

Essex Thameside News

Nº 172, August 2021



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Graham Cook

Chairman and co-editor

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Chairman's message

Welcome to our August newsletter

Bob Dylan wrote 'times are a changing'.

Well, we certainly have lived through the last year with so many changes to our restrictions, that I am sure we have all lost count of them.

So called 'Freedom Day' finally arrived four weeks late, on 19th July. We still have certain restrictions, and confusions such as when you have to wear a mask and when you don't. One item of good news is that we are able to recommence our monthly club meets at Langdon Hills Golf Club on the first Tuesday of every month. We will be meeting on the 3rd August in the Function Room as usual. It will be the first time that some members have met each other for over a year. As we previously announced we are taking the opportunity to hold our overdue Annual General Meeting (AGM) and election of the committee. We hope many of you will be able to attend.

We held an actual face to face committee meeting in July. It was nice to be able to sit around a table together, rather than look at each other on a laptop via Zoom. We discussed the shows, events, museums and places we can visit, and that we would like to consider for 2022. At this time, it is rather unlikely that we will hold a club European tour next year, but we will organise a tour in England. We are considering a trip to Jersey, Isle of Man, or Isle of Wight. We would be pleased to hear from members of any other places they would like us to consider or look into. We have a few events still this year, please have a look at our events page.

On Sunday 8th August the JEC West Sussex Region are holding an event at Arundel Castle, West Sussex. It is rather a long trip from our area, but if you fancy giving your Jaguar a nice run, it could be an event to attend. In

August we have the RHS Hyde Hall Car Show meet on Sunday the 15th. We will be situated in our usual location. It is a free event. I will email members with further details once I have the tickets.

On the 29 August we have 25 cars booked to attend The Lavenham Car Show. It will be a nice drive, chance to meet up and enjoy a look around Lavenham. On September 19th we have a marquee car meet for our regions members only at Lester's. We still have tickets available for the afternoon tea event. Please see the flyer on page four in the newsletter for further details.

This month's newsletter has been prepared by me. We hope you like it, if not please tell us what you would like to see in future Newsletters.

Well that's all for now folks.

I look forward to seeing your polished Jaguars and your good selves at our club night and shows in August.



Lavenham

Hyde Hall 2019



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Events Diary: August–December 2021

The following shows and events are anticipated subject to COVID guidelines, including potential cancellation or postponement in the event of further COVID-related restrictions. Arrangements for next year will be advertised in future newsletters.

JEC Essex Thameside Region show attendances and events:

Tue 3 August	Club Night and AGM, 8pm, Langdon Hills Country & Golf Club, RM14 3TY
Sun 8 th August	Jaguars at Arundel Castle, JEC West Sussex Region. Arundel BN18 9AB
Sun 15 August	Classic Car Show, RHS Garden Hyde Hall, CM3 8ET
Sun 29 August	Lavenham Classics Show, Recreation Ground, Lavenham, CO10 9SH
Fri 3–Mon 6 September	Essex Thameside's Peak District Tour, Makeney Hall Hotel, DE56 0RS
Tue 7 September	Club Night, 8pm, Langdon Hills Country & Golf Club, RM14 3TY
Sun 19 September	At Home With Lester: garden party hosted by Lester Magness, CM9 6QA
Tue 5 October	Club Night, 8pm, Langdon Hills Country & Golf Club, RM14 3TY
Tue 2 November	Club Night, 8pm, Langdon Hills Country & Golf Club, RM14 3TY
Tue 7 December	Christmas Club Night, 8pm, Langdon Hills Country & Golf Club, RM14 3TY

For information — other non-JEC shows and events open to individuals:

Fri 30 July–Sun 1 August	The Silverstone Classic, Silverstone Circuit, Northants, NN12 8TN
Sat 31 July–Sun 1 August	Festival of Wheels, Trinity Park, Ipswich IP3 8UH
Sat 7 August	Breakfast Meet at The Castle, Great Leighs, CM3 1NE
Sun 22 August	Coffee & Cars Meet, Museum of Power, Langford, CM9 6QA
Sat 4 September	Breakfast Meet at The Cherry Tree, Stambridge, SS4 2AF
Sat 2 October	Breakfast Meet at The Hare, Roxwell, CM1 4LU
Sun 24 October	International Jaguar Spares Day, Stoneleigh Park, Warks CV8 2LG
Sat 6 November	Breakfast Meet at The Castle, Great Leighs, CM3 1NE
Fri 12–Sun 14 November	Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show at the NEC, Birmingham, B40 1NT

At Home With Lester



2.00 p.m. till 6.30 p.m., Sunday 19 September 2021
at Lester Magness's home, Hatfield Road, Langford, CM9 6QD
(What3words = frog.clouds.angle)

Tickets £10.00 per person

(available to JEC Essex Thameside members & partners only)



Marquee service, 4.00 p.m. till 6.00 p.m. with live music



Menu

Egg & Cress Sandwiches

Smoked Salmon & Cream Cheese Sandwiches

Cucumber & Cream Cheese Sandwiches

Honey Baked Ham & Mustard Sandwiches

** * **

Lemon Drizzle Cake

Homemade Scones with Strawberry Jam & Cream

Sticky Date Cake

Shortbread

Profiteroles dipped in Chocolate

Strawberries dipped in Chocolate

** * **

Served with Pots of Tea & Coffee

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Summer Jaguar Festival Bicester Sunday 4th July 2021

Anyone who checked the BBC weather forecasts for Sunday 4th, may have been put off in attending, as yours truly did last weekend for the 'Simply Jaguar' event at Beaulieu. It turned out that Beaulieu wasn't a washout as forecast! The same goes for the Summer Event at Bicester. The forecast wasn't favourable but on the day, it was just fine. A simple shower around midday, just as I said to Jackie that I would put the hood down so visitors can see the interior. As we began to walk away, it started! Jackie blamed me of course! However, it lasted for only a few minutes and that was that for the day, or at least while we were in attendance.

James Blackwell – General Manager of the JEC indicated that 1,700 spaces had been sold for this event but to be honest, it did look as though there were far more than that in attendance.

The field where cars were being parked up was vast. There were areas allocated for the E-Types (60th anniversary year) and included 77RW, the E-type famously driven through the night to the model's launch at the Geneva Motor Show from Coventry by factory test driver Norman Dewis in March 1961. Also celebrating specific anniversaries were the XK8/Rs (X100 & X150 models) (25th anniversary year) Mark X (60th anniversary year) X Types – (20th anniversary year) as well as general parking for all other Jaguar models.

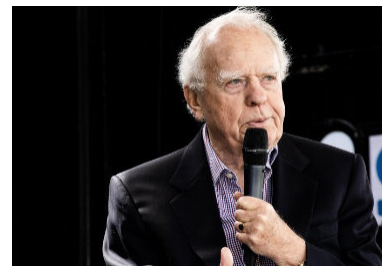


The schedule of events included talks from Peter Leake who was the Dealer Training Manager for Jaguar during the 80s & 90s, Sir John Egan, Chairman of Jaguar Cars from 1980 to 1990 and Kevin McCloud, the star of Channel 4's 'Grand Designs' programme. These talks were conducted on a large lorry trailer/stage with a giant TV screen above.



Although I didn't get to listen to Peter or Kevin, I did stop by and listened to the fascinating history of Sir John Egan at Jaguar.

It was a very interesting talk about how he saved Jaguar, which at the time was part of the British Leyland Group. We all know what happened to that, so through Sir John's Egan leadership, he was able to privatise Jaguar and move away from British Leyland. However, it wasn't without its problems, as the British car industry was effectively going down the pan, due mostly to the unions and strike actions. Faults on new model cars were another major factor, whereas Jaguar launched the XJ40 in 1986 and had one of the worst faults per car in the industry. Sir John quickly saw the need to reduce this and implemented various quality controls, not only with Jaguar staff but with suppliers too. One supplier he mentioned, had a 40% failure rate of its products, which was totally unacceptable. If you get the opportunity, try and get a copy of the book, 'Saving Jaguar' by John Egan. I recommend it.



So, getting back to the event, there were a number of 'special' cars on display. The Eagle Company that produces special E-Types Speedsters that cost in excess of £300,000 as well as Eagle Lightweight GT were displaying a number of their cars.



Another one that caught my eye was a XK8. I was under the impression that this was a 'Show Plate' stuck on the front of the owner's car. However, on looking closer, it appeared to have been on the car for some time, so once home, I checked it out on the DVLA website. Sure enough, this car is registered with this index plate! It must be worth more than the car itself!



Another 'special' car which undoubtedly many would have passed without a second look was in one of the hangars. Parked up between a XK220 and an E-Type was this XKR-R. One of only two made in 2001-2 by Jaguar's Special Vehicle Operations (SVO) which fully seam-welded its coupe monocoque for greater strength and rigidity. A partial road cage was added along with kidney squeezing Recaro bucket seats and four-point safety harness with the rear seats being replaced by helmet bins! The engine was taken from a 4 litre XKR and increased from 370 bhp to 400bhp. The rear suspension was thrown out and the replaced with the suspension set up from the Jaguar S Type. The suspension was also lowered by 30mm and was fitted with 20" BBS alloy wheels. But one thing that does set it apart from the other XK8s and Rs is that it was fitted with a six speed Tremec T56 manual gearbox. Something, no other XK8/Rs are fitted with. This vehicle is currently being housed at the Jaguar Heritage Hall at the British Motor Museum at Gaydon.



On the Mark X/420G stand there was a beautiful Mark X convertible. Yes, a hatchet job had been undertaken on this big car by a professional company, the result being absolutely stunning.



Another car of significance at the show, will be for those who remember "Catch us if you can", "Glad all over", "Bits & Pieces", any ideas?

The Dave Clark Five's album 'Catch Us If You Can' Which featured this E-Type



There were more cars of special significance which I could list but will run out of space.

Overall, the turn out was fantastic and many Essex Thameside Members did attend and enjoyed the day but perhaps not for the ladies. Bicester Heritage website describes itself as "the UK's first business campus dedicated to historic motoring and aviation. Comprising of a cluster of industry leading specialists, Bicester Heritage delivers a unique customer experience by providing a supportive ecosystem of skills and businesses, geared towards the historic motoring market". None of the units were open, there were no displays. Effectively all that was available was Jaguars in a field, food stalls and a few trade stands. Not of interest to our lady partners. Originally the event in May was supposed to be held at Blenheim Palace. Pity it had to be postponed and a new venue arranged, but blame the Covid for this!

Next year the National Club are planning to undertake summer shows at Brooklands Motor Museum, Newby Hall, Blackpool, the birth place of Swallow Sidecars and SS Cars and at the former home of Sir William Lyons at Wappenbury Hall. Let's hope that there will be something for the ladies at each of these events.

Doug Warren

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THE ART OF PERFORMANCE

Exclusions apply.

'Wheel Meet Again' day on 4th July. Organized by CCVC Rotary Club.

We were invited by one of our members Colin Breathwick, whom is member of the CCVC/ Rotary Club to join them on their 'Wheel Meet Again' Drive-It-Day, which they arranged to make amends for the National Drive Day in April that had to be cancelled due to the Covid restrictions.

Unfortunately the date chosen was the same as our JEC Bicester Festival. We had members attending both events. Nevertheless, the event raised over £1,800 for both Farleighs Hospice and Mind, the charities selected by organisers. It was a great leisurely 50 mile journey through the Essex Shires.

Another one of our members Don White writes:

When we arrived at Hyde Hall after our 50 mile run we were marshalled into our allotted parking area. It was the furthest overspill car park from the Hyde Hall entrance. This years run had been limited to only 80 cars to comply with Covid rules, so all the entrants were top notch. Sue and I decided to look around the grounds and soon lost all sense of time. The car judging and trophy presentation was at 14.30 hrs, and we arrived back at 14.45hrs to find a note under the windscreen wiper, " You have won best post war car, see me in Jensen Interceptor blue". I could not have been more pleasantly surprised as the standard of cars was extremely good. There was no-one at the Jensen Interceptor as they had gone to the Hyde Hall restaurant for lunch. After about an hour they returned, and I was presented with a nice trophy.

Ian Croxson attended the meet, and took these splendid photos including

1973 Jensen Interceptor, 1924 Bullnose Morris Oxford, 1965 Mercedes 230SL Pagoda (with 6 cylinder engine)

As you can see it did rain some of the time!



Well done Don. Many congratulations on your award.

August Car Quiz - Name The Make And Model



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

Good Luck. Answers in next month's Newsletter.

My Cars (Part 2)

Ian Croxson

After return from California, with our new born Son safely delivered, it was then down to re learning how to speak English again. As Oscar Wilde once said 'Two Worlds apart separated by a common language'. Instead of a daily commute along Pacific Coast Highway 1 (PCH) and the Pacific Ocean I was faced with a jaunt from Chelmsford to South Croydon, where the head office of my company was based. The A12, the then newly built M25 and the M23 duly beckoned. No eight lane freeways, but more congestion, clutch pumping with stick shifts and a lot of fender benders being the norm.

For my vehicle of choice I chose a five door 2.0L Granada Ghia hatchback with a five speed manual gearbox for sheer novelty value. It had air conditioning which in 1988 was relatively rare but did give me that 'home from home' feeling when tackling the Road to Hell, the southern section of London's Urban Motorway system, the M25 via the Dartford River Crossing.

After 3 months commuting to the goldfish bowl overlooking the sewage works in Beddington Lane, a new position beckoned within the company as General Manager of the company's Warehouse and Forwarding company at London Heathrow. A glutton for punishment I accepted and spent the next five years doing the northern anti-clockwise route of London's Orbital Highway system. A daily commute of some 142 miles. This was without trips to clients, meeting overseas agents and site visits to venues and the regular visits to HMRC around the airport. Before I knew it I had clocked up 100,000 miles. I switched to a gold Granada Ghia, did another 100,000 miles and then changed to a White Scorpio which lasted two months before my license was taken away from me by courtesy of the Farnborough Constabulary. That is another story though.



Commuting to LHR took on a new dimension using drivers, friends, public transport, relying on lifts, working from home (ahead of its time) and eventually getting my bike vandalised at the station in the process. At home Liz was not

amused. By that time we had a young son and a newly born baby daughter and she had a husband who couldn't drive. Our family car was then a silver BMW520i. Not entirely practical to get the pram and the usual accessories and the kitchen sink in, so that had to go. We opted for more practicality and bought another 'Fix It Again Tony'. This time one of the first Fiat Tipo Hatchbacks, a showroom model that had every gimmick and toy on it. With the exception of Power Assisted Steering! We didn't



realise it at the time but it soon became apparent that it was hard work, especially at the weekends, when we went house hunting out to the west and south west of London trying to find somewhere nearer to live nearer my place of work, and reduce the commute.

With the prices of property crashing around the early nineties, there was little we could afford in the Surrey, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire areas, so when a house that we liked became available to us around the corner in good old Chelmo, it was a no brainer. We would stay put. Very logical. Using trains, planes (I was spending a lot of time travelling overseas) and other peoples transport, I could get to Heathrow with difficulty, but it was not impossible. Before long I was back on the road again with yet another Scorpio, complete with returned driving license, courtesy of DVLA, but by this time working in East Grinstead High Street.

Having had a taster of living overseas and experiencing doing business in often difficult working environments, with lots of contacts, Liz and I decided to take the plunge and have a go at running our own business. From sitting around the kitchen table formulating a business plan, designing the company stationary, finding offices and clients, we registered the business and Show Carriage, our exhibition transport company was formed in 1995 based in Writtle.

Liz took care of the admin and finance. I sorted out the operations and the commercial development and our journey began. Over the next 20 years the company grew into one of the leading Event and Logistics company's specialising in home and Overseas exhibition freight forwarding requirements. It wasn't without its problems, staffing, getting paid together with red tape and government bureaucratic procedures, all presented challenges, trials and tribulations. We succeeded however and eventually we sold the business to a larger group who wanted to integrate our company with theirs. After spending some time with the combined new entity, it became clear the culture was different and big company politics was not for us. We took a back seat and retired from every day corporate life in 2015.

Our cars over that 20 year period became more interesting. The need to do away with all those Dagenham proliferations and to ally ourselves towards making conscious business choices and decisions became apparent.

The Tipo which was a second car became our only car when we started trading in 1996. After a few months and when we put a few quid into the company coffers we decided to buy our first company load lugger. A green 7 seater Renault Espace with removable seats that could effectively be turned into a van, albeit getting a hernia in the process. Apart from European runs across the Channel to Paris and Maastricht carrying Fine Wines for Antique dealers (thirsty bunch) it was extremely useful for weekend football and netball rallies transporting our own, plus neighbours kids around the East Anglian countryside. Very soon our fleet at work increased to accommodate Ford Transit and Sprinter Vans and then the larger HGV type Luton bodied Tail Lift Trucks. We were firmly on the road.



After the Espace we acquired a silver Mercedes W124 220E with 24,000 miles on the clock. A great tribute to German engineering at its

best. Solid reliable and well screwed together we ran this as our main car supplemented by Liz's newly acquired Fiat 16V Coupe. This was quickly followed by its successor a real pocket sized Ferrari, a bright yellow five cylinder 20V Turbo. It went like a rocket and we managed to wind it up to 155mph with fours up en route to the Black Forest in Germany. For all the adverse publicity Fiat has been singled out for - ie rust and reliability we found to the contrary. That in the ten years and 90,000 miles plus that we owned the car, apart from routine servicing, all we had to



do was to change the cambelt once. Rapidly approaching 100K and another cambelt beckoning, reluctantly we

parted company with it. It was P/X'd against yet another yellow car. This time a VW 1.9TDI Beetle Cabriolet, closely followed by another 2.0Litre TD Beetle convertible in Java Brown.

Because of our involvement in Overseas Events and the high mileage I was doing, we soon needed another long legged load lugger. We sold the W124 and bought a metallic blue 7 seater Mercedes 300TD estate. With the back seat and the additional twin seater at the rear down, we regularly used it like a Van placing exhibition cargo spread over the rear platform for European trips to event venues on the continent. Additionally we used to carry the exhibition installation and dismantle crew by car rather than by plane. This saved the company money on travel related costs and at that time tax relief could also be claimed on mileage expenses.

Once we reached 100K in the 300TD it started getting a little tired and a blue 320 E saloon followed. A luxury express limo one might say. It was a mistake. It was a demonstrator from MB Park Lane, shod with 20 inch wheels and alloys that altered the handling and caused tram lining with uneven tyre wear. It chewed up tyres every 8000 miles and when questioning it with Merc's they claimed that the tyre wear was normal and indeed a safety characteristic designed to keep the driver alert at all times. After two sets of tyres were replaced and a third set worn beyond repair at 30,000 miles my patience had gone in continually arguing with MB about my 'driving style', and it had to go. A new Volvo XC90D5 was bought. A little noisy perhaps with its diesel clattering resembling a bag of nails from the outside but inside this was probably one of the most comfortable cars I have driven. We ran this for over 225000 miles with no aggravation. The only complaints being the high servicing costs from Volvo main dealers. We cannot speak too highly of its reliability, the orthopaedic designed seats, its excellent loading capabilities and its wonderful driving position. A work horse par excellence.



As the business developed there came a point that my cars became 'work pool cars' with all and sundry using my car. I decided to treat myself to a bit of fun and a white Triumph Stag entered the Croxson garage. It was bought

on a whim from a friend who had cleared it out from a deceased's garage. There was no real history on the car but frankly it was very tired and needed a restoration. I took it to a specialist in Fyfield that put it on a ramp and then proceeded to tell me that despite its rakish looks, it had a dodgy past, that it had been shunted, and had not been repaired properly. This might explain why it was all over the road and would cost a small fortune to restore to



its former glory. Coupled with the fact my workload was increasing and that I did not have time to oversee the project I decided to sell it down the pub as there was a bloke who was desperately keen to get his hands on one and was happy to buy as seen. I got my money back and lesson

learnt - 'Don't bite off more than you can chew.'

A metallic red Mercedes 500SLC TLC 899 took the Stags place. A fantastic car for the summer but no so good in the Autumn and Winter. It didn't

seem to like leaves which seemed to gather in the engine compartment and had a detrimental effect on the electrics. I kept that for a couple of years until my first Pacific Blue Jag XK8 X100 series with the



4.0Litre lump came along with registration no Y599 LUD. It was a beautiful example with around 25,000 miles on the clock. To me this was the cars dreams were made of. Ivory leather, Wooden dash and gear stick, and an ivory tonneau cover. What more could anyone wish for?

Elegance personified it ticked all the boxes, and only came out when the sun shone. This took pride of place in my garage and during my tenure of ownership until 2011, I only racked up another 6000 miles. The only reason I sold it was my next 2006 Jaguar XK X150 4.2 litre all aluminium series convertible in Zircon Blue was being sold by the previous owner of Y599LUD, a close friend of ours who changed his cars as often as I changed my socks. I knew

the car was an ex Jaguar management car and in immaculate condition. This one had the all new modern sporty aluminium trim and with ivory leather. I didn't know how good it was going to be. It did us proud for 8 years until Sept 2019 with no major expenses except routine servicing by



Grange. It did have a slight problem with Oxidisation around the windscreen surround and the rear quarter roof joints. This was dealt with very professionally by fellow member Mario Varnava at Auto Art detailing. At 54,000miles I was sorry to see the car go, when I received a firm offer from a member of the JEC Kent Area. I had been thinking about buying a XKR for a couple of years but I failed miserably to locate a low mileage example that I liked. They were usually in black or white or silver. I wanted something different and when a base 2014 XK came along in British Racing Green with ivory and the traditional wood

dash came along at the right price, I was smitten. To this day the XK still looks the business as a future classic grand tourer, despite the existence of its near replacement, the equally alluring F Type. With its pillar box sized rear boot, I remain sceptical on its practicalities for our needs, so the BRG XK is to remain.

Finally to wrap up our motoring history I must mention the last few cars that we owned before stepping into pensioner mode. The Volvo XC90 finally went. Through a Libyan client based in the UK that hadn't paid his bill, I acquired his BMW 728i that he wanted to ship back to Tripoli. Exercising



a lien on same, I ran the Bavarian bruiser with its black privacy glass and fat wheels for a few months before selling it on to one of our employees for a knock down price to finally recover the debt. I needed a large estate again and through an incredible leasing deal picked up a real pimp wagon- a Chrysler 3.0 Litre CTD Touring. It looked a bit like a hearse in black with its privacy glass but it proved to be a spacious load carrying marvel with its fantastic six cylinder Mercedes diesel engine. It had massive torque to boot. As Jeremy Clarkson once described it - 'Great for gangsters at Shooting parties.' During the first month of ownership we took it down to Milan for a job and it swallowed four adults, five suitcases and numerous bags. The only trouble encountered was a narrow helter skelter car park near Lake Como.



Built for Cinquecento Fiats, getting out of the exit park was traumatic, with a hair breadth separating the car with a massive girth from the large concrete superstructure. A true Yank Tank, it came back unscathed, apart from the drivers brown trousers and perspiration marks,

I'm pleased to say.

Once its three years were up in 2012, a white BMW 525 Touring took its place. A great driving machine with both space and pace we parted company with it in 2016 some months after its warranty expired. The Garrett manufactured turbo went at the Toys Are Us roundabout at Ipswich, when the car started losing power. In their defence BMW handled it as gentlemen and honoured the warranty, even though it was outside its three year period. They towed it back to Coopers in Chelmsford and replaced the turbo without charge. Confidence in the product was slightly shaken however after seeing all that blue smoke surrounding the vehicle, and whilst we loved the car we never felt comfortable with it again, prompting us to look into the merits of a car without an engine as our everyday transport. Along came our Tesla.

So some 40 +cars later after 48 years of motoring, I have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a bad car. It's just that some are better than others. If ever there were a car that embedded the famous advertising slogan 'Space, Grace and Pace', then the Tesla and the Jag would be top of the league.

Answers to July "Behind The Wheel" Quiz

1. The Beverly Hillbillies (Donna Douglas, Irene Ryan, Max Baer Jnr, Buddy Ebsen)
2. Bullitt (Paul Genge, Bill Hickman)
3. Burke's Law (Gary Conway, Gene Barry, Leon Lontoc, Regis Toomey)
4. The Prisoner (Patrick McGoochan)
5. To Catch A Thief (Cary Grant, Grace Kelly)
6. Paper Moon (Tatum O'Neal, Ryan O'Neal)
7. Gideon's Way (John Gregson)
8. The Avengers (Patrick Macnee, Diana Rigg)
9. The Italian Job (Rossano Brazzi)
10. Starsky and Hutch (David Soul, Paul Michael Glaser)
11. Dr No (Sean Connery)
12. High Society (Frank Sinatra, Grace Kelly)
13. What's Up, Doc? (Barbra Streisand, Ryan O'Neal)
14. Magnum PI (Tom Selleck)

Well done if you had correct answers for 2, 3 and 7.

Answers to July "Before They Were Famous" Quiz

1. Sandra Bullock
2. Stephen Spielberg
3. Mick Jagger
4. James Woods
5. Liz Hurley
6. Jack Lemmon
7. Raquel Welch
8. James Dean
9. Kevin Costner
10. Jonny Wilkinson
11. Julie Andrews
12. Loretta Swit (played Hot Lips Houlihan in M*A*S*H)

BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS

Who did these youngsters grow up to be?

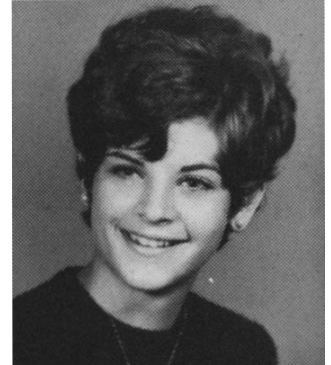
1



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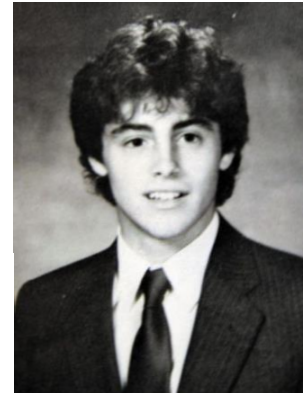
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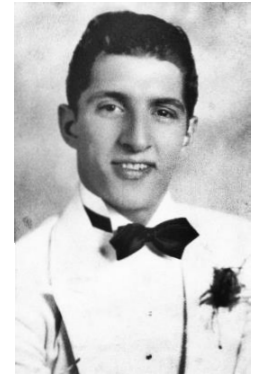
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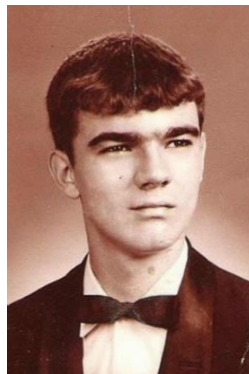
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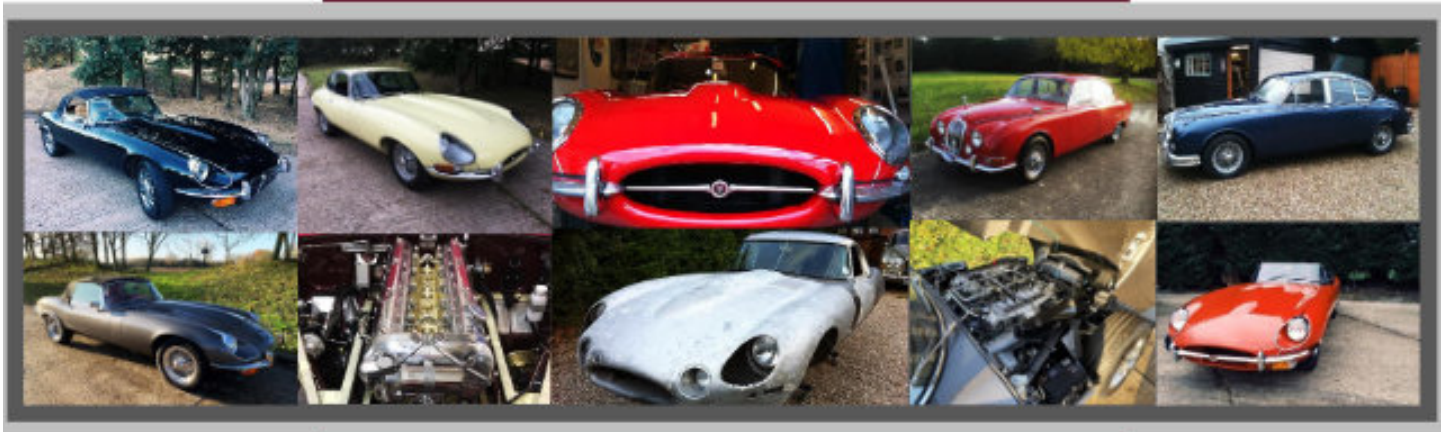


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The Flower shop – by Colin Cooper

(A story as told by my father Frederick Cooper)



It was 8 o'clock on a bright sunny August morning in the late 1930s. Dad, William John Cooper had just come out of the kitchen door into the back yard of 107 Milton Street and told us that this morning we were going to start a decorating job in Hamlet Court Road.

"Get the hand cart loaded up Fred, steps, paste boards, brushes, buckets, all the usual, Son". said Dad. "Geoff, Bill, You're going as well, so give him a hand."

My Dad, Will, as most people called him, was as usual dressed in his dark suit with waist coat and dicky, (which he could get four days wear out of by turning it upside down for the second day, back to front for the third day and again upside down for the fourth day), stiff collar, watch and chain, but as it was quite warm, no jacket.

"Here's the schedule." he said.

"And don't piddle about in the yard too long or I'll knock it off your timesheet on Friday."

This was no idle threat. Friday was the morning when all the tradesman lined up in the back yard waiting for their wages at the bay window and it was not unusual for the timesheet that was presented for calculation and payment, to come flying and spinning back out of the bottom sash window. This would be, to come flying and spinning back out of the bottom sash window. This would be accompanied by cries of:-

"Lies, all lies, do it again and I'll pay you."

The cream builder's hand cart was loaded up, pots, buckets, paint kettles and distemper, slung on hooks underneath. My brother Bill, being the eldest, went on ahead on his bicycle. Geoff and I pushed the truck down

Milton Street, turning right into Station Approach, cutting off through Bradley Street, past the Blue Bird Café on the corner, round Victoria Circus and along London Road to Hamlet Court Road.

"Mind the wheels in the tram tracks." said Geoff.

"We don't want to get stuck again."

It was starting to get quite warm so when Geoff and I got to the job we were glad it was an empty first floor flat. We stripped off our clothes and just put on our white bib and brace overhauls. After pushing the cart from the yard, Geoff and I had a rest. Bill had just finished his morning break, so he started to unload the truck.

Bill decided to start in the top front room. The steps and boards were set up and buckets of clean water were fetched from the bathroom, Geoff and I set to washing off the distemper on the cornice and ceiling bed.

"Plenty of water, let the water do the work." Said Bill, as he started to strip the wallpaper in the opposite corner of the room.

As the day drew on, it got hotter. All three of us by now were stripped to the waist and the job was going well.

I could hear Dad coming up the stairs. He usually visited the job after his game of cards at the Victory Club. He came about an hour before you went home at six, just as you started to feel tired. He stood in the doorway with his thumbs in his waist coat pockets, looked about him, grunted and informed us all that there were four more rooms to do upstairs. Off he went down the stairs again with his usual saying, whenever he wanted you to hurry up.

"Hay Tiddley Backy Pouch." You only ever asked what it meant once!

"We've done well today" said Geoff.

"The walls were nearly stripped and the ceilings washed off except for the last lift."

"Oi mind what you're doing, you flicked me." said Bill.

"Keep the brush on the work, don't splash it about."

"Accident Bill" said I, hiding a snigger behind my hand.

Geoff saw my face, grinned and flicked a 6" brush full of whitewash water at me saying.

"You should a've more respect for your elder brother."

Whilst trying to get some whitewash out of my eye. (The lime in it stings a bit.) Bill squeezed his sponge onto my foot so the creamy white liquid ran down into my shoe.

Geoff let out a loud laugh at my misfortune, so I slapped him across the chest with a full 6" double knot brush full of dirty water. This seemed to be the signal for a free for all, scooping copious amounts of white water over any brother that was in range, the three buckets were soon empty.

As usual my youngest brother Geoff was the wettest.

"It's nearly 6 o'clock, time to get the truck back to the yard." I said.

"Where's Geoff gone?" said Bill.

With that Geoff, still set on revenge, came back into the room and threw a whole bucket of water over me and a whole bucket over Bill.

"That's it, that's enough, look at the bl—dy mess, the floor's awash." said Bill.

"Never mind." I said. "It'll all be dry by the morning and I've got band practice tonight."

So down the stairs we three wet miscreants went, locked the door to the flat and went back to Milton Street with the empty truck. Me pushing, Geoff running at the side of the truck and Bill on his bicycle, harnessed up with a rope, towing from the front. It didn't take long to get back home to 107, Milton Street.

Next morning it didn't take long to get to the flat, we were all on our bicycles, Bill on his Rudge Whitworth, me on my Raleigh trade bike and Geoff on his "bitza" bike called rhubarb and custard since he had painted it yellow and red.

Meanwhile back home at Milton Street the telephone rang.

"Wait a minute." said Dad to the telephone. "Can't you see I'm getting ready."

Dad would not answer the telephone unless he was properly dressed which included combing his hair and straightening his dicky and tie.

My Mum Ada Cooper would never answer the telephone, she thought it was the devil's work.

On the telephone was Mr White, of Talbot and White Estate Agents of Clarence Street. He was a very important person who passed a great deal of work to the firm.

"Cooper, I want you to go down to Hamlet Court Road immediately, there has been a catastrophe in the Flower Shop. It seems that the ceiling has collapsed on the flowers and made a terrible mess."

Mr White continued.

"I understand that you are working in the flat above." (Dad's heart missed a beat.) "So it shouldn't take long for your men to attend to the emergency without delay."

"Certainly Sir, I shall go directly and supervise the clearance personally." replied Dad.

"Send the bill for clearing the shop directly to the office." Instructed Mr White.

"Together with an estimate for repairs to the damaged ceiling for insurance purposes, and Cooper, be in my office tomorrow morning at five past eight."

"Yes Mr White." said Dad as the telephone was replaced at the other end without a "thank you" or as much as a "good day."

Back on the job I could hear Dad coming quickly up the stairs. Dad always walked fast with very small steps but the rate he was mounting the stairs and the fact that he was visiting the job in the morning was unusual.

Dad burst into the room. "What the bl—dy hell's been going on?"

Without waiting for an answer. "Have you seen the shop underneath? I don't know what you were doing up here yesterday, but you've brought the ceiling down and it's a right" He tailed off unable to finish the sentence.

"Get down there all of you and clear it up. By the way they think it's an accident so act dim. That won't be difficult for you."

Mrs Boothby, who rented the shop, was sitting in the corner on an upturned bucket, trying to straighten the stems out on some carnations. She was obviously in shock. The ceiling had come down and all the lime and horse hair plaster, wooden laths and fifty years of dust and dirt had collapsed into the shop. It had not been kind to the horticultural display. In fact the only clue left that the stock had been there, was the odd white lily and pink ribbon sticking out from the pile of rubble.

We all three worked hard that day, more or less in silence. The shop was cleared, the ceiling repaired and within a couple of days the shop was back up and running. Dad put his invoice in for the repairs, got paid and everybody was happy again. Nobody knew how the ceiling had come down except Bill, Geoff, me and I know Dad had a good idea of what actually happened !!!

Written by Colin Cooper in recording the stories told to him by his family especially his father Fred, and his Uncles, Geoff, Fred

and Bill in running and working for the local family building and decorating firm W.J.Cooper & Son. Checked SLC

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