

Backfire

North West Casual Classics
Newsletter September 2024



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

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Next Meeting : Tuesday 8th October 2024

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Eileen's little Nissan 100NX flying the flag at Tatton Park, with a very patriotic club gazebo in the background. A rare car on our shores.

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER



Hi All.

On the Sunday after our August club night, while NWCC were exhibiting at Tatton Park, I drove the Austin up to Lytham St Annes to take part in a 1940's weekend, it's just shy of 50 miles and took me an hour and twenty minutes. The skies were overcast but at least it was dry. I had been given a ticket to exhibit, however I didn't get asked for it.

I parked next to a pre-war Morris and set off to the Field Kitchen for a bacon butty and a mug of tea. There are three large greens between the promenade and the seafront road at Lytham and these were occupied by re-enactors encampments, exhibitors and all sorts of 40's related stalls. 'My' green also had 3 pre-war fire engines, 2 Spitfire aircraft and a 1930's single decker Ribble bus. Approximately 25 period cars stood proudly shoulder to shoulder, (post-1950's classics were accommodated on the adjacent Green).

After 10am hordes of spectators appeared, many looking the part in 40's attire and. I was asked to participate in the parade which was to start at 12 o'clock, so at ten to we all formed a line behind a large Army truck. At noon all the military vehicles moved off first and I've never

seen so many Jeeps, there must have been over 50! These were followed by Scout cars, motorcycle outriders and trucks, then it was our turn to move off. With crowds lining each side of the road we were cheered along by spectators. Lytham is a little like Llandudno, in that there are no shops on the front, only houses and Hotels. So it was only when the parade reached the main shopping area that the crowds could be really appreciated. At one point they were six deep on the pavement. The parade traversed the route twice and was much appreciated and soon we were back on the front with even more visitors asking questions about the cars. The sun emerged from behind the clouds and a blue sky graced us with its presence. The rest of the afternoon soon slipped by and so with sandwiches eaten and tea consumed, it was time to head homeward.

There's always one, isn't there? As you can see on my picture the rally plaque holder on the front of the Austin bares the legend MOD. Well one aficionado informed me that in 1948 the MOD didn't exist,

it was still the War Department and should read W ^ D ! To this end I have done my best to re-create a more accurate one. (See pic.)

It has become evident in the last few months that the Austin has started to shake its booty when cornering. When Glyn drained the petrol tank a few weeks ago to remove the sediment, he thought he had found the problem. The 'Silentbloc' rear spring bushes appear to be well past their best, with crumbling rubber emanating from their ends.

This is allowing the springs to move side to side, so as I have a spare pair, I decided to get them renovated. I took them up to Rosendale Springs (01706 217521) where they stripped and re-furnished them. They also supplied new bushes for the springs and the two extra ones for the chassis. Let hope fitting everything will be as easy as getting them reconditioned!

Cheers, Nigel.



Above, our Chairman parades his Austin 16 for the Lytham crowds. Below: New WD plate made to ward off anoraks...



EDITORIAL

The recent Tatton Park Classic Car Show (I won't use the daft names they keep giving it) was my first in ten years. I stopped attending because I felt the organisers were not putting enough back into the show relative to what they were charging the public. I know everyone gets excited about it being the biggest classic show in our region, but having ploughed through the mud once too often, I decided enough was enough.

This time around, a ticket from the Volvo Owners Club and the thought that my Volvo PV444 was built for unmade roads back in its native Sweden made me relent.

Given the very early start time, we opted to book in at a farm B&B, which was within a mile, and extremely comfortable with all mod cons. The only drawback was a cobbled road in poor condition with plenty of potholes. We traversed it at a crawl without incident, but I doubt that anything sporty or low-slung would have managed it.

Arriving at the gates at 7.30 we drove straight in, and followed the signs to the car clubs area. An almost complete lack of marshalling was evident.

The first thing I was struck by is how little the basics of the show have

changed. Exhibitors are still cutting grass themselves and the dreaded Portalooos are still there. As to the catering prices, thank heaven we took our own.

The content was good, but there were some notable absentees in the big national clubs and the axis of the show now seems to be shifting to regional clubs like NWCC and individual entries. There were some very fine individual cars present, but there were also a lot of empty spaces, repetition, and vehicles that did not belong at a classic car show. In a word, it felt a bit thin.

When I first attended Tatton, I was a guest of the Standard Motor Club, and for just the Triumph marque alone there were clubs covering every era. This time around there were stands dedicated to the 2000/2500 range, TRs and Stags, and that was it. No clubs representing pre-war, razor edge, Standards or the small chassis cars, yet you see them all at the NEC. Why is this?

Despite this, I still enjoyed the show and well done to NWCC for a strong showing with a professional stand.

The day ended with the 4 pm rush to leave, despite spectators still being everywhere, and the inevitable gridlock, another thing that has not changed. Just what are all those marshals actually for? **Steve C**

Diary dates for 2024

8/9/2024	NWCC Veterans and Heroes Show, Gulliver's World, Burtonwood WA5 9YZ
27/09/2024	St Helens Town Centre Show, Church Square (entry via Chalon Way)
28/09/2024	Museum of Liverpool, Pier Head, Liverpool L3 1DG Re-scheduled Phoenix event. Please take cardboard or carpet to protect paving
06/10/2024	Wirral Bus and Tram Show, Woodside Ferry, Birkenhead (Car display at Wirral Metropolitan College, Twelve Quays Campus car park, CH41 1AG)
03/11/2024	North West Museum of Road Transport, Hall Street, St Helens, WA10 1DU (indoor show) NB: Space Limited to 45 cars only.

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 AUGUST MEETING

There were 55 members present at the meeting, and the charity raffle raised £102.10

Nigel thanked all who helped with the stand buildup and breakdown at both Frodsham and Newton, which were both successful shows with good weather and large turnouts. Similar help will be appreciated at both Tatton and Burtonwood. Tatton on Friday 16th August, and Burtonwood on Sunday 8th September from 9am.

The JWG trophy has been engraved, and was formally handed over to Alan for the year.

Members were reminded to inform Steve Tanser of any changes in their membership details.

SHOW INFORMATION

The show season is now winding down, and the remaining event sheets are full up or close to it.

The Phoenix show at Rainford Cricket Club is restricted by the nature of the site and we have only 15 places available.

We have 4 cars registered for the Avro Show, but only 1940's or earlier vehicles may attend.

Kenny advised that proper catering and toilet facilities will be available at Burtonwood, but that

no vehicle movements can take place before 4 pm except for genuine emergencies, and these must be escorted out by marshals, and display hazard flashers (if fitted) and move at walking pace due to the number of children on site.

The Transport Museum show is limited to 45 spaces, and the museum have asked for variety. A surprise attraction may also be present!

Kenny reported that we have 20 cars registered for the Wirral Bus and Tram Show, but that communications are proving a problem.

The St Helens Town Centre Show is now back on, and the Council have seen sense and rescinded the requirement for individual Public Liability Insurance. It will be in Church Square, access being via Chalon Way.

John Slevin still had unclaimed Tatton passes at the meeting. As has been pointed out previously, any no shows may harm our space allocation in future years.

Gordon Keeble: Anglo-American hybrid 60's supercar

There cannot be many cars in the world that have 90 survivors out of a production run of just 99 built 60 years ago, but the Gordon Keeble is one such.

It all began when an American Fighter pilot Rick Nielsen asked Ipswich mechanic Jim Keeble to fit a Chevrolet engine into his Peerless. Keeble opted to do the work at the Peerless factory in Slough, where the MD, John Gordon became involved. He tasked Keeble with engineering a better car for the 5.3 litre engine, and Keeble came up with a very strong space frame design with a de Dion rear axle located by a Watts Linkage. John Gordon meanwhile spoke with Bertone at the Geneva

Motor Show and engaged the young Giorgetto Guigiaro to style the new car. A steel-bodied prototype was shown at the 1960 Geneva Salon and attracted a lot of interest. The car was shipped to Detroit to show it to Chevrolet, and Ed Cole approved the supply of their 327 small block V8, the first time this had been done.

Unfortunately financing proved a problem until banker George Wansborough agreed to finance the new company with his own money.

Gordon left soon after, taking with him the rights to the prototype badge design of a rampant stag, echoing his Scots heritage. At a press launch, a wag picked up a passing



tortoise and set it on the bonnet, and the irony of having the world's slowest animal as the mascot of the world's fastest 4-seater car stuck.

And fast it certainly was. With the Chevrolet V8 pumping out 300 BHP and 360 ft/lb of torque, through a Warner T10 transmission the Keeble could hit 100 mph in 10 seconds and roar on to 140 mph. Yet it was flexible enough to pootle along at walking pace in top, or hit 50 mph in first gear. Launched with a fibreglass body of excellent quality, "Autocar" described it as "a car which is ahead of anything else in its class" and "Motor" described it as "electrifying".

Sadly, under-capitalisation, a low selling price and constant strikes at suppliers drove Gordon Keeble into receivership in 1965 after just 82 cars had been built. A resurrected company started by a concessionaire built a further 17 from incomplete cars and components, and the final car, number 100, was built by a North London garage from parts.

Today, an enthusiastic owners club keep the memory of the Gordon Keeble alive and the fate of every car is known. Owners have improved their cars with rack and pinion steering, suspension improvements and even auto transmission conversions. It remains one of the very best GTs of its era.



Left: Chassis number 22 showing elegant but purposeful styling. Above: Comprehensive original interior with very period quilted vinyl.

Deja : Andy Saunders and automotive alchemy

Anyone attending the 2022 Classic Car Show at the NEC will have seen Andy Saunders' latest stunning creation "Déjà". The son of a garage owner from Poole in Dorset, Saunders started customising cars back in the 1970s. He has since produced a string of acclaimed and outrageous vehicles that are all his own work, but his later output shows real artistry. He draws no plans, but his gift is to look at a particular panel or component, and see how it might form part of

a project he visualises entirely in his head. In the case of "Déjà" he set out to create a homage to the great French coachbuilders of the 1930s, such as Saoutchik and Figoni and Falaschi. Saunders has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of car styling, and their work on Delahayes fascinates him

Saunders often purchases parts that spark his interest and squirrels them away for future use. "Déjà" began with a rusty set of Delahaye 135S wings purchased at





Beaulieu Autojumble. This led to research on the Internet looking at classic Delahayes. A derelict Riley RMF chassis was purchased and restored to provide the mechanical underpinnings for the project, and from then on it took 6,000 hours to create what we see here, starting with the rear half of the Riley floor pan. The rear wings sit against a panel made from the Riley rear door, and were lengthened twice until Saunders was happy with the proportions. The hood well cover and hood frame shown above came from a Ford Street ka. The boot lid is 4 quarters cut from the Riley boot lid with steel inserts and some of the Ford boot lid. The doors are made from classic mini doors, reverse hung and reshaped, because

Saunders uses proprietary door hinges in all his projects as these are among the hardest elements to get right. The scuttle, bonnet and inboard front wings are all scratch built, while the windscreen is from a Mini, in a hand built frame. All the spats are hand-formed from aluminium.

The level of work and detail that has gone into building this car are staggering. The steering wheel is a Porsche 356 replica wheel from a VW specialist, but with a Perspex rim and a genuine Lalique St Christopher horn push. The grille is a Delahaye item obtained at some cost from France, and required extensive restoration.

The bonnet mascot is 1940's Ford, but with a lilac-tinted Perspex fin to match the splitter on the screen.

The seat is a widened and rebuilt 1940's Sunbeam Talbot item, chosen because it has a tilt mechanism to allow access to the crystal decanter and glasses behind it. The dashboard is genuine Saoutchik, but sectioned into three and inverted, before being remade with period instruments and Chevrolet chrome pieces covering hidden switches. The gear knob is a crystal candle holder, while the door handles are from a deco-style bedside drawer unit!

All the chrome work on the car is hand-formed brass, then chrome plated. The headlamps are period Marchal units. The rear bumpers

are modified Jaguar Mk.10, set well back to protect those sweeping wings. The only hint of vanity on the car are beautiful cursive "Saunders" scripts set low on the rear quarters, and small "Delahaye" badges with a pencil insert saying "by Saunders".

If you have an hour to spare, I can heartily recommend the YouTube video of this car, with Saunders himself interviewed at the NEC walking us around his creation. Just enter "Andy Saunders stunning handbuilt" into the YouTube search box to find it. What comes over even more than his considerable talent as a car builder is his humble attitude and willingness to share how he does it. Long may he continue to do so.



NWCC members out and about in August



Teresa picking up third prize at a cold and windy Phoenix Show at Rainhill Cricket Club. Below: Geoff, Al, Eil and Sasha sheltering from the wind.





Above: Our professional looking stand at Tatton. Below: Some of our “youngtimer” exhibits on our stand. (Photos courtesy of Teresa)





Above: First brew of of the day, with club car selection in background.
Below: NWCC members were also present on other club stands at Tatton.



The Bond Equipe : The forgotten sports coupe from Preston

One of the better aspects of large shows like Tatton is finding real automotive unicorns among the other classics on display. Here your editor spotted two, a rare VW Karmann Ghia type 34, and in the foreground, an even rarer Bond Equipe GT4S, of which only 2,505 were ever made.

A common misconception is that the GT4S was a kit car. They were in fact supplied as complete cars by Bond Cars Ltd. in Preston, an offshoot of Sharps Commercials.

Lawrie Bond began designing vehicles in the 1940's, and his company launched their model A Minicar

3 wheelers in 1948, in answer to postwar austerity. While spartan, with their ubiquitous Villiers engines driving a front wheel capable of turning through 180 degrees, they were very economical, manoeuvrable and lasted right through the Suez fuel crisis, becoming steadily less spartan until the final model G in 1966.

The Equipe was an attempt to move upmarket into more civilised transport with the more usual number of wheels. Bond came up with a design for a sporty fibreglass coupe to be built in partnership with Triumph. The Equipe GT was



launched in late 1963, and was built on a modified Herald chassis, with the Spitfire engine. The neat fibreglass shell featured a fastback shape, bonded to the Herald floorpan, and using the same bulkhead and doors as the Herald convertible. A well-appointed interior, which raided the Spitfire and Vitesse parts bins, and added a Les Leston steering wheel and Micro-cell bucket seats, helped the GT's sporty credentials but lack of rear headroom and a boot lid told against it in the market, and only 444 were built.

Bond moved rapidly to address the GT's shortcomings, and the GT4S was launched in October 1964. It had a revised roof line dipping by

Just 3 inches over the rear seats, with a proper boot and a neat duck tail spoiler. At the front, the 4-headlamp treatment from the big 2000 saloon took the place of single headlamps, and the tilting front end was designed to accommodate the Triumph 6 cylinder engine later if needed.

The GT4S was a modest success, combining sporty looks with ease of maintenance and reliability. The Webasto sunroof on this example only adds to its practicality.

Sadly, Heralds rust, and the fibreglass body bonded to the Herald floorpan is a restorer's nightmare. Today, only penny numbers survive, but hats off to the owner of this lovely restored example.



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



Say hello to another landmark automotive horror, the Gaylord Gladiator. They should have stopped at the name, but the Gaylord brothers were never burdened with self doubt. Heirs to a hair clip fortune they, like many others, wanted to recreate the golden age of the American motor car and marques like Duesenberg and Stutz. They engaged stylist Brook Stevens, (who went on to design the equally hideous Excalibur), to pen a luxury coupe with an electrically retractable roof, a Cadillac engine and GM's Hydramatic transmission. The brothers meddled in the styling, insisting on the enormous

headlamps, electric everything, and the finest materials throughout, which only escalated costs.

A prototype was shown at the 1955 Paris Salon, with a hastily-revised \$17,500 price tag. Built by Spohn in Germany (who have also featured in this column) it failed to generate any orders, and the brothers were not happy with the quality of Spohn's work, so commissioned another prototype from a body shop called FIF in Friedrichschafen, Germany. This took a year to build and was shown at the 1957 Salon, with a 4 headlamp treatment at the front which at least removed the close



resemblance to Olly Beak. It seems the Gaylords were not happy with this one either, and went to the courts. The long legal battle caused Jim Gaylord to have a nervous breakdown, and the whole project was abandoned.

FIF were eventually bought by Zeppelin, who today own the sole surviving car. The whole project failed because the brothers completely underestimated the costs involved, and saddled it with truly awful styling.

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>



Back Page Beauties: Renzo Rivolta's company Iso grew out of the sale of their Issetta bubble car design to BMW, who sold 160,000 of them. The shift to car making in 1962 led to a range of models all powered by Chevrolet V8s, and styled by Marcello Gandini on chassis by Giulio Alfieri. This gorgeous creation is a Grifo, with a 5.7 litre V8, capable of 175 mph. The 7 litre version was spoiled by a square bonnet hump and was only 11 mph faster. Sadly, oil crises and supply chain issues killed Iso in 1974, but the idea of Italian styled GTs with American V8s lived on.