As there has been a dearth of contributions by members to this edition I am invoking the ‘Austin 7 Rule’ (where, if there is not enough other stuff to write about you get a dose of A7s). This is Murray Jamieson’s single seat racer, pictured at Gaydon. It is a beautiful bit of engineering and, in my view, exceptionally pretty. The description with the car reads:

‘Stung by the success of MG in all kinds of motor racing, Sir Herbert Austin decided to encourage a factory racing team. In 1932, a privateer Austin Seven Ulster caught the eye of the Longbridge team. It was piloted by Tom Murray Jamieson, a talented engineer who worked with Amherst Villiers (who partnered with Raymond Mays in race car development) and was developing his own design of supercharger on the car. He added a high pressure Roots supercharger to the Seven’s basic side-valve 747cc engine, boosting compression and combustion pressures so much that a total of 32 studs were needed to hold the cylinder head down! In 1933 the car was campaigned at Monthlery and Southport speed trials but did not meet expectations. So the decision was taken to turn the car into a track racer.

The engine and transmission of the record car were fitted in a new frame and clothed in a body not unlike the shape of American sprint cars, which were considered fashionable at the time. The car was state-of-the-art and also very light, weighing only 8.5cwt (431kg). To accommodate the driver in the narrow single seat body, the transmission was offset to the left. Making its first appearance at the Whitburn meeting at Brooklands in 1934, factory driver Driscoll took the lap record in the Mountain Handicap at its first outing.

Two new cars were built (to the same design) in 1935. One of them crashed spectacularly at Brooklands in 1937, when lady driver Kay Petre was tipped into a spin by Parnell’s MG, an incident which effectively ended her racing career. The car displayed here is the survivor, a sprint car often driven by Bert Hadley. The cars were very successful in hill climbs, such as Shelsley Walsh and on track at Brooklands and Donington, where the handicapping system favoured small engines.’

I happen to have just finished reading a contemporary copy of ‘Split Seconds’, the autobiography of Raymond Mays’ racing career from the 1920s to the 1950s. He wrote: “Then came the final, in which, as we all realised, Bert Hadley on the works Austin was going to be a very hard nut to crack, for the handicap tended to favour smaller cars (at least it did when one had drivers and cars of Hadley’s and Austin’s mettle to contend with).” The book is a great read if you can find a copy.

Murray Jamieson came to a sad end in 1938 at Brooklands. Bill Boddy (of Motor Sport magazine renown) wrote a contemporary account:

“The J. C. C. International Trophy Race was run this year on May 7th, thirty entries coming in. The previous year’s course was used and again the cars left to a rolling-start, the pace-maker being John Cobb’s 4½ litre Bentley. Alas, the race was marred by a very serious accident in the opening stages. As Cobb’s car drew to one side and George Eyston let fall the starter’s flag, Percy Mclaren, driving as usual bare-headed, in his unblown 1,736-c.c. six-cylinder Riley, Louis Gerard’s T.T. Delage and Raymond Mays’ 1,748-c.c. E.R.A. broke clear of the jostling pack. Mays had the lead along the back-leg from ‘Bira’-s Maserati, Gerard’s Delage and Abecassis’ Alta. Joseph Paul, another Frenchman, was coming up the straight past the pits when his Le Mans V12 Delage burst into flames. He was hemmed in by other cars but, the heat becoming unbearable, he extended his left arm and pulled to the near side.

Lace’s Daracq did not give way and the two cars collided. Both swerved and ran up the steep safety-bank. So steep was this bank that the spectators were protected otherwise only by a paling fence. Against this the blazing Delage pinned a woman, who was released with difficulty. Many people walking back along the track to the pits were knocked over, ten being injured in all and a girl spectator killed. Later Murray Jamieson, the brilliant Austin designer, died in hospital. The driver leapt from his car in flames and suffered concussion and severe burns. Not surprisingly, Percy Bradley [Brooklands manager] was beside himself with anguish as ambulances were, with difficulty, hurried to the strip of enclosure between the two straights. I saw the entire episode and, unable to help, ran back along the sandy bank towards the Fork, fearful that the tank of the Delage would blow up. Fortunately, the fire-fighters prevented that, but alone and unattended lay the dead girl spectator who had been hit by the car. The race, meanwhile, went on..."
Introduction to Formula 1

Derek Lloyd wrote regularly for the club magazine and in this series we revisit some of his articles. This one is from 1999.

Now that Bernie Ecclestone’s Formula 1 racing circus is well and truly under way for another year, I was reminded of my first introduction to this top flight of motor racing...

It was in 1950, the year the Motor Racing World Championship was instigated. In those days motor racing was followed by a select band of enthusiasts and there was none of today’s mass coverage by the media. It was also much more dangerous and a high speed crash was often fatal. To get details of race results, it was necessary to purchase one of the motoring journals such as Motor Sport or Autosport as there was no coverage in the dailies.

Not surprisingly, therefore, I knew absolutely nothing about the subject when one day my cousin asked me if I wanted to play a new game he had invented. This involved the use of a solitaire board which had a groove around the circumference in to which were placed five marbles. Each marble was given the name of a racing driver and the idea was to tilt the board to start the marbles moving round the circumference. Faster and faster they went until one by one the marbles flew off the board. The winner was the marble which stayed on the longest. (Honestly, this is a true story!).

The five drivers were Ascari, Farina, Fangio, Gonzales and Villoresi - none of whom I had ever heard. All of them would have been household names if Bernie had been around, but in 1950 you would have been hard pressed to find more than a handful of young people who would have had a clue who these drivers were. My cousin, who was the same age as me and had been interested in cars almost from birth, knew all about each of them, even though three of them were Italian and the other two were Argentines. In our game most of the races were won by Ascari as ‘his’ marble was slightly smaller than the others!

We played this game for hours on end and I’m sure such a simple pastime would be hard for the youngsters of today to understand, but in those days few people had TV and there were no computer games for amusement. All we had was 15 minutes of ‘Dick Barton, Special Agent’ to listen to on the radio each day.

My interest was increased further when a friend who lived close by started to let me have his old copies of Motor Sport to read. Here I was able to re-live the real adventures of these five drivers through the 1950 season and the marble game was soon abandoned. The race reports were several weeks old when I received them, but this was no hardship as I didn’t know the results anyway!

Eventually I persuaded my parents that Motor Sport would be a sensible addition to the family’s reading material and I was able to follow the exploits of not only the drivers mentioned, but also in later years Stirling Moss, Mike Hawthorn, Peter Collins and so on to the present day.

And what became of them...

The drivers mentioned in Derek’s story had mixed fortunes. Some lived to ripe old age. Others were not so fortunate...

Alberto Ascari was born in 1918 and was World Champion in 1952 and 1953. He was killed driving at Monza in 1955.

Giuseppe Farina was born in 1906 and won the first World Championship in 1950. He was killed in a road crash in 1966.


José Froilán González, born in 1922, never was a World Champion but he won the British Grand Prix in 1951 and 1954 and won at Le Mans in 1954. He died in 2013.


Sir Stirling Moss (born 1929) is ‘The greatest World Champion Britain never had’ for although he won many, many races in many formulae he never clinched the World title.

Peter Collins (born 1931) had a successful racing career in the 1950s driving for HWM, Vanwall, and Ferrari. He was killed driving in the 1958 German Grand Prix.

Mike Hawthorn, born 1929, was the first British driver to win a World Championship - in 1958. Profoundly affected by the death two months earlier of his team-mate and friend Peter Collins, he died in a road car accident in 1959.

Apropos of Mike Hawthorn, here is a picture of 1934 Riley Ulster Imp that was the first car Hawthorn raced, in 1950.

Driving it, and his other Riley, in 1951 he won that year’s Brooklands Memorial Trophy. By the end of the 1952 season the Riley had been sold to John Prichard, a works driver for the Aston Martin team.

In 1957 Hawthorn re-acquired the car and planned to rebuild it for display in the showroom of his garage in Farnham. Sadly he did not live to fulfil the ambition.

In 1959 Hawthorn’s mother sold the car to its present day owner, Tim Ely. The photo was taken at the first Kop Hill revival in 2009 - coincidentally Andrew Croysdill’s Riley is parked next door.

Time for a caption. Here, Richard Hale is amused at what David Davis and John Blackham are up to. Whatever are they saying? Send entries to nicksalmon@spinta.co.uk

The role in the club of beer is widely understood and appreciated. Members are diligent in their surveys of the subject and can often be seen undertaking field studies.

Here we see ‘Two-Beers Bassett’ at Little Gransden, and the Chairmans at the 2015 Picnic.
From the Continental Correspondent

Tony Hodson

A further few lines from sunny south western France. I see parts of the UK are under floodwater once again, whereas we have been having unseasonably mild weather and too little rain. Once upon a time such things would have been of great interest professionally [Tony was ‘in water’ during his career], now one nods knowingly at difficulties suffered by others.

Attending events has been rather curtailed for two reasons. At the end of July the Austin suffered a broken leaf in the front spring. Fortunately help was at hand in the shape of a very nice chap who builds replica Ulsters and lives in a little village about 30 minutes away. His daily driver is a Model T Ford which has never been restored and so is in wonderful oily rag condition. He was on the point of returning to UK to pick up a pile of bits for a new Seven as he has reserved a Stand at Retromobile in Paris in February in order to sell replicas and has yet to put an example together for the replacement, there being a dearth of flat springs on Ebay at the time. I did suggest that the genuine article would look good on his stand – but some seeds do fall on stony ground!

The second reason is that September was spent in the colonies – Australia to be exact, with family, who emigrated there about two years ago. Not much to report on the motoring front, although No3 grandson celebrated his 5th birthday whilst we were there. At the time we were spending a week in the deep south as it is called at a place called Albany, which is the port from which the Anzac troops embarked for Gallipoli. Anyway, his mother and Grandad thought it would be a great idea to book the lad a ride on a Harley trike which was available for hire. He shows great promise on the automobile front and although seeming a bit overwhelmed by the machinery he did quite enjoy it. His big brother, Grandson No1, also had a go with his mum on board. She was able to report that every time the machine accelerated a wide grin spread across William’s face, so he would appear to be made of the right stuff also!

However to correct the balance your correspondent and Mrs H attended the Winter Sortie of the CVAM, that is the French club based in St Junien. This involved a train ride, which was somewhat more civilised than last year’s run out. There is a stretch of preserved railway commencing at the nearby town of Confolens. Normally this is reserved for something called Velorail, which is a fairly energetic way of seeing the countryside as you pedal yourself. However to correct the balance your correspondent and Mrs H attended the Winter Sortie of the CVAM, that is the French club based in St Junien. This involved a train ride, which was somewhat more civilised than last year’s run out. There is a stretch of preserved railway commencing at the nearby town of Confolens. Normally this is reserved for something called Velorail, which is a fairly energetic way of seeing the countryside as you pedal yourself. Fortunately the route is fairly flat but for me and those with you on a little trolley affair.

Having returned home we totted up the events missed which of course included the Circuit des Remparts in Angouleme, again. That is the third year we have missed. It’s true that you never do the things which are on your doorstep!

However to correct the balance your correspondent and Mrs H attended the Winter Sortie of the CVAM, that is the French club based in St Junien. This involved a train ride, which was somewhat more civilised than last year’s run out. There is a stretch of preserved railway commencing at the nearby town of Confolens. Normally this is reserved for something called Velorail, which is a fairly energetic way of seeing the countryside as you pedal yourself. Fortunately the route is fairly flat but for me and those with you on a little trolley affair.

So it was on a lovely sunny morning we all presented ourselves at the station and having had the obligatory coffee and petits madeleines, clambered aboard the train which proceeded to take us at a stately 30kph down the track to a village called Manot. The Car is powered by a V12 engine, sadly not a Bugatti, but a diesel constructed by Alstom I believe. At Manot we were allowed 20 minutes or so for photos before the return trip. On arrival a small steam engine was spotted lurking behind one of the buildings and some of us got quite excited, however closer inspection showed that it was made entirely of wood! Clearly it was a mock-up for purposes unknown. Mrs H rediscovered the truth of the old saying that one should never follow a Frenchman who sets off by himself as invariably he is answering a call of nature! Mr H found this so funny that he was forced to follow suit!

Following our safe and steady return to Confolens, lunch was taken at a local restaurant and a deal concluded for some ash for the continued restoration of our Speed 14 Rover. Of course the evening was spent dozing gently in front of the telly...

Well I think that brings you up to date on matters French, it remains to wish you and everyone in the Club all the best for the new year and if anyone is thinking of a trip to our part of France in 2016 you are more than welcome to drop in for a cuppa or something stronger.

EVENTS CALENDAR 2016

Club meets are usually held at the Rising Sun unless otherwise stated. The summer mid-month meets may be held at other venues so check the website for latest info.

Monday 1st Feb Club Meet - Quiz Night - 8pm start
18th - 21st February London Classic Car Show at ExCeL. www.thelondonclassiccarshow.co.uk

Monday 7th Mar Club Meet

Sunday 3rd April – Old Warden Aerodrome Classic Car Show. www.classicmotorshows.co.uk

Monday 4th April Club AGM - 8pm start

Sunday 24th April Drive It Day - Club run. Mike Hayward organising.

Monday 9th May Club Meet
21st - 22nd May Beaulieu Spring Autojumble. www.beaulieuevents.co.uk

Sunday 22nd May Herts Auto Show. Stanborough Park. www.hertsautoshow.co.uk

Sunday/Monday 29th & 30th May - Knebworth Park Classic Car Show. www.classicmotorshows.co.uk

Sunday 5th June London to Brighton Classic, Kit & Sports Car Runs. www.classicmotorshows.co.uk

Monday 6th June Club Meet

Sunday 12th June Falcon Motor Club Classic Tour. www.falconmotorclub.com

Saturday 18th June Classic Picnic at Hall Green
Monday 20th June Club mid-month meet tbc
23rd - 26th June Goodwood Festival of Speed. www.goodwood.co.uk

Sunday 3rd July - Hatfield House Classic Car Show. www.classicmotorshows.co.uk

Monday 4th July Club Meet

Wednesday 6th July Classics in the Walled Garden
8th - 10th July Classic Le Mans

Monday 18th July Club mid-month meet tbc
29th - 30th July Silverstone Classic. www.silverstone.co.uk

Monday 1st August Club Meet

Thursday 4th August RNLI Charity Car Show at Pirtton. Mike Frisby organising.

Monday 22nd August Club mid-month meet tbc

Sunday 28th August Little Gransden Car & Air Show

Sunday/Monday 28th & 29th August - Knebworth Park Classic Car Show. www.classicmotorshows.co.uk

3rd-4th September, Beaulieu Autojumble. www.beaulieuevents.co.uk

Monday 5th September Club Meet

9th - 11th September, Goodwood Revival. www.goodwood.co.uk

Monday 19th September Club mid-month meet tbc

Monday 3rd October Club Meet

Monday 7th November Club Meet

Monday 5th December Club Meet

All information is given in good faith but no responsibility is accepted for errors.
It was in about 1983 that I bought my dad’s TR7 - flogging off a blue ’67 MG Midget (number plate LOU 512F) inevitably giving rise to the car being christened ‘The Bloo Loo’ after a contemporary TV advert for toilet cleaner) to raise the money.

Yes, I know the TR7 became something of a joke, but at the time it was considered reasonably stylish and it was a heck of lot more comfortable than a Midget - and much more of a bird-puller ;-) I did a full respray of the car and can be seen here, just after the final coat, looking pleased with the results.

A few months later I was blatting down a particularly fast stretch of local country road when there was an almighty bang from under the bonnet and the car jumped what felt like 6ft into the air. It was probably 6 inches in reality but it frightened the life out of me. With the car still travelling at some speed and the rear wheels locked and skidding, it took quite a few yards to bring things to an orderly halt.

It transpired that the cam belt tensioner had disintegrated, the timing chain slipped and the valves in the head had made contact with the pistons, smashing two of the crowns and wedging against the other pair. Result, an instantly seized engine and the airborne excursion. Fixing the damage was costly and time consuming and shortly afterwards the TR was sold on. I wasn’t too sorry to see it go... but I really do still miss that Midget.

Sure you are insured?

A story in the November edition of the Austin Seven Owners Club magazine highlighted an issue with RH Specialist Insurance - now under the umbrella of Hiscox.

A7OC chairman, Howard Annett, was driving his modern car when he was followed by a police car into a local supermarket car park and informed that his vehicle appeared to be uninsured. Howard was puzzled as he has several cars on the same insurance, all paid for by direct debit. The officer helpfully entered Howard’s Mini and A7 two seater onto the computer as well only to find that they also appeared to be uninsured. Howard didn’t have his insurance certificate with him and was asked to show them in seven days. He was allowed to finish his shopping and drive home. It turned out that it was a slip up by the insurers mainly due to Hiscox’s computer program not talking to Equity Red Star’s (the insurers) computer. All has been satisfactorily resolved with apologies from RH.

I understand the issue may have been to do with the insurers not communicating properly with the Motor Insurers’ Bureau - a central database of insurance records. You can check if your own vehicles are on the database by going online at http://www.askmid.com/

Check MOT history

The A7OC magazine also alerted me to a new government website on which you can check the MOT history of any vehicle. This could be particularly useful if you are buying a used vehicle. www.check-mot.service.gov.uk

Check Recalls

Find out if a vehicle model, vehicle part or accessory has been recalled because of a safety fault. https://www.gov.uk/check-if-a-vehicle-has-been-recalled

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