



Stow-on-the-Wold Motor Club Newsletter (Magazine) number 14 September 2025

A bumper issue this quarter so thanks to all who have submitted articles. We've got a message from the Chair so I'll keep it very short. Please keep the articles rolling in.

Rob Brown drbchestnut@gmail.com

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Stow Motor Club Clothing

Club clothing is available as follows, with new prices. A catalogue with pictures of the garments will follow shortly. Please contact Jenny jennyevanson@gmail.com or Ben buildercotswolds@gmail.com 07771 691145/01451 830678 to order. Payment in advance please.

Overalls	£57.58	Polo Shirt	£17.26	Gilet	£28.78
Sweat tops	£28.78	Regatta jackets	£43.20	Baseball cap	£14.38
Beanie	£12.24	Umbrella	£21.58		

A Few Words from our Chair

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of the Stow Motor Club magazine.

Since being asked to be chair of the Stow Motor Club (SMC) committee it has been fantastic to meet the members, both old and new.

Since I became the chair of the club – (the chair I always wanted was a porter's!) - one of my aims has been to encourage and set up regular events, talks, meetings and outings. Obviously, the biennial motor show is our premier event, but the more events we hold outside this, the more interest we will attract.

My idea is to have at least six events spread over each three-month period in the diary. This will act as a catalyst for members to meet and share ideas. Note that a calendar has been kindly created by one of our members and this will be on the SMC website soon.

Of course, the *raison d'être* for the club is its members and its excellent set of volunteers, both on the committee and more widely in the club. As we have found, all club members bring a repertoire of varied motoring enthusiasm. And on top of this, the SMC has become a key part of the local charity ecosystem. This is exemplified by our close links with, and support for, local Rotary clubs. The Kitebrook event was a great demonstration of this ecosystem in action, and the upcoming Cotswold Festival of Motoring (September 21st) and the fourth Rotary in the Rissingtons Treasure Hunt (October 11th) will undoubtedly be two more.

The monthly "Square Wheels" events in Stow Square have added a great platform for both existing members and for those not yet in the club to sample our hospitality around our assorted vehicle.

Please look out for more. For the near future I'm hoping to arrange a visit to James May's pub and combine it with visits to various local attractions. Of course, I'm very happy to receive all suggestions for further trips/events.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the SMC members for their support. Enjoy.



Peter Brown

Notices

Cotswold Festival of Motoring – Sunday, September 21st

To be held in Bourton-on-the-Water. John Barber

<https://www.northcotswoldsroutary.org/cotswold-festival-of-motoring>

Talk by James Walshe, Deputy Editor, Practical Classics – Wednesday, September 24th

You may recall Roger's article about his chance discovery of an article about the 2CV he owned from new in the 1980s which appeared in Practical Classics recently. It resulted in correspondence between Roger and the author, James Walshe, who was delighted to find the "missing link" in the car's history. Now James has agreed to visit Stow Motor Club to speak about his role at the magazine, his life as a journalist more broadly and some of his experiences with the automotive world. His talk will be held on **Wednesday September 24th, 2025, at Stow Social Club – time: 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm.** No need to book. We look forward to a good turnout.

In James's own words:

Combining his biggest loves in life – radio, music, and old cars – West Country born James Walshe is a motoring journalist and radio producer. James's career has taken him from commercial radio stations in Leeds, Sheffield, Brighton, Manchester, and Birmingham and most recently the studios of BBC Radio 2. Ten years ago, having been tempted away from London by the promise of the glamorous world of classic cars, James ended up surrounded by rusty old bangers and covered in engine oil at the workshop of Britain's biggest selling classic car magazine. There, (if he isn't standing underneath a French car scratching his head), he spends his days in the pursuit of



heartwarming stories about enthusiasts and their cherished classics.

Established in 1980, Practical Classics magazine is staffed by hands-on car enthusiasts and uniquely, has its own workshop where the writers restore and maintain their own fleet of classic vehicles.

Stow Motor Club Road Trip – Friday, September 26th



**A STOW MOTOR CLUB
SEPTEMBER
ROAD TRIP**

**WOODCOTE
& COPSE**

ONLY 15 PLACES AVAILABLE

11.00am
Tour one of the top Lotus dealers
and newly appointed for Morgan
New & Used Cars for sale | Silverstone | Woodcote & Copse
Morgan New and Used Cars | Morgan, Silverstone |
Woodcote & Copse

12:45pm
Black Pit Brewery
<http://blackpitbrewery.co.uk/>

2:30pm
- Silverstone Museum
Silverstone F1, Motor Racing & Motorsport Museum & Events

**Book
Now**

TO BOOK EMAIL
info@stowmc.org

**26TH SEPTEMBER
2025**

A Call from Mike Schoen – a Club Calendar for 2026

I have an idea about making a calendar of "Members Cars " I would like to make it in time for the beginning of December this year, ready for 2026. My thought is that it would consist of just cars, one per month, set in different locations of interest in the area. The emphasis in each picture will be the car. If anyone is interested in offering their car for this project and has an idea for a specific location, please let me know. My phone number is **07462 115358** or via WhatsApp.

Fourth Cotswold Car Treasure Hunt – Saturday, October 11th



Rotary in the Rissingtons 4th Costwold Car Treasure Hunt on Saturday 11th October 2025



Come and join us for an afternoon exploring the wonderful countryside by car and benefit charity too.

The route will take you to places you may not have seen before with some difficult (ish) clues... and a trophy for the winning team.

Distance is approx 50 miles

It begins at

UPPER RISSINGTON VILLAGE HALL (GL54 2QW)

1:00 pm signing-on for 1:30pm onwards departure

and finishes approx. 2 hours later at

THE COTSWOLD BARN, LONGBOROUGH

for tea and cakes.



Contact: Pete Brown browngti@hotmail.com

Pause for Thought When We Head for Ypres Next May

Roger White

Shown is an article written more than a hundred years ago giving advice to those planning a motoring trip to the battlegrounds in and around Ypres. Of course, this was published only two years after the armistice so it's understandable that it was described as a pilgrimage.

Taken from "The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient", published May 1920.

THE PILGRIM'S GUIDE NOTES ON THE CONVEYANCE OF CARS AND MOTOR-CYCLES TO THE CONTINENT

It is advised that those intending to travel in their own cars should join either the R.A.C. or A.A., if they are not already members, as it is practically impossible for others to transport their cars to France. Full particulars will be supplied free on application to either of these clubs, but for the benefit of Pilgrims who may be considering making their journey by road, we append the following notes:—

- (i.) 45 per cent. of the value of the car must be deposited either with the Customs, or with the Clubs mentioned above. (These latter have an arrangement, whereby they settle the matter with the authorities on the guarantee of the Member's Bankers). The whole amount of this deposit is returnable upon completion of the journey.
- (ii.) The actual cost of transhipment varies between £5 and £8, according to the wheelbase of the vehicle.
- (iii.) Cars are taken on the following routes:—
Southampton—Havre.
Newhaven—Dieppe.
Folkstone—Boulogne.
Harwich—Antwerp.
- (iv.) The amount of Customs Duty payable for Belgium is considerably lower than for France, only £1 14s. per cwt. (returnable in full) being charged.
- (v.) A great deal of trouble can be saved by obtaining an International Pass, either from the R.A.C. or the A.A., which avoids taking out a licence and registration on the other side.
- (vi.) Spare parts are practically unobtainable on the Continent, so it is as well to take as many as possible.
- (vii.) The price of petrol is 10-12 francs for 5 litres (1.1 gallons), and as this can only be had in the larger towns, tanks should never be allowed to run low, but should be filled whenever a supply can be obtained.
- (viii.) Motor-cycles are not liable to Customs Duties, provided their owners are members of a recognised organisation (a special Customs card is provided free by the R.A.C.), but motor-cycles with sidecars are dutiable—the charge varying from £15 to £20 according to size and weight.

My “Hairdresser’s” Car!

Andrew Mitchell

What a terribly disrespectful name for a great little sports car. Let me tell you the story ... But first, as a new member of SMC, I should introduce myself . “Sea Captain Andrew Mitchell” as referred to by Ben Eddolls in his recent article on Overlord. Yes, he is correct, for once!

I spent 21 years of my early life navigating Shell oil tankers around the globe, followed by a spell in the North Sea managing oil production platforms, until in my forties I came ashore founding, and subsequently selling, a consulting company and myself to Lloyds Register of Shipping. There I became involved with the United Nations and international maritime law, working on the development of three pieces of legislation which are now mandatory in the shipping world. A final fling saw me working in New Orleans for four years representing BP Exploration in the infamous Deepwater Horizon litigation. To cap my career off at seventy-two, I was asked to go to Somalia to meet the “pirates”, but that is another story! Enough of that. My final anchorage is Upper Rissington where I have been since 2008.

So what about the Hairdresser’s Car? Working abroad from 16 years of age I had never scratched the itch of owning a sports car, so in 1998 when living in London I bought a Mazda MX-5 NA. One of the many “special editions”, it was a car to enjoy until one day in Croydon the dog jumped out. He could not understand why the car had no roof. The MX-5 had to go. But the itch was still there and in 2008 I entered the world of Caterhams. What a joy, 225 bhp and 530 kgs. and it was through this I met Andy Couchman from Great Rissington. 45000 miles later with track days and trips to Croatia in the bag, a change in family circumstances saw the demise of that wonderful car. Alongside the Caterham I ran a Jaguar F-Type 3-litre supercharged and currently an Aston Martin DB11 Volante, both excellent cars but not quite scratching my sports car itch. As I approached eighty I decided it was now or never, and explored buying a “Big Healey”, just like the Dinky toy I once owned. However, a



drive at Rawles Motorsport clearly demonstrated I have missed the boat; it is not for me. I have gone soft!



The name Stow Motor Club had been bobbing around for a while; Peter, Andy, John, Gary and Roger were in it; why wasn't I? So, I joined earlier this year and up came Overlord 2025. Do you take an Aston on a boy's trip? Possibly not! Enter the MX-5 Homura, the last iteration of the ND series.

From the minute I sat in it, I had to buy it. This was a posh Caterham. Not two years old, 8000 miles and £25k. I drove it home. I can honestly say that it has all the tech that the DB11 has, in some cases even better. In an Aston you "think" it will start. In the Mazda, you "know" it will. The engine, a 2-litre Mazda Duratec, the same as in the Caterham, is giving 189 bhp but you just feel it is ripe for tuning. BBR advertise a "Super 220" upgrade which I will consider, but what about turbo- or super-charging?

So, this is my Hairdresser's Car. In its Soul Red Crystal colour, with white seats and black BBS wheels it looks the part. It is analogue to drive, comfortable and corners well. But currently the exhaust note does not quite "do it". This will change. But first I will ask the wife!!

I look forward to good times with the SMC.

Car and Classic Monthly Newsletter

Roger White



Most of you will be familiar with the “Car and Classic” website. It’s mainly a route to advertise classic cars and bikes for sale. But the owners of the site have recently started to issue a newsletter. The header for the first is shown and if you would like to receive these newsletters the email address is hi@mail.carandclassic.com. The following gives an idea of the type of content in the early issues.

Top Summer Sellers

Some statistics have been quoted related to classic car sales based on the advertisements on the Car and Classic website. Comparing activity in the Summer months with that in the Spring months, the following cars have seen the largest percentage change in average prices.

No 1 - 1990s Porsche 911 993 Carrera 2	up 37% from £44,975 to £61,950.
No 2 – 2000s Audi TT Roadster	up 24% from £4,625 to £5,750
No 3 – 1990s Jaguar XJ6	up 20% from £5,000 to £5,995

In July this year Mercedes-Benz was the top selling brand with 118 cars sold in the month, with an average sale price of £15,885. Porsche were second with 83 sales (£34,995). Top

Mercedes model in July was the Mercedes SL-class with 68 sales, compared with 37 in the same month a year ago. In the best seller list the SL was followed by the Porsche 911, the MGB, and the Jaguar E-Type.

The next statistic compared sales through the site of cars built in different decades. It turns out that



those from the 2000s were top, just ahead of the 1970s. But the 70s-built cars were the fastest growing group, up 12% on last year, with those from the 2000s remaining pretty static.

Another statistic of interest concerned the difference between advertisements on the website using a professional photographer and those using photographs taken by the vendor. Advertisements with professionally-taken photographs achieved a 53% sales rate compared to those using photographs taken by the vendors of 37%.

The newsletter contains other articles. This issue featured “Best Budget Convertibles to Buy in 2025 – our £10k Top Ten”, and “The Volkswagen Type 2 – Five Things You Need to Know”.

Finally there’s an article on some of the things to watch out for when buying a classic car, which seemed worth reporting.

Red Flags

1 Rust never sleeps (and neither should you)

If you catch sight of serious rust on a classic’s body or frame, don’t just wince - pause. Major corrosion is rarely just skin-deep; it often hints at structural woes and repair bills that could outpace the car’s value. Factor this into your offer, or better yet, ask yourself if this is a project you’re truly ready for.

2 No inspection? No deal.

A seller who refuses an independent inspection is waving a red flag the size of a rally banner. Classic cars have stories, and you deserve to hear the whole tale from a trusted expert. If the answer is “no,” it’s time to walk away, no matter how shiny the paint.

3 Paperwork that doesn’t add up

Mismatched VIN numbers, missing documents, or a logbook that reads like fiction? These aren’t just bureaucratic headaches, they can mean trouble with authenticity, provenance, or even legal ownership. Always cross-check the paperwork as carefully as you check the oil.

4 The “too good to be true” trap

A bargain price can be tempting, but classics aren’t immune to the old adage: if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Ultra-low prices often hide expensive secrets or worse, outright scams. Trust your instincts, and do your homework.

5 The orphan model problem

Falling for a rare beauty? Make sure you’re not alone. If no local mechanic is familiar with the model, every future repair could turn into a wild goose chase. Before you buy, check your area for specialists who can keep your classic running sweetly.

Classic Sunday Roast: A Memorable Gathering at Beechwood Park on Sunday August 24th

John Barber

There are some Sunday afternoons that linger in the memory long after the dishes have been cleared and the laughter has faded, and the recent “Classic Sunday Roast” hosted by Brio Retirement Living at their Beechwood Park Development was certainly one of them. On this golden afternoon, the genteel hum of conversation mingled with the gleam of polished chrome, as members of the Stow Motor Club gathered to celebrate the art of fine motoring and fine dining.



Fifteen club members arrived in a cavalcade of automotive history, with eight remarkable cars and a single Harley Davidson motorcycle commanding admiring glances on the drive. Each vehicle was a story in itself: from the relentless grandeur of Ron Warmington’s Blower Bentley, its powerful presence harkening back to the golden age of British racing, to the dignified elegance of the Glew’s 1920 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost—a car whose very presence whispers tales of the Roaring Twenties.



The line-up was a rolling museum, but it was the company that made the day so memorable. Members swapped stories of rallies past, offering knowing nods and hearty laughs as they admired each other's pride and joy. The Harley Davidson, gleaming in the afternoon sun, drew its own set of admirers, a perfect counterpoint to the stately motorcars.

Yet, it was not only the vehicles that delighted the senses; the menu, curated with care, was a feast for both the eyes and palate. Attendees were treated to a traditional Sunday roast, with a tempting trio of mains: succulent roast chicken, tender lamb, and delicate salmon, each expertly prepared and accompanied by all the classic trimmings. The conviviality of the meal was only heightened by the sweet selection of desserts—indulgent tiramisu, a nostalgic cherry sponge, and a refreshing fresh fruit salad, providing the perfect finish.

As the afternoon sun cast long shadows over Beechwood Park, members raised their glasses to good friends, fine engines, and the promise of many more Sundays just as splendid. Thanks to the generous hosting by Brio Retirement Living, and the unique camaraderie of the Stow Motor Club, the Classic Sunday Roast will surely be remembered as a highlight of the motoring calendar.

Three Wheels Bad, Four Wheels Good

Ben Eddolls

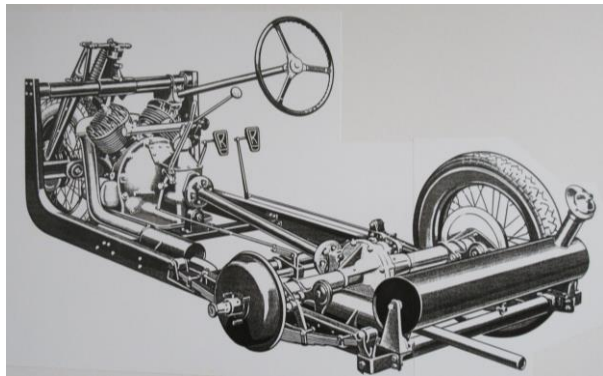
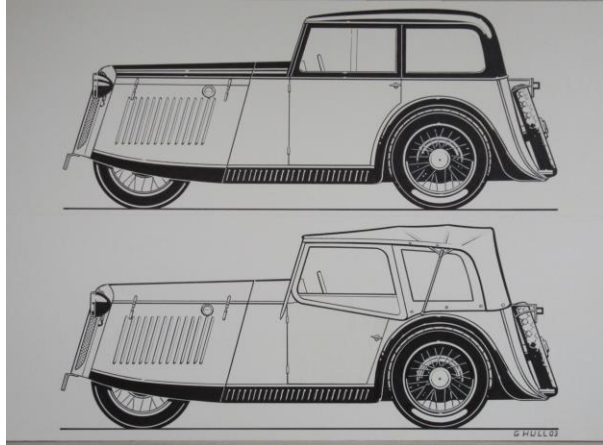
Reliant cars – you'll remember Del and Rodders, living on the edge, and driving on the edge, and over-exuberant cornering in their three-wheeled Reliant van - not such a wonderful image .

Reliant grew out of Raleigh, the cycle manufacturer. In the mid-30s Raleigh briefly moved into car and van manufacture. The Raleigh Safety Seven three-wheeler came out. The saloon and tourer versions are shown. Sturmey-Archer built the 750 cc V-twin engine and integral gearbox, specially designed using magnesium alloy castings to keep overall vehicle weight below 896 lb so that it would qualify for reduced road tax.

Performance was comparable to that of the Austin 7.

However, production had barely started when

Raleigh decided to revert to solely bicycle manufacture, probably as a result of tax rate changes in 1935. But T L Williams, the car's designer, didn't lose faith, especially in the van version, so he took over manufacture himself. Of course, he needed a new name for the company. The brake and clutch pedals of the existing vehicles were stamped with the Raleigh "R", so unless he was prepared to change the presses, he had to find a new name with this initial - hence Reliant (*ref 1*).



Success followed, not least because drivers of these Reliant three-wheelers only needed a motorcycle licence. Their very low running costs opened up motoring to the masses, especially after the war. Fibreglass had been a wartime invention, initially used as short-term protection covers for radar domes. However, its strength, light weight and durability soon found its way into the motor industry and Reliant became experts in its use for their vehicles.

In 1960 Reliant became involved with an Israeli company making a small two-seat sports car, the Sabra, mainly sold in America. It had a Ford Consul engine, steel chassis and fibreglass bodywork - light, strong and, with a bit of tuning, powerful. Dynamics changed and car became the Sabre, offering the same engine or a six from a Zodiac. It retained the same layout, a strong steel chassis, sporty suspension and a lightweight fibreglass body, making it a real performance car for its day.

Roll the years on and along came the Scimitar, initially a coupe body with similar engines to the Sabre, then with a Ford V6, finally developing into the Scimitar GTE with its definitive hatchback shape - the topic of my thoughts.

My association with Scimitars started in about 1970 when a cousin's husband had one as a family car. Being very much car people, their array of motors always impressed me as a raggedy kid. Move on to the 1980s. Working near Oxford, I often passed a driveway with a red car outside, it looked a little forlorn but I managed to find out it was for sale and a deal was struck. I did some work on its owner's house and gave him a little cash and I became the proud owner of a 1974 Scimitar GTE. A little fettling and it was running, MOT'd and on the road, it became my family transport!

Looking back I probably didn't quite appreciate how good it was. It had that proven V6 3-litre Ford Capri engine, but this one was prone to overheating - until I fitted a new multi-core radiator. It had a Transit four-speed gearbox but with overdrive on third and fourth gears. Despite its relative simplicity, this drivetrain, when combined with a lightweight fibreglass body, embarrassed many a yuppie in an XR3 or Golf GTI as I gradually left them behind.

Time moved on and so did the Scimitar, but I kind of never got it out of my skin.

Following a procession of vehicles a Scimitar once again came to my attention, this time a 1974 SE5a, pretty much the same as my original, only forty years later! The GRP body was rough, but the interior was good and it had a newish galvanised chassis. To my surprise it was much admired by others. However, there were drawbacks: no power steering, the need for a new sunroof, a great deal of driveline 'shunt' and of course the awful body. Reluctantly it was moved on to a kindly man from Brighton.

Although a little disillusioned with Scimitarism, I soon stumbled across another one on Ebay, and following a drunken barbeque it was agreed that friend Mike would take me the sixty-four miles to Shrewsbury to look at it. Sixty-four turned into over 100 and we found a beige coloured (I'm advised to say "champaign") SE6. This model

is a slightly bloated SE5a. The main problem with this one was its hideous velour seats. But it started first touch of the key. I shunted up and down the seller's driveway by way of a test drive. The brakes worked. Fiddling with fuses got the electrics going. I made an offer less than I had sold the old car for. It was accepted.



A quick phone call and it was insured, and I drove home, revelling in the drivability of this forty-six year-old motor.

What now? In Phil and Kirstie style do I love it, or list it? The jury's out but the more I look at the car the more I realise it's been pretty much re-fettled with many new parts. So I guess it will stay. But I just can't live with those velour seats so I'm looking for sensible seats to swap in.

It looks mighty fine from twenty paces, riding high on its Wolfrace "mag slot" wheels that came with new tyres. In fact, it's arguably an attractive vehicle, certainly a pleasant change from a modern jelly mould.

Ref 1: Letter from Graham Hull to the Editor of 'The Boneshaker', the Journal of the Veteran-Cycle Club, No. 228, Summer 2025.

Stow Motor Club Visits Pembleton Motor Company John Barber

Preamble from Pete:

I discovered The Pembleton Motor Company one Sunday on You Tube at the magic 5.00 pm watershed when new episodes of Harry's Garage, Tyrell's Garage and The Late Brake Show appear. There appeared a wonderful overview and road test of a Pembleton 24. So I went for more details and decided to contact Guy, their MD about a possible visit. After a very friendly phone call, a date was arranged and the visit was advertised to the Stow Motor Club membership, for August 13th.

Peter

A Day of Engineering, Enthusiasm, and Camaraderie

On a warm morning, members assembled at the Queen's Head in Stow, exchanging greetings and stories over coffee, anticipation humming through the air. This was no ordinary meeting; it was the beginning of a memorable journey to the Pembleton Motor Company, a revered name among British specialist car manufacturers.

The Convoy: Motoring Heritage on the Move

The rendezvous at the Queen's Head was a spectacle in itself. Club members arrived in an array of vehicles. Among the gathering were a gleaming Porsche 356, its curves recalling a golden era of design, a brace of agile MX5s—modern classics in their own right—and the imposing presence of a Bentley Turbo R, whose quiet authority drew admiring glances from onlookers. Each car, lovingly maintained and proudly displayed, reflected the spirit of its owner and the ethos of the club.

With engines warmed and spirits high, the convoy set out from Stow. The drive itself was a celebration—windows down, the air tinged with summer, the gentle roar of engines punctuating the morning quiet. The route was chosen not merely for efficiency but for pleasure, allowing club members to savour every mile.

The Pembleton Motor Company: A Modern Workshop with Vintage Soul

Arriving at the Pembleton Motor Company's headquarters, the group was greeted by the company's team, whose warmth and enthusiasm set the tone for the visit.

Pembleton's facilities are a fascinating blend of contemporary engineering and traditional craftsmanship, nestled in a building that hums with activity and history. The heart of Pembleton's operation is its workshop—a treasure trove for anyone fascinated by the process of building motorcars. Members were shown around by experts whose deep knowledge of both the marque and broader automotive history made for illuminating conversation. Milling machines, lathes, and hand tools line the walls, interspersed with gleaming aluminium body panels awaiting their place in the assembly. Every stage of production, from chassis assembly to final fit and finish, is undertaken with meticulous attention to detail.

The company's philosophy is apparent in every corner of the workshop: small-scale production, bespoke specification, and an unyielding commitment to driver engagement. Members were invited to view various models in different stages of completion, from naked chassis to finished vehicles ready for delivery. The sight of skilled technicians assembling vehicles by hand was captivating—a living testament to traditional coachbuilding in the modern era.



Admiring the Pembleton Cars: Artistry and Engineering

At the centre of the day's interest was the Pembleton T24, the latest offering from the company and a car that embodies the spirit of British lightweight motoring. Members gathered around the demonstrator and listened as Pembleton staff detailed the philosophy behind the T24: lightweight construction, engaging dynamics, and timeless design.

Discussions flowed around the car's technical details—the innovative chassis design, the finely tuned engine, and the tactile nature of its controls. The T24 is powered by a Moto Guzzi 850 cc V-twin mounted at the front. Transmission is via a gearbox based on that of the Citroen 2CV, with the associated classic gear pattern, and the car is front-wheel drive. Pembleton's engineers explained how every

aspect of the car is geared toward delivering an unfiltered driving experience, from its sharp steering to its responsive power delivery. Beyond the T24, the club enjoyed a guided tour of some of Pembleton's earlier models. Each car is a testament to the company's commitment to authenticity: classic lines, bespoke finishes, and a sense of individuality that's all too rare in modern motoring.

A Shared Table: Lunch at The Manor Arms, Abberley

After a morning immersed in engineering and conversation, the club reconvened for lunch at The Manor Arms in Abberley. This historic inn provided the perfect setting for relaxation and reflection. Over hearty fare and local ales, members exchanged impressions of the morning's experiences, comparing notes on the cars, the craftsmanship, and the future of specialist motoring.

Conclusion

The visit to the Pembleton Motor Company was a celebration of British engineering and automotive heritage. As discussions around the Pembleton T24 continue and new journeys are planned, the club remains united by a simple passion: the joy of the drive, and the fellowship found along the way.



Ninety-Six Hours of the Le Mans Classic 2025

Paul Evans

You can't beat the atmosphere in Portsmouth ferry terminal ahead of a Le Mans weekend. July 2nd was a warm summer's evening and the quayside queues for Brittany's boats resembled "Third Thursday" at Wychford.

My party of six was a bunch of mountain-biking petrolheads from Hook Norton, and we were as excited as the rest. As in 2023, when it was just Ian and me, his three-wheeler Morgan was attracting the most attention. I was in my Caterham and Lee's 2017 Transit was full of our camping gear and six shonky pushbikes and was blending in with all the camper vans.

We enjoyed a smooth crossing and left Caen early the next morning with the rest of the English invasion, following a non-autoroute course. But fifteen minutes in, there was a drama. My freshly fettled Caterham had a problem and my heart sank. It was electrical,

either a dead battery or an alternator but, either way, the car could only be started with either a bump start or a jump pack. When we tentatively got back on the road, I dared not use indicators, lights or horn.



Turned out it was a dead battery, confirmed by a father and son workshop that we found near our supermarche stop. They directed us to their mate at the battery and alternator equivalent of KwikFit. And for the very reasonable cost of eighty-six euros, I got a battery fitted and the alternator tested. It was given a clean bill of

health. Big relief.



We arrived at our no-frills campsite without any more bump starts and using indicators. It was hot. The temperature had reached 35 °C. Camping Epinettes is inside the top end of the circuit and handy for Tertre Rouge and the whole village and paddock, as well as the Bugatti circuit complex where the car clubs set up, so it was a good location. The bikes were a great way of getting around as spectator traffic was bad, and many of the roads had switched to one-way or were closed completely during the weekend. Hence we found ourselves cycling to the legendary Auberge des Hunaudieres on the Mulsanne Straight one lunchtime.

We got directions in French from a toothless old resident. His shortcut was 'just' a short stretch the wrong way down the tram tracks, into the woods and out via the industrial estate. What could possibly...? An oncoming tram, that's what went wrong, appearing round a corner, travelling slowly, but with a gesticulating driver who was obviously quite angry. Fearing arrest or worse, we used our offroad bike skills and fled into the forest, laughing like naughty schoolboys!



The al fresco lunch went on for some time, and Hunaudieres proved to be a fantastic spot, with a soundtrack of GT40s, Lister Jags and historic Ferraris howling down towards the second Mulsanne chicane. The owners even opened up the first floor rooms and windows, so we went up and watched the qualifying session on the track below. Long lunches and late nights were a theme of the



weekend thanks to all the pop-up food outlets and Bar24 in the race 'village' which stayed open all hours.

For any of you who were lucky enough to join the Blackthorn Racing workshop visit, you recall that, this year, they had entered an Austin-Healey in grid 4 for 1965– 1970 cars.

Taking a few hours out of the Saturday drinks session, I found a warm welcome in the pits from owner and racer Claude Bovet, Dan and the team.



Qualifying went well for them, but their rain-soaked race sadly ended with a mechanical failure. They learnt a lot and will be back for the Classic and potentially one of the Le Mans 24hr support series in 2026.

Our weekend ended in the rain too. After the sun and heat it was a shame to have to pack up wet tents, bail out the Tillett seats and sit in a damp cockpit for the trip back up to Caen on Sunday. And my copilot did the unthinkable and fell asleep in the passenger seat of a Caterham – it had been a tiring few days and nights.



Would we go back? Undoubtedly. The noise, accessibility, range of race cars, and joie de vivre around the campsites and paddock were unforgettable. ACO, the Le Mans race organisers, have since announced the biennial Classic will become an annual event, but with a split of the age categories. So it will be a tougher decision about which year to support.

The organisation on site by our tour operator Motorsport Travel

Destination was good but their back-office operation was poor for 2025 so I will look for a different provider if we go back.

If you're reading this and considering a trip to Le Mans, there are a number of SMC members who have been out many times and would be happy to give you their own tips and recommendations. Just ask.

Stow Motor Club's Elegant Excursion: Ladies' Day at Salon Privé 2025



[Renault® Sunglasses](#)

John Barber and Peter Brown

An unforgettable Outing Filled with Style, Heritage and Hospitality. The sporadic showers did nothing to dampen enthusiasm, as six lucky members of the Stow Motor Club prepared for one of the season's most anticipated outings: Ladies' Day at Salon Privé 2025 at Blenheim Palace. The annual motoring event, famed for its elegant display of classic and modern automobiles, its sartorial flair, and its vibrant social scene, promised an exciting experience. This year, the occasion was made even more special by the generosity of Renault sunglasses, whose complimentary tickets for our motley crew allowed us to savour the day in style.

The Journey Begins: Bentley Elegance on the Road

There's something magical about setting out on a motoring adventure in a vehicle that's as much a part of the story as the destination itself. For this year's Salon Privé, the club's transport was no ordinary carriage but Pete Brown's immaculate Bentley—a gleaming testament to British engineering, comfort, and the pursuit of driving perfection.

The journey southward unfolded with a sense of occasion: the deep thrum of the Bentley's engine, the subtle aroma of leather, and the laughter of friends reuniting for another chapter in the club's eventful history.

Arriving in Style: First Impressions at Salon Privé

Salon Privé is more than a car show—it is a festival for the senses, a tableau of gleaming coachwork, vibrant personalities, and the gentle clink of champagne flutes. It is tradition at Salon Privé to dress with élan, and the club did not disappoint; Panama hats, summer dresses, and tailored blazers set the tone for a day of refined leisure.

Their arrival was marked not only by the spectacle of the cars on display—spanning everything from pre-war Rolls-Royces to the latest hypercars—but also by the sense of belonging to a wider fellowship of enthusiasts. The club's complimentary tickets, courtesy of Renault sunglasses, were more than just entry passes; they were tokens of appreciation for the shared passion that binds the motoring community.

Hospitality and High Spirits: The Renault Sunglasses Experience

Renault sunglasses, a brand synonymous with timeless style and motoring heritage, were the generous hosts for the club this year. Members were warmly greeted by

the Renault team and invited to sample the latest collection of eyewear—sunglasses crafted to evoke the glamour of golden-era road trips and continental tours.

Our club members found themselves drawn into conversations with Renault’s ambassadors, discussing the legacy of classic motoring accessories and the intersection of

form and function. For our chairman, a new pair of Renault sunglasses became irresistible and he purchased a pair from the new Jim Clark range. Sadly, the at times torrential rain meant they were not required during our visit.



Exploring the Concours: A Feast for the Eyes



Members strolled around Blenheim’s expansive South Lawn, where the world’s rarest and most beautiful cars basked in the sunlight. The Concours d’Elégance, the centrepiece of Salon Privé, dazzled with an array of meticulously restored classics—

Bugattis with swooping bodywork, Ferraris whose scarlet paint shimmered like silk, and Bentleys, of course, whose histories were as compelling as their lines.

Lunch in the Orangery: A Culinary Interlude

The promise of luncheon in the Orangery drew the club together once more. The Orangery at Blenheim Palace, flooded with natural light and perfumed by the gardens beyond, offered a sanctuary from the bustle of the concours lawns. White linen tablecloths, polished silverware, and attentive staff set the stage for a meal as elegant as the surroundings themselves.

The menu was a celebration of British produce: crisp garden salads, delicately poached salmon, and a selection of fine English cheeses. Glasses of chilled white wine refreshed parched palates, while conversation ebbed and flowed between reminiscences of past Salon Privé outings and speculation about which machine might take home the coveted Best in Show award.

The Afternoon: More Discoveries and Lasting Memories plus Richard Hammond

Refreshed and re-energised, members returned to the lawns for an afternoon of exploration and delight. Beyond the main concours, Salon Privé offered a rich tapestry of activities: exclusive previews of limited-edition supercars, talks and demonstrations by industry luminaries, and interactive displays from the world's leading automotive marques. Many found themselves drawn to the Salon Privé Ladies' Day Pavilion, where style competitions and charity raffles added a playful spirit to the festivities.

The last highlight was Richard Hammond who has now gone into the world of gin and whisky (it seems this is an addictive pastime for the Grand Tour members). He signed a bottle for one of our group's son's birthday and was happy to pose for photos with the group ,

Throughout the day, snapshots were captured—smiling faces framed by the



brilliant green of Blenheim's grounds, reflections of classic coachwork mirrored in Renault sunglasses, and impromptu group photos beside the event's showstoppers.

These images, destined for the club's scrapbook, would serve as mementos of a day when the pleasures of motoring, friendship, and style converged in perfect harmony.

Reflections on the Road Home

As the sun began to dip behind the palace's stately façade, Stow Motor Club regrouped for the journey home. The Bentley's engine purred once more, and the car's sumptuous cabin provided a fitting retreat for tired but contented travellers. The conversation turned to highlights of the day—the thrill of seeing automobiles that had graced Le Mans



and Monte Carlo, the discovery of new favourites among the concours entries, the exquisite lunch, and the simple joy of time spent among friends.

There was unanimous agreement that the club's visit to Salon Privé 2025 had set a new standard for club outings. The thoughtful hospitality of Renault sunglasses, the style and comfort of Pete Brown's Bentley, and the memorable lunch in the Orangery had combined to create an experience neither soon forgotten nor easily surpassed.

The Spirit of Salon Privé: A Lasting Impression

Salon Privé is not merely an event, but a celebration of all that is best in motoring culture—a tradition of elegance, innovation, and shared passion that resonates through every exhibit and encounter. For the Stow Motor Club, Ladies' Day 2025 was a vivid reminder of why the club exists: to bring together those who appreciate the artistry of the automobile, the joy of fine company, and the thrill of the open road.

As the Bentley wound its way back through the dusk-lit roads of the Cotswolds, the members carried with them the spirit of the day—sunlight glinting off polished bonnets, the cool confidence of Renault sunglasses, the taste of fine wine and laughter, and the promise of future adventures. In years to come, when tales are told around the club's table, Salon Privé 2025 will shine as one of the brightest chapters in Stow Motor Club's story.

How Fast is Your Car? Really?

Andy Couchman

There are two simple but tried and trusted ways we typically measure the comparative performance of our cars:

- 0-60 mph time
- Power-to-weight ratio.

You can measure other things (Nurburgring lap times being popular with some manufacturers) but the above give a useful guide and are all-important when it comes to pub bragging rights (a plug here for the Square Wheels evenings in Stow!).

Top speed is a comparator too, but how many of us have ever driven our cars flat out in top gear, and besides, some manufacturers limit top speed (even more so with electric cars). And aerodynamics make a big difference too once you're into illegal speeds.

But, despite their popularity, both measures are deeply flawed, which begs the question: 'Could we do better?'.

Hold on, 'deeply flawed'? Yup – let's look at why...

0-60 times

Magazine tests typically run their test cars with two people onboard (one to drive and the other to operate the test gear) plus the magazine's testing equipment. The cars will be in full road going mode and usually have around half a tank of fuel.

Compare these stats with those produced by the manufacturer, and the magazine's car will invariably be slower. Why? More weight and probably less than ideal weather, plus the magazine car will invariably be loaded with extras, all of which add weight and so dull performance.

A more useful comparison would be to test cars with just one person aboard, but that's not so easy to do in practice.

Result? Your car, with just you onboard, running on little fuel and nothing in the boot/glovebox may even be quicker than the results Autocar published. You need to correct for speedo error of course (their equipment uses GPS to measure speed, so should be more accurate, while your car's speedo will invariably be a tad optimistic).

Should we use Power-to-Weight Ratios?

Oh come on, we're comparing fact A with fact B here. What could possibly be wrong with that?

Ah, glad you asked. Unlike the 0-60 times, we typically measure weight with *one in the car*. To be a fair comparison, we need to ensure we use the car's actual 'wet' weight – that is with fuel, oil and water, and everything attached that should be.

Does it make a difference? Well, let's assume we have three cars, all with a power to weight (P/W) ratio of 100 bhp per tonne (1,000 kg).

- Car A weighs 500 kg and its engine produces 50 bhp.
- Car B weighs one tonne and its engine produces 100 bhp.
- Car C weighs two tonnes and its engine produces 200 bhp.

Of these, car C will be quicker. Eh? But all three have identical power-to-weight ratios – 100 bhp per tonne.

That's only true if the cars drive themselves, but they don't. Add say 100 kgs of driver (fully dressed with a bit of carry-on weight) and the figures change:

- Car A still has 50 bhp but now weighs 600 kg so P/W is 83.3 bhp/tonne
- Car B has 100 bhp and 1,100 kg so P/W is 90.9 bhp/tonne
- Car C has 200 bhp and 2,100 kg so P/W is 95.2 bhp/tonne.

The manufacturer's quoted weight is often quite a bit lower than as tested too, as the brochure car will have no extras and nothing in it that's unnecessary. Arguably, adding 100 kg would be a fairer way to compare (the same principle as why your car, four up, is slower than when it's just you on-board).

So, should we change our two old faithful comparators?

In an ideal world yes but in reality – we probably won't bother. Pity that but, hey ho, it's off to the Queen's Head to 'prove' why my car is faster than yours...