



BVAC News

May 2020

Editor's Ramblings

OK, so rambling's not allowed these days! Drive It Day should have happened by now and the show season should be about to get under way, but we live in strange times with very little traffic on the roads. Someone does drive a very pretty Morris Minor convertible past our house every few days. I wish I knew who he was so I could recruit him for BVAC.

My plea for material for this month's newsletter has borne fruit as you'll see below. George Jeffrey has contributed a photo montage of the motorcycles he owned before he saw sense (my view, but then I'm biased!) and bought an MX-5, while Rory Jackson has shared the story of his Lotus restoration. It's definitely one to look out for once the lockdown is over, no offence to your Saab, Rory, but I hope we see the Lotus at Milestone soon. Only Helen Kirkness has been brave enough to share a picture of herself from the 70's – nice coat! Just to remind us what we're missing, Kenny Wilson has contributed some pictures from last May (Milestone and the BVAA rally at Kelso) as well as passing on some news from the FBHVC and we have a little identification puzzler from Neil Renilson. Thanks to you all. My own modest contribution concerns a couple of 1955-vintage cars which I ran when they were a mere twenty years old. Apologies if I've told any of you some of this before, but this is the first time I've committed the tale to print.

I hope you're all keeping safe and finding plenty to do in the garage during the lockdown. I know my garage is tidier than it's been in a long time and there's even some modest progress on my long running quest to get a second 1930s Morris on the road. Spare a thought for Chris Biggs – the MGB he bought a while back is still in Oxfordshire with no legal way of getting it delivered. That must be frustrating!

David

FBHVC News

In what I promise will be the last reference to COVID-19 in this newsletter, here is a statement issued by the secretary of the FBHVC:

We hope you are all keeping well and continuing to stay safe.

Let us all help the DVLA and key workers to not send in paper applications until further notice.

In line with the government's advice the DVLA have a very limited number of staff on site who are only dealing with applications from those who are directly involved in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They are not accepting any other paper applications.

Please keep abreast of their information by viewing the following link which was originally posted on 25 March, but is continually being updated. (Latest update was 17 April.) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dvla-coronavirus-covid-19-update>

You may also wish to view the link below. <https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving>

The above information is also available on the News page of our website, which I hope you are all referring to when needed. <https://fbhvc.co.uk/news>

If you want to a longer read, the latest FBHVC magazine is available here:
<https://fbhvc.co.uk/newsletter-archive>

George's Bikes (George Jeffrey)

I noted you were interested in photos of vehicles that members had owned over the years. I can't come up with the 50 year old Marina or whatever but, until the late 1990s, my love was for motorcycles. Just prior to your latest newsletter e-mail, I had been looking out photos of many (though not all) of the bikes I'd owned from the mid 70s to the late 90s. I gathered these all together into the attached pic in case anyone was interested in these. The bikes were used for travel all over the UK and Europe/Scandinavia and must have covered well over 250,000 miles all together. The bikes in the photos are (top left to right then moving down):



Kawasaki ZXR750 H1 (1989)
Kawasaki ZXR750 L1 (1994)
Honda CBR1000F (1989)
Honda CBR900RR Fireblade (1996)
Kawasaki GPZ1100 B2 (1983)
Honda CB400F (1976)
Kawasaki GPZ600R (1985)
Laverda Jota 120 (1982)
Kawasaki ZXR750 H1 (1989) (2nd pic)
Kawasaki Z650C (1978)
BMW R1000T (1980)
Kawasaki Z1R (1980)

Helen's Mini and MG (Helen Kirkness)

In response to your newsletter, I've sent a couple of fashion statement photos from the 1970s



for you to use if you want. Me & my Mini was taken in 1974 at Stirling Uni (added bonus of an Anglia in the background!) and the MG was at the Benson & Hedges concours at Callendar Park in 1988, where you had to dress appropriate to the year of your car - which was 1976.



Rory's Lotus (Rory Jackson)

Every year I fill in the form for membership of BVAC and it asks for a list of vehicles. Each year I dutifully complete the list of classic(ish) vehicles in the shed and hope that I will be able to show any of them at a breakfast meet or even, perchance, take them to the show. So far, so little success. The Saab 96 v4, ironically the most recent addition to the shed, is the only one that has been on the road for the last couple of years. It has made it to a few breakfast runs but I long to be able to drive either of the Lotus projects which I inherited. I feel like even more of a fraud as I write a 'running report' for Absolute Lotus. This is a misnomer as I have barely managed to cover 300 miles since I was left two Lotus Elan plus 2 (both from 1968) back in 2016.

My target this year had been to get at least one Plus 2 on the road for Drive It Day. Whilst I have been known to pick up a spanner (or hammer and pliers) to resolve problems with cars, I have very limited mechanical skills. I am extraordinarily lucky to have two very skilled and fantastically patient friends who help me. Together we have chased down various faults with

the closest to roadworthy Plus 2. However, each time one problem was resolved (the broken clutch slave cylinder, the sticky throttle cable, the loose pedal box, the leaking exhaust, the ineffective handbrake, the leaking oil breather, the faulty headlamp riser, the non-working fuel gauge...etc.) another problem has reared its head. Towards the end of last year the engine was running terribly. A fault with the carbs was diagnosed and these were rebuilt. However, I felt I was fighting a losing battle.

As mentioned, I inherited the Elan Plus 2 from my father. I have joked that it was his last act of revenge for my appalling behaviour as I grew up. The Reverend John Jackson loved all things mechanical. From building a Mini Jem at the age of 17 through to tuning a Rover SD1, he would turn his hand to pretty much any



mechanical job. I have not inherited those skills. Accordingly, I chickened out and sent the car to Spyder Cars in Peterborough. They are one of the top classic Lotus specialists in the UK. They were the source for the Zetec conversion kit which my dad sourced for the other Plus 2 (more about that another time perhaps). My intention, and budget (ahem!), was that they would give the car a proper going over, identify the engine issues, fettle the trim, give it a proper service and send it back. I packed up the car with all the spare parts I have accumulated and sent it on a trailer down south.

The assessment was not great. Andy (the workshop chief) at Spyder called me. Starting from the top, the 52 year old wiring had had it. I sort of knew this. Each time I had an intermittent electrical fault it was clear that the old copper was not great. The shocks and springs were tired. Yup, I could accept that. The engine was a basket case. Oh dear. He did say that they could tune it as best as possible but the valve stems were leaking, it was smoking (but not in a good way). What did I want to do? Dear reader, what would you do?

As you can see from the photos, I went with doing the whole thing. A body off refurbishment including re-wire, new dash, suspension replacement and refresh as required, engine re-build and many (many) other incidental improvements that pop up when you are doing this level of work. The argument each time is simple; whilst we are in here, why don't we just sort that bit out? It is impossible to argue with that logic.

Unfortunately, just as the engine was back into the vehicle and running, the lockdown hit and the garage closed. Fingers crossed that the Plus 2 will be back at some point in the summer.



Neil's Find (Neil Renilson)

This is lying on waste ground near me. Free for the taking. I've no idea what it's from, but spoked wheels suggest not the usual remains of old farm trailer. It may be of use to someone, if only for the diff innards. I guess there will be those amongst our number who may be able to identify it and pass details to the relevant owners club? If anyone has any ideas or is interested, email entries@bvac.org.uk and I'll put you in touch with Neil. Looks like you would need to take a spade and probably a saw!



London & Edinburgh – A Tale of Two Cars (David Hunter)

In 1975, my then employers kindly sponsored me to spend a year in London studying at the City University Business School. Who needs a car in central London? My bedsit was five minutes' walk from the tube station on a direct line to the university and everywhere else I wanted to go was easily accessible by public transport. So my old VW was sold and off I went.

Well, my good intentions lasted a month or so, then my desire to escape the city at weekends got me searching the pages of Exchange and Mart (no internet in those days) for a car. It didn't have to do a daily commute, so I could look for something 'interesting', couldn't I? My eye lit on just such an interesting car and a tube ride north to Barnet soon had me doing a deal on a recently imported, twenty-year old Citroen 11B. Better known in this country as the 'Big 15' it was the long wheelbase (and wide track) version of Citroen's famous Traction Avant. Right hand drive models were built in Slough and furnished in leather and wood, but this was a Paris-built one, LHD, cloth upholstery and a bare metal dashboard. In these early days of computerised DVLA records there was no thought of period numbers, so it came with shiny reflective number plates as KYV441P, just like new! The old Paris plates were in the boot – I came across them last week when doing a garage clearout.

This was an impressive car – shiny and black, 15'6" long and broad with it. The design must have looked very advanced when it appeared in 1934, low slung as it wasn't sitting on top of a chassis and with no running boards. However, by the time this one was built in 1955 it was looking a bit dated (and about to be replaced by the futuristic DS) and in 1975 it looked positively ancient.

So what was this beast like to drive? Front wheel drive with a broad track, low centre of gravity and original equipment Michelin radials meant that on the open road it was a delight with superb cornering. Just as well you didn't have to slow down too much for corners, as the acceleration was 'leisurely' with the four-cylinder 1911cc engine – more powerful models came with six cylinders, but had a thirst to match. Front wheel drive in those days came with compromises – heavy steering (only partly compensated for by a huge steering wheel), a turning circle of around 45 feet and a weird gearchange. The gearbox was ahead of the engine, operated by rods which passed down the side of the engine compartment from a lever that emerged from a rectangular hole in the dashboard and curved down to be ergonomically close to the steering wheel. It moved up and down and left and right to give three forward gears and reverse, very smooth in operation but impossible to hurry. That car took me out of the city most weekends, often up to Cambridge and while it ran pretty reliably, after a few months it was beginning to show some problems in the driveshafts and suspension. I didn't think it likely I would be able to get specialist help in Edinburgh, so when my time in London was up, I agreed to leave it with someone who could fix it properly. That repair ended up being a long running saga in itself, but more immediately I had the contents of a London bedsit to move back to Edinburgh and no transport to do it with. I enquired with Hertz and they wanted over £40 for a one-way hire from London to Edinburgh. In 1976, that sounded like a lot of money to spend in one day, so I consulted Exchange and Mart again.

Part two of this tale finds me in a housing estate on the outskirts of Croydon looking at a Ford Popular, the 'sit up and beg' model which had been someone's pride and joy in 1955 but was now looking a bit down at heel. Still it would only set me back £65 and I wouldn't have to hand it back to Hertz when I got to Edinburgh. A quick run round the block proved it went,

steered and stopped OK, so a deal was done and I headed back to North London. It may have been built the same year as the Citroen, but this was a very different machine. The handling was just this side of diabolical (provided there wasn't a crosswind) and while the Citroen would pull smoothly up to nearly 70mph, the low third (top) gear of the Ford meant the sidevalve engine was getting very loud around 45.

Still, all credit to the little Ford, it did what was asked of it covering the journey from London to Edinburgh in a mere(?) 13 hours despite the load it was carrying. The engine's thirst for oil was considerable, so there must have been a blue haze behind it the whole way – I think it used almost a pint of oil for every gallon of petrol, which makes most two strokes seem environmentally friendly.

Back in Edinburgh, the Pop gave me another three months running before the clutch packed up, and given the dubious state of the engine, I decided it wasn't worth repairing. I got £30 for it from a guy in Dalkeith who wanted to build a Jaguar-engined hot rod. I don't know if he ever did, but it would have been a fearsome beast. I certainly got good service from that little car, all for a net cost of a fiver less that Hertz's hire charge. Sadly, no photographs of either car seem to have survived, so here are a couple of stock images. The Ford's the tall one!



Out and About – May 2019 (Kenny Wilson)





Quiz Answers

Here's last month's quiz with the answers filled in. I emphatically deny responsibility for any of the puns!

It was a **Sunny** day as the playboy with an international reputation drove along the **A40** between Cheltenham and **Oxford**

He was heading for London with his **Escort** for the **Civic** Reception and concert. As he held her hand he felt the **Sapphire** Engagement ring he had given her. He recalled some of the **Rolls** that had made him a **Legend** in his own lifetime.

As a school **Prefect** he had been **Cortina** (**ouch!**) position in Jamaica's **Montego** Bay with the wife of an American politician. The republican **Senator** from **Austin** Texas, greeted him with an "**Audi** Partner", but had gone for his **Colt** 45 when he found our hero trying to get his wife into the **Lotus** position.

As he drove towards the concert hall, he knew his **Cavalier** attitude to life was over. With this girl, life would be different. No longer would he play the wild **Rover** and make a **Passat** all the girls he met. He left her at the stage door. "I'm so worried about this performance," she said. "I played so badly at the rehearsal this afternoon." "Don't worry," he replied, "**Ital** be all right on the night." "**Yugo** and park the car and don't forget to pay the **Fiat** the booth," she said.

It was a glittering occasion with a celebrity audience. He had already spotted **Princess** Alexandra with her daughter **Marina**, Anna **Ford** and Johnny **Morris**

His fiancée gave a faultless performance from her Bach repertoire; the double violin **Concerto** in D **Minor** followed by Beethoven's Choral **Symphony**

Her performance was a **Triumph** And was met with universal **Acclaim**

In her flat later, getting supper ready, our hero sensed there was something wrong. As she took a **Cherry** pie from the **Lada** the feeling of moving through life together with one **Accord** seemed to have gone. The **Bond** between them had been broken. "It's no good darling, I could never marry you, our whole relationship is a **Charade**. You are too small for me, in fact you are practically a **Midget**" He walked around the room in a daze, collecting his **Golf** Balls, his copy of James Clavell's **Shogun** and his favourite records: Abraxas by **Santana** and **Viva** Espania.

Sadly he kissed her goodbye, stepped down into the street, and walked towards the distant **Horizon** wondering if he would ever again play a **Major** part in a woman's life?

Stop Press

This just in as the newsletter was almost finished from SADCASE (that's the Storrington and District Classic and Sportscar Enthusiasts) via Fred Magill for anyone who's interested in taking part:

CLASSICS FOR CARERS - AT HOME CAR SHOW

News has reached us of [Classics for Carers](#), a unique at-home, national **motoring event** scheduled for **this coming Sunday 3 May**. This fundraiser hopes to provide some light relief in lock-down whilst raising funds for the NHS Charity. It invites owners of motoring machinery to participate in a national, static event at home. Sharing their passion for motion either online or on the driveway, for the enjoyment of local communities while out on their permitted daily exercise (following social distancing requirements of course).

The organisers write: "The first weekend in May is an opportunity to throw open the garage doors, pull off the covers and join like-minded enthusiasts in supporting the incredible NHS heroes, working selflessly in exceptional circumstances."

Participants can support by [purchasing an event rally plate or sticker](#) for their vehicles or make a donation via the event's [JustGiving page](#) (with all profits to the NHS Charity). More details also on [Instagram](#): [Facebook](#).



Well, that's all for this month, I guess it's back to the garage. Thanks for all the contributions, keep 'em coming!

Stay safe,

David