

Backfire

North West Casual Classics
Newsletter May 2024



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

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Next Meeting : Tuesday 11th June 2024

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A gaggle of Spridgets, led by our own Mike Upton's Red Frogeye, at Heskin Hall, Drive It Day 2024

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER



Hi All.

Drive-it-Day used to herald the start of the classic car season and I suppose it still does, but these days the odd little get together in the early months of the year is not so unusual, This years' Drive-it-Day / St. Georges day Run, was held across the United Kingdom on Sunday 21st April, this being the nearest Sunday to St. Georges Day on the 23rd. The NWCC Official Run Supremo Chris Lee, had supplied us with a route from the Hayloft in Penketh to Heskin Hall near Chorley. The departure time was around 10.30 am. An alternative start was available from Lyme and Wood Pits Country Park on Vista Road, Newton-le-Willows. This was because the route passed along Vista Road anyway, so members who lived nearby had decided to start from there. This start was also at 10.30 am so we wouldn't create a convoy.

I started from the Vista Road rendezvous and Kenny was to be navigator. Unfortunately Colin and Margaret Evans couldn't join us, as their chosen vehicle had "failed to proceed". Member David Collier in his 1989 Wartburg had followed me from home and we met up with the other participants for a pre-run chat

and a coffee.

Kenny and I hung back and let the others go first, this was to make sure that at least some of the runners and riders followed the instructions and didn't just follow us! Our run went well with only one deviation from the supplied directions, again due to joke telling. We travelled along some super back roads and saw lots of lovely countryside. It's amazing how much open countryside there is around us when you stick to the B roads. We passed through many a little village and hamlet.

Arriving at Heskin Hall, classic cars were both coming and going. I found a spot amongst a goodly array of classic cars of all eras, and wow it was busy! Our NWCC Car of the Day belonged to Geoff and Kim Ashcroft. It is a beautiful little 1968 Wolseley 1300 Four door saloon in beige. A cracking car and from what I could see, all original too! The Run Trophy was duly awarded.

If you haven't been on an NWCC Run yet I can thoroughly recommend it. Watch out for others later on in the year.

This month's meeting will be the last before Tatton Park and our Annual Show in June. Please be aware that volunteers are always needed to pack up all our equipment after the show is over at Tatton.

At our Annual Show at Hale, if you can help with guiding and parking the cars as a marshal, then please come to the club gazebo and get a

NWCC high-vis jacket. It gets very busy, especially between 9 and 10 am. Thanks.

I'm sorry I will not be at Club Night this month but I'm having a few days away in Yorkshire. I might have a sneaky look at Mathewson's auction showroom if I just happen to be passing...

Cheers, Nigel



Nigel's fine Austin 16 in dappled shade on a lovely woodland road on our 2024 Drive-it-Day run to Heskin Hall.

EDITORIAL

Another show season is upon us, as we scramble to complete those jobs on our classics that really should have been done over the winter, had we not been foiled by deluges, storms and cold weather. I tend to accept this with resignation now, as like my hopes of a long , warm summer, they tend to be a triumph of hope over experience.

I hope readers will forgive me therefore for trying to bring a little sunshine into our lives with a look at the beach car phenomenon among the Riviera set in the late 50's and 1960's. Then, as now, you had to be a millionaire to own one, but we can all dream.

Congratulations to Geoff Ashcroft, our first trophy winner of (I hope) many this year with his lovely Wolseley 1300. Like many of you, I remember the ADO16 series on every street as a child, when it was the top selling British car for 6 years and sold 2.1 million units. Sadly, like so many Issigonis creations, rampant rust was an integral part of an otherwise very clever design and survivors are now a rare sight.

Also this month I take a look at another of our local manufacturers Rochdale, whose Olympic was on the cutting edge of sports car design in its day, in a line of glassfibre

monocoque designs which can be traced from the beautiful Lotus Elite, through Rochdale to the Clan Crusader. Not bad for a couple of local men in an old cotton mill!

It seems that the electors of Greater London were not annoyed enough to eject Mr Khan for his ULEZ racket, which is puzzling, but the people have spoken and we must accept the result. However we are hearing more and more voices challenging the core assumptions behind net zero, and the war on the motorist that it has legitimised. I was amused this morning to read that Mark Sand, General Manager of Ford Model e Europe has called out the government's plans to fine companies up to £15k per vehicle for failing to hit quotas for EV sales. Ford's response will be to take IC-engined cars out of the UK market altogether, and refuse to pay any fines. Sand said that "we cannot push EV sales into the market against demand", which seems like common sense to me. (One imagines delivery drivers will soon be doing dodgy deals for black-market transits). When will politicians ever learn that you cannot dictate to markets, or impose Soviet-style quotas. We all know where that leads, and it is towards economic self harm and certain ruin.

Steve C

Diary dates for 2024

11-12/05/2024	Blakemere Military Show (Pre-1950s), Sandiway, CW8 2EB
12/05/2024	Cheshire View, Christleton near Chester (TBC)
12/05/2024	Wirral CCC Claremont Farm
18-19/05/2024	Anderton Boat Lift Show (Under discussion)
26/05/2024	St Helens Bus Museum
27/05/2024	Rainhill Village Gala
1-2/06/2024	Tatton Park (Early show)
08/06/2024	Hale Carnival, NWCC Annual Show, L24 4AX
16/06/2024	So Retro, Walton Gdns, Warrington WA4 6SN
18-19/06/2024	Cheshire County Show (NB: weekday event)
23/06/2024	Lymm Transport Festival (Numbers TBC)
07/07/2024	Lydiate Show (pre 1973 only)
14/07/2024	Warrington Disability, Walton Gdns, WA4 6SN (TBC)
13-14/07/2024	Cheshire Steam Fair, Daresbury (Pre-1973 only) WA4 4AG
20-21/07/2024	Middlewich Show
28/07/2024	Frodsham Rotary Club Show
03/08/2024	Newton Town Show
17-18/08/2024	Tatton Park (Late show)
7-8/09/2024	Avro 40's Weekend at Woodford (Pre-1950s only)
8/9/2024	NWCC Show, Burtonwood
06/10/2024	Wirral Bus and Tram Show, Woodside Ferry

Events listed in blue above are NWCC's own events. Those in black are where the club makes block entries. Those in green require individual entries to the organisers. Please check our web site or Facebook page before setting out for a show.

KEY POINTS FROM APRIL MEETING

The charity raffle raised £79 and there were 37 members present. Nigel began by reminding members who are attending events to offer any spare seats to those members whose cars are off the road. He also has club stickers, tax discs etc. available to anyone who wants them, and Eileen has club regalia for sale to anyone who needs it for the new season. There may be a club stall at Hale and Burtonwood for parts and auto jumble, in aid of our charity partner.

Kenny reminded members that our public liability insurance does not cover individual members. It is there in case the club itself is held responsible for damages, from say, a gazebo taking off and landing on a car. If you run over a spectator, the claim will be against your classic policy, so check it covers you for events.

Chris Lee spoke about the pitfalls in this area from his experience organising Lancashire Motor Club events, under Motor Sport UK cover.

Bob Holder has suffered a nasty fall and sustained some bone injuries. The club will be organising a card, and we all wish Bob a speedy recovery.

SHOW INFORMATION

Another starting point has been organised for the "Drive it Day" run for those who live further North. It is the Lyme and Wood Country Park car park on Vista Road Newton, WA11 0RN. Start time from both points is 1030 hrs, and Phil has sent maps and instructions to all who have registered thus far.

Lymm is offering 22 places instead of the requested 30. Kenny has whittled our list down to this, with two reserves. He **MUST have your vehicle details in advance or you won't get in.** The event is now full with 400 entries.

A second show at the bus museum has been agreed for November. Meanwhile Halton Show is now on, but in Runcorn, not Widnes, and will be by individual entry only. It also clashes with our Hale show on 8th June, and participants will need to carry proof of insurance. Volunteers are needed for Hale and Burtonwood for marshalling duties etc. Please contact Kenny.

St Helens CCC and Phoenix have not yet released their events lists.

Chris has suggested another day out in September to Adam Sykes' dealership, Teresa recommended the 50s museum in Denbigh.

Rochdale: A truly innovative sports car from a small Lancashire manufacturer that punched well above its weight

We have looked previously in these pages at Crossley of Gorton, and Chevron of Bolton, both significant motor manufacturers in our region. This month we will take a look at Rochdale, a name almost unknown outside enthusiast circles, who produced some truly innovative engineering.

Rochdale Motor Panels and Engineering was founded by Frank Butterworth and Harry Smith in 1948, in a former mill in Hudson Street, Rochdale. The small concern undertook general car repairs, but also made mainly single-seater alloy bodywork for competition cars from 1952 onwards.

This was the post war “specials” boom. At a time of great austerity, new cars were mainly for export under the government’s “export or die” policy, and the few sold here went to priority customers. Nevertheless, young men who had experienced some excitement in the war years and had learned to drive in the forces, wanted the freedom of car ownership. One way of achieving this was to take an old Austin 7 or Ford 8, strip it of its body, and fit one of the special bodies then being sold by a variety of concerns. If you had the

mechanical skills and could afford to upgrade the mechanicals as well, you could produce your own sports special, and attract the ladies or even go racing or trialling. A whole cottage industry was spawned, giving rise to companies such as Falcon, Fairthorpe, Ginnetta, Lotus and our subject here, Rochdale.

Their first bodies were alloy and sold as Mk.2s, and 16 were produced between 1952 and 1954. This was a very modest start, but in 1954 Rochdale adopted the new wonder material, glass fibre. This would prove pivotal to their future. They launched the Mk.4 body, which was available in an 81 inch wheelbase for Austin 7 specials, or 108 inches for Fords and larger chassis. Purchasers had to provide all interior fittings and brackets, and it sold for £46 ten shillings. Rochdale sold 150 of them until production ceased in 1961.

Alongside the Mk.4, Rochdale launched the ST in 1955, designed for the Ford Ten or Popular chassis. Reflecting a maturing market, this included ready-fitted doors, bonnet and internal bulkheads. Despite this it was insufficiently rigid and sold in limited numbers, being

replaced by the GT in 1959.

The GT would prove to be the most successful Rochdale. Based on their F-type racing body, but fitted with a roof, it was torsionally stiffer and came with fitted doors, bonnet and a curved windscreen. Their own chassis was also introduced in 1960. Rochdale went on to sell 1350 GTs, and a further 50 of a convertible version called the Riviera, which was available with 2 or 4 seats and a detachable roof.

axle on coil springs, the Olympic was offered for a range of engines, from the lowly Ford 109E up to the BMC B series from a Riley one point five. The engine was carried in a bonded in tubular steel sub frame, and the shell included a bonded-in steel roll-over hoop above the windscreen.

The Olympic appeared at the Copenhagen Racing Car show and the Geneva Motor Show, and was available in left or right hand drive.



1959 Rochdale GT in competition trim

In 1959 Rochdale made the daring move of introducing the Olympic. Designed by Peter Parker, with a glass fibre monocoque shell, this was cutting-edge engineering for the time, with only Berkley, and the better-known Lotus Elite having taken this route before. Using modified Morris Minor torsion bar front suspension, and a live rear

It marked a move for Rochdale away from merely providing bodies and leaving the buyer to engineer everything else, into true kit car production. For £670 buyers received a comprehensive kit including all necessary mechanical parts. The car was a success, being exported to the USA, Australia and elsewhere. On test with *Motor* in

1961, a Riley 1.5 engine version achieved 102 MPH and 0-60 in 11.9 seconds, pretty lively for that time.

A factory fire in 1961 gutted Rochdale's premises, and they relocated to nearby Littledale Street. Undeterred, they restarted production and launched a re-engineered Phase 2 Olympic. This included an opening rear hatch, and the competition car builders' favourite, Triumph Herald double wishbone front suspension and disc brakes. A 78 BHP Ford Cortina 1500 GT engine became standard. Weighing just 12 CWT the phase 2 was now good for 114 MPH and executed the 0-60 dash in 11 seconds. Selling as a complete kit for

£735, or fully built at £930, Rochdale sold 150 Phase 2s. Sadly sales slowed after 1967, and the last kit was produced in 1973 and Rochdale cars were no more.

Why did they cease production? Firstly, Rochdale had under-priced the car, and could not raise the quality without charging more for it. Secondly, was the time lost sourcing batches of components at acceptable prices from what were essentially competitors. A further layer of hassle came from owners who lacked the ability to build the cars correctly. The heater ducting business began as a sideline, but it proved easier and more profitable.



Today, the Rochdale Owners Club keeps the memory of this innovative little sports car alive, and owns the body moulds. Unlike Lotus, who had a great deal of trouble with their beautiful, but fragile Elite, causing Colin Chapman to revert to a backbone chassis under the Elan, Rochdale really achieved something special to build such an advanced design and make it work.

Glass fibre thickness varied from 2 mm on door panels to 10 mm at stress points. The prototype was tested for 30,000 miles, and the car survived 5 rollovers in testing, with just a cracked screen. This was very impressive engineering out of a former cotton mill in the small Lancashire town whose name their cars bore with pride.

Life's a beach: Living La Dolce Vita with some of Europe's coolest beach cars

Now that the sun has decided to put in the occasional appearance in our skies, our thoughts quickly turn to holidays, and for me, Europe's sunny places. Imagine strolling through lovely old towns, lunching in harbour side restaurants, with gentle lap of the Med against extravagant yachts.

Sometimes these will unload a tiny car from a hold, the matching accessory to the classic Riva Aquarama speedboat tied alongside by spotless mooring lines. Perish the thought that the wealthy owner, or this season's bronzed "Mimi" clanking her Bulgari as she hangs on his arm, should have to walk to the boutiques, jewellers, or their villa on their brief excursions ashore.

The beach car idea is thought to have been dreamed up by Carrozzeria Ghia chief Gigi Segre, who noticed large taxis clogging up the narrow streets of the Neopolitan islands of Ischia and Capri. He saw a niche for a small car that would sell to hotels and resorts, like a motorised rickshaw, but with Italian style. The first were built on Lambretta "Asp" trike underpinnings, but in 1954 they switched to the Renault 4CV.

Designed in secret in the war and anticipating a post-war need for mass transport, the 4CV was launched in 1947 and lasted until the Dauphine appeared in 1961. With a monocoque shell and rear-mounted 760 cc engine, it sold well and in many ways was a better basis for a beach car than the more



Renault 4CV Jolly by Ghia

well-known Fiats which followed. With a larger floorpan and more power, the Ghia 4CV Jolly looked very smart, and laid down the formula for all later beach cars. Minimalist but very stylish bodywork, a chain where the doors should be, wicker seats, dinky whitewalls and a semi-frameless low-cut windscreen. The name “Jolly”, from the Italian for “Joker” would soon become generic.

The other progenitor of the beach car was Gianni Agnelli, who in the 50s was one of Italy’s richest industrialists, owning Fiat and Juventus Football Club amongst much else. He also owned Villa Leopolda in Villefranche on the French Riviera, where his family spent their summers.

In 1958, Agnelli approached Ghia, whose stylist Mario Boano drew up the Fiat Spiaggina to his exact specifications. Based on the Fiat Nuova 500 platform, the Spiaggina was used to ferry the Agnellis around their large estate and into Villefranche, and was soon featured in Vogue. Using all the Jolly styling cues, it was also notable for being a clean-sheet design, with no hint of the baby Fiat beneath.

A second car was built and gifted to Agnelli’s friend, Greek shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis. That car is lost, but Agnelli’s was well-used until he gifted it to his chauffeur in 1973. It was offered by RM Sotheby’s this year at an estimated \$295,000.



Fiat Spiaggina by Ghia

The Jolly concept quickly took off, with the “beautiful people” who would not ordinarily be seen dead in a baby Fiat. The launch of the 600 for those with *molto bambini* allowed

Ghia to develop the Jolly concept further with more power and the chrome rails below echoed yacht fittings. Yul Brynner and Onassis (again) were famous owners.



Fiat 600 Jolly by Ghia



Fiat 850 Michelotti Shelette

In 1968, prolific stylist Giovanni Michelotti exhibited the Shelette at the Geneva Show. Commissioned by boat builder Philip Schell (brother of racing driver Harry) it was an updated take on the Jolly, while keeping the key styling cues. With a fiberglass body on a Fiat 850 special chassis and a rear engine, they sold 80 under the Michelotti brand. Ringo Starr was among the glitterati who bought one, as was (yet again), Onassis, who wanted an automatic, and so ordered a DAF-based version. He and Jackie used it on his private island, Skypios, and took it on board his famous yacht Christina, and it is now in the Louwman Museum. Some were badged as “Spiagetta”, from the Italian “Spiagia” for beach.

One of the more unusual takes on the Jolly concept was the Fiat 600 Multipla Marinella, by Carrozzeria Fissore in 1957.

The Multipla was the original mini-MPV, used in Rome as a taxi and (just) capable of seating 6. Fissore used the platform to create a stylish beach car, with a horseshoe-shaped wicker rear seat in an all-steel body, with a sliding canvas sunroof. Like Agnelli’s 1958 car, the Marinella was a clean-sheet design giving no clues as to its origins.

Saving the most bonkers offering until last, I give you the Felber Ferrari 365 GTB/4 beach car, styled by Michelotti, and commissioned by the Emir of Qatar.

Built in 3 months at Michelotti’s



Fiat 600 Multipla Marinella by Fissore



Studio in Turin, it was ordered in metallic blue with a denim interior, but an oil crisis intervened and the Emir cancelled. Michelotti repainted the car metallic bronze with black leather, showing it at the 1976 Geneva Show. The middle man in this crime against good

taste, was one Willy Felber, a Swiss entrepreneur who was responsible for butchering another 365 into an estate car. His "beach car" never saw a beach or left Switzerland, changed hands several times and gained the nickname "Croisette" after the promenade in Cannes.

Out and about with N.W.C.C. Members this month



Above: Dave Collier's Wartburg 1.3 Tourist with fellow "Ossis" in the familiar setting of Gaydon. Dave's car is one of only 2 in the UK.

Below: Geoff and Kim Ashcroft's lovely 1968 Wolseley 1300 4 door, receiving the car of the day award at Heskin Hall from Nigel.





Above: L'Equipe Stott at Heskin Hall, having made it there without getting lost! Nice to see Phil's rare and quick little Clan Crusader out and about.

Below: Also on our run to Heskin Hall, a fine example of the almost extinct Rover 820 series, developed with Honda as a successor to the SD1





Just the thing for the touring gent in the alps, and available in “a great variety of gay mixture colours” Tyrolean Tifter anyone?

FIND THE CLUB ON THE WEB AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA AT:

Web: <https://nwcasualclassics.online>

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/groups/northwestcasualclassics

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

Our NWCC Charity Partner 2024

Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP) is an internationally acclaimed user led charity. With over 30 years’ experience of developing and delivering mobility and independent living services, our aim is to support disabled people and people living with long term health conditions.

<https://www.disabilitypartnership.org.uk>



They really shouldn't have: A look at some cars that should have stayed on the drawing board...



There is ugly, and then there is “Oh good grief”. Say hello to the 1958 Spohn DV13 Convertible, which begs the question, what on earth were they thinking ?

Spohn were a German coach-builder founded in the 1920s, who had enjoyed some success, building bodies for the Maybach Zeppelin amongst others.

Hermann Spohn survived the collapse of the German Reich by repairing military vehicles for the occupying French, He started creating custom bodies for Americans stationed in Germany, who were flush with cash and enjoying a very

favourable exchange rate and could also ship cars home for free. Once they all went home, business dried up, as did ideas of setting up shop in the US, (who were just a teensy bit anti-German at the time...)

The DV13 was Spohn's last gasp attempt to revive his brand, and resembles two sports cars mating. Built on a 1939 Ford Chassis, with a 331 cubic inch Cadillac engine and 3-speed Ford gearbox. The DV13 really was too much, too late, and remained a one-off. Today it is a curiosity at major American classic car shows.



Back Page Beauties: There have been many lovely Alfas, but this Giulietta Spider must be the prettiest of them all. Pronounced “Julietta” (the Italian language does not use “j”), it is from 1965, the final year of production. Styled by Pininfarina its exquisite lines concealed a 1600cc DOHC all-alloy engine with a single Solex carburettor developing 79 BHP. A four speed gearbox, independent front suspension and a live rear axle provide simple underpinnings, and the brakes are finned aluminium drums all round. Yet the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts, and it is a study in the design principle that less is more, and one appeared in “The Day of the Jackal”!