

Backfire

North West Casual Classics
Newsletter June 2024



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

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Next Meeting : Tuesday 9th July 2024

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



Cover: A striking image of the Anderton Boat Lift reflected in a rare Volvo PV544 Sport, basking in the sunshine, taken by Michael Upton.

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER



Hi All.

For those of you who have seen me hobbling about of late, I can confirm that I am now on the list for a new hip. With me being from 1952, original parts are no longer available so after-market replacements are the only way forward. I can only hope that whoever is doing the job (eventually), doesn't have to rely on EBay for supplies! News from the France Fleet this month:

AUSTIN 16: When my friend Glyn Jones offered to have a look at the steering on the Austin I was pleased to say the least. I had remarked to him a few weeks ago that navigating the car was becoming extremely challenging, to say the least. Turning the wheel was as much effort as going 2 rounds with Big Daddy! Various remedies were discussed including needle bearings on the kingpins and even an electric steering rack. In the end a more simplistic treatment was decided upon, to grease the kingpins and bushes. I have an air powered grease gun which I bought many years ago on offer at Machine Mart, and had used it with great success when I first bought the Austin but to my shame, I've never repeated the operation since. There are

greasing points all over the underside of the Austin, the steering being just some of them. After lifting the front wheels off the ground the steering was still heavy and it wasn't possible to turn the wheel with just one finger, it really was stiff. At this point I have to say that all the subsequent crawling about on the floor was performed not by me but Glyn! There are 7 greasing nipples on the steering, 3 track rod ends and 4 kingpin bearings. The track rod ends took some lubrication and so did the top kingpin bushes but the bottom kingpin bushes not so much. It seems that both the lower swivel pin bushes are clogged up in some way and so I think that the kingpins will need to be withdrawn and the bottom bush freed off. This is obviously a more involved task and will have to wait until another time. The steering is however, a lot easier than before but still not quite right.

TRIUMPH STAG: I haven't been using the Stag much at all recently and so I've decided to sell it. Anne and I had some great times with it, going to many shows, with and without NWCC. Not just locally

either, as we also went down to Ludlow in Shropshire and as far as Moffat in the Scottish borders. We both enjoyed our time with it even though it has been a source of much derisory ribbing from NWCC members. It was the first club car to swallow Evans Waterless Coolant,

in fact it's the only club car to use the Evans wonder juice. I do need to prepare the car for sale and that's not going to happen soon due to my leg, but it is on my "To Do" list.

Cheers, Nigel

THE FRONT AXLE

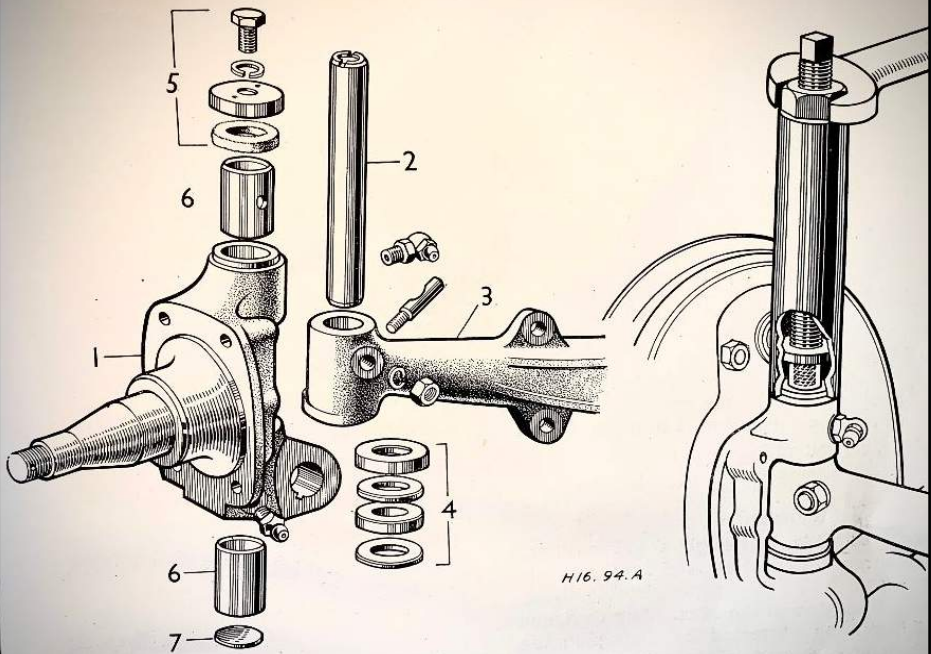


Fig. 1. An exploded view of the swivel axle on the left showing : 1, swivel axle ; 2, swivel pin ; 3, front axle ; 4, the lower thrust assembly ; 5, the set screw and felt-washer assembly. 6, the swivel pin bushes ; 7, the welch plug. The illustration on the right shows the method of extracting a swivel pin. If the brakes are still in position, remove the brake drum and screw in the adjuster to clear the swivel pin.

For younger members born into an era of sealed-for life joints and McPherson Struts, king pins were common up to the early 1960s. They often required a hydraulic press to remove them and fit replacements. Cars also came with something called a "Lubrication Chart" showing multiple greasing points and recommending proper British Castrol grease!

EDITORIAL

Summer is now officially upon us, and by the time you read this, our shows at Anderton Boat Lift, Tatton and Hale have already taken place, and the weather gods have been fairly kind. Let us hope it stays that way.

Less kind has been the increasingly bureaucratic and risk-averse behaviour of some show organisers, who are creating needless headaches and work for our hardworking committee members. This is particularly prevalent in local authority staff we deal with, who seem to be falling into the trap of gold-plating what begin as relatively sensible rules into something altogether more intrusive and draconian. If I were being uncharitable I would think that much of this is to justify their own existence. My more charitable self tells me it is more likely excessively risk-averse behaviour by staff terrified of being sued or blamed for any calamity

Quite what the difference is between a row of cars in any car park, and a row of cars in a field is hard to discern, unless you factor in the points that our classics are valuable and fastidiously maintained objects, and unlike modern electrics, don't weigh 2 tons, move soundlessly or spontaneously combust.

Out in the wider world Koji Sato, Chief Executive of Toyota, along with representatives from Mazda and Subaru, has confirmed that they will be pursuing a "multi pathway" approach to reducing emissions, rather than going all-in for electric vehicles. This will include developing smaller, efficient engines to be used in hybrids, hydrogen fuel cell vehicles and synthetic fuel engines.

Akio Toyoda, the Chairman of Toyota warned in January that EVs will be unlikely to capture more than a third of the global market, due to infrastructure constraints.

Toyota's approach has angered climate activists, but customers have voted with their cash, propelling Toyota to a record profit of £26 BN in the year to April, to which your editor can only say money talks, BS walks. In the end, markets will decide these questions, because politicians cannot force people to buy a product they don't want and which doesn't suit their needs. Yes, we need to reduce emissions, but why have our rulers done absolutely nothing to start with the low-hanging fruit, such as smaller, lighter cars, engine size limits, better public transport, and yes, electrics where they are appropriate? Even if they will need a set of new tyres every other service...

Steve C

Diary dates for 2024

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)
10/08/2024	Museum of Liverpool Life Show (Phoenix)
07/07/2024	Lydiate Show
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
10/08/2024	Museum of Liverpool Life Show (Phoenix)
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 MAY MEETING

There were 48 members present, and the charity raffle raised £95.

Nigel was in Whitby, along with Eileen and Alan. Suggestions of satanic rites in Dracula (or no) costume around the abbey ruins were refuted by Kenny, who chaired the meeting.

Michelle has had to step back from her role as Secretary for personal reasons, and Teresa has kindly stepped up to fill the role.

Condolences were expressed to Dave Squires, on the sad loss of his father after a long illness.

SHOW INFORMATION

Kenny clarified that Astley Hall near Chorley is not in our events programme because we voted as a club not to support events which charge us to exhibit.

Those attending Lymm must give Kenny your correct vehicle details and registration number, not just your name on the sheet. Please also complete sheets **legibly**, as Kenny is not a graphologist!

Kenny acknowledged the hard work John has done on Tatton, both in securing a good pitch, and his dealings with the organisers. As with Lymm, please provide **all** the information asked for, or we

risk losing places.

Volunteers are still needed for both Hale and Burtonwood shows to help with set-up and marshalling duties.

St Helens Council have disbanded their events team and put their work out to a private company. This means that the Victoria Park Show, and the Town Centre shows are now cancelled. A local Councillor is taking on the Earlestown Show organisation, and information will be shared when known.

The Newton le Willows Town Show is not affected by these developments and will go ahead.

The show at the Museum of Liverpool Life at Mann Island run by our friends in Phoenix will now take place on Saturday 10th August, NOT 29th June. If you have signed up for this event you do not need to do so again, but **do** tell Kenny if you cannot make the new date.

If attending, please bring cardboard if your vehicle leaks oil, to protect the museum's paving.

The on/off Halton Anniversary Show is now taking place, but it falls on June 8th, the same day as our own Hale Show.

We were not speeding Mr. Plod, honestly, said Noddy:
The FiatGamine 500, by Vignale.



This dinky little Fiat Gamine was left out of last month's feature on beach cars, as it is not really a beach car, but it is so cute it would almost guarantee you show prizes if children were doing the judging!

Possibly the nearest thing to a real-life "Noddy" car, they were built by Vignale for just 3 years from 1967-70.

At just 119 inches long and 51 inches wide, it was based on a Fiat 500, with a road-burning 21.2 BHP.

For all its attractiveness, it was not a success, and Vignale built just 700. This killed off the company, and Alfredo Vignale, who styled the Gamine himself, sold his firm to De Tomaso. They would build Panteras there, and Alfredo died in a car crash

3 days later, and Italy had lost one of its most prolific stylists.

Vignale were a large outfit based in Turin, and built cars on production lines. These included their own brand creations, using mechanicals from other makers, and bodies for Ferrari, Alfa and Maserati. They also styled the Jensen Interceptor, did prototype work for Triumph, and built the lovely Triumph Italia.

The Gamine does come with a basic hood, but they are best kept in southern Italy, as they have a tendency to dissolve. I have seen one example with red wings (for the maximum Noddy effect) and they are now rare and very expensive.

Chasing the Schlumpfs: the story of an extraordinary discovery

In 1977 a strange sequence of events occurred which would set the classic car world alight. An industrial dispute at a textile mill in the small town of Mulhouse, in the Alsace region of Northern France had escalated to the point where angry workers stormed factory buildings by night, and dragged their contents out before the eyes of the world. Journalists flocked to the scene, revealing a vast factory building, laid out in avenues lined with 800 replica Parisian lamps. Along these avenues were arranged 427 classic cars, many of enormous value, including a huge cache of 122 Bugattis. Their owners, the Schlumpf brothers, Hans and Fritz, had fled to their native Switzerland, leaving a mountain of unpaid debts and a business employing hundreds in ruins. Hard-nosed and acquisitive, and with feudal notions of industrial relations, the brothers had never been popular.

The collection was not, as it has often been described, "secret". It was known in the town, and in classic car circles, but only a select few invited guests had ever seen it. Their private museum had 3 restaurants, and they had apparently intended to open it - one day.

Its crown jewels were two Bugatti T41 Royales of the 6 ever built. A sober Park Ward saloon, and the Coupe Napoleon, used by Bugatti himself. This was missing its silver elephant mascot, sculpted by Rembrandt Bugatti, taken by the fleeing Schlumpfs as a keepsake.

The French government stepped in, and secured the site, before it was hastily declared Le Musee de Nationale de l'Automobile, to safeguard its riches for the nation.

Your editor, then a young man, was so taken by the romance of this extraordinary story that in summer 1978 my future wife and I drove across France to see it for ourselves. Entering by a small art-deco style entrance lodge, I can still recall my astonishment walking into its vast hall, lit by a saw-tooth glazed roof, with gleaming exhibits stretching for what seemed like miles. Each car was on axle stands on white gravel. At the entrance stood a Bugatti type 35 and two children's electric type 52s with carved angels and a heavy cast plaque inscribed "Notre Cher Maman" (our dear mother). It seems the place was meant to be a shrine to her memory.

Unbeknown to visitors, there was also a vast workshop and storage



facility elsewhere on the site, with over 200 unrestored cars and parts, (including yet more Bugattis) and a staff of 55 mechanics and other craftsmen still working on them. It seemed that the brothers wanted to acquire every Bugatti they could get their hands on. Denis Jenkinson and Peter Verstappen's excellent book "The Schlumpf Obsession", recounts how Fritz in particular, pursued Bugatti owners all over the world, to the point of becoming a nuisance. He was a demanding buyer, insisting on reams of documentation, and driving a hard bargain. The very secretiveness of the Schlumpfs, Jenkinson suggests, worked for them, because if an owner fell on hard times and needed to sell, the

Schlumpfs could offer total discretion, (at a price). So it was that Fritz acquired the collection of American collector John Shakespeare, including the Park Ward Royale for \$70,000 in 1962.

Despite his enthusiasm for all things Bugatti, Fritz was not above hard bargaining with them. When the Bugatti factory was sold in 1963 to Hispano-Suiza, he bought their entire collection of 14 historic cars, including Bugatti's own "Coupe Napoleon" for £50,000. Thus the second Royale entered the collection.

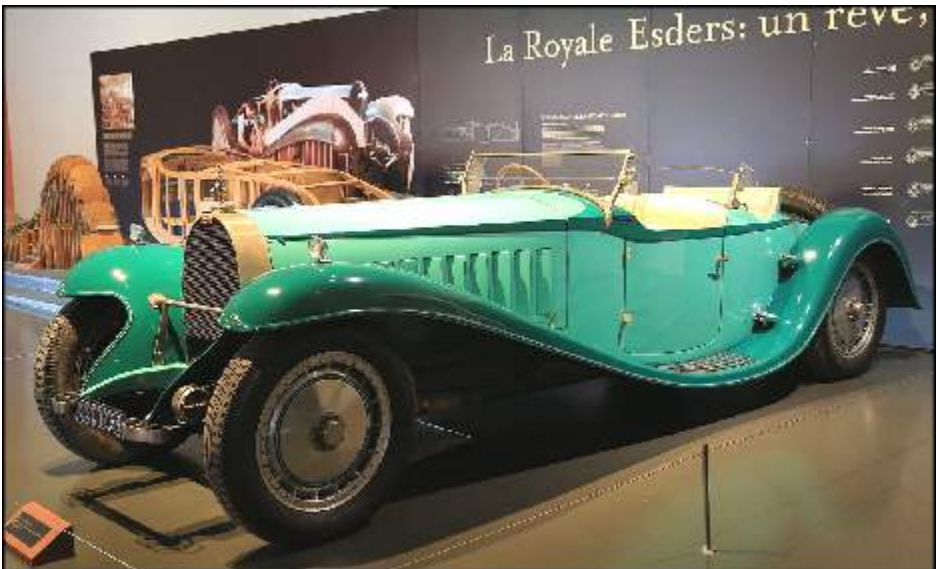
Not satisfied with this, in 1965 the brothers embarked upon the recreation of a lost Royale in great secrecy, dubbed "Project 411". In 1932 French Couturier Armand Esders

ordered a Royale with a sleek 2-seater body styled by Jean Bugatti, which made a fine advertisement for his fashion house as he drove the elegant streets of Paris. With no headlamps (he refused to drive at night) it was probably the world's most extravagant roadster, but when he sold it just before WW2, the new owner replaced the body with a Coupe de Ville. It later ended up in Bill Harrah's museum.

Undeterred, the Schlumpfs had acquired the original factory drawings and casting patterns as part of their Bugatti factory haul, and set their team to work. By October 1970 they had built a rolling chassis, but the body was incomplete when the Schlumpf empire collapsed in 1977, and was later

finished by the museum's current workshop team. When the museum was inspected in 1977, there were 3 large circular platforms at its centre, one for each of their 3 Royales.

The Schlumpf collection was, of course about more than just Bugatti, even if these were their obsession. Stunning examples of every major European marque were present along its avenues, and the brothers had done deals with Mercedes and others to acquire historic cars, often by trading cars the makers wanted for their own museums. The collection is undoubtedly Francophone (there is not a single American car in it), but this probably saved it by dint of it being a ready-made French



Esders recreation. Note the body bucks in the background



national collection. The Schlumpfs themselves would spend years in luxurious exile fighting legal battles to try to reclaim their treasures, but to no avail, and both died in Switzerland. Only Fritz's wife, Arlette Schlumpf, gained custody of 40 unrestored cars through the courts after his death, and auctioned them off amid much hype, as "The Malpersach Collection"

The whole Schlumpf saga is a fascinating tale of hubris and obsession. At the end, the brothers were ignoring warnings from their workers, bankers and the French tax authorities that their game was up. They carried on collecting even as their empire collapsed.

And what of the collection? It has since been completely revised into

one of the great car collections of the world, (although has fallen prey to the modern fad for interactivity.)

As it was first revealed, it was, in the words of Bugatti expert Hugh Conway, a "nouveau-riche extravaganza, vulgar and lacking in taste". It's embarrassment of riches seemed to be more about showing off the Schlumpf's wealth than about any coherent theme or telling a story. Cars fitted with inappropriate bodies made on site, multiple examples of the same model, and above all, cars that would never again be allowed to leave the museum or to be driven were all obvious flaws. Despite these failings, it remains an experience I shall never forget.



Fuelling Your Classic: a Warning From the BFHVC, and the DVLA modifications consultation.

Some Fed and DVLA matters you should be aware of:

Steve Tanser has kindly drawn my attention to advice from the Federation aimed at owners of vehicles with fuel fillers contained within the boot, bonnet or under the seats. These include the Imp series, Renault 10s, early Land Rovers, early VW Beetles and even modern Transits.

The Petrol Retailers Association, which represents 65% of UK forecourt owners, issues their site operators guide or “Red Guide” which advises members to refuse to serve anyone filling a petrol container while in a boot or interior, due to the risk of flammable fumes collecting in the space, and later being ignited.

So far, sensible enough, and such containers **must** also be those specified for carrying petrol.

The issue has arisen with some site operators assuming that customers were breaching this rule, while in fact they were simply filling their tank via the normal ((concealed) filler.

The advice therefore is for owners of affected vehicles to make the attendant aware that their filler cap is within the body before filling up via the intercom or in person.

I have also had my attention drawn to the DVLA consultation on modified classic vehicles which “seeks evidence to help identify areas of potential change to how historic, classic, rebuilt and electrically converted vehicles are registered with the DVLA”.

The closing date for responses is 1159 hrs on 4th July (election day) and you can access the questionnaire (all 29 pages of it..) at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/registering-historic-classic-rebuilt-vehicles-and-vehicles-converted-to-electric-call-for-evidence>

Although this may seem a chore, you don’t have to answer all the questions, the wording of which often reveal some of the DVLA’s thinking and preoccupations.

If you have a modified classic or a kit car, it really is in your own interest to make your voice heard in this consultation, and frankly I would advise all members to respond.

Out and about with NWCC Members this month



Above: Chris Lee's gleaming Mini at the Anderton Boat Lift Show

Below: Nigel's "Hooligan" Volvo 850R prowls the pits at Oulton Park





A nicely original Moggie beneath the towering structure of the world famous Anderton Boat Lift, which raises and lowers canal boats 50 feet between the Trent and Mersy Canal and the Weaver Navigation. Currently under restoration, it is scheduled to re-open in 2025

Tatton Park June 2024



Above: This picture just about encapsulates everything about car shows!

Below: Volvo PV544 Sport, Jaguar Mk.2 and Corvair Corsa





Above: Volvo 122 S fronts a typically eclectic range of NWCC cars

Below: Pre-war corner of our stand, with two previous prize winners





A fine E30 3 series BMW. Why did all their subsequent offerings have to be so bloated, when they could produce something as compact, good-looking and potent as this?

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...



Founded in 1959, Marcos had a notable history, including competition success with Jackie Stewart and Jackie Oliver at the wheel of their “Ugly Duckling” Xylon race car. (Xylon being Greek for wood.)

In 1963, the Adams Brothers replaced Frank Costin as chief designer, and Marcos launched their beautiful 1800. Initially with a marine ply monocoque chassis inspired by the De Havilland Mosquito, it had a Volvo B18 engine and was an immediate success, going through several engine changes and a move to a space frame steel chassis. In total they

Sold 855, finally ending production in 1973.

Quite what they were thinking when they introduced the Mantis M70 (above) is unclear. It was meant to offer a 4-seater Marcos, and had a steel space frame chassis and the heavy Triumph 2.5 six unit up front. Unfortunately the styling was a riot of clashing curves and lines and nothing really made sense, from its bug-eyed front to its huge overhangs and recessed wheels. Only 32 were sold, and the company called it a day in 1973, but like Sinatra, they made multiple comebacks.



Back Page Beauties: Launched by Carl Borgward's small independent company in Bremen, the Isabella started life as a saloon, then an estate, before this Coupe was launched in 1957 in an attempt to arrest falling sales. With a monocoque shell, and a modest 1493 cc 75 bhp engine it was no sports car, but it was very pretty and very well made. Coil spring front suspension and coils and swing axles at the rear gave a good ride, and the interior was well-trimmed in rather baroque German style, with white plastic steering wheel and switches and deep front seats. It deserved better, but sadly Borgward folded in 1961. His wife Elizabeth drove hers until the 1980s.