

November 2017

Mutterings

THE NEWSLETTER of the EASTERN CENTRE
of the AUSTIN HEALEY CLUB



A Healey with history - see inside

www.ahc-eastern.co.uk

ROB'S RAMBLINGS

Once again I have had to put regular Mutterings contributors under pressure as I am away for the couple of weeks that span the copy date. They have come up trumps and my thanks to them and also David Singer who has written a piece on the Government's legislation that covers Vehicles of Historic Interest that I am able to serialise, the first instalment featuring this month. It is always helpful to me to have articles of a general interest that I can hold until I have a lean month and use then, so please do put pen to paper.

My absence has meant that I was not able to attend the AGM which is a disappointment as it is always an enjoyable social occasion as well as important for driving the future direction of the Centre.

In the interest of filling a page or two I have written something on the 1955 Le Mans race, known as 'The Death Race' for the horrendous accident that killed over 80 spectators and involved the Austin-Healey featured on the front cover.

In 2011 the car was put up for auction. I don't know what it was sold for but the estimate was over £1m.

Rob

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ALL MEMBERS

From January 2018 Mutterings will be distributed electronically, this means that you no longer will receive a paper copy enclosed with your Revcounter.

The reason for this is one of economy. Eastern Centre is responsible for its own finances which include the outlay on copying and distributing Mutterings that costs over £1000 per annum. The EC committee would like to invest more in events for its members helping 'pump prime' events such as the New Members' Day.

**PLEASE THEREFORE ENSURE THAT THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY,
STUART SELF membership@ahc-eastern.co.uk HAS YOUR MOST UP TO
DATE EMAIL ADDRESS.**

SOCIAL WHEELS

By the time you read this we will have had the AGM, but comments are too late for inclusion in this Mutterings because of deadline constraints this month. Hopefully it will have been a pleasant and constructive affair, and there will be reports in next month's magazine. It seems hard to believe we are nearly at the end of the year, and this is my penultimate 'Wheels' before Christmas!!

It has been a busy year for most of us; I hope you have found plenty of activities to enjoy with your Healey and other members of the club. The weather has been a very mixed bag, although that is the one thing we have no control over, and for the most part our principal events were blessed with sunshine.

I am already taking a look at the delights in store for 2018, so please check the calendar in this issue, some dates are set this early, others have to be confirmed. Make sure we have your current email address or you may miss some event you particularly wanted to attend, remember Mutterings is going electronic in 2018, and whilst a lot of information will be on the website we are still having a few problems in getting this properly set up and running, so keep checking, and contact one of the committee members if you need information. All our numbers and email addresses are in the Mutterings pages, plus other contact details where club members who are not on the committee are organising events through the year, and of course for events not Healey based but which we think you might enjoy.

Good luck with the winter fettling
And I hope to see you all very soon.

Angela

Sunny Angela at Gransden (R) trying to get gazebo, flag and other paraphernalia into her pristine 100.



LE MANS 1955

Le Mans 1955 will always be remembered for the horrific crash that killed over 80 people and changed the face of motor sport forever. The crash involved future world champion Mike Hawthorn who was blamed in some quarters for the crash, driving a D-Type Jaguar, the prototype Healey 100S you will see on the front cover driven by Lance Macklin and Pierre Levegh's Mercedes 300SLR.

I recently read Mike Hawthorn's autobiography from 1958 and this passage gives some insight to the circumstances of the crash. It is important to remember that both Hawthorn and Macklin had disc brakes, the Mercedes drums augmented by a massive air brake that came up from the rear shroud:

..... the stage was set for tragedy, for the performance of the cars, increasing each year, had outstripped the existing safety measures on this and a number of other circuits. We drivers knew the dangers which could send cars shuttling back and forth between the safety barriers as they had done before, and as Macklin's car did on this occasion, but I doubt if anyone thought in terms of a car flying through the air, disintegrating like a bomb in the public enclosure to project eighty people into eternity and maim a hundred more.

When I passed Macklin, I was travelling about 25 m.p.h. faster than he was and I decided I had ample time to get ahead before braking for the pits. I certainly had disc brakes which could pull me up very quickly, but so had he. But when a faster car passes you it is almost automatic to glance in your mirror to see if there is another one coming. Now during the briefest possible glance in the driving mirror, Macklin's car would have travelled 80 to 100 feet. And if he happened to miss my signal and found me braking unexpectedly, he would travel another 50 feet before the brain could get a message to the foot to put the brakes on.

What we do know is that Macklin, taken by surprise, for some reason, pulled over to the left and from that moment Levegh's plight was desperate.

The Mercedes would travel about 70 feet while his brain was registering the emergency. We know that he then put his hand out, for Fangio says he owes his own life to this last gesture by Levegh, but while he made this gesture he would have travelled another 250 feet.

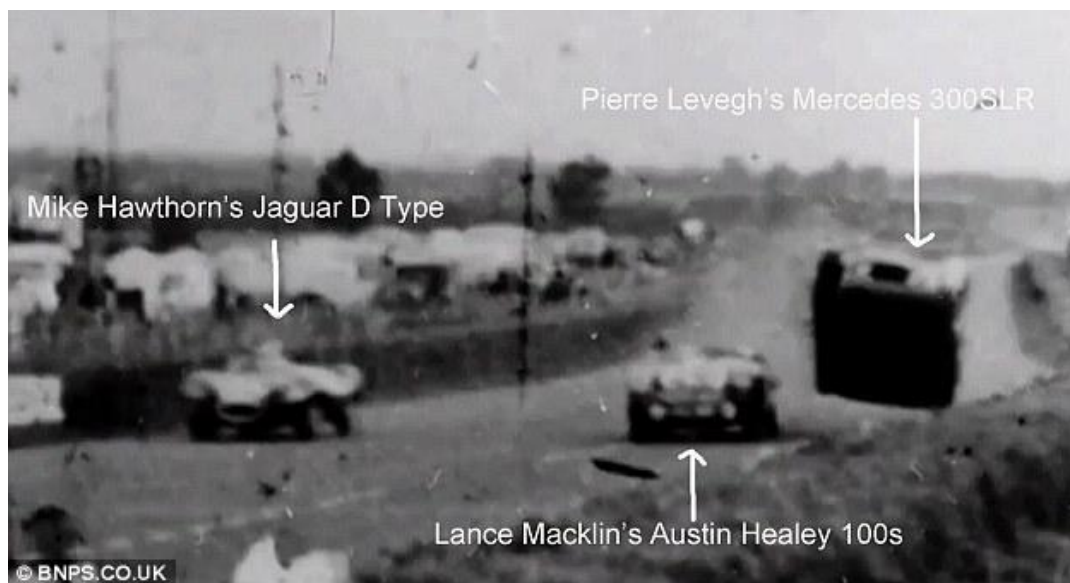
Le Mans 1955 continued...

The footbrake would not slow him down very fast from about 150 m.p.h. and there was no time to get the air brake into action; and so he careered helplessly into the Austin-Healey and the earth barrier.

It was suggested that the back of the Healey acted like a launching ramp that propelled Levegh's car into the air and into the crowd.

Mike Hawthorn was exonerated but suffered a lot of personal abuse when competing at events following the crash, some possibly because Jaguar continued the race ultimately to win. Mercedes called in their cars later in the race.

Rob



TOURING TROPHY - 2017

The Touring Trophy runs from AGM to AGM (October to October) and is now CLOSED.

Entrant	Date	Trip	Trip	Total
Pat & Zara	13-10-17	Round and about	65	1044
Rob	13-10-17	Round and about	12	730

Congratulations to Pat and Zara and their Sprite. This is the first time a Sprite has won the Trophy, appropriate as we enter its anniversary year.

GOOD NEWS OR BAD NEWS FROM THE GOVERNMENT?

You may well have read in newspapers, magazines or on the internet the new regulations that will be come into force in May 2018 which will be a concern to both classic car owners as well as to the specialist car constructors. The reason behind this is that we, as a country, don't fully conform to EU regulations on the matter, writes **David Singer**.

A great deal of hot air and misinterpretation is being promulgated at the moment and I have been asked by one of my clients who create "retro look" cars from more modern examples, to research the subject, to sort out the wheat from the chaff and to give him some advice.

We are entering a bit of a minefield here but for most classic car owners there should be no problem. For the owners of hot rod, jacked up and Rat cars there will almost certainly be a problem but the worst that will happen is that the vehicle's registration will be deleted and a "Q" registration issued. This might be a bit more of a problem if you are the owner of an Aston Martin DB4 GT, Zagato or Volante convertible recreation made from a DB4, 5, or 6 saloon. Having your registration cancelled and a "Q" registration issued might have an impact on the value of your motor car!

To summarise things; as from 20th May 2018 the DVLA will be classifying cars over 40 years old (on a sliding year) as "Vehicles of Historic Interest" (VHI). A VHI will be exempt from both Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and an annual MOT. It is proposed that when the keeper of a car applies for the status of a car to become a VHI, they will have to declare that "No substantial changes have been made to the vehicle and if they were, then these took place before 1988" (i.e. 30 years ago). After this, each year when a form V11 (reminder to tax notification) is received, a similar declaration will have to be made. Presumably this self certification will have some penalty statement included for giving false information and the DVLA will reserve the right to be able to have a vehicle inspection made. Additionally it will be a requirement of an MOT station to report on cars that have had substantial changes made to them.

New regulations from the Government continued...

When a vehicle attains the age of 40 years it falls within the "Historic Taxation Class" and no VED is due. The VHI classification is only used as a test for roadworthiness testing exemption.

So now to explain what "*Substantial Change to*" as opposed to "*Radically Altered Vehicle*" means and what the results will be, according to the DfT & DVLA:

Substantial Change: (Draft Guidance issued by the Department for Transport)

A 40 year old vehicle will automatically become a VHI unless;

- Its power to weight ratio has been increased by more than 15% (unless such modification took place before 1988); or,
- It is already on a "Q" plate; or,
- It is a kit car assembled from components from different makes and model of vehicle (a BITSA); or,
- It is a "Reconstructed Classic" (that does not mean a "rebuilt car", as long as it is to the original specification); or,
- It is a "Kit Conversion". A Kit Conversion is where new parts are added to an existing vehicle or old parts are added to a kit of a manufactured body, vehicle or monocoque body shell, changing the general appearance of the vehicle. The last two types can have age related registration numbers but will not be considered as a VHI.

If your car is not classified as a VHI due to any of the aforementioned reasons, then the car will no longer be exempt from an annual MOT. These rules will also be applied retrospectively. How the Police or the DVLA can prove that the power to weight ratio has been affected and / or that it was done pre or post 1988 has, as yet, not been announced.

More from David next month...

EVENTS FOR 2018

Main events organised by AHC or where we have a club stand or where we know AHC members are attending will be shown in bold. Check on the website for the latest information: www.ahc-eastern.co.uk

1st January: New Years Day: Barrington Village Green and thereafter first Friday of each month.

Daffodil Weekend, probably in April, details to follow, but David Wheeler has agreed to run this popular event again, his email is wheelerd@blueyonder.co.uk

22nd April: Drive it Day: There will be lots going on marking this important motoring heritage event, keep a look out for your favourite.

4th/7th May: Northern Lakes Weekend based at Backbarrow, Cumbria. Paul Johnson on 01270 650593 is your contact for this one, his email is chairman@ahc-northern.org.uk

13th May: Battlesbridge Spring Classic Car Show, always popular with Eastern Centre members.

18th/20th May: National Sprite 60th Birthday celebrations at Chateau Impney, near Droitwich. Tony Curran is planning a big family fun party to mark this important anniversary. Latest details on the website at Sprite60.org or from Tony on info@sprite60.org

6th/8th July: Classic Le Mans. Super event well supported by Eastern members in the past, Travel Destinations do a variety of packages, or link up with other local people to travel as an AHC group. If interested contact Rob Ransom. mutterings@ahc-eastern.co.uk

2018 events continued...

31st Aug/3rd Sept:

Eastern Centre Weekend,
Ufford Park, Woodbridge.

In honour of the Sprite anniversary, Chris and Angie Davis are organising this one in the lovely Suffolk countryside. Please register your interest as soon as possible with them on

canda3000@hotmail.com

as this will be offered first to Eastern members, then open to other areas and possibly the Dutch club, depending on availability. If you want to go, tell them soon!

It's Back!

In honour of the Sprite Diamond Jubilee



The Eastern Centre Weekend Event

August 2018

The weekend will be of the traditional format and be based in Woodbridge Suffolk.

Fri 31st August - Mon 3rd September 2018

Further details to follow soon but please register your interest and definite reservations with Chris & Angie Davis as soon as possible to ensure your place.

canda3000@hotmail.com

In addition there will be two Classic Car Shows at Duxford, dates not available yet, the Letchworth picnic, 1st Saturday pub meet at The Horse and Groom, Cornish Hall End, 1st Sunday Breakfast Club at Colmworth village hall, 3rd Saturday pub meet at The Bluebell, Hempstead, and of course our regular Noggin and Natters, see back of Mutterings for details, not to mention all the race meetings, most classic events have Healeys competing, check the websites for details and dates.

Plenty already for you to note in next year's diary, keep watching the website, don't forget Mutterings is going electronic, without your current email address you may miss out, make sure we have this. Stay safe, keep Healeying!!

Angela

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Due to editorial deadlines I am writing these notes before the AGM and you will be reading them after the event so I will take a leap of faith and say it was a great day out, it always is when you meet up with friends and have a meal.

We will have had to discuss the thorny matter of finances, in days past, Eastern Centre was financially stable mainly down to the efforts of the various brilliant Regalia Secretaries which ensured a small top-up to the membership subs, which meant we could indulge in producing our own newsletter and have funds available to initiate events. We no longer have that input and are reliant on the money returned to us from National. We are the only Centre still producing a local newsletter "Mutterings" that is sent with the monthly RevCounter.

Although we have a very good deal, the money returned from National does not cover the expense, so we have gradually reduced our bank balance to a stage where the Committee has decided we cannot continue producing a hard copy. Starting in January we will only provide "Mutterings" electronically. General event information will be available in RevCounter but there is always the editorial deadline problem [which was one reason we continued with "Mutterings"], going electronic will mean the latest updates can always be included, there is also the benefit of being able to include more photography and on a computer you will be able to enlarge these photos to see all the detail. This change will ensure we have the funds available to enable us to initiate events such as next year's Eastern Centre Weekend in September at Ufford Park being organised by Angie and Chris Davis. Eastern Centre is proud to say all of its major events over the years have been totally self-financing but there is always the need for an initial input of cash to get the ball rolling.

To ensure you continue to get a copy of "Mutterings" please make sure the email address the Austin Healey Club has listed for you is accurate and still active, email Stuart Self membership@ahc-eastern.co.uk to make sure you are included in any mailings, also please check your entry in the members area on the National Club website to make sure it has been put in correctly, it only needs a dot out of place for the address not to work.

Chairman's Chat continued...

Having you on this list will enable us not only to send "Mutterings" but also inform of any last minute additions to the event calendar. Rest assured this list will only be used for "Mutterings" and event updates and will not be available to anyone else. As an aside if you have not registered for the "Members only" portion of the National website it is worth doing as you can access special offers and technical information not available on the general area.

If you are unable to receive information via the internet please contact me on 01366 347412 if I can't get to the phone please leave a message and I will get back to you.

There are a couple of changes in the committee that will have taken place by the AGM, to make the most of members' experience Maggi Byford will now take on the Treasurer position and Mike Quinn will be in charge of the Eastern Centre Website. Regarding the website there have been more issues changing over to new software than I anticipated but things are progressing so please bear with us, there again if you are on our email list we will be able to inform you as soon as it is live.

On a personal note, we had a great Weekend in Snowdonia with the Welsh Sub-Centre followed by a few days in Derbyshire with our local Spalding Car Club, the Hundred behaved itself and kept most of the water out, covering 900 miles in the week.

Happy Healeying
....and web-surfing.

Dave Holman
*(Chairman, if I didn't
get voted off at the
AGM!)*



DAVE'S TECHNICAL TIPS

On a technical note I have had more correspondence from Frank Rush about speedo angle drive problems, after another failure around the 300 mile mark.

His supplier has found a bulletin from the BMC American franchise published in the '60's regarding the fitment of a copper washer between the gearbox and angle drive, I intend to have a look through the few bulletins that I have to see if there was a British equivalent. I seem to have a memory of a flat fibre washer but it is not something you can pop out and check easily.

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Supplemental Information for 021-511 or 120694 Angle Drive (Speedometer Cable to Gearbox) Austin Healey BN4-BJ8, MGB 63 on, TR'S 63 on



This speedometer angle drive was fitted to many British cars where there was insufficient room to run the speedometer cable directly into the gearbox. The original angle drives quickly developed a reputation for being prone to failure. This resulted in a thorough investigation that in the end resulted in the Technical Service Bulletin (TSB) of February 29, 1968. The TSB (copy on the next page) explains that the 324-720 or 3H550 "washer-adaptor to gearbox" **must** be fitted with the angle drive. If the washer is left out, the end load on the angle drive will be excessive and it will fail. When we first offered our reproduction of the 120694 angle drive, we included information in the catalog and with the part regarding the necessity for the washer.

We also assumed (incorrectly, as it turned out) that the angle drive being replaced would probably have the necessary washer, which could be transferred to the new angle drive. Despite our best efforts to get the word out, a significant number of new angle drives were fitted without the washer. It became apparent that the best thing to do would be to simply include the 324-720 or 3H550 washer with the angle drive, and explain why it was needed.

IMPORTANT! When fitting the angle drive, fit a 324-720 or 3H550 washer as shown on the next page.

Dave's technical tips continued...



I have included the bulletin I was sent above but am not sure it will be easily readable in a printed "Mutterings" - another reason for going electronic! I don't think the drawing is very accurate as I would think the washer will fit inside the knurled collar to act as a spacer.

Stop press: I have just had a reply from Frank about the washer sizes for the angle drive, they are: Copper washer: Outer diameter 18mm, Inner diameter 11 mm, Thickness 1mm

Dave

LONGBRIDGE REFLECTIONS

Members may remember an article in Mutterings about Duncan Industries of North Walsham who produced a sleek body for the Warwick Healey chassis and a prototype small car called the Dragonfly. Peter Riddle who used to be on the AHC Eastern Committee many years back sent this note.

How about this for a bit of a circular story -

When I was working at Longbridge in the 70's I used to sneak into the tunnels under the site to look at the old prototypes that were stored down there.

During the war Austin built Bristol Pegasus engines in those tunnels - see photo.



The Pegasus aero engine had been designed by Roy Fedden (later Sir Roy).

During wartime development of the Pegasus, Roy Fedden's Chief Technical Assistant at Bristol Aero Engines was Ian Duncan.

After the war, Fedden designed a Fedden car and his design team included Ian Duncan and Alec Moulton. But it was unsuccessful and the company folded.

In 1946 Ian Duncan left Fedden and set up Duncan Industries in North Walsham. Duncan Industries built bodies for Donald Healey's Riley-engined Healey cars. Donald Healey went on to produce the Healey Hundred that became the first Austin Healey built at Longbridge from 1953.

Dragonfly continued..

But Ian Duncan also built a prototype Duncan Dragonfly mini-car (below). The Dragonfly had a transverse BSA engine, front-wheel-drive, 10" wheels made by Dunlop and Moulton-patented rubber suspension.



When Duncan Industries went into receivership in 1948, the prototype Dragonfly and all its drawings were sold to Austin at Longbridge.

In 1959 BMC launched the Mini with - transverse engine, front-wheel-drive, Moulton-patented rubber suspension and Dunlop 10" wheels made on THE SAME TOOLING that had been paid for by Ian Duncan to produce the Dragonfly's wheels!

In 1978, I was working on prototype Austin Metros with the same Dunlop 10" wheels. If the Metro could use these wheels, no new tooling would be needed and the wheels were very cheap.

We were tasked with making a 7" drum brake system work in the Metro - but it was a heavier car than the original Mini. None of the brake lining manufacturers could give us a friction material that gave acceptable pedal effort while still passing the EEC fade resistance test.

So the 7" drums were chucked away and the Metro was launched in 1980 with front disc brakes and new 12" wheels.

NOGGIN `N` NATTERS

Colchester area	Varies	Contact	Tony Poulter	07835 653199
St. Albans area	First Tuesday	Contact	John Keener	01494 728360
<i>Crown and Sceptre at Bridens Camp, Water End, HP2 6EY</i>				
Suffolk area	Varies	Contact	Garrow Shand	01394 389013
<i>Regular road runs and pub meets - contact Garrow for details</i>				
Cambridge Area	2nd Wednesday	Contact	Rob Ransom	01223 524821
<i>St Ives Golf Club, Joint meetings with Cambridge and District Car Club</i>				
Ongar Area	2nd Wednesday	Contact	Jim Sweetingham	01268 545429
<i>Old Kings Head, Stock, Ingatestone, CM4 9PQ</i>				
Biggleswade Area	Varies	Contact	Clive Cocks	01933 551885
<i>Contact Clive for venue and timing</i>				
W Norfolk area	2 nd Thursday	Contact	Dave Holman	01366 347412
<i>Varies: Contact Dave for the latest information</i>				
Bury St Edmunds	Varies	Contact	John Bolden	01359 240153
<i>Location varies</i>				

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