

Backfire

North West Casual Classics
Newsletter July 2024



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

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Next Meeting : Tuesday 13th August 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 delightful 1939 Ford Pickup displaying its immaculate tuned flathead V8 under sunny skies at Hale Carnival. Photo by Mike Upton.

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER



Hi All.

Further to my Chatter last month regarding the steering on my Austin, it is finally sorted.

Last month my friend Glyn and I (mainly Glyn), had lubricated all the grease nipples on the steering mechanism to try to improve the agonisingly stiff action. It had improved somewhat but the steering remained challenging to say the least. The bottom bearings on the Kingpins had remained stubborn and the free flow of grease into these two bearings remained hopeless. Perhaps the obvious solution would have been to remove the Kingpins entirely, clean up and refit but Glyn suggested a plan which he used to do when he was a mechanic with a fuel delivery company. The problem as he saw it, was that hard grease was blocking the oilways and not allowing the lubrication of the bushes. So after elevating the front of the car off the floor, we set to.

As there are no flammable parts present at this location, warming the area with a blowtorch should melt the hardened grease and allow fresh supplies to be pumped in. Well that was the plan. First he removed the two grease nipples in question

and gave them a good clean, one of which proved to be non-operational. This was exchanged for one off the scrap chassis I bought a few years ago, both were then replaced and we were good to go.

The driver's side was first and the flame was played directly onto the bushes/bearing area, and result! Soon the hardened grease was oozing out of either end of the bearing and as I rotated the steering wheel, Glyn applied the grease gun until the grease flowed freely from both ends of the bearing.

The nearside proved to be the culprit in this whole affair. It took considerably longer to free off this side and it actually got worse before it got better! Eventually it did free off and the grease made its way through the bearing and the steering was at last free.

Now I'm not saying that steering the Austin is a piece of cake, because it's not, but it's a lot easier on the biceps than before!

When I first got the Austin the previous owner had fitted an SU fuel pump as the mechanical one was giving him trouble and when I took

ownership, I fitted electronic ignition. As a result it is always keen to start, so imagine my dismay when reluctance to fire up began happening on a regular basis. On inspecting the fuel filter I saw a terrible sight. It was filthy, so I removed it but before replacing it I powered up the pump, the pump ran but flow of fuel didn't. Time to call Glyn!

We drained the tank and despite it being only 4 years old, loads of sediment ran out. A short length of rubber fuel hose which had gone alarmingly soft was also replaced. After the tank was refilled with Super Unleaded, the engine burst into life. I hope that is the end of the problem. When Nigel at the workshop, services the car later this

year I'll get him to completely replace all the rubber fuel line components.

The Volvo went for its MOT on the 28th of June. It passed, but with a couple of advisories. Nothing very exciting but enough to get serious and expensive if not addressed soon. Obviously the Volvo has to be MOT'd but as always, I do advocate the inspecting of all vehicles at least once a year by a third party. Better to be safe than sorry!

Cheers, Nigel.

Positive Feedback From Tatton Park Show

We are pleased to report that the committee have received very positive feedback from the organisers of Tatton Park Show.

The organising team were really impressed with our stand, and the way in which as a club, we delivered what we had promised in terms of attendance and the range of vehicles on show over the weekend. We were also told that we always put on a good show at this event, so well done to all involved.

This bodes well for our future involvement at Tatton, which is our premier regional show. The organisers have told us that they have tightened the rules due to large numbers of no-shows, and we did see large spaces on many stands. If we can maintain our good name with the organising team, this only strengthens our position when we are negotiating for our space allocation in future years.

EDITORIAL

Your editor has been immersed in garden projects for the last 3 weeks building a gazebo, which has provided endless opportunities for re-visiting school geometry and woodwork lessons. The step aerobics involved have left me aching, but at least I have avoided much of the election coverage, which fills me with gloom. To quote that bloke on the telly, is this really the best we have got?

I also worry for the future of our hobby as all the contenders seem to be in thrall to the net zero activists (aka the Iron Age Appreciation Society)

We did manage to attend Hale, which was once again a great success, with 115 cars attending, and some fine, if rather breezy weather. I did however notice that the carnival field looked somewhat depleted compared with previous years. We also attended a charity event in Southport at an independent Volvo specialists in aid of Macmillan, which was busy, and had us fielding questions about our cars all day. In this issue I have given an account of the events leading up to our withdrawal from Lymm Transport Festival this year and for the foreseeable future. This is for the benefit of members who do not attend

meetings, and who need to be aware of the issues the committee has had to deal with. Although we are concerned in case this is a fore-taste of the future for other shows, it is much more likely that this is an isolated case of misguided over-reach by individuals. In any event, as long as the new government allows us to drive and enjoy our classics, there are alternative ways we can enjoy them to lining them up in someone's field for a static display. "Adapt and survive" as the saying goes, and we can be very adaptable.

Elsewhere in this issue we take a look at by far the largest motor manufacturing plant in our area, Ford of Halewood, which is a remarkable story of survival in a fast-changing market. We also remember one of the outstanding British Hot Rods of the 1970's, Nick Butler's "Revenge", which featured craftsmanship and engineering of the highest order. It is difficult for younger members to appreciate just how vibrant the rod and custom scene was in the 1970s, with indoor shows in every major city, a lively club scene, and three national monthly magazines supporting the hobby. It is still with us, and we have seen some outstanding examples at our shows, but cost and the SVA rules have not helped it.

Steve C

Diary dates for 2024

| | |
|---------------|---|
| | |
| 06/07/2024 | Earlstown Market Car Show. 1100 hrs> |
| 07/07/2024 | Lydiate Show (in aid of NWCR) 0800 hrs> |
| 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 Car Show, Town Field, Middlewich |
| 27/07/2024 | St Helens CCC Annual Show, Haresfinch Sports and Social |
| 28/07/2024 | Frodsham Rotary Club Show, Frodsham Communit Centre |
| 03/08/12024 | Newton Town Show, Mesnes Park. Newton le Willows |
| 10/08/2024 | Astle Park Steam Rally, Chelford, Cheshire |
| 10/08/2024 | Museum of Liverpool Life Show (Phoenix) |
| 17-18/08/2024 | Tatton Park (Late show) |
| 25/08/2024 | Phoenix CCC Annual 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 JUNE MEETING

There were 48 present at a lively and well-attended meeting, and the charity raffle raised £97.

Our membership database is becoming out of date. Would any member who has moved, or changed their contact details please inform Steve Tanser. Steve has forms for the purpose, and it takes a moment. If you do not come to meetings, contact him via

membership@nwcasualclassics.online

Josh has taken on the role of club blogger, and you can see his efforts on our website. For those unfamiliar with blogging, it is short for web log, and means a regular diary of our club activities on t'interweb, (which, for those unfamiliar with it, is a novel method of exchanging ye script betwyne clerkes through electrickery...)

Steve T. Has raised £50 for the club charity by selling some items we were gifted on E-Bay.

Nigel once again raised the issue of help for members of the committee. This need not involve taking on a formal role, but can be taking on a single task such as making some calls or finding out

something and reporting back. Please see Nigel if you have some time/skills you can contribute.

SHOW INFORMATION

In view of the prominence of the Lymm Show issue, I will deal with it separately overleaf.

Tatton was an exceptional show, and well done to John for his sterling efforts. He is trying to secure the same pitch for next year. The only issue noted at Tatton was that it is becoming increasingly expensive for the public. See also the positive feedback we have received from the organisers, on page 4 of this issue.

Hale Show was a great success, with around 115 cars present. The raffle raised £197 for the club charity. Apart from one minor incident with a marshal, who had no official standing, it was an excellent show with only the merest hint of shower!

The Liverpool Museum Show at Mann Island is rescheduled to 10th August, as stated last month.

The Transport Museum Show was packed to capacity, and raised over £2K, an excellent result.

Lymm Transport Show

At the June meeting Nigel and Kenny recounted the long and frustrating saga of the Lymm show. Members are aware that we had already been given a reduced allocation of places, because the show was allegedly fully booked. What follows suggests that this may prove to be misplaced hubris on the part of the organisers, with whom our dealings have been fraught to say the least.

Relations hit a new low when the committee received a spreadsheet purporting to show members of NWCC whose cars were not taxed, and therefore uninsured. How they had come by this information is unclear, but they requested we act upon it or those vehicles would be denied access. When checked, this information proved to be totally incorrect.

The next absurdity was the demand that members each have £1m of Public Liability Insurance cover, and provide proof of this on arrival. No other show we attend has requested this, and it shows a misunderstanding of what PLI is for. Most classic insurance policies cover you for attending shows and any third party claim. Your car will be static all day, and will usually be moved under marshalling before the event opens to the public and after they have left. The risks of accidents are therefore tiny, and covered by most classic

policies anyway. Nigel's researches showed that some classic insurers had never heard of the need for PLI and did not offer it, while Adrian Flux do offer it for around £20.

Lymm's organisers claim that this has been imposed by their insurers, and that they cannot afford to fund it, despite charging the public £6 a head to attend. Our response to this is that providing our cars at shows comes at some cost to their owners, and we do this for free. As a club we have also taken a vote not to attend any show that charges us to exhibit. Passing on the expense of PLI to our members is a de facto additional charge.

The committee has therefore, with regret, decided to withdraw from the Lymm Transport Show 2024, and not to apply in future years, or recommend individual members to support this event if this policy remains in place. As of the June meeting we understand that other local clubs have also withdrawn, and that there are at least 150 no-shows that we know of, with members present queuing to strike their cars from the list.

The parting shot from the Lymm organisers was that this policy is here to stay. We shall see...

From Anglia to Orion : A history of Ford's Halewood Plant

We have looked previously in these pages at Crossley in Gorton, Chevron in Bolton and Rochdale in (surprisingly) Rochdale as well as the sole Waldron made in St Helens.

It is time now to look at the history of car making in Liverpool, and Ford's long tenure of it's massive Halewood Plant.

When your editor was growing up in the 60s and 70s in South Liverpool, Ford touched everyone's lives . Not only did most families have at least one member working there, but because of the staff discount scheme , Ford cars were everywhere. The Halewood Hotel even had rooms named after Ford models and local banks and businesses depended on the custom of Ford workers.

Halewood was not the first English Ford plant, and neither was Dagenham. That honour belongs to Trafford Park, Manchester.

In 1911 Ford purchased a former carriage works by the Ship Canal to assemble the Model T. It quickly began sourcing local content where possible, due to the costs and delay in shipping parts from Detroit. In 1912 Ford began converting the plant to the assembly line production methods Henry

had pioneered, and between 1912 and 1913 production rose from 3,000 cars to 6,000 per annum. The British-built T sold for £175, compared with Austin's 10, then selling at £240.

Ford stayed in Trafford Park until 1931, when the first vehicles rolled out of its new Dagenham plant, which had taken 7 years to build.

Halewood opened in 1963, to relieve pressure on Dagenham. Car ownership was booming, and the Anglia was the first model built there. This was joined by the Corsair between 1964 and 69.

Car making was a big opportunity for Liverpool to move away from a dock-centred local economy and having too many eggs in one economic basket. In 1967 the Escort replaced the Anglia, and was built solely at Halewood, apart from the later performance versions built at Ford Advanced Vehicle Operations at Aveley. The Capri was also built at Halewood from 1969, but was shared with Dagenham.

By 1970, Halewood was Ford's major European facility along with the Saarlois plant in Cologne, and built all Escorts and Orions. This would end in 1997 with the announcement that the replacement model, the Focus, would be built at



The first Anglia, gifted to Liverpool Museum, rolls off the Halewood line

Saarlouis. This seemed to be the death knell for Halewood, but in what would prove to be the first of many lucky escapes, the plant would have an unlikely saviour.

Ford had been on an acquisition spree in the late 90's, buying up Jaguar, Land Rover, Aston Martin and Volvo. It had also entered a partnership deal with German gearbox company Gertrag. Just as production of the Escort van was winding down, Ford announced in 2001 that the new X-Type Jaguar, (which was loosely based on a Mondeo platform), would be built at Halewood. In addition, Gertrag would take over a large part of the

site, building transmissions in a joint arrangement with Ford. The plant was re-badged as Jaguar Land Rover, but the Ford flame still flickered in the Gertrag joint deal.

In 2007 Halewood began building the second generation Land Rover Freelander, and the curious sight of a dirt off-road test track became visible to drivers passing on the A561 (forever known as the "Ford Road" by locals). One year later Ford sold JLR to the Tata corporation of India.

Production of the X-Type ceased in 2009, and Halewood lost 300 jobs and the plant closed for 3 weeks.

Once again clouds hovered over

Halewood, but in March 2010 the government made a £27m grant to JLR to build the Range Rover Evoque at Halewood, which proved to be a best seller. Soon 3,000 people were working at the plant, growing to 4,000 by 2012, and Halewood worked around the clock to meet demand. Twice now, a car badged from another manufacturer had saved a plant indelibly associated with Ford,

Remember that Gertrag deal? Well the terms of that deal meant that Ford still part-owned the transmission plant, and when they bought out Gertrag in 2021, they became sole owners, so the blue oval once again went back on the building and

the Gertrag name was replaced by Magma PT. The plant still builds gearboxes for the Focus, Kuga, Fiesta and Transit.

JLR for its part, invested £200m in Halewood in 2014, and today the plant builds the Discovery and the Evoque.

In 2022 Ford invested £125m in Halewood, to secure 500 jobs and prepare for the move towards more electric vehicles. This would increase Ford's production of electric power units by 70%, and secures the longer-term future of the plant, which Ford states is "integral" to its European EV planning. To mark this shift, the



Inside the vast assembly hall at Halewood today



Aerial view of the vast Halewood plant, which covers 450 acres.

Road crossing the front of the iconic building has been renamed “Electric Avenue”.

Ford has not survived for 121 years by being anything less than pragmatic. The Halewood plant still has the capacity to build 450,000 petrol/diesel transmissions per year, and Ford anticipates that demand for these will continue for some years to come, particularly for its commercial vehicles. The new products will be made alongside the old, and the plant reconfigured gradually as needed if a transition to EV’s demands it.

Halewood has now been in almost continuous use for 61 years, when other Ford plants have closed.

It has survived strikes, recessions, fierce competition from Europe and the Far East. It has undergone more name changes than Lord Lucan and the shifting sands of the corporate world, as Ford’s strategy has gone through takeovers, mergers, buy-outs and sell-offs. Various arms of Ford, and others, have shared the vast site, but above all, like Liverpool itself, it has endured, and been a great survivor, and is already gearing up for its next chapter.

The way we were: running a vintage car in the 1960s

Long time Austineer and Seven owner Colin Evans has provided this sample from the catalogue of Messrs Causeway Auto, of Newington Causeway, S.E.1 from 1968.

The idea of being able to replace all the vitals of your engine for under £20 seems unbelievable in this age of the thousand pound plus exchange unit, but we must remind ourselves that everything is relative.

In 1968 the average weekly pay for a male manual worker was £22, and women earned a lot less

What is also clear is how much more hands-on mechanical ability was expected of vintage car owners then, with literally everything you might need available if you had the skills to do it. Mind you, as a Volvo owner I am still laughing at the idea of a 1 1/8" main bearing!

EXCHANGE UNITS FOR AUSTIN SEVEN 1923/29

| Description | Year | Price Each |
|---|------|------------|
| Exchange Rebored Block with pistons, with refaced valve seatings & studs | All | £7. 5. 0. |
| Exchange Resleeve Block with pistons, with refaced valve seatings & studs | All | £10.15. 0. |

NOTE:-Leave cylinder head studs and manifold studs in, remove valves, valve springs & tappets. Leave valve guides and tappet guides in. Remove side water branch. Old block checked for size. If old block cannot be rebored at 60 thou. max. we can only supply resleeve block with pistons.

Customers old units must be sent with order otherwise surcharge will be made against return of old unit.

Exchange crankshaft. with 4 conrods. Crankshaft reground and 4 conrods remetalled to suit and rear main metal-sprayed and machined to size.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| 1-1/8" 2 Bearing | 1923/29 | 8. 19. 6. |
| 1-5/16" 2 Bearing | 1929/36 | 8. 19. 6. |
| 1-5/16" 3 Bearing, Remetalled | 1936/37 | 8. 19. 6. |
| 1-5/16" 3 Bearing | 1937/39 | 7. 19. 6. |

* Ex-crankshaft, 4 pairs B/E shells, 1 pair centre shells to suit.

(1)

November 1968.

Hale Carnival Show 2024



Above: Phil Stott's "Smurfette" proved a popular exhibit at Hale and **Below:** Nice Austin Somerset in the Hale sunshine





Above: A fine Alvis TD 21, a car of real quality and **Below:** Lovely little Wolseley 1500 gleaming in the sun



Revenge is sweet: remembering an iconic British Hot Rod



In 1975 a young and very talented hot rodder called Nick Butler decided that he had had enough of getting wet driving his first creation, an open model T “T Bucket” called “Nykilodeon”. That car, named for its registration NYK 1, had already wowed the show circuit for 4 years. Nick’s new creation would not only keep him dry(er) but it would make history, and go on to be judged “Rod of the Century” by the National Street Rod Association. Named “Revenge” Butler’s creation won trophies and awards wherever it went, and featured on TV, including “Blue Peter”. It was a sensation.

Nick was not just a weekend hobbyist in a shed. He had trained as an aircraft engineer with Hawker Siddley, was an established Aero modeller, and was interested in the design of race cars. What set Revenge apart was that it broke new ground. British audiences had never seen such innovation and engineering ingenuity before. Here was a car that not only compared with the best the Americans could build, but actually surpassed them. Starting with a custom-built chassis, Revenge employed hidden Jaguar E-type torsion bars for front springing and hidden lever arm dampers to give a clean front end.

At the rear was an entire McLaren M10A racing car rear end, with in-board rear discs, fabricated wish-bones and radius arms, and a propshaft handbrake.

The body was a parody of a Ford C cab delivery, with a kicked up rear end and an asymmetric rear window, and was moulded from scratch. A classic brass model T radiator, acetylene-style headlamps, brass mirrors and carriage lamps all added period styling details.

Then there was the engine. Oh the engine. How does a racing aluminium Chevrolet 427 big block with a massive supercharger and twin 4 barrel carburettors sound? Well with race car headers going into big

collectors, it sounded like Satan waking up with a hangover, loud and angry. A quilted headlining, traditional T bucket vertical steering column and a moulded glassfibre dash completed the creature comforts. A gleaming black paint job, with gold detailing and lettering by Calbrook Cars finished off the whole amazing creation.

With 800 BHP, performance was vivid, and Butler proved Revenge was not just for show out on the drag strip.

Butler sold Revenge to fund other projects, but the buyer just stored it and let it rot. Today it is owned by Roger Fulker of Spain, who has restored it as it appears in the pictures, and did a 1,000 mile run in it in 2022 in aid of mental health charity MIND.



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I can't see today's "boom box" brigade with their earthquake sub woofers reckoning much to just 2 watts and a 7"x4" speaker, but that was how it was in 1963, and 16 Guineas was a lot of money back then. No FM either!

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.



Even as a lifelong Volvo fan and owner, your editor cannot bring himself to like the Bertone 262C. Designed by Volvo's Jan Wilsgaard to appeal to the US "personal luxury car" market, they took a standard 260 saloon, elongated the doors, relocated the B post and lengthened the rear wings before shipping it off to Bertone in Italy. There they built the roof, pillars, cowl, screen surround and upper doors. The roof sat nearly 4 inches lower than standard, and the screen was raked more. Selling for just shy of \$16k, Volvo sold just 6,662 between 1976 and 1980, when it was put out of its misery.

Although laden with every possible extra the 262C just looked plain odd, and with a black headlining and tiny rear windows, it was claustrophobic in the rear, and not a lot better up front. It was also fitted with the PRV engine, a collaboration with Peugeot and Renault that could muster a feeble 140 BHP from its 2,667 cc, with none of the traditional Volvo reliability or durability. Capable of just 106 MPH it was a stodgy drive, and looked like a main battle tank that had mislaid its gun barrel. Unsurprisingly, three quarters of them went to the USA, and few survive.



Back Page Beauties: If there was ever a prettier, more technically advanced sports coupe for its era than the Lancia Fulvia we have yet to see it. Designed by Piero Castagnero on a shortened saloon floorpan and launched in 1965, the little Fulvia ran for 3 series until replaced by the Beta coupe in 1977. Forget the rallying HF versions with their lairy black bonnets and huge spot lamps, the Fulvia is at its best in its original form. With a narrow-angle 79 BHP V4 engine driving the front wheels through a five-speed gearbox, and equipped with disc brakes, tactile steering and a classy interior, this was an engineer's car ahead of its time.