

BRIEFS

WALLINGFORD SET TO BREAK RECORDS

This year the Oxfordshire town of Wallingford's Classic Vehicle Rally and Parade raised a record £6000 for charity and was sold out to capacity with 250 vehicles booking spaces two months before the actual event. For 2014 the all-volunteer-run event is aiming to improve on these numbers. All vehicles from motorcycles to muscle cars are welcome and more info can be found at: www.wallingfordclassiccars.org.uk or by calling: 01703 218906

HONORARY MAXI MEMBERSHIP



At the Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show on Saturday, November 16, the Austin Maxi Club bestowed an honorary membership on Trevor Ripley of Shropshire. Trevor is the new owner of MCE 7G, the Maxi that contested the Daily Mirror London to Mexico World Cup Rally in 1970. The car is one the first 500 Maxis built and is still in its rally-prepared condition. Mr Ripley's honorary membership was presented by the Club chairman Ernie Jackson.

AIR-CON STILL COOL AT 80

It's been 80 years since air conditioning became an option on cars. In 1933 a company in New York began fitting air conditioning units to cars for the first time – a development that Popular Science magazine described as 'remarkable'. In 1939 Packard became the first manufacturer to offer A/C as a factory option, costing \$274 (or nearly £3500 by today's reckoning). It wasn't until 1954 that Pontiac introduced the electric compressor clutch – before then owners had to manually slacken the air conditioning drive belt if they didn't want the system to run.

CAR PARTS STOLEN

On the night of Saturday, November 16, thieves stole a 3.5-ton 'Moose' car transporter from a farm in Edgworth, Lancashire. The truck contained a very distinctive white bodykit for a customised Volkswagen Beetle. Chevrolet Super Saloon – a customised Beetle fitted with a GM V8 engine in 1974. The car is a former racer and, understandably, is unique. The bodykit is white with the racing number 12 and VW logos across the headlights. Anyone with information should call the police on: 101.

DID YOU KNOW...

When Tony Crook was chairman of Bristol Cars he would often challenge would-be newcomers to Bristol ownership to beat him on a Scalextric set he had in his office. Winning could be key to being 'allowed' to buy a Bristol.



Simpson's World

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Editor in chief Peter Simpson picks the most interesting (and often irreverent) pieces of news that have been occurring recently in the classic car world

MINOR CENTRE PROGRESS

At the recent Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show I was pleased to bump into Zak Ware, who is now running Charles Wares Morris Minor Centre, formerly (and famously) of Bath but now based just up the road on the outskirts of Bristol. According to Zak, who was manning the stand along with production director Tim Brennan, 2013 was the first time the Centre had attended an NEC Show for some years, but they wanted to be there in order to meet owners and enthusiasts and show how things are moving forwards under the second generation of the Ware family.

Brennan, who has been with the company since it started 38 years ago, told me that business remains good, despite the supposed economic recession. "We're finding that people in this rather quirky market are certainly

confident in spending lots of money", and while he doesn't see a return to the massive price hikes enjoyed/suffered by the hobby in the past as being likely, he does think that a Morris Minor still represents a very good alternative to the sub-two-percent interest savings in the bank are currently earning. As well as the home market, the Centre is seeing strong demand for restored cars and parts from Germany and the USA.

One question that I knew was on many people's lips concerned the supply of body panels, many of which are sourced from Sri Lanka, a country that has recently been in the news for all the wrong reasons. Brennan was reassuring: parts supply has not been impacted at all as it's concentrated in the south of the country, whereas the trouble has been in the north, and he sees no prospect of that changing.

WIN A VANDEN PLAS!

The Norfolk and Norwich Classic Vehicle Club is raffling a Vanden Plas 1500 saloon that was once owned by a well-known motoring journalist to raise money for the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit at Norwich and Norfolk Hospital, and plans to take the car in question to several shows in and around East Anglia to sell tickets at £2.50 each.

Back in 2002, the 1978 car was owned by Danny Hopkins, who is now Editor of Practical Classics magazine. Danny sold the car at auction that year (for £180...), featuring the sale process in the magazine at the time. It

was subsequently used for a few months before being laid out of use for the next ten years, after which it was discovered by Club members who are now in the process of putting it back into roadworthy condition.

Club member Les Heaton is organising the raffle, which is to be drawn at the Club's annual show in June, 2014. Meanwhile, if you don't bump into the car and club at a rally, you can order tickets by post by sending a cheque for £2.50 (payable to NCVCFun Day) and an SAE to: Les Heaton, 2 Chapel Street, Shipham, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 7LB.

CLASSIC CAN!

During the Second World War most of Britain's motor and other heavy industries switched over to war work. Not all of this was high-tech stuff like aeroplanes: there was also a massive need for the more mundane products such as 'jerry cans'. Morris produced (quite literally) millions of them at its body plant, but Singer also made a significant number of these vitals items for keeping forces supplied. In fact 367029 of the things were made at the company's Canterbury Street works.

Anyway, a genuine Singer-made can was displayed by the Association of Singer Car Owners at the Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show. Apparently the two halves of the can were pressed out using 'Big Bertha', the press used to make chassis members. Most cans made by Singer were, apparently, used in the North Africa campaign.



Charles Wares's Morris Minor Centre at the NEC Classic Motor Show. Production director Tim Brennan (left) and managing director Zak Ware (right).

Tim and Zak also confirmed that Charles Wares is doing well, enjoying his retirement to the full and has recently started painting again – scenes not cars we hasten to add!

Charles Wares's Morris Minor Centre can be contacted on: 0117 300 3754, or you can visit its website: www.charleswaresmorrisminorcentre.co.uk



SAVE JACK'S GARAGE!

Jack French was, apparently, one of the most influential builders of Austin Seven based 'Specials' in the 'Fifties and 'Sixties, with 'Simplicity' – said to be the best-known Austin Seven Special of all – among his creations. The garage in which these were built was largely from ex-war department scrap and still exists, though it is now to be demolished to make way for a new brick-built structure, and the Pre War Austin Seven Club has launched an appeal to save it. A permanent home has been offered at the Avoncroft Museum at Bromsgrove – close to the Longbridge factory site. However, practical and financial assistance is required preparing the new site, transport and lifting, and reassembly and repairs at the new site. It's also hoped the display will include some period tools and equipment and parts for an Austin Seven Special chassis. If you can help with any of this please email: cplainjones@gmail.com

