

# Backfire

North West Casual Classics  
Newsletter, November 2023



**The North West's Leading Classic Vehicle Club,  
Established 1996**

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**Next Meeting : Tuesday 12th December**

## DISCLAIMER

Views or opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the club, its officers or committee members. No responsibility can be accepted for inaccurate or misleading information within this newsletter, but every effort will be made to check accuracy before publication



**A fine "razor edge" Triumph Renown / 2000 from the Sir John Black era in blazing sunshine at our Hale Show in June.**

## CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Thanks to Chris Lee, our resident cartographer, the 2023 "Autumn Amble" was a tremendous success. Interested parties gathered at the Black Swan to take part in what was to be a lovely days drive. My navigator and gagster was Kenny Jackson and our vehicle of choice was again my Austin 16. I say again because this was exactly the same staffing arrangements as last time on the St Georges Drive-it-Day run, earlier in the year. After a complimentary coffee thanks to the Black Swan we did sally forth only after Chris and Jan Lee had departed to check the route and the coast was clear.

Traversing the Warburton Bridge the required 12p toll was duly paid and we were on our way. For the first part we circumnavigated the beautiful Dunham Massey area and headed south, traversing the M56 and our first stop at the High Legh Garden Centre. I noted to Kenny before our arrival that we were being followed by a few North West Casual Classics cars who were clearly letting him do all the navigating!

After a coffee and a sticky bun I decided we would let the others go first and so we waited as members' cars set off towards the exit. When the coast was clear we departed.



As we went over the M6 I noted to my helmsman that the NWCC convoy had reformed. They must have been concealing themselves in the Garden Centre car park the boundaries!

The next right turn was into Frog Lane which I drove past and so did everyone else, so no one was reading the route. We stopped and executed a swift U-turn, (no mean feat in the Austin with its heavy steering...), dashed back to Frog Lane and hid in a farmer's field entrance and waited until they all went past. When we arrived at Pickmere we were accused of getting lost! The cheek!

The Red Lion was the next stop where a lovely lunch was enjoyed along with a small ale. Following the consumption of the comestibles, Kenny and I set off on the final leg of our journey, further south west to Wincham and its salt pans, passing Great Budworth village and on towards the historic Anderton Boat Lift. The weather was with us as we finally headed north along some beautiful country roads.

What could be better than driving a 40's car along mainly deserted back roads in the English countryside? We continued towards Warrington on what were mainly forgotten trails until we got to Stockton Heath. From then on we negotiated the metropolis in which the statue of Oliver Cromwell stands proudly next to the River Mersey. The A57 was soon in our sights, and after bridging the M6 for the second time that day, the countryside opened up again.

Soon we were back in Hollins Green and parked up in the car park of the Black Swan. The Austin had performed faultlessly and I had enjoyed the drive. A truly fabulous run out and thanks again to Chris for all his efforts, it was certainly worth it.

*Cheers,  
Nigel.*



Kenny studies the directions for the Autumn Amble while Nigel photographs his trusty Austin Sixteen outside the “Mucky Duck”. They appear to need the AA! (Sorry, Ed.)

## EDITORIAL

Well the Autumn Amble has been and gone, the clocks have gone back, the events calendar is empty, and the rains have lashed down as the leaves have been swept from the trees. In short, winter is coming, and as I write this we are just 50 sleeps from Christmas.

I was tempted to call this issue the “Covid Special Edition”, as your editor and his good lady have spent from 20th October until now with this charming visitor to our shores, and I have to tell you it isn’t much fun. At the time of writing I am still coughing and although I tested negative on Bonfire night, I still feel like I am running about 20% down on power. Please forgive me if this issue feels a bit lacklustre and DO get your shots if you haven’t already. Protect yourself by wearing a mask in shops and other crowded areas and gel your hands. Take particular care in crowded air-conditioned spaces like aircraft, or the NEC...

On the classic car front, before being struck down by the nasty little virus I decided to knock another item off my “to do” list and paint the inside faces of my PV444’s wheels. I decided to use the “POR” paint Frost demonstrated at one of

our meetings, and I am fairly impressed. It really does dry to a rock-hard finish, and the Ford Engine blue shade is very close to the PV’s original shade of “Midnatsbla”.

On the downside, it isn’t cheap, and you will need the thinners as well as it gets claggy quite quickly once opened.

I also managed to take the 940 out for a good run up to Widnes and back, as it had been standing for a month in all weathers. Typically, it fired right up, everything worked as it should, and it reminded me of what smooth, powerful and reliable vehicles they are. The new discs and pads have banished a slight brake squeal, and pull her up rapidly and true.

I hope you enjoyed the article on Crossley last month, and I hope to make the history of local car makers a key strand in future issues. We have such a heritage in this area from Ford in Halewood and Standard Triumph in Speke, to less well-known concerns like Cockshoot in Ducie Street (all will be revealed!).

If you would like to see your car on the cover of “Backfire” next year, send me a high-res, portrait image, (preferably without a Portaloo or telegraph pole in shot), and I will be happy to include it. Stay healthy!

**Cheers, Steve C**





If you enjoyed the feature on Crossley Motors last month, here is a period shot of their workforce, showing the size of the undertaking with flat caps as far as the eye can see and female staff and boys up front.

### Diary dates for 2024

18 or 19/05/2024	Anderton Boat Lift Show (Under discussion)
1-2/06/2024	Tatton Park (Early show)
08/06/2024	Hale Carnival and Show
07/07/2024	Lydiat Show
20-21/07/2024	Middlewich Show
03/08/2024	Newton Town Show
17-18/08/2024	Tatton Park (Late show)
28-29/09/2024	Victoria Park Widnes (Provisional)

Please treat the above as strictly provisional advance dates for your diaries only. They may change, and some may not take place at all!

## KEY POINTS FROM OCTOBER MEETING

Nigel advised that he has been cleaning and repairing the show equipment for the club trailer, laundering flags and ordering a third gazebo, and a replacement cover for one we already have. He has looked at getting more club umbrellas but the costs were too high.

The committee has sent a sympathy card and our condolences to the family of Dave Epsley.

Nigel announced that he will be standing again as our Chairman, and reflected on the growth of the club since he joined the committee, doubling from 65 members then to 130 today. Nigel thanked all present for their support, and said how serving the club has helped his recovery from his own sad loss.

Dougie was presented with the John Wayne Greatbanks Trophy which has now been engraved.

John Cleaver's experiences on his recent film shoot with his Corvair were discussed, including 12 passes through the Manchester Airport runway tunnel and filming on a dark cobbled street!

Helen asked for video footage from members and Dave asked for donations of raffle prizes.

The club charity raffle raised £117

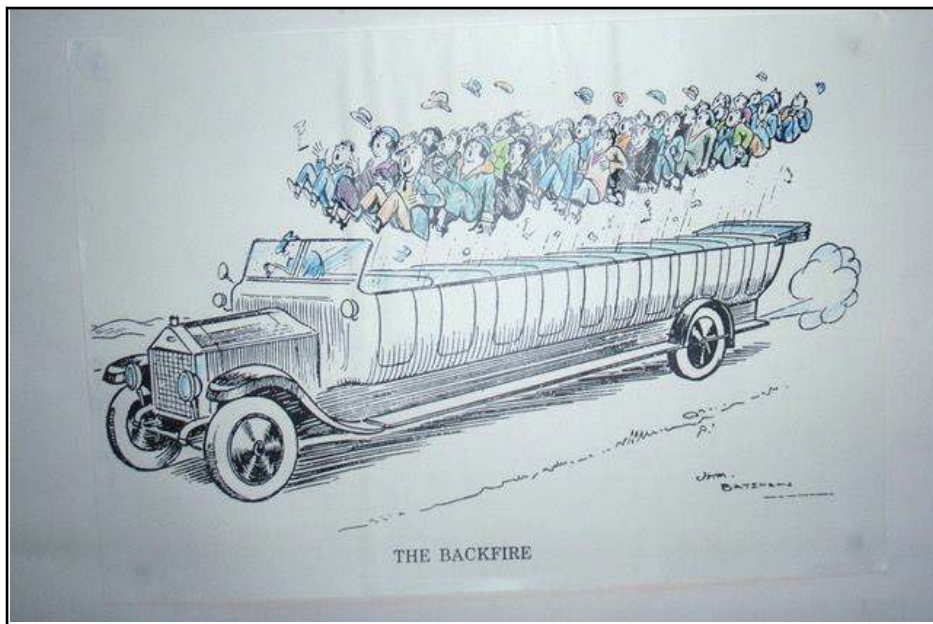
## SHOW INFORMATION

Kenny spoke about the few shows remaining, and asked members attending the Museum show to be there early. The public will be admitted from 11 am - 4 pm.

Negotiations regarding the proposed show at Anderton Boat Lift are continuing, with the organisers proposing a 2-day event. Kenny has put out a sheet for potential attendees to register their interest and is looking for around 50 cars in total.

As per this year, John will be managing our Tatton entries, and the dates for the two shows are now firm at 1st and 2nd June for the early show, and 17th and 18th August for the late show.

Kenny informed members that at this point, we have 11 shows at various stages of planning for the 2024 season.



## Annual General Meeting

In accordance with the club constitution, our AGM will take place at the December meeting, when the committee will stand down and offer themselves for re-election should they wish to continue. Nominations for new members must be received in advance of the meeting and proposed and seconded at the vote.

The committee will give members a full statement of accounts and a report on the activities of the club over the last year. Resolutions for discussion at the AGM must be submitted to the Club Secretary in writing and signed by at least two members in advance of the AGM.

Members are reminded that anyone who has not paid their subscription within two clear months of the due date is deemed to have left the club, and therefore **cannot vote at the AGM** under club rules.

The committee always welcomes offers of help, and reminds members that new blood is essential if the club is to continue to be successful. Please therefore consider offering to serve, as some of the existing members have already given long service. The club also has non-committee roles available for anyone able to help, so please speak to a committee member if you are interested. Many hands make light work!



## DAVE EPSLEY R.I.P

Dave pictured at the Ferry Car Show in 2008



## W.O. Bentley and the Dream of a 100 mph Silent Sports Car: The Mighty 8 Litre

The Bentley 8 litre was, depending on your point of view, either a monumental over-built folly which bankrupted its maker, or the last great design of an independent Bentley Motors, designed by its founder and one of the finest cars of its era.

Launched in 1930, the 8 litre had a cast iron block, straight 6 engine of 7,983 cc, with a non-detachable twin-plug head, on an electron alloy crankcase. Fitted with a single overhead camshaft driven by connecting rods and 4 valves per cylinder, it produced 230 BHP at 3,300 RPM. It was the most powerful car ever built in Britain at that time and was guaranteed to exceed 100 mph. *Autocar* recorded a half-mile terminal speed of 101.1 mph on test in 1930, and the Bentley would go from walking speed to flat out in top gear.

Supplied only as a chassis, with either a 144 or 156 inch wheelbase the 8 litre had a strengthened 4-speed non-synchromesh gearbox, vacuum-assisted mechanical brakes at nearly 16 inches in diameter, and a 25 gallon fuel tank. Centralised chassis lubrication was included, and the whole edifice weighed in at 2.5 tons (without coachwork) and cost £1,850, the equivalent of £293,000 in 2010.

Only 100 were built, of which 76 survive today, many without their original bodies. Bentley went into receivership before being absorbed by Rolls Royce in 1932. W.O. Bentley went off to Lagonda, where he would design their V12. Rolls discontinued the 8 litre and disposed of all the spare parts and tooling.

So, folly or masterpiece?

Let us look first at Walter Owen Bentley himself. From a prosperous background, and one of nine children, Bentley was educated at Clifton Public School, but at 16 his father paid for a premium apprenticeship at the Great Northern Railway. This even included acting as a locomotive fireman. This shaped Bentley's engineering outlook for life, which can be summarised as built it beautifully, build it big and build it to last. One only has to look at any Cricklewood-era Bentley to see how massively wrought these bluff old thunderers are in comparison to rivals like Bugatti or Alfa Romeo. Not for nothing did Ettore Bugatti dismiss them as "the fastest trucks in the world". Bentley's vehement opposition to "Tim" Birkin supercharging his 4.5 litre Le Mans racing cars is well-known, declaring it would "pervert the engine's design and corrupt its performance."



### **The perfect proportions disguise the size and presence of the 8 litre**

Bentley instead pursued what would be his lifelong approach, to add more capacity with robust engineering, and he was proven right. The “blower” Bentleys, although marvelous to behold, never won a race and proved unreliable, while Bentley’s cars went on to win at Le Mans 5 times, vindicating their creator’s judgement.

While it seems unwise to have introduced the 8 litre just before the Wall Street Crash, Bentley was an engineer, not an economist. In an era before 24/7 news and economics correspondents, it is doubtful whether he knew anything of the

storm to come. The crash took markets and governments by surprise, and developed very quickly. Bentley sold 100 of his masterpiece in 2 years, and had the depression not intervened, he would undoubtedly have sold more. He was also following other manufacturers around the world such as Cadillac, Packard, Lincoln, Bugatti and Hispano-Suiza in building large premium cars. All of them failed to see that the future lay in smaller, mass produced, less expensive cars as motoring became democratised, and luxury cars became a niche market. Unlike some of his



**The mighty 8 litre in situ. Note the Autovac, magneto and coil ignition and spare plugs, and the diameter of that steering column!**

competitors, his was a small concern without the financial clout to weather the depression. He was by no means alone in this. If anything killed Bentley it was the emphasis on perfectionism regardless of cost.

Two ironies to conclude on. Nine decades after the demise of Bentley, the modern Bentley Motors, now owned by Volkswagen, had to discontinue their premium Mullanne model due to low sales, proving that even modern product planners with all their spreadsheets and marketing specialists don't always get it right.

Also, in 2006 that same company bought back and restored W.O. Bentley's own 8-litre, YF2002, which he loved and drove for many thousands of miles, (often at 85 mph in darkness without lights!), as a "Symbolic" company car for all their future Chief Executives to use at special events if required. I am sure W.O. would have been highly amused...

**Steve C.**



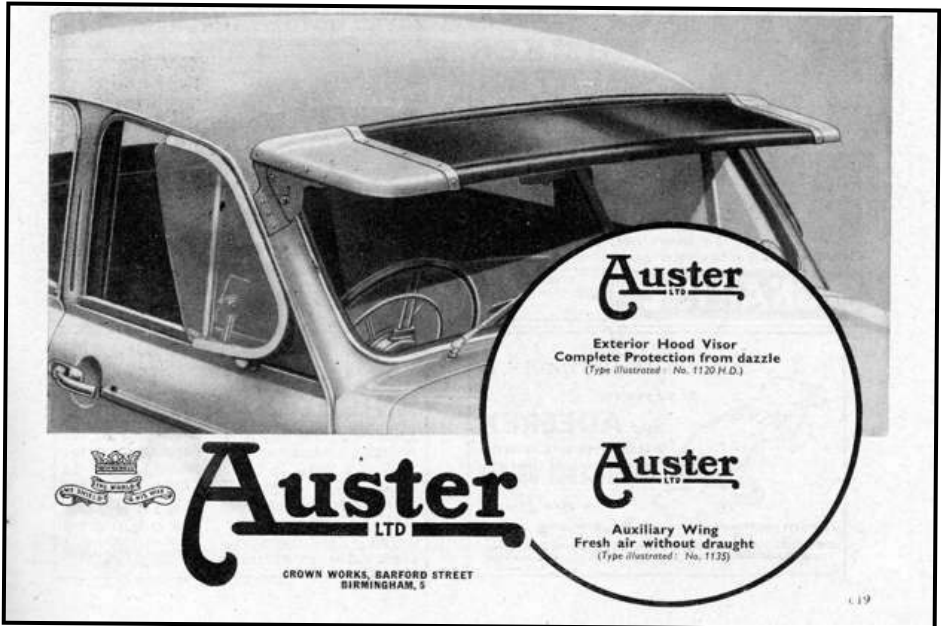
NWCC Members Out and about in October. Teresa's handsome Morgan gets some reaction from a spectator, and a fine 1973 Vauxhall Victor FE Series, both participating in our Autumn Amble.







Members enjoyed a meal at the Chapelford Farm pub on Sunday 15th of October, although Jilly seems to be scrutinising the greens here...



Another from our period accessories archive, I wonder were they any relation to the aircraft company? I can confirm that the “Gangsterkap” visor on my Volvo PV444 does make driving in low sunlight a lot easier.

## Room at the Inn & Y Project

**Providing Food, Shelter and Support to Homeless and Vulnerable People In Warrington**



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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/NWCasualClassics>



Back Page Beauties: To Italy this month, for the incredible trio of BAT cars (short for Berlinetta Aerodinamica Tecnica) designed by Franco Scaglione and built by Bertone as concept studies in aerodynamics for Alfa Romeo between 1953 and 1955. From front to back we have BAT 9, 7 and 5. Underneath all that hand-crafted aluminium beauty lay a cooking Alfa 1900 saloon chassis and 90 HP. Drag coefficients on these cars varied from 0.19 to 0.23, outstanding even today. All three were sold to a Japanese collector at Sothebys in 2020 for \$14.8 million.