

THE XK SPIRIT

THE ARISTOCAT REGISTER MAGAZINE



A 'stag' gering Aristocat picture

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ENGINE NOTES

EDITORIAL

For many of us of a certain age, the sound of 'The Beatles' singing and playing "Here Comes the Sun" released in 1969 evokes memories of a different age of motoring.

The sun has been shining brightly through June and I've certainly been enjoying watching all the Isle of Man TT Road Racing on TV. As a former "Petrol-Head" (now an 'Electric-Head') to me this is the pinnacle of bravery, skill and total madness as they lap the 37.73 mile circuit at speeds over 200 mph. With this year's lap record being broken by Peter Hickman at an average 136.358 mph, these guys and gals are definitely wired differently!

June has definitely been a personal challenge as on the 16th I had to visit Moorfields Eye Hospital, City Road, London for an emergency operation on my right eye due to a Detached Retina. Fortunately I was operated on within a few hours and am now recovering with a Black Eye Patch.

My biggest challenge has been to locate Parrott (Parakeets not the same) and even Amazon couldn't oblige! The good news is that in a couple of weeks time I should be able to get back to driving and visit some of our Saturday morning Classic Car meetings. Back in February at Bletchingly a Vauxhall L - Velox Roadster Concept was on display. This is one of only two produced and on page 10 you can read the article about this unique vehicle.

Although I currently don't own an Aristocat having sold YEL 921S (now owned by Pete & Judi Thurlow), I have to admit that when I first saw our cover picture of John Jennings "Cat" I did have mild moments of envy ('Get behind me Satan'). John's "Cat" had had a visit to Autotune where Anthony and Richard have used their fettling magic making the car a sweet runner but, also before leaving it got a bit of buffing attention from Autotune amazing body man and the car looks absolutely stunning. I understand

that the Stag in the picture is a regular visitor to John's home as he lives out in the wide open spaces of Dumfries and Galloway.

Well it's now July and our summer weather seems to be a bit like summer, spring winter and autumn all rolled into one, sometimes on a daily basis. Hopefully this will not put those building off from cracking on and enjoying your build. Do remember that Autotune are the experts and have an endless store (not only of parts) but knowledge and info. on how to get the best out of your build and so often (as I found whilst building) all the answers to those tricky problems that you will encounter irrespective of your skill set and knowledge. I was so thankful to Anthony, Richard and Carolyn for the endless help that they provided at all stages of my build. To say their after sales service was 2nd to none, in my experience was not an exaggeration and without their expertise I wouldn't have got the job done. Happy motoring through summer.

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DRIVER'S SEAT

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Over this winter I managed to fit my soft top to the "Cat" which has proven very handy with this terrible weather we are having at the moment.

We did have some lovely weather in June and we were able to take "The Cat" on a few long journeys which were great. It always attracts attention, even from people you would not expect. My wife even suggested that we should move to sunnier climes, which is one option. But with the new roof at least we can use it at

weekends without getting wet.

After my niece used the car for her wedding, I have been approached by several people enquiring about hiring it for various events, including a conference in Dublin next month. I have had an enquiry from the events company who want the "Key Speaker," who is flying in from America, to arrive at the Conference in it. They are even prepared to pay the ferry cost (not a cheap crossing £500) and hire for the day. I did say 'no' but they have been chasing me ever since.

Apparently, he likes to drive and arrive in style!!

I don't know if any of you made it to the Newark Kit Car Festival. It was one I did hope to attend but unfortunately I wasn't able to due to family commitments. I don't think the weather was very favourable which is a shame for events like this as so much time and effort goes into the preparation from organisers, exhibitors and attendees.

As I sit here writing this, it looks like it's going to be a nice bright day so I am going to finish up now, go out to my garage, get "The Cat" out and take my wife to Chatsworth House for lunch.

I do hope we get some better weather, so we can all enjoy taking our cars out after all the hard work that's gone in to building them. No better feeling than hitting the road with the hood down!!!!

Enjoy the rest of your summer.

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National Kit Car Show 2023



This year the National Kit Car Show moved from its usual location of Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire to the Royal Three Counties Showground in Malvern, Worcestershire.

According to the organisers, this is a permanent move for the foreseeable future. Although I don't know the reasons for the move, part of it must be due to the costs, and that the National Kit Car Show (and kit car shows in general) are reducing in size. Having said that, the Three Counties Showground had a spectacular location at the foot of the Malvern Hills made all the better by fantastic weather over the first weekend in June.

The Aristocat Register had a club stand at the show but while I was there, no Aristocats were displayed. Unfortunately, I couldn't take my Aristocat this year due a defective tyre that I couldn't get replaced in time.

There was only one exhibition hall used for manufacturers and parts

suppliers, and this was significantly smaller than either of the Stoneleigh halls, accommodating between fifteen and twenty stands. Does this reflect a contracting kit car industry in the UK? Certainly some of the familiar names were not on display and some of those that were have been subject to changes in ownership.

I spoke with Simeon Cattle, General Manager of the recently-formed Westfield Chesil Sports Car Company. He bought the old Westfield company out of administration in the last year.

Although they have great plans for the future, including electric

versions of both Westfield and Chesil vehicles, after talking with Simeon, I felt that there was still a question mark in his mind; whether manufacturers of kit cars would be able to sell petrol or diesel driven cars after 2030.

Outside of the hall, the biggest club stand by far was the Westfield with a marquee and about 60 cars on show.

Other stands typically showed between five and ten cars. Wandering around these club stands I found that I found a much friendlier reception than in previous years.

Owners were only too keen to talk to you about their pride and joy.

In summary, while much smaller than previous shows, I felt that the show was equally as enjoyable; although for different reasons.

Let's hope that the show can continue at this new venue of the Malvern Showground.

- Martin Webb



Granddaughter's end of school Prom



Granddad's taxi arriving

My Granddaughter's end of school Prom (very American!) was held on the 5th of July and she asked if I could take her in the Aristocat; so I took her. The event was at the Swansea.com Stadium, the city's main sports stadium for Football & Rugby. I didn't take the pictures so the quality is mobile phone stuff. The Prom event was for all Swansea secondary schools and was controlled bedlam with cars, some dressed up and people all over the place!

It is hard to believe she, Rhiannon, is 16 years old this month. She is Child minding. How time flies (Ye gods I'm 78 this month!)

The Aristocat is running OK still less than 50K miles in 23 years but



"Hmm, am I ready for this bash?"

I do have a problem with the glassfibre gelcoat despite it being garaged. The tops of the wings are losing colour with pale patches. I tried colour restorer on the patches but it didn't work.

I will try it again but I guess the real cure is to have the car painted, an expense I can't really afford at this time.



Off to digs to get dressed

Wrapping is a slightly cheaper alternative; has anybody got experience of this?

- Keith Turner

Bits and bobs

Anyone wishing to sell their Aristocat, please make contact with Autotune. We will broker it for you via our new website, which is where many people start looking to source a car.

We frequently have people ringing up who only want a good, well finished Aristocat and this is generally because they do not want to build. Matching spec. to spec. and budget to budget is a

good way of sorting out sensible customers. Several cars have been sold in this way, over the past few months. As I write this, yet another enquiry, and no cars available.

- Carolyn Taylor

Looking forward to a great summer



Hi to you all and I hope you are all well and have had a good 2022 and now a great 2023.

2022 was a great year for using the Aristocat with some really hot and sunny weather but, there was also some really stormy weather in the autumn which cost me two new car covers. As I'm writing this hopefully the weather warms up soon as we seemed to have missed the Global Warming.

Now that the latest terminology is climate change I cannot see why there has not been a push for LPG vehicles. As LPG is a fuel that is greener than Petrol, Diesel, and Electric (looking at the battery and renewal costs).

They are allowing London buses and taxis to convert to LPG but private cars still have to pay ULEZ charge £12.50 per day if the Mayor of London gets his way!

My latest car addition is a 4.0 ltr Jaguar XJS which I purchased last

by the end of August it may have to be sold.

I just hope that Sadiq Khan does not get his way with this money making scheme, as by come 29th August 2023 it could cost me £12.50 every day I use it as I will be living in the new zone.

My wife, Pauline has a 2005 Saab convertible which runs well on LPG and she loves it. Hood down whenever the sun comes out and it gets new dings frequently in supermarket carparks. The gearbox is automatic with no filter so I have to change part of the gearbox oil every year to keep a smooth gear change.

I sold my TR8 after 32 years ownership as well as the Simitar GTE last year. Both needed a lot of work which I really didn't have the time for. Both went on the same weekend and Pauline would not believe me until they were gone.

February 2021. It is a good clean car with an LPG kit fitted but unfortunately not commissioned. When the LPG was set up and a few minor body repairs completed it runs very economically and is great fun to drive.

The purchase of the XJS was for bad weather touring and it was used a lot in the early part of the year as our weather was often extremely poor. I like the XJS a lot but as we may be living in the ULEZ



My Lexus R300 was also sold and I now use a Saab 9-5 estate as my daily transport. This is not LPG but is ULEZ compliant. I would like to fit LPG but there's now so few LPG stations that it is't worth it.

Now leaving the best till last, my beloved Aristocat. We had loads of fun with her last year and took the "Cat" to the Le Mans Classic.

I went with a friend and we had a great time with wonderful weather, great selection of old cars and lots of fun. The organisation of the event was all about corporate money making and as a result the time table ran late from the start and got even later.

The organisers have promised better this year but we will see!

Our return journey in the "Cat" from the Classic was eventful. The clutch slave cylinder failed at the last toll booth before Calais.

Only an hour to catch the ferry so we rolled it down the slope to bump start and off to the ferry.

At the ferry terminal we were helped by several folk and managed to get through customs, passport control and onto the boat. Phew!

At Dover we decided to drive it back to London. We got all the way to the Dartford Crossing when the traffic stopped on an uphill section of the M25. They had closed the



tunnels, and the starter motor then gave up so we had to resort to an AA recovery home.

All now fixed and enjoying using it again.

The main Le Mans 24 for this year was sold out for tickets by December 2022 so we cannot go this year.

First miss apart from the Covid years since 1988, but we should have organised ourselves earlier.

I will finish up writing for now, as in the morning I am off to the Spa Classic with a friend. We will be travelling in style in his classic Daimler 250 V8.

- John Knight

Aristocat wedding car



The happy couple posing with ETG after the ceremony

Over the past few years Patrick Adam, (who several years ago had a Red, a White and a Blue Aristocat in his stable) has reported on journeys, exploits and accidents with his beautiful white Aristocat; ETG 851.

A couple of years ago she was on parade as a very capable Wedding Stead for his daughter. **- Editor**



My new son in-law driving ETG with my very happy daughter to the wedding reception



ETG having a rest after a hectic day on duty

Taylors out and about



The Taylors are not noted for doing classic rallies; organising, yes, for the Lancashire Automobile Club, but not competing. However, this particular rally forced Anthony to do it, for old times sake. Mrs. T was too busy signing drivers on, organising, food etc. thus choosing not to navigate, so a third generation Taylor, nephew James,

did the honours. It was to be a commemorative Rally following the route of the Club's first Rally in 1904, this being 100 miles from Whalley to Kendal and back. Anthony's Great grandfather did it in his own early Daimler and was one of the 18 who successfully completed the run and won a gold, Yes, gold medal at the end.

The Club purchased one of these medals offered on the internet two years ago, and it set the theme off. A local jeweller, who has enjoyed many of our Runs/Rallies in his Alvis, chose to reproduce the medal in silver, beautifully boxed and he presented one to each finisher of our Rally.

On the way round the Aristocat seemingly lost its front number plate and progressed the route with the number KENDAL 100! This was later found and a kind person googled and contacted us at work, and we now have the same plate returned. How kind of them was that!! A great day out.

- Carolyn Taylor

Goodwood Revival

Anyone who has been to Goodwood Revival knows "The Boys". Mick Jasper and Co. were up at the Wrea Green Classic Car Charity Festival in Lancashire (the Fylde Peninsula) as I heard one of our customers telling some Americans at Goodwood, when they asked where he came from. "Equivalent to your Texas on oil I would say!!!!" I nearly fell out of my bottle of champagne when I heard that. And the anti-frackers have stopped that oil exploration up here now. As a family we always go and support this incredibly fast growing event, the lovely village green with duckpond, and 400 classics attending. **- Carolyn Taylor**



Vauxhall L - Velox Roadster Concept 1948

As we already know the first post-war Vauxhall models were virtually unchanged from their pre-war counterparts apart from the front grille changing from vertical to horizontal bars and a few minor tweaks to engines. The 10 was quickly dropped, leaving just the 12 with its engine in the H 10 body and the larger J body 14.

Like most of their competitors, Vauxhalls Design Department started urgently working on new models almost as soon as the war was over with planned launch dates in autumn 1948 when the first post-war motor shows were scheduled to take place in London and Paris. During the war years, David Jones had been kept abreast of advances in US car design and had already devised a clever, and more importantly quick, facelift for the 4-cylinder 12 which gave the car a "new" look without the huge costs and time involved in changing the basic panels or structure. The overall effect was like a miniature 1948 Chevrolet Fleetline; sort of! The centre section of the car was almost unchanged, the drawback was that the car remained very narrow compared to some of the competitor launches. The car could have been launched earlier as most of the design work was done within 6 months, but wartime urgency still prevailed at Luton! The result of this was during the early part of 1948 the Design Department didn't really have a



great deal to do. Preliminary drawings were being for what would eventually become the E Type and also thought was being given to a new Bedford van, which would end up as the CA, and also replacement trucks, but the David Jones team had the rare opportunity and time to dream of more exotic ideas. A catalyst for this may have been the experimental 6-cylinder engines that Maurice Platt's engineers were working on for the new L Type Velox. These involved over-boring the 1781cc engine from the J 14hp model to its maximum capacity of 2275cc which gave a significant increase in both power and torque. In other words, an ideal engine for what any car designer likes to play around with; a 2-seater sports roadster.

Vauxhall had not had anything that could be described as remotely sporting since the 1920's and in those days they were competing in a very upmarket environment totally different from what

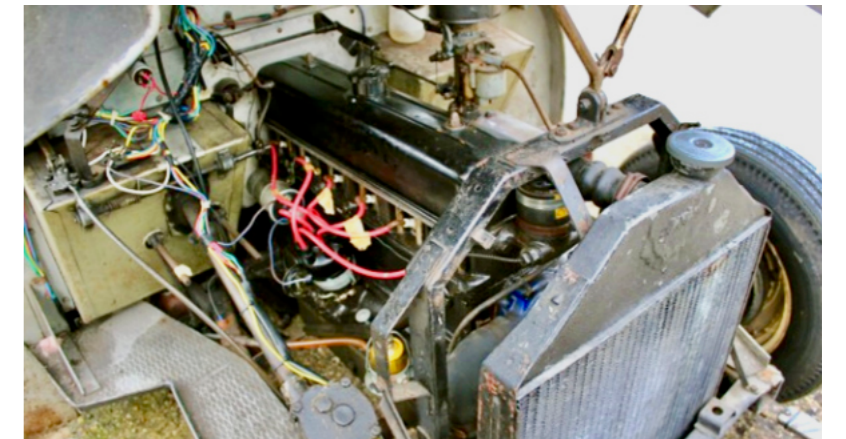
Vauxhall had been, and at the time still were making, that is efficient and popular and or family transport for the masses.

Plans mentioned to continue production of the H Twelve after the launch of the L Type as a basic price leader for the Vauxhall range had already been overruled by the head of GM Overseas Operations, Ed Riley, he believed only one body was needed to keep the Vauxhall plant fully occupied until new expansion in capacity could be realised in the coming years. This had been the reason for offering two engines in the same body to create two distinct models in the L Type – 4-cylinder Wyvern & 6-cylinder Velox.

The fortunate aspect of the Vauxhall's Design Department was that at the time it was very much like David Jones's personal "kingdom" and as long as the corporate projects were completed on time and were successful, he was free to indulge himself in

whatever he liked within reason. It has been noted by many at the time that his relationship with fellow senior Vauxhall Directors and department heads, including Assistant Chief Engineer Maurice Platt, was strained on a good day! The Design Department also resembled more of an art studio than somewhere that designed cars and trucks although by necessity this would change in time.

So it was against this background that Jones himself sketched out his idea for a 2 seater roadster which would use the powerful new experimental 6 cylinder engine planned for the new L Type Velox. A clay mock-up was made which was significantly different to the road-going version apparently, but we will never know because no pictures exist of this, only verbal testimony. The basis for the concept car was a modified J-14 as the chassis was already designed to use the engine and could be



adapted much easier than the I-12 chassis or the new L Type. As can be seen from the pictures much of the length of the car was taken up by the elongated boot which contrasted sharply with the upright front end which was necessary in order to cover the tall engine and radiator. The overall style was similar to other 2 seater roadsters that would appear over the next few years from other manufacturers but the long tail was unusual and somehow the car has an almost "art deco" look about it. The front end was something of a disappointment

and was quite anonymous looking apart from the larger-than-normal headlights but hid a unique bonnet arrangement whereby the whole front end would lift up to reveal the engine compartment. Another advanced feature was the built-in indicator lights in front and the rear which were finished with two-piece quarter bumpers. The hub caps are straight from the upcoming L Type.

Inside the concept used a central gear lever, which would end up on the steering column on the L Type, and a dashboard, with 2 large dials with chrome surrounds, mounted to the left of the driver and a separate ammeter mounted below. The quarter windows were fixed and the only luxury items were the leather trim and wood door capping which were obviously styled as an integral part of the car.

The car, as with many open-top vehicles, looks a lot better with the roof down but I would not rank it as David Jones's best work. ▶





Guilford Surrey and was advertised as follows:

“This Car was built as a joint venture by two car workers, a Bentley mechanic and a Vauxhall mechanic in the 1950’s. They designed and built one each of their own sporty fast car. Made with genuine Vauxhall and Bentley parts, it was built to a very high standard and built to last. This car is, I repeat, 1 of only 2 ever made, this is a 2 door Drophead Coupe with a red leather interior. It utilises Vauxhall’s excellent Straight 6 Cresta engine”. Well, if you don’t know just think of something that sounds exciting! The car uses a J-14 Chassis number and a very low engine number that identifies it as an early L Type experimental unit. The car is still in regular use today, the only difference is the owner now knows what they have been driving around for years and the rest of us have a new Vauxhall Concept to add to the history of the company.

- David Booker

◀ The car was shown to Vauxhall management with a view to limited production. This is not as far-fetched as it sounds as prior to WWII Vauxhall offered the 12 & 14 hp models with a choice of bodywork, either factory produced by Vauxhall or by Martin Walter of Folkestone and also Salmon & Sons, so it is conceivable that the production could have been outsourced to one of these or many other coach builders around at the time. Vauxhall production was out of the question. The other big stumbling blocks would have been the required continued manufacture of the modified J-14 chassis and the likely selling price which would have been well outside of Vauxhall’s “normal” market range. There may have been plans to show the car at the 1948 London Motor show but if there were they didn’t materialise although the following year Vauxhall did exhibit the one-off Zimmerli 18-6 Velox roadster from Switzerland.

It is known that the car was used by David Jones as his personal transport for a while but I think it’s likely that the car was then taken off the road for about four years then re-registered again in March 1954 or it was left lying around the Design Department for a similar time and was first used in 1954, I think the former is more likely than the latter. Quite how or why it managed to escape into the public domain is also a bit of a mystery but may have been sold to an employee of Vauxhall who worked in the Jones team. The last known sale of the car was in 1973 in

