



Stow-on-the-Wold Motor Club Newsletter (Magazine) number 18: September 2026

It's been a big summer for the Stow Motor Club. A highly successful motor show has been the highlight but momentum has been maintained since the show, with various outings, talks and the summer programme of Square Wheels. As a result the Newsletter this quarter is longer than normal, and thanks to all those who have taken time to report on the summer activity.

Rob Brown drbchestnut@gmail.com

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Club Merchandise

Andrew Mitchell

The clothing has been specifically chosen for its quality and value for money and comes with the Club logo embroidered on each garment. Available in a range of colours are ladies and men's outdoor fleeces, ladies and men's polo shirts, coveralls and, for your head, a cap!

We have partnered with **Super Lemon** in Bourton to provide you with this package which can be found on the Super Lemon website at:

<https://cotswoldcustomclothing.co.uk/collections/stow-motor-club>

This link will take you direct to the Club clothing from where you make your choice and pay online. You can either pick it up from:

Super Lemon, Unit 29, Old Station Yard Business Park,
Bourton-on-the-Water, Cheltenham GL54 2RZ

or have it delivered for a small additional charge. Delivery is around five working days.

Calendar – September 2026

Events may be amended, depending on circumstances. Additional events may be added at any time.

*Monthly committee meetings are normally held at the Social Club @ 1830 and speakers @ 1900. However, note that the **Jamie Falvey** talk on September 16th together with the preceding committee meeting, will be held at **Brio**.*

DATE		EVENT
Sept	1	Square Wheels @ Queens Head
	11	Visit to RML Group at Wellingborough
	16	Monthly meeting: "Jamie Falvey - BRIT Racing Driver"
Oct	3	Car Treasure Hunt - Rotary in the Risingtons
	21	Monthly meeting: Skittles challenge with Aston Martin Owners
Nov	1	London to Brighton Veteran Car Run
	18	Monthly meeting: Julien Simon-Chauteemps - F1 Racing Engineer
Dec	the	Christmas Event
	16	Monthly Meeting: Post Office Scandal 2 - Ron

Events of interest run by other Organisations

DATE		EVENT
Sept	2 - 6	Salon Prive Blenheim
	18 - 20	Goodwood Revival
Oct	11	Coffee and Classics - CMH
Nov	13 - 14	Classic Motor Show - NEC
Dec	6	Christmas Party - CMH

Forthcoming Evening Highlights

STOW MOTOR CLUB GUEST SPEAKER

A circular logo for the Motor Club Stow-on-the-Wold 2026. It features a green center with the year '2026' in white, surrounded by a black ring with the text 'MOTOR CLUB' at the top and 'STOW-ON-THE-WOLD' at the bottom. The background of the logo is a stylized wheel.

JAMIE FALVEY

A small icon of a calendar with a date highlighted.

WEDNESDAY
16TH SEPT 2026

A small icon of a clock face.

6:30PM
VIEWING DALLARA STRADALE

A small icon of a clock face.

7:00PM
PRESENTATION

A portrait of Jamie Falvey, a man with a mustache, wearing a black racing suit with various sponsor logos. He is holding a racing helmet with 'BRIT' and 'ACTORSE' branding. The suit also features 'TEAM BRIT' and 'GELAN FLUM' logos.

Jamie Falvey a 40 year old from Fernwood in Nottinghamshire and made his return to Team BRIT in 2025. Jamie served in the Royal Marines commandos as lance corporal. He was medically discharged after sustaining hearing damage, resulting in permanent tinnitus which curtailed his career in the military. Joined Team BRIT as a driver in 2017, competing in the Aston Martin Le Mans Festival in 2018. He moved on to professional racing, becoming the 2018 Caterham 270R champion and a multiple race winner in the 2020 Ginetta GT4 Supercup Championship. In 2024 he competed in the Michelin Le Mans Cup in the LMP3 Class in 2024, with Team Virage. In 2025 he was announced as the driver of the team's new BMW GT3, and will drive alongside Paul Fullick in the 2026 GT Cup championship. "As soon as I was approached by Team BRIT with this opportunity, I was humbled and hugely excited."

"It's really special for my time with Team BRIT to have come full circle. Having started out with the team with minimal racing experience back in 2017, to competing in other championships, it's a 'pinch me' moment to be part of their move to GT3 racing."

A bright yellow sports car, likely a BMW GT3, parked on a paved surface. In the background, the Eiffel Tower and the Paris skyline are visible under a clear sky.

Brio Beechwood Park, Stow on the Wold, GL54 1FP

Reflections on the Stow Motor Show – 2026 Roger White

Our Stow Motor Show in July was in the opinion of many a great success. It was the most ambitious Motor Show we had organised so far, with more added attractions to provide entertainment for the whole family.

The show had two main aims. It was hoped to turn a profit to allow us to make donations to our three chosen charities and we also planned to provide an enjoyable day out for Stow residents and visitors alike. Thanks in part to the great weather it succeeded in both .

Financially we netted £4,590.04 which has enabled us to provide £1,250 donations to each of the three charities, Stow Primary School PTFA, Cotswold Friends and Kate's Home Nursing, as well as fund an awards event at St Edward's Hall to recognise both the Show



awardees and the twelve sponsors whose generosity enabled us to host the show. This group deserve a special mention as without them the event could not have taken place.

On the day the Super Car group in the Square provided an incentive for people to cross the Fosseway and visit the main show.

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Over four hundred visitor cars were accommodated which provided over £2,000 in income, shared between us and Rotary North Cotswolds who marshalled the visitor parking. Within the show, we had over two hundred registrations as exhibitor cars, including four dedicated motor club sites.

The various attractions included the climbing wall, the vintage bus rides, the Bourton Radio Controlled Car Club, the Fire Service demonstration and the three shows by the magician, Mr Alexander (shown). They were all very well received. The Zorbs attraction unfortunately had to be halted because of the extreme heat but the ice cream van did a roaring trade!!

Music was provided by Paige and the Red Shift, and the Witney Guitar Club. An additional highlight was the flypast by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire, which was greeted by loud applause.

The end result was a great event made possible by the volunteer support of many members of the club who pitched in during the planning stage in the months before the event as well as the many tasks to be carried out on the day itself. These included the design, production and placing of the advertising banners and notices, design and content of the programme, marking out the field and marshalling the arriving cars on the day. There was great camaraderie and good humour throughout the event - although everyone probably had a good sleep that night after a hot and busy day!

From the proceeds we have been able to again keep back £5,000 as seed money for the planned show in 2028. Congratulations to all involved.



Stow Motor Show 2026

Jenny Evanson

Never has **so much** work and thought gone into the preparations for Stow Motor Show as it did in 2026. **So many** came to enjoy it and so few of us organisers got the chance to wander round and have a look at everything... but it didn't matter! We, the committee, and all the volunteers I spoke to, were delighted to make the little sacrifices we had to in order to deliver a top community event! Well done us! At least most of us got to see the marvellous Spitfire flypast.

Thanks have already been given but I'm most happy to repeat... to Nigel Surnman a member of SMC, and his army of volunteers drawn from The Stow Civic Society and beyond. Thanks and a big hug to all of you, without whom the event couldn't have happened.

Massive thanks as well to the team from Rotary North Cotswolds who bravely tackled the car parking.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues in SMC for your ideas and dedication to the event.



Particular thanks to Geoff Parke for his knowledge and expertise.

To John Barber for pulling things together in fine spreadsheets, arranging the BMF flypast and much more.

To Roger and Diana White for keeping a tight rein on the finances.

To Greg Forster for our signage and giving it all a very professional look and feel.

To Pete Brown, our esteemed SMC chair, who raised a huge amount of sponsorship from his contacts old and new.

And, of course, to Ben Eddolls... mastermind and founder of the event, who held it all together when things could have easily

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drifted off into chaos.

Please don't be upset with me if I missed you out of these thanks; you know who you are and what you contributed, for which we're all very grateful!

This year our Motor Show played host to two large orange things. The first was the Sun... shorts and hats were the order of the day, unlike 2024 when wellies and raincoats were de rigueur. Simon Clarke and his team did their best to assuage our thirst via the cracking bar. Unfortunately, the Zorbs were abandoned early because we were a bit worried about cooking small children. But, as you might expect, the queue for ice creams was of consistent and sizable length.

The second big round orange thing won The People's Choice Award, kindly organised by our friends at Brio. Now, with a Motor Show graced by Aston-Martins, Lagondas, Bugattis, Rolls Royces ...oh the list is long and beautiful.... the fact that our dear SMC member's Outspan Orange, built on a mini chassis, top speed 30mph (due to high risk of rolling)... won, gives hope to us all in this mad world, and demonstrates our collective joy of the eccentric!



Would this vehicle have won People's Choice at a motor show in Milan? Probably not but I don't care. Well done little Outspan... you gave us great joy, and your prize is deserving!

The "Wold" Cup winner (SMC's choice of best in Show) was chosen and awarded by our SMC Chair Pete Brown to a gorgeous 1989 Lotus Esprit Turbo.

The Spitfire Concourse prize was won by an immaculate BMW 325i. Both deserving - and not orange!

Did we get everything right with this show? ... nope... but we tried! Have we learnt from our very few and hardly noticeable mistakes? ... oh yes! Are things looking auspicious for our 2028 Show? ... most definitely!!

See you there! x

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and Spitfire Mk Vb AB 910 – A Few interesting Facts

Roger White

The Spitfire which visited our 2026 Motor Show is part of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and is one of only nine Mk V Spitfires still flying worldwide, from over 6,450 Mk Vs built. It is a combat veteran which flew 143 operational sorties in WWII following its



delivery to its first squadron in August 1941. It was powered by a Rolls Royce Merlin 45 engine and armed with two 20mm canon and four 0.303-inch Browning machine guns. It was a D-Day Spitfire and carried the invasion stripes when it visited us.

An unusual non-combatant story involving this aircraft is the “girl on the tail”. In February 1945, a WAAF mechanic rode on the horizontal tail surface of the aircraft as it taxied to the take off point. Apparently, this was standard procedure at that airfield in windy conditions. But the pilot did not know she was there so did not give her the signal to get off, and he took off with the WAAF still on the tail. Obviously, this could have had disastrous results, but the pilot managed to maintain control and one circuit later he landed with the WAAF still wrapped around the fin!

Another story with a touching symmetry involves Spitfire test pilot Jeffrey Quill. He flew the prototype Spitfire in 1936 and delivered AB 910 to the BBMF, then known as the Battle of Britain Flight, in September 1965. This was to be his last ever flight in a Spitfire.

This information and much more on “our” Spitfire and the other aircraft comprising the BBMF was part of the comprehensive welcome pack I received when I joined the BBMF Club. I recommend visiting their website at

<https://www.raf.mod.uk/display-teams/battle-of-britain-memorial-flight>.

Photograph of the Spitfire described was taken by Mike Schoen at the 2026 Motor Show - somehow!!

2026 Isle of Man Hill Rally

Rory Oliver-Hall

It had been 18 years since I last co-drove in an off-road event. At that time we were competing in the British cross-country championship in a space-framed, mid-engined buggy with a 4.6 litre Rover V8. Consequently, when the opportunity arose to get back in the passenger seat for the 2026 IoM Hill Rally I jumped at the chance. Not only would I get to co-drive but I would also get to go to the Isle of Man, somewhere I had never been.

There were a few teething problems. The homologation on my helmet had expired and I hadn't renewed my National Rally License, and my race license wasn't good enough for this event. However, the loan of a helmet and a free speed license from Motorsport UK soon had this all sorted. I had a brief sit in the passenger seat of our almost completely standard Land Rover Discovery powered by the mighty 3.9



litre Rover V8. I tested that the intercom worked, and that was the prep, oh apart from buying an OS map of the IoM and ensuring I had a stop-watch.

So jump forward to the 16th of July. It's 4.45am and I am up and out. Rendezvous at Dave's, the owner and driver of the Discovery, previously best man at my wedding and now ops Director at JLR. I've known him 32 years and he is Land Rover through and through. Meet Will who is a Lotus development engineer and our chief mechanic for the weekend. We have a ferry to catch from Liverpool at 11.



Uneventful journey, just nice and easy towing with a new Defender. Arrive in Liverpool and I meet our other mechanic, Geoff, who has arrived on his XJ1300. On the ferry and the reunions start. I haven't attended an off-road event for well over ten years so there are lots of people to say hello to. After a very smooth crossing we arrive in Douglas, off the ferry and head to the TT pits which are the headquarters for the event. Unload and we head for scrutineering. Thankfully no issues at all. I

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spent a load of time studying the road book as I haven't done a multi-venue event for probably 20 years and I'm a bit nervous about cocking it up. Timings are critical and can easily turn a win into a tenth place if you get it wrong. Luckily, we had effectively a prologue to get into the event on the Friday afternoon. A couple of laps the wrong way round a motorcross track. Sounds a bit easy but the jumps were tricky and it was very dusty. After starting 42nd out of 45 we managed to make our way up into the 30's which was a good start. No mishaps and I managed to keep us on the right route and at the right times on the road.

Back to the TT site, service and then I went for a lap of the TT course on the back of Georges XJ1300. Unfortunately, it was dark by the time we got out and foggy up on the mountain but I got the impression of the course which was awesome.

So we came to Saturday. This was the meat of the rally. Twelve stages set all over the Island. 9.30 off and we're heading north towards Jurby airfield which will be our service point for most of the day. Firts stage is a combination of closed tarmac roads and off-road. Nice to be in the woods again. Then we head off to Jurby to do a stage at the airfield, then service and repeat the two stages. The airfield stages are tough on the brakes but the Discovery takes it. The scenery is beautiful and at one point we can see both Ireland and the Lake District. We do a further six stages and then service back at the TT paddock. There have been a number of stoppages so by the time we reach the final stage we are only just inside the time for opening the closed roads again. We eventually finish into service at 9.30pm.

We have basically been in the car for twelve hours. The stages have been good although a bit more tarmac than would have been ideal. We have managed to get up to 19th which is amazing in our Discovery. However, the class is competitive as we have to run in "modified" so we are only 3rd in class.

So Sunday comes around and we have six stages to do and hopefully a reasonably early finish. Everything is going well until we are crossing a rough piece of grassland.

Through a gate and there is a lurch - and we are not progressing well. Dave says he thinks a driveshaft may have gone. We stop, and get out. I look and think we have broken a spring as the car is slanted over. Meanwhile Dave runs off and gleefully comes back with a wheel!!! The wheel has come off!!!

Out with the jack and after several attempts to we get the wheel on and pinch nuts from the other corners.



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We lost 20 minutes which put us down to 29th. Out of the stage and we get a puncture but we lose no time as it is in the transit section. Anyhow we finish the event still in 29th overall which remained a good result.

After packing up I got a daylight lap of the TT circuit on the back of the XJ1300, including a 120mph blast down to Creg Ny Baa - which was interesting when we tried to slow down at the bottom!

What a great event and what a great place to go. Hopefully I'll be back for 2027. The only downer was that for some reason we were booked on the 7am ferry which meant we had to get up at 4.30.



SMC goes to Crewe

Andy Couchman

Your club was well-represented at the BDC (Bentley Drivers' Club) 90th anniversary event *Cars, Coffee & Community Event* at Bentley's 60-acre site in Pyms Lane, Crewe, in July.

Established in 1938 as a 'shadow factory' to produce Rolls-Royce aero engines, some 26,065 Rolls Royce Merlin engines were produced there from 1938-46, well away from the heavily bombed South-East. After the war, Bentley launched its first Crewe car, the Mk VI, in 1946, having previously built its cars in Cricklewood, London (1919-1931) and later – when taken over by Rolls-Royce - at Derby.

Club stalwart Ron Warmington and wife Helen brought their beautiful 1929 Blower Bentley along for the weekend, while club chairman Pete Brown, along with regalia boss Andrew Mitchell and your author attended on the Saturday. The original plan had been to attend in Pete's 1996 Bentley Turbo R but head gasket and turbo issues thwarted that so, instead, we attended in Andrew's quick and refined Genesis EV.

The first surprise on arriving was the sheer size of the estate, and certainly just walking round would surely keep anyone working there fit. However, small golf carts and electric vans are used to get people and stuff around the buildings including, on the day, us!

The second surprise was just how good the home-made cookies in the refreshment area of the visitor centre were.

The centre gave us chance to look around and sit in Bentley's current range of cars, a personal favourite being the Bentayga, a hybrid SUV or GADACA vehicle (goes anywhere, does anything, comfortably and accessibly). Mind you, with a base price of £190K+, the piggy bank is not yet large enough to oblige.



Many of the factory buildings were accessible, including the new €146.8m Paint Shop (it can handle 22,000 cars a year) and the Sew & Trim Shop and Wood Shop.

The main production buildings were, understandably, off limits, but we also got to see many of Bentley's historic cars, going back to its very
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early days. We were allowed to take photos in most places but not, unfortunately, in these shops.

At Bentley (named after its founder W O Bentley), customer choice is not just indulged but encouraged. So, after the big stuff like model and colour, you get a choice of wood and leather in your car's cabin, all exquisitely machine- and hand- crafted.

A highlight was seeing how the craftsmen hand-stitch leather steering wheels. Until recently, Bentley used sharpened fork (as in knife and fork) prongs to ensure even spacing for the stitching. Two needles and threads and the skill to know the

right tension on the threads make for a perfect and strong result. You can even choose the stitching pattern.

With EVs becoming more popular (Bentley launched its own EV – the Torcal - that weekend), reducing weight has become a priority for all car manufacturers, a small example being how Bentley dashboards are now made of plastic rather than metal. A retrograde step? Not really, plastic is easier to mould, lighter, as strong as necessary and can't be seen anyway under its leather outer layer. Eight or more hides are used in a modern Bentley, using specially selected and dyed hides from Italian mountain cows, used for the quality of the leather and lack of pinprick holes caused by barb wired fences and flies.

Wood veneer, just 0.8mm thick, is used on dashboards, door cappings and panels, with the delicate material wetted and heated to go round corners before being cured in vacuum bags to ensure the material does not lift or split.

Wood choice? Almost limitless and techniques like book matching and mirror matching provide perfect symmetry. If you're into wood, you could happily look at a

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single Bentley dashboard (burr walnut being the traditional choice) all day without getting bored. It's British craftsmanship at its very best.

Is such quality really necessary? Of course not, but a discerning owner buys a Bentley because they want the best and to be pampered, and if you have to talk about how much this all costs – well, that's just vulgar!

On display outside, queueing up to be concours judged, were over a hundred Bentleys (including Ron's Blower) which gave us chance to see even more Bentley



history and to chat to owners too. One chap owned over 30 cars (including a few Bentleys) and proudly told us that every one was British, while a couple in a Derby Bentley had a few cars too, and every one was pre-WW2.

After a long but fascinating day (with more free cookies and a free partial charge of the Genesis

courtesy of Bentley), we set off for home, and even (by choice) experienced the well-known EV phenomenon – range anxiety. Or rather, we calculated that there would be just enough juice to get us home without stopping for a quick recharge. In the event, Andrew had a comfortable six miles of range left when he arrived home. Phew. That saved us having to try to connect together our mobile phones...

Big thanks to the Bentley Drivers' Club, Bentley Motors and their staff, Andrew and Pete. And if you ever get the chance to visit Pym's Lane – do so!

When does 9 become 20?

answer... in the Cotswold Square! Andrew Mitchell

In the Spring of the year I was sitting with our esteemed Chairman (aka Peter) looking at a blank calendar for the SMC. I suggested a Drive Out in August, the weather should be OK by then. But where to go and for how long? SMC, to my knowledge, had not actually done a dedicated Drive Out event like this before, but I have in several other clubs over the years.

I chose the "Cotswold Square" as a simple but interesting route with some good views along the way and approximately 130 miles in length. The event went on the calendar in March and an advert went out in late July albeit with a couple of mistakes. To clarify the event I sent out an overview asking for confirmation by the following Tuesday at 1200. Only nine people... a bit of a disappointment! Regardless, we were going ahead and so I did a recce of the route only to find the usual road works and road closures along the way. Whilst nursing a pint at the planned lunch stop, two phone calls increased the numbers from 9 to 15! Bookings and route amended, the morning of Saturday 15 August soon came along. And then it happened .. in the sunshine of Stow Square, **9 had become 20**.

The usual, but most enjoyable, "car club" confusion ensued. "Do you know where you are going ... no!", "have you got a copy of the route... no!", "where's Harry... he's gone for a wee!". But despite all this, the eclectic collection of vehicles under the SMC banner left the Square on time at 0900 (except for Ben who was waiting for Rob). The Fosse

Way was unusually quiet and good time was made to Cotswold Airport for breakfast at the AV8 café. The verbal rev limiter sat beside me kicked in once at 7000 rpm ...so reliable!!

We parked up under the port wing of Negus, the resident Boeing 747.



Breakfast at AV8, Kemble

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Now, this is where ***“9, or is it 15, but it’s actually 20”*** has the potential to be a problem! After apologising profusely to the duty manager for me getting it wrong, the table and food orders were sorted and eating began. Rob who had ordered nothing digested a “Gnat” and all ended well.

Once again the eclectic SMC group, confident in what lay ahead, exited the airport dead on time. Back to Kemble, past Malmesbury it was a pleasant 21 Celsius. The road works and complex roundabouts at Chippenham were skilfully negotiated and it was into the countryside towards Calne. It was Saturday market day in Calne but no real holdups before taking on the delightful A4 towards Marlborough. I am always reminded that until the mid-60s (*I recall it clearly*) this road was the trunk road from London to South Wales, the older ones amongst us picking out buildings that served as the posh hotels and roadside cafés of the past. As a family we did not partake in such luxuries; it was long days in the car, Shippams fish paste sandwiches and me attempting to light the primus stove under the “clear” directions of my father.

Although my father was a garage owner, we never had our own car, magically one that was *For Sale* always became available at the right time! Having negotiated the busy high street of Marlborough, West Berkshire and Hungerford soon beckoned. “*Left at the Shell place*”, pass under the M4 and onwards to Great



Tea at No 4 - the bottom of Stow Hill

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Shefford where the “Swan”, a great local pub, is soon to reopen after being closed for many years (*note to self .. a good place for SMC to visit*).

With the temperature now a sweaty 27 Celsius, we arrived for lunch at the Queens Arms, East Garston in the Valley of the Racehorse. Once again “**9, or is it 14, it should be 20 but it’s now 19**” came into play but was calmly dealt with by the manager and we settled down as a noisy and hence segregated group in the cool of the Garden Room.

Ninety minutes of munching signalled a successful menu had been addressed and it was time to leave on the third leg of the journey.

Avoiding the closed roads, and with the temperature now showing 29 Celsius, we made our way to Lambourn and north over what must be one of the best roads in the South of England. As the road drops away into Childrey, on a clear day you can see Upper Rissington 22 miles away on the port bow to the NNW (as us old seadogs would say). And so it was across the Vale to Faringdon (watch for the speed bumps), Lechlade and Burford to finish at Number 4 at Stow at the bottom of the hill (photo on previous page). The Queen’s Head had been planned, but it was considered no parking would be available.

During “tea”, Ben announced the winner of his competition, “*how far have I driven?*”. Three winners were declared, but the biggest winner was the Cotswolds Lions football team who will receive £75 towards their new football kit storage facility. For those who do not know the Cotswolds Lions, it is a charity based in Upper Rissington, closely linked to the Primary School, giving young children the opportunity to play competitive football.

A good day, enjoyed by all but shall we do it again? I think the general consensus is, yes. I have planned the “Wales Wander” for a weekend in November. Same format, breakfast and lunch and a distance around 150 miles. It may be raining but that is just an added challenge. When it is advertised could I please ask you to abide by the closing date, it makes things so much easier. See you next time... Andrew

97-Year-Old Letter from Le Mans

Andy Couchman

I don't know about you, but I find antique shops, car boots and car shows fascinating. Not just for the things you're looking for, for your old (or not so old) car, but for the things you never knew you wanted or even that they existed.

One such discovery was an old handwritten letter at Spencer Elton's stall at the VSCC Prescott meeting in August (where the club's John Barber had a win in his 60s Fiat 850 Nurburgring). Spencer is one of the sport's characters (meant in a good way) and a regular feature at such events. An ex-racer (ask him about the time James Hunt punched him after Spencer's Formula Ford car had collided with his), he has many a tale to tell. The first thing I came away with was a pewter bottle holder (with bottle) presented to competitors in the August 1938 meet – the first year of racing at the world-famous Gloucestershire hill-climb venue owned by the Bugatti Owners' Club.

Back to the letter; as a long-time fan of the Le Mans 24 hours race, the letter appealed (it was a photocopy rather than the original) because it was on two sides of headed paper from the Hotel de Paris in Le Mans. I asked Spencer if he knew who it was from or to. 'No idea!' was his reply and he wasn't even sure when he had bought it, but knew it had been with him unsold for many years.

Between us we tried to work out who the letter might be from – was it anyone famous? It was simply signed 'Jack'. The content suggested Jack had something to do with racing Bentleys, and the date was helpfully simply written as 'Wednesday' – no date, month or even year, although the headed letter paper helpfully told us it was nineteen-twenty something.

Intrigued, I bought it for not a lot, and promised to let Spencer know the following weekend if I'd been able to decipher it.

Back home, the letter was transcribed (a photograph of the letter and the transcript appear at the end of this article). Any mistakes are down to me. The letter suggested Jack was a driver, while the recipient – 'My dear Geoffrey' was surely someone close to Jack. However, more than one Jack had raced for Bentley over the period 1923-1930. The contents were really interesting – a first-hand account of what it was like to race at this famous race for the first time. All in a neat hand taking up fully two sides of paper. But, who was Jack – and who was Geoffrey - and when was it written?

After quite a bit of Googling, it appears that Jack was Jack Dunfee, Bentley works driver, and he raced for the factory at Le Mans in a 4½ litre Bentley (number 9) in 1929. He and co-driver Glen Kidston finished second overall (to Woolf Barnato and Tim Birkin's Speed Six Bentley) and won the up-to-5 litre sports car class.

Jack returned to race a Blower Bentley in 1930 but was a non-starter.

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Back to the 1929 race; the Bentley Boys were instructed by W O Bentley to race just fast enough to lead but no faster. That was to ensure reliability (and to disguise their real speed from the Mercedes spies watching the team...) but it frustrated the drivers, and at one point Jack apparently stopped at the Café de l'Hippodrome (mentioned in the letter) for a drink, after racing too far ahead and being told to slow by W O himself. Jack also had the frightening experience of complete light failure when the headlamp bulbs burnt out while he was doing over 100mph on the unlit Mulsanne Straight. He was not happy when he later found out mechanics had replaced the bulbs with higher output (and therefore shorter life) units before the race, without telling him.

According to Ron Warmington (whose 1929 Blower Bentley also sports their number 9 on its radiator grille), Jack Dunfee was Bentley's only professional race driver (the rest were mainly wealthy amateurs).

Jack was later joined in the team by younger brother Clive, and the pair went on to win the prestigious Brooklands 500-mile race in 1930, and returned to try to repeat the feat a year later. Jack was lying fourth overall in the 8 litre Bentley when he came into the pits to hand over to brother Clive, who set off in hot pursuit of the leaders, with both the talent and the machine to do it.

Sadly, it was not to be. Overtaking a slower car on the Brooklands banking, Clive ran a wheel too high, and the car left the track, smashing itself into a tree. Clive was thrown out onto the track and died instantly, and Jack never raced again. The incident was horribly captured by Movietone News.

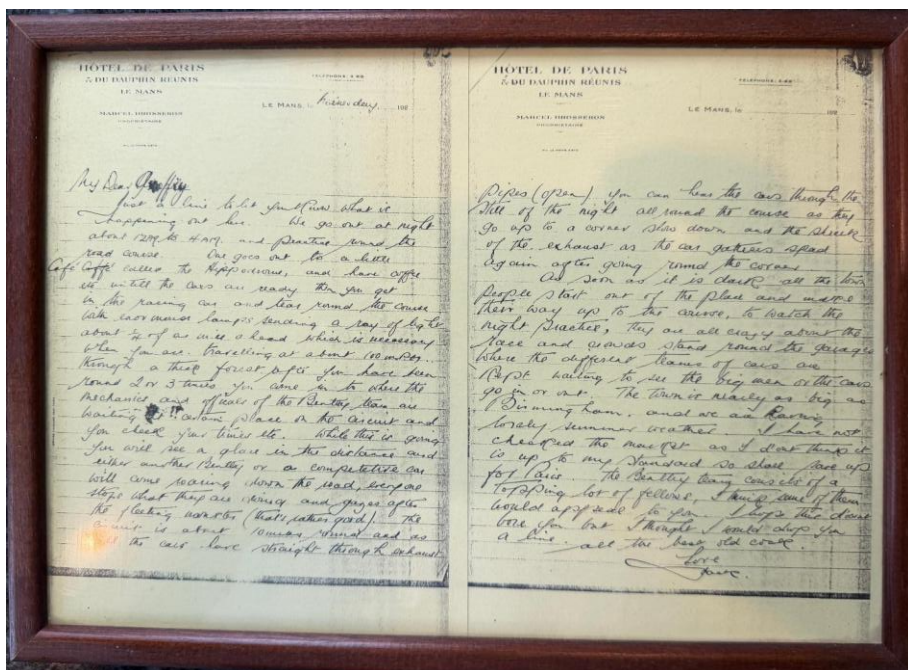
Tragedy later hit brother Geoffrey too, who was lost when piloting a Mosquito plane with the RAF in 1944.

After his racing career ended, Jack Dunfee was associated with fast boats and became a successful theatre impresario, before going on to become a farmer. Thrice married to screen stars, he was also once engaged to Eva Gabor (sister of the more famous Zsa Zsa). His final years were spent on his farm, living at Wychwood Manor in Ascott-under-Wychwood. He died, age 73, on 13 September 1975, having been born on 19 October 1901.

And the letter? Given his Bentley associations, it's been passed onto Ron who has passed it onto the Bentley Museum. We hope to find out in due course if the original is known but, in the meantime, immerse yourself in the world of the Bentley Boys in the run up to the legendary race on 15-16 June 1929 when Bentley finished 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th.

See the letter and transcript overpage.

continued



Hotel de Paris
2 Du Dauphin Reunis
Le Mans
Marcel Brosseron, Proprietare
Le Mans, Wednesday 192_

My Dear Geoffroy

Just a line to let you know what is happening out here. We go out at night about 12am to 4am and practice round the road course. One goes out to a little Café called the Hippodrome, and have coffee etc until the cars are ready then you get in the racing car and tear round the course with enormous lamps sending a ray of light about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile a head which is necessary when you are travelling at about 100mph through a thick forest. After you have been round 2 or 3 times you come in to where the mechanics are and officials of the Bentley team are waiting at a certain place on the circuit and you check your times etc. While this is going you will see a glare in the distance and either another Bentley or a competitor car will come roaring

continued

down the road, everyone stops what they are doing and stares after the fleeting monster (that's rather good). The circuit is about 10 miles round and as all the cars have straight through exhaust pipes (open) you can hear the cars through the still of the night all round the course as they go up to a corner slow down and the shriek of the exhaust as the car gathers speed again after going round the corner.

As soon as it is dark all the town people start out of the place and make their way up to the course, to watch the night practice, they are all crazy about the race and crowds stand round the garages where the different teams of cars are kept waiting to see the big men or their cars go in or out. The town is nearly as big as Birmingham, and we are having lovely summer weather. I have not checked the night life as I don't think it is up to my standard so shall save up for Paris. The Bentley team consists of a topping lot of fellows, I think some of them would appeal to you. I hope this don't bore you but thought I would drop you a line.

All the best old crone.

Love

Jack.

A Scimitar Trilogy – Part One

Ben Eddolls

In my dotage I have come to realise that Reliant Scimitars hold quite a light in my life, probably more than I realise.

My first insight was an SE5 owned in the late 60s by my cousin and her husband Pete Whitney. Some may know of Pete from his days at South Cerney Engineering near Cirencester. It was their daily driver and family car. The lines of the Scimitar left an impression on me.

We move on twenty years or so and I'm involved in aluminium seamless guttering, another interesting topic but not just now. Anyway I was regularly passing a red SE5a parked at the front of a house near Abingdon in Oxfordshire. I just had to have a look. The owner said it had been parked for a while and it was for sale. It was in generally OK condition. For my part, I observed his guttering was not in good shape, and a deal was struck: - guttering and some cash for LFC 70N. (I've no idea if it's still around and can't see it as registered with DVLA.)

This was a 1975 car with black vinyl interior, Webasto vinyl sunroof, 4-speed manual gearbox with overdrive which worked on second, third and top, so 7 speeds!

With a bit of fettling (I could never get a



decent seal on the exhaust manifolds) and a new multi-core radiator to solve overheating, it passed an MOT and became our family car.

At this time the Golf GTI and XR3i were the young man's choice so it was great when one appeared in the mirror, snapping at my heels. Just flick down the overdrive, foot to the floor and gradually the chaser was left behind. As I found out later when I had a MK1 Golf GTI, it ran out of puff at about 112mph. The Scimitar only ran out of fuel!!

Family needs changed and the Scimitar moved on for an early 2-door Range Rover with an SD1 engine, a great vehicle but very juicy and not the best tow vehicle for a fully laden trailer on these Cotswold hills.

That's it for this chapter but there's more Scimitarism on the way!