emeryson appeared in 1936. The family relationship was not harmonious and this probably contributed to the closure of the initial business prior to WW2.

In the late 1940's the 500cc racing car formula (devised by members of The Bristol Aeroplane Company Motor Club) was gaining support and George, while having employment elsewhere, and his sons decided that a front engined car would provide a competitive solution. An interesting feature of their designs was the adoption of rubber 'bungee' suspension. Fitted with inboard front brakes and either Norton or JAP engines the Emeryson's offered the cars for sale at £650 ex works. It is reported that seven were manufactured. While initially being seen to be competitive with the designs from Cooper, Kieft etc their competitiveness declined in the latter 1940's albeit they performed well in club racing events.

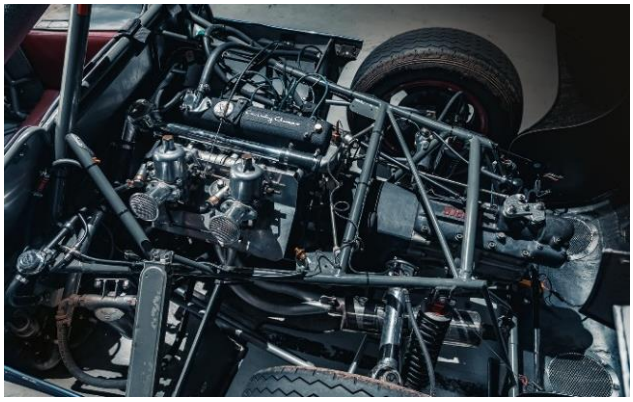
Family divisions continued and Paul essentially continued the business with the first post-war special appearing in 1947. Paul continued to build Formula 500's but notwithstanding continuing financial stringencies, in 1953 he produced the 2-litre Formula 2 Emeryson Alta in which he competed until 1955.

In 1953 Paul Emery built his first Formula 1 car which he developed with initially an Aston Martin engine and latterly with a 2.5 litre Alta unit. Perseverance was rewarded when in 1955 he qualified for the British Grand Prix at Silverstone ahead of Jack Brabham, only for the car to fail early in the race.

Emeryson Cars continued to endure financial problems and in 1960 it was refinanced by Alan Brown the owner Connaught Cars, who were entrants in Formula 1 at the time. This change of ownership allowed Paul Emery to focus on the engineering aspects of racing car construction and he turned to the design of a Formula 2 car. The car was a spaceframe design powered by a Coventry Climax 1.5 litre FPF 4-cylinder engine. The car was considered to be competent when raced.

At that time Emery was approached by Ray Fielding, a Hillclimb competitor, requesting a road going sports car that he could enter in Hillclimb events.

Hence, this unique car was produced by Paul Emery, in 1961. It was based on his F2 design with the chassis having been widened to accommodate two side by side seats. It is currently fitted with a Coventry Climax 1460cc FWB single camshaft engine, a Cooper gearbox and SU carburettors.



It is the only road going Emeryson and the sole Emeryson Sports car. It is a well-known competitor at prestigious classic car race meetings in the UK and Europe. The asking price, at the Bibury Motor Hub, was £79,995.

Paul eventually sold Emeryson Cars in 1961 after building a series of rear-engined Juniors and Formula 1 cars (in 1962 the latter were powered by BRM V8s and were re-branded as Sciroccos). While he remained in the business, at the end of 1962 he left, forming Paul Emery Cars, specialising in Hillman Imp tuning and producing the Imp-based Emery GT.

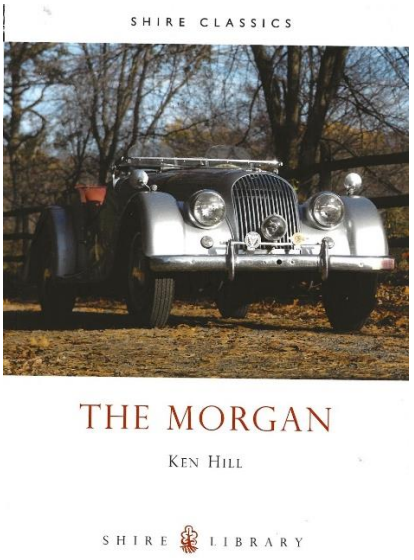
The Chinese Invasion.

No doubt we have all glanced at the extensive number of cars in the transit store at Portbury Docks. Here is a guide to the identities of Chinese car manufacturers and nineteen brands that are already or will soon become available in the UK. Electric, Hybrid, Petrol and Diesel versions are available.

Manufacturer	Brands
Chery	Chery, Omoda, Tiggo, Jaecoo.
Great Wall Motors	Ora, Haval, Doer (pick up).
BYD	BYD, Denza, (pick up).
Geely	Geely (also owns Volvo, Polestar, Lotus, LEVC taxis).
Zeekr	Zeekr
XPeng	XPeng
Changan	Deepal
SAIC	MG, MG IM (premium brand)
Maxus	Maxus (pick up)
GAC	GAC
Nio	Nio
Leap Motor	Leapmotor (linked to Stellantis)
Skyworth	Skywell

From the Bookshelf: The Morgan. Author Ken Hill. Published by the Shire Library.

This 32-page A5 sized booklet was published in 1996 and subsequently reprinted/updated in 2011. It traces the history of the Morgan Car Company from the original 1909 three wheeled prototype, constructed by Henry Morgan (HFS) upto the date of publication.



While production of Morgan Cars was interrupted by the engineering demand created by WW2, and restarted in 1945, the 'F Type' three-wheeler remained in production until it was withdrawn in 1952. The F Type had formed the basis of the first 'experimental' four-wheel Morgan which was announced in December 1935 to coincide with the London to Exeter Trial. Known as the 4-4 (four wheels and 4 cylinders) and latterly 4/4 it has essentially remained in production, with a multiplicity of engines, and different model identities, including the Plus 8, until the present day where it is known as the Roadster.

The text also covers the design and production, between 1964 and 1967 of 26 Plus 4 plus glass fibre bodied coupes. Widely considered to be a failure at the time of manufacture these cars are now seriously valued.

Consequently, the 2000 addition of the Morgan Aero 8, aluminium chassis with traditional ash wood frame and BMW power and subsequent models including the Aeromax coupe, Morgan Plus E electric version and, of course, the new Supersports model introduced in March this year, are not covered in this brief history.

Likewise, the reintroduction of the 3-wheeler in 2011 looked back to the heritage on the company but is not covered in the text. That model was superceded by the Super 3 model which is built on the Aero 8 chassis.

Given that competition success has supported the Morgan 'brand' since its beginnings, in 2022 a limited edition, of 62 cars was introduced by the company to celebrate its Le Mans 24 Hour class win in 1962.

Morgan remains the oldest motor manufacturer in the world. It is owner in partnership with Investindustrial, a private equity investor and the Morgan Family.

Seen at Kemble Airfield. A Magni M24C Orion Autogyro.

I will admit that I photographed this Autogyro because of its minimal size and attractive styling. Little did I realise that it has a 'history'.

An Autogyro, as you will know, incorporates an unpowered rotor, which provides lift, and an independent engine driven propellor which gives forward motion. The engine can be mounted fore or aft. While the rotor rotates undriven in flight, initial powered rotation is necessary, at slow forward speed during take-off, in order to ensure that it develops lift as the aircraft accelerates.

The unpowered, free spinning rotor blades are angled not only to provide a downward force (lift), by forcing the air to move upwards and aft through the blades, but also an accelerating force such that the rotational speed of the blades increases with forward motion, to a stable speed. An Autogyro requires forward motion to create lift and unlike a helicopter it cannot take off or land vertically.

The Autogyro principle was developed in the early 1920's by the Spanish aircraft designer, Juan de la Cierva in a quest to achieve low speed flight. His initial Autogyro flew for the first time in Madrid in January 1923. The Autogyro was the forerunner of the helicopter albeit in that application the air is drawn from above and not below as with the Autogyro.

In 1925, with financial backing from Lord Weir, then Chairman of Weir's of Cathcart, the engineering company, Cierva moved to the UK which then became the centre for autogyro development. Autogyro's were also subsequently developed in the USA, Russia, Japan and Germany and consequently were widely deployed in WW2.

However, the appearance of the small Autogyro 'Little Nellie', designed by British engineer Ken Wallis, in the 1967 James Bond film 'You Only Live Twice' brought the potential of small autogyros into public perception. Wallis gained 34 Autogyro world records for speed (129mph), height and altitude, holding eight of them at the time of his death aged 97 in 2013.

Ken Wallis with 'Little Nellie' the James Bond WA-116 Autogyro

Autogyros can be seen at the Helicopter Museum in Weston super Mare.

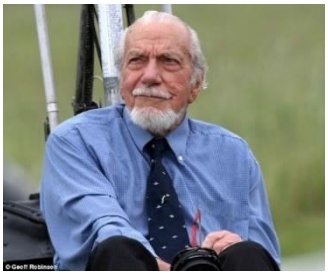
The Magni M24C Autogyro is one of a range of Autogyros designed and built by 'Magni Gyro srl' based in Milan. The M24C provides side by side seating in a fully glazed enclosed cockpit. They are powered by a choice of either a 115hp Rotax or 141hp Rotax 4-cylinder, 4 stroke turbocharged engines. These engines have been designed specifically for small helicopter or Autogyro applications and develop full power upto 15,000 feet with an operational ceiling of 23,000 feet. The twin rotor blades are of composite material construction. Magni also manufacturers two open cockpit, tandem seating versions, the M16 and M22.

However, the Magni M24C Orion illustrated above has an interesting history given that it was involved in an accident at Oakley Airfield, Buckinghamshire, on 6th August 2017. The Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) reported that having taken off and reached 50 ft, the engine stopped. Having no useable runway available the pilot turned slightly to the right into wind, necessary to maximise rotor blade rotation, in order to return to the runway. (Autogyros can safely autorotate with engine failure due to the previously noted upward direction of air through the rotor blades). On landing the Autogyro rolled onto its left side damaging the rotor blades, tail and propellor. The pilot suffered minor injuries. The cause of the accident was traced to contaminated fuel dispensed from a 'jerry can that the pilot had used for many years'!

Magni Gyro is a family-owned company and its UK distributor, Magni Gyro UK, is based a Popham Airfield, Hampshire. See: https://www.magnigyro.co.uk/. Popham is a recreational airfield used predominately for private flying and gliding.

As an aside, if you are able to look back to 1953 you will recall that two UK aircraft manufacturers, Hawker and Supermarine were in competition to gain the world airspeed record with their Hunter and Swift single engined fighter planes. The pilots were Neville Duke and Mike Lithgow respectively. They were national heroes at the time. The record was eventually gained, on 7th September, by Duke with a speed of 727.63 mph on a course located off of the coast of Sussex. On 7th April 2007, Neville Duke was flying his private aircraft when he made an emergency landing at Popham Airfield, having felt unwell. Regrettably, he died later that day. Neville Duke was a highly decorated WW2 fighter pilot having been credited with 27 'kills' in the Mediterranean conflict.

Juan de la Cierva



Ken Wallis

Neville Duke

The Sunbeam 1000 hp Land Speed Record Car and Sir Henry O'Neal de Hane Segrave.

The central character of this 'story' is Sir Henry Seagrave (22nd Sept 1896 to 13th June 1930). Seagrave was a British citizen, born in Baltimore, Maryland to an American father and an Irish mother. He was brought up in the UK, attending Eton College and Sandhurst before being commissioned into the Army in 1914. He joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and was injured twice on the Western Front, the second time during hand-to-hand fighting. Following recuperation in England he joined the Royal Flying Corps and having scored a 'kill' in May 1916 he was shot down over the Somme two months later. As a consequence of the resulting severe ankle injury he was confined to a series of 'desk jobs', initially being the command pilot of the first remote controlled aerial drone (unmanned powered aircraft).

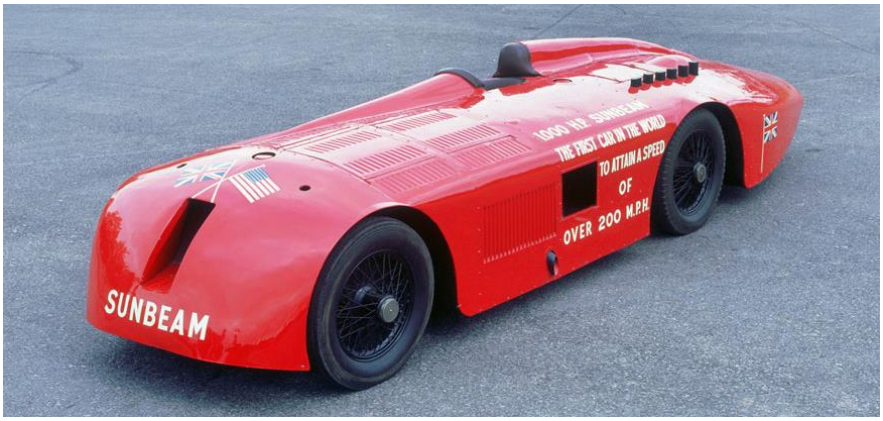
Seagrave married in October 1917 and in January 1918 he was seconded to the British Aviation Mission in the USA. He resigned his commission in 1919.

By 1921 he had become a recognised and successful racing driver having won the 200-mile light car race at Brooklands in a Talbot Darracq. In 1922 Seagrave was nominated as a member of the STD racing team formed by the newly merged, by takeover, of the Sunbeam, Talbot and Darracq companies. STD had a tenuous, complicated and continually changing financial structure until its demise in 1935.

It is important to note that in 1922 the Chief Designer of Sunbeam was Louis Coatalen. In 1923 Seagrave won both the French and San Sebastian Grand Prix in a British Sunbeam and a regional race in Miramas, France before retiring from racing to concentrate on speed records including the World Land and Water Speed Records.

World Land Speed Record.

Being the first car to achieve a Land Speed Record (LSR) in excess of 200 mph may now seem somewhat unspectacular given that the current record is held by Thrust SSC, which achieved a speed of 763.035 mph on 15th October 1997 at Black Rock Desert, Nevada (amazingly that being 28 years ago!). However, on 29th March 1927 Sir Henry Seagrave achieved a two-way average of 203.79 miles per hour on Daytona Beach, Florida driving the Sunbeam 1000hp car specially designed for the purpose.



Following that achievement the car returned to the UK for demonstration runs on Southport Sands before being placed in storage, latterly being on display at the National Motor Museum in Beaulieu, Hampshire. The catalyst for this article is the news that car is now undergoing refurbishment in preparation for a return to Daytona in 2027. To facilitate this a £300K fund raising scheme has been instigated.

Land Speed Record history.

The first recorded LSR was achieved by Gaston de Chasseloup Laubat on 18th December 1898 driving an electric Jeantaud when he achieved 39.24 mph over a measured kilometre. Competition remained intense until interrupted by WW1, there being 21 successful attempts in the period. Interestingly, one LSR was achieved by Henry Ford in January 1904 when he achieved 91.37 mph in a Ford Racer.

Activity picked up after cessation and the first post war LSR was achieved at Brooklands on 17th May 1922, by Kenelm Lee Guiness, Sunbeam 350 hp, who recorded 133.75 mph at Brooklands. Guiness was the inventor of the KLG Sparking Plug and a member of the brewing family.

Being the first to achieve the 200mph milestone became the next target. In July 1925 Malcolm Campbell achieved 150.87 mph in the Sunbeam 350 hp which by then was named Bluebird. Competition continued when Henry Seagrave and J G Parry Thomas joined Campbell with LSR attempts. Seagrave achieved 152.33 mph at Ainsdale Beach, Southport in April 1926 but was beaten one month later by Parry Thomas, at Pendine, with 171.02 mph in his chain driven LSR Car ‘Babs’. Campbell and Parry Thomas continued to raise the record in turn with Malcolm Campbell achieving 174.88 in February 1927.

Progress was slow but by this time LSR cars were typically single aero engined and specially designed for the purpose. However, Seagrave had foreseen that a somewhat more powerful car would be required if he was to be the first to achieve a speed in excess of 200 mph. Consequently, in the mid 1920’s he approached the Sunbeam Company, who had had prior LSR involvement with their ‘350’, requesting that they design and build suitable car. As noted above, Seagrave had previously raced the 1922 Grand Prix Sunbeams that were notably successful at Brooklands. This move reunited Seagrave with Coatalen.

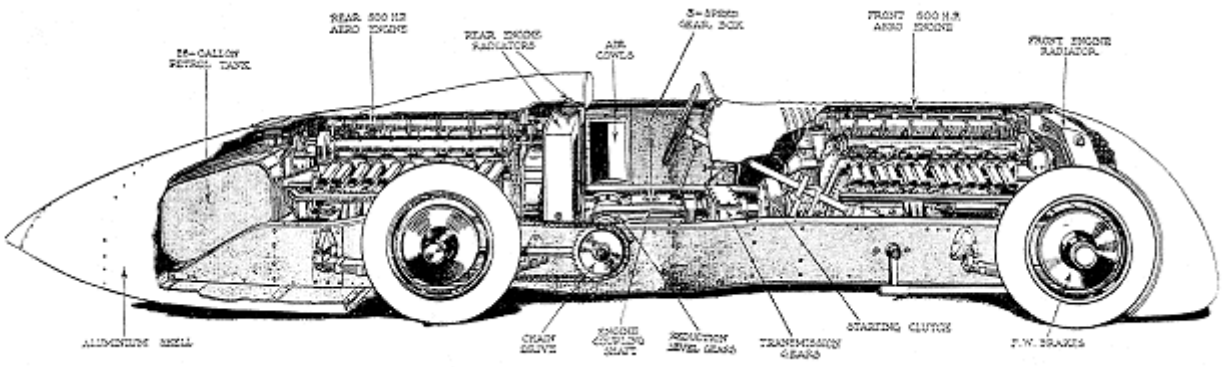
The Sunbeam 1000hp LSR car.

Louis Hervé Coatalen (1879 – 1982) was born in Concarneau, Brittany and trained in the French automobile industry. Initially, his employment in the UK was with the Humber Company which he joined in 1901. By choice he became a nationalised British citizen. Having ‘made his mark’, Coatalen then joined the Sunbeam Company in 1909 and became

joint Managing Director in 1914. Following the formation of STD in 1922, Coatalen retained the position of Technical Director and Chief Designer of the Sunbeam Company based in Wolverhampton. His design output was prolific, including racing cars and especially aero engines during WW1. It is reported that Sunbeam was the major British supplier of aero engines in wartime.

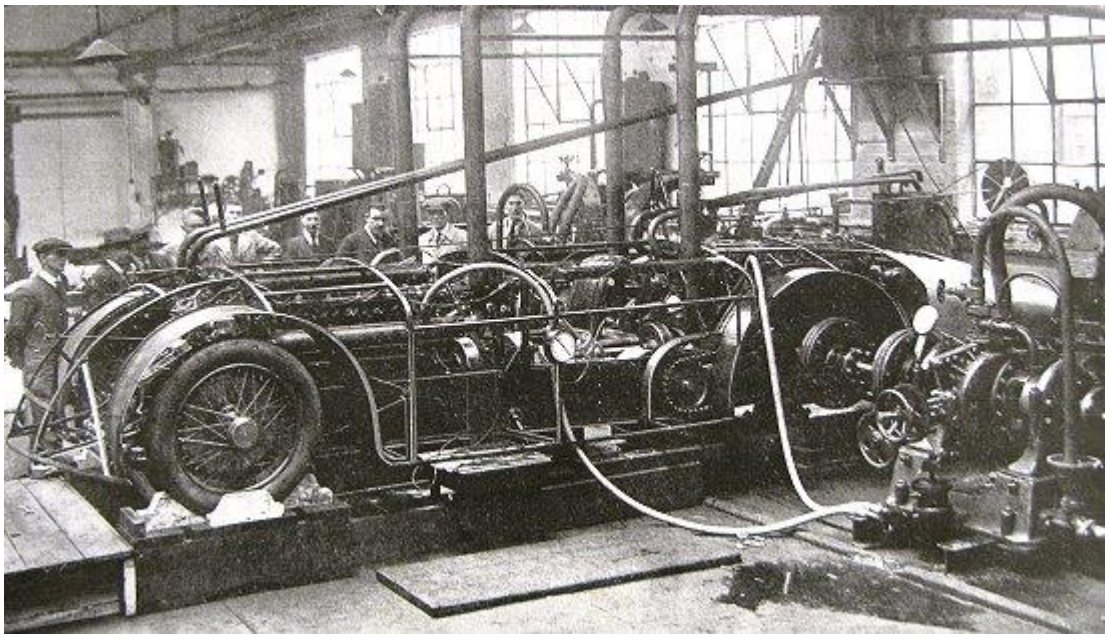
Coatalen provided the scheme drawings for the 1000 hp LSR car, to be known at the Wolverhampton factory as 'the Slug', with the detail design being supervised by Captain Jack Irving who had responsibility for the Sunbeam racing activities. The cautions Sunbeam board had, to an extent, given their reluctant support for the venture by limiting the company's' commitment to the supply of the car 'ex works'. The additional costs of the LSR bid, including transport to the USA, subsistence, Sunbeam support staff costs, USA import duties (which were £16,000 in 1927!), hire of the track and timing staff and all sundry costs etc were to be to Seagrave's account. These aspects were a significant personal burden given that he had to personally finalise all administrative arrangements and also a financial burden for which he sought sponsorship.

The chassis construction consisted of two deep longitudinal steel side members which were cross linked by equally deep transverse fabrications thereby providing rigidity adequate for a vehicle that was designed to travel on a straight course.



The design incorporated two Sunbeam 22.5 litre V12 Matabele II aero engines each producing 460 hp. (the 1000hp claim was, therefore, erroneous but no doubt the Sunbeam marketing staff did not let fact confuse a good story!). As you can see from the cutaway general arrangement drawing one engine was installed in front of the driver and the second at the rear.

The streamlined aluminium body, supported by a tubular spaceframe was developed following testing in the Vickers, Weybridge, wind tunnel. Special tyres and wheels were designed, tested and supplied by Dunlop.



On test coupled to Heenen and Froude Dynamometers showing longtidunal side chassis members, tubular body supporting frame and chain drive.

The two selected Matabele II engines, designed by Sunbeam prior to WW1 (being pre Coatalen), were a 'simplified' versions of the similarly named aero engine, had previously been specifically designed for and installed in the record-breaking hydroplane, Maple Leaf IV which, when piloted by British Aviator, Tommy Sopwith in 1912, was the first boat to achieve 50 knots.

One of the two Sunbeam 22.5 litre V12 Matabele aero engines recently under restoration at Beaulieu. The rear engine air starting system gauges can be seen on the RHS

The two-stage engine starting process was adopted. Firstly, the rear engine was started by an air system following which a friction plate clutch, installed in the shaft linking both engines, was engaged to link to and synchronise the front engine. For the LSR run attempts, the friction clutch was disengaged and engines were then linked via a manually engaged fixed dog clutch. External drive to the two rear wheels was via twin side chains driven by sprockets located externally on a cross-shaft bevel gear system integral with and driven by the front to rear drive shaft.

Pre despatch 'Road testing' at the end of February 1927 was absolutely minimal, given that it was limited to a slow speed 300-yard run within the Sunbeam works! The car was then made available for a press viewing after which it was prepared for shipping to the USA by Cunard on 2nd March.

Competition was still strong and Campbell's achievement in February 1927 of 174.88 mph prompted a response by Parry-Thomas who to returned to Pendine but on 3rd March 1927 he was killed when attempting to raise the record yet again. Initial assumptions were that a failed chain drive had caused the accident. Parry-Thomas was 42 years old.

Daytona had been selected for Seagrave's record attempt given that it is a 9-mile-long beach which, during the early spring time, has an adequately firm and smooth surface.

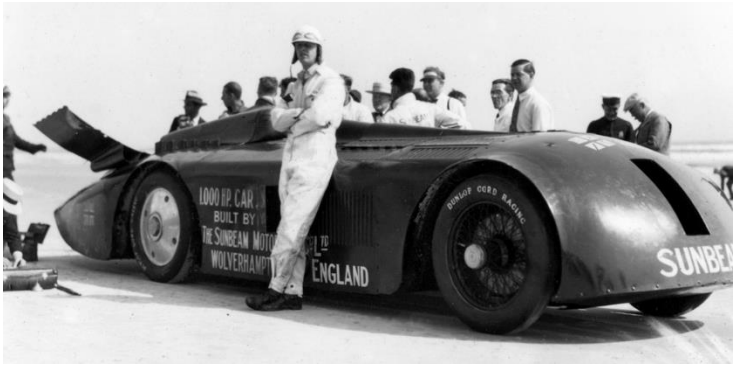
On arrival at Daytona the party was given a strong civic welcome.

On the 20th March Seagrave was ready to start the record attempt programme. His initial run was at slow speed simply to check the functioning of the car. The second run was at a higher speed but wind conditions were adverse and no further progress was made. Given the return of suitable conditions Seagrave returned to the track on Tuesday 27th March, his team having made necessary modifications to the car in the meantime.

In front of an estimated crowd of 15,000 and at 9.30 am Segrave made the first of two-timed runs through the measured mile. Starting from the southern end of the beach the first run was successful, albeit a side wind caused steering difficulties, by achieving 200.668mph. Just beating the 200mph target!

After a change of wheels and tyres together with a necessary check of the drive chains, Seagrave made his second run within the hour allowed. At the end of the run, regrettably the car failed to decelerate and over ran the end of the 9-mile course due to the overheating and melting of the aluminium brake shoes. After slowing the car by driving it into shallow water. Seagrave returned to the timing centre he learnt that the during the second run he had achieved 207.015mph, thereby securing an average of 203.792mph.

Mission accomplished!



Seagrave and his team contemplated making a further record attempt but decided not to pursue the idea.

He had raised Campbell's record by 30mph but to do so had required a car driven by twice the engine power.

On return to the UK Seagrave was feted, initially by a civic reception at Southampton followed by demonstration runs at Southport sands and at Brooklands.

Seagrave was not finished with the Land Speed Record and in March 1929 he returned to Daytona for a second successful LSR attempt with a new car, the Golden Arrow, also designed by the then ex Sunbeam Chief Designer, Jack Irving. Powered by a single 925 hp 23.9 litre Napier W12 engine, also used for Supermarine Schneider contenders, with support from the Rootes Brothers, Seagrave achieved 231.45 mph in front of a reported 150,000 spectators!

The Golden Arrow with the Sunbeam 1000hp in the background

In April 1930, Seagrave was rightly knighted for his achievements.

Concurrently with his involvement and preparations for the Land Speed Record, and supported by Lord Wakefield Chairman of the Castrol Company, Seagrave had also prepared for an attempt on the World Water Speed Record. His new wooden hulled boat, Miss England II was powered by two Rolls-Royce R type 12 aero engines (as used in the successful Supermarine Schneider Trophy race float planes and predecessor of the WW2 Merlin engine). On 13th June 1930 at Lake Windemere Seagrave achieved the record with an average over two runs of 98.8mph. Not content he started a third run but the boat flipped killing both Seagrave and Victor Halliwell, his riding mechanic.

Ironically, at that time Seagrave held both Land and Water Speed Records simultaneously albeit posthumously.

The boat was salvaged and Kaye Don, in competition with American Gar Wood, recovered the record for the UK at Lake Garda with an average of 110.2mph in 1931. Competition between the two rivals and the further development of both the Land and Water Speed Records is another story.

Apart from this immense success Seagrave left two legacies.

Firstly, in the early 1920's he had led the design of a twin engined four seat metal monoplane designed for 'executive' touring. Following his death a prototype was built by Saunders-Roe at Cowes and two more were constructed by the Blackburn Aircraft Company as the type B1 Seagrave. In addition, Piaggio built two in Italy. The project was not successful.

Blackburn B1 Seagrave

RAC Seagrave Trophy

Secondly, in 1930 the RAC instigated the Seagrave Trophy to recognise outstanding contributions to Land, Sea of Air Transport. Commissioned by Lady Seagrave, it was her wish that the trophy would celebrate British nationals who demonstrated outstanding skill, courage and initiative. Malcom Campbell, Stirling Moss, Lewis Hamilton and Richard Noble, (September 2025 'Chat') whose career mirrors Seagraves', have been recipients. Notably, in 2018, the Trophy was also awarded to Billy Monger in acknowledgement of his courage and determination following the loss of both lower legs in a Formula 4 crash at Donnington the previous year. The current holder is Nick Tandy, who is the first British driver to win all four major 24-hour endurance races at Le Mans, Nürburgring, Spa and Daytona.

Sir Henry Seagrave was 43 years old at the time of his death. A man of remarkable achievements.

Yangwang U9 Xtreme

While I can understand the attraction of wishing to own and drive a road car from established manufacturers such as Porsche, Ferrari, McLaren or Aston Martin and I do understand that there are kudos 'brownie points' to be gained from owning more exotic, low volume production, cars such as a Bugatti, Koenigsegg, Pagani etc I doubt that I would consider purchasing a Chinese BYD Yangwang U9, simply because of its name. That said, I was erroneously cautious about accepting a Ssanyong Tivoli** as a hire car recently. I obviously need to be educated!

However, the Yangwang U9 Xtreme (tuned version) is currently the worlds' fastest Electric Vehicle having recently achieved 308.4 mph at the ATP (Automotive Testing Papenburg) test track in north west Germany, South of Emden. This surpasses the previous record of 272.61mph set by the Aspark Owl*. As a reference this speed exceeds the 220mph achieved by Chinese high-speed trains.

The car is powered by four motors providing a total of 2978 bhp giving a 1-62 mph time of 3.2 seconds. The special Xtreme version has in excess of twice the 1288 bhp power of the 'standard' production version.

Impressed?

Notes:

- *the Aspark Owl is a Japanese Super Car.

- **The Ssanyong Tivoli, now known as a KGM is an excellent 4-person, 4 suitcases car that Mary and I were allocated by the Goldcar Hire company from Gibraltar Airport, La Linea in September. It was well appointed and spacious with lively performance, good handling and precise steering. A welcome surprise.
- The same cannot be said for the 4WD Dacia Duster that a Sixt upgrade allocated to us at Pula in May. A rudimentary car with imprecise steering and a gearbox that was a challenge even for someone who is familiar with a stiff rebuilt MGB box!

The September Mystery Car was the Citroen Mehari.

Citroën launched the Mehari on 16th May 1968 at the Deauville Golf Course. Built on the Citroen Dyane 6 saloon platform and designed by Roland de La Poype, it featured a 'pick up' style body constructed in ABS plastic.

The Mehari was produced between 1968 and 1987 during which time 144,953 units were built (including 1,213 4x4 versions introduced in 1979). Production centred mainly in the Citroën factory in Forest, Belgium, but also in seven other factories in France, Spain and Portugal.

Two flat 2-cylinder air cooled engine options were available:

- 435cc giving 26hp at 6759 rpm.
- 602cc giving 32hp at 5759 rpm.

Mehari is the name given to male dromedaries in North Africa and the Sahara. Dromedaries are known for their rough terrain toughness and ability to carry goods and passengers over long distances, hence the choice of the name for this vehicle.

The Mehari is highly modular, being able to transform part of its floor into a backrest thereby allowing the addition of two additional passenger seats at the rear.

Maintenance is straightforward. The body is made up of only 11 easily repairable parts which can be cleaned with a pressure washer both inside and outside.

The Mehari was widely used by Police forces together with the French Army which purchased 11,457 examples between 1972 and 1987. The 4x4 version was adopted by medical services such that 10 medically equipped Mehari supported the 1980 Paris – Dakar Rally.

These photos, of a Slovenian registered example, were taken in Vrsar, Croatia in May 2025

I thank David Webber, Edward Kirkland, John Harris and Terry Osborne for correctly identifying the Mehari.

Edward wrote:
Now, there's a car that brings back happy memories! It is of course the Citroen Mehari.

Back in the 70's and early 80's when we regularly visited Easter's sister and brother-in-law in Estepona, Angel had a Mehari for his painting and decorating business as well as everyday use and we have great memories of going out in it and exploring that corner of the south of Spain.

David wrote:
The latest mystery car is a Citroen Mehari derived from a 2CV. Drove one once – a bit like a shed on wheels – I guess "interesting" would be the word for its handling!

December Mystery Car.

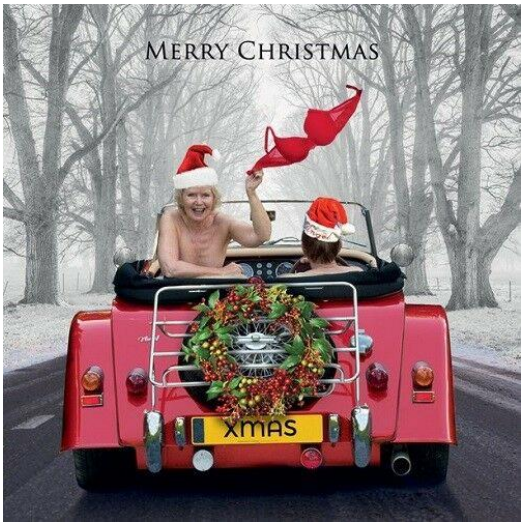
No clues this month except that this model offered a choice of two body styles.

Please send your answers to me (craddyrichard@gmail.com/01454 414842/07776 202 663).

A Morgan miscellany.

- **DCM (Don't come Monday).** As you probably already know, DCM is a well-known acronym that refers to an employee who has received a Redundancy payment. Perhaps the owner of this Morgan Plus 4 recently purchased a new 'Toy Car' with his!

- **Festive Greetings!**



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.

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.

And finally:

It simply remains for me to send very best wishes from Mary and I for a very Happy Christmas and a safe and healthy 2026 to you and your families.

Dick

Bank: Lloyds, Account number: 00577513, Sort code: 30.00.01. The Account is a Business Account.

V1.2.1