

Essex Thameside News

N° 217, May 2025



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Chairman's message

Steve Rider

chairman@jecessexthameside.co.uk

Hello Essex Thameside Members,

The season kicked off in April with some of the committee attending the 82nd Members Meeting at Goodwood. A tremendous variety of vehicles were to be seen both on track and in static displays over the weekend and, if spotting a celebrity is your thing, then you could also spend some time with a camera and autograph album to enhance your 'souvenir' collection. A more detailed report is planned for the next newsletter and we will also provide details of the Revival event at Goodwood, due to take place in September.

The show season generally is now under way and the club enjoyed a good turnout to the recent Museum of Transport show in Maldon. Organised to raise money for charity, typically the Essex Air Ambulance, the show was well attended with 14 various model Jaguars on our club stand. If you are not familiar with the Museum of Power then the article later in this newsletter by our Neil Shanley is well worth a read.

At the time of drafting this message we are finalising last minute arrangements for the club's Spring tour to the Cotswolds. With over twenty cars and forty plus members taking part, it should be a great event

and a big vote of thanks must go to our Vaughn High for his phenomenal efforts in organising the tour. Full details will be provided on a future report.

As reported previously the club has put together an extensive list of potential shows and events for 2025 as evidenced within this Newsletter.

We have enclosed advertisements for some of the shows, and also issued by e-mail a list of events. The relevant details of the committee member coordinating that event are included and should help when requesting further information or perhaps registering your attendance.

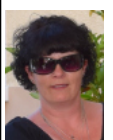
Our main article in this month's Newsletter is a detailed report from a friend of our Richard Gibby and gives us a fascinating incite into the life and career of Raymond Mays, founder and leading light of the ERA and BRM. The article may be a trifle long but is well worth the read.

A number of belated membership renewal fees have now been received, thank you. However if you have not yet renewed your membership then please be advised that this will be the last Newsletter that you will receive if we don't hear back from you.

Finally, Tuesday May 27th is the date of our next club night. Following the success of our 'Easter-themed' meeting in April, complete with hot cross buns and chocolate eggs, we are looking forward to our guest speaker from the Essex Air Ambulance. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join us then.

Steve

Committee Members

	Richard Gibby Treasurer, Webmaster and Editor rwgibby@icloud.com		Ian Croxson Secretary ian@thecroxsons.com		Lester Magness Vice Chairman and Social Secretary lestermagness1@gmail.com
	Beverly Warren Membership Secretary membership@jecessexthameside.co.uk		Neil Shanley Committee member and Co-editor neilshanley@btinternet.com		Vaughn High Committee Member vaughn.high@sky.com

Events Diary

Club nights start at 7.00pm on the last Tuesday of every month (except Tuesday 23rd December 2025)

Shows, Events and Visits

For information and/or to book, please contact Lester Magness (lestermagness1@gmail.com or 07739 263330) except where otherwise indicated.

16 th –19 th May	Cotswolds Tour - fully booked (Contact Vaughn High: vaughn.high@sky.com 07910 787411)
25 th May	Sandringham Pageant of Motoring, Norfolk - fully booked (Contact Vaughn High: vaughn.high@sky.com 07910 787411)
Saturday 7 th June	Visit to The Historic Dockyard, Chatham ME4 4TZ
22 nd June	Hatfield Heath Festival, Hatfield Heath CM22 7EB (Contact Neil Shanley: neilshanley@btinternet.com 07973 874022)
6 th July	Classic Car Show at RHS Hyde Hall, CM9 5JQ
13 th July	Orsett Classic & Vintage Show, Orsett Showground RM16 3JU
22 nd July	Joint JEC Essex / RREC East Anglia midweek visit to Barnards Farm, Brentwood (Contact Richard Gibby: rwgibby@gmail.com 07866 268522)
26 th July	Display at Essex Police Sports & Social Family Weekend, Chelmsford CM2 6DT
TBC in August	Visit to Biggin Hill Spitfire Factory (restoring aircraft)
24 th August	Lavenham Classics, Suffolk CO10 9QT
7 th September	Classics at Glemham, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 0BT
14 th September	The Big Barleylands Classic Motor Show, Billericay CM11 2UD
6 th December	Annual Christmas Bash, at Pontlands Park Hotel (Contact Neil Shanley: neilshanley@btinternet.com 07973 874022)

Others - for information only

18 th –19 th May	Beaulieu Spring Autojumble
18 th May	Rickinghall Classic Car Show & Craft Fair, Suffolk
23 rd June	Simply Jaguar at Beaulieu
6 th –7 th September	Beaulieu International Autojumble
12 th –14 th September	Goodwood Revival, West Sussex
14 th September	Maldon Classic Car Show, Promenade Park, Maldon CM9 5JG
8 th –10 th November	Lancaster Classic Motor Show at the NEC, Birmingham

RICKINGHALL

THE VILLAGE HALL, HINDERCLAY ROAD, DISS, IP22 1HD

Sunday 18th May 2025 10am - 4pm

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Hatfield Heath Festival

This Festival takes place in June each year and is a pleasant day out on the very large village green. There is “something for all the family” – stalls, fairground attractions and so on. There is also a large contingent of classic cars – even a rocket propelled bike turned up last year.

This is our second year here and it is proving as popular as the first one. We already have 17 cars attending and there is no charge. You still have a little time to book, so please email, phone, text or WhatsApp Neil Shanley to save your place. (neilshanley@btinternet.com, mob 07973 874022). And now for the details:

Location: Hatfield Heath, Bishops Stortford, Essex CM22 7EB

Start time: around 08.30



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Raymond Mays losing a wheel at the Caerphilly Mountain Climb race in 1924; the car skidded to a halt just inches from a precipice.

Raymond Mays, racing legend and founder of ERA and BRM

The following article was penned by Steve Horne, a good friend and Rolls-Royce Enthusiast.

Raymond Mays was the epitome of a racing idol and certainly, as a schoolboy, I was hooked sufficiently by the story of his White Rileys and ERA. I pored for many hours over an incredible tome *The History of Brooklands Motor Course* by Bill Boddy whom I first met as a founding member of The Brooklands Society in around 1965. This led inevitably to me inviting Raymond Mays to come and give a talk to our Leys School Motor Club, which I chaired at the time. Our club paid for his accommodation in Cambridge and we had the enormous pleasure of dining with him at The Royal Cambridge Hotel. That evening, he signed the said tome over a picture of him at Brooklands; a book which I treasure to this day.



Born as Thomas Raymond Mays in 1899, the young car enthusiast grew up in the market town of Bourne, Lincolnshire, where he lived throughout the whole of his life. The only child of local business owners, he was a well-known figure in town. Attending a local public school, he met the aspiring automotive engineer Amherst Villiers who would eventually join him at Cambridge University. Travelling with his father to motor racing events across the country, a young Mays developed a love for cars that would inevitably see him take to the track.

What we now know as the Motorsport Valley was once full of dirt tracks and hill climbing. When Raymond Mays returned from the First World War, he knew that there was a gap to fill. At the time, Europe was the place to race cars. With the likes of Alfa Romeo, Mercedes-Benz, and Ferrari prancing around race

Below: Mays racing a plane at Skegness Sands, 1923



tracks across Europe, British motorsport was largely held in respect due to its drivers.

Mays took his first win as a Cambridge University undergraduate, at Brooklands in 1921. Slowly gaining recognition, Mays built up a community of passionate racing enthusiasts on and off track, including his friend Amherst Villiers. To turn a small market town into a bustling hub of motorsport, Mays started by partnering with Villiers and by utilising local talent.

His successful career as a racing driver began in 1921 with hill climbs and speed trials, and he was particularly associated with a pair of Type 13 Brescia Bugattis known as Cordon Bleu (after the brandy of that name) and Cordon Rouge (after GH Mumm Champagne). Setting records and enjoying success at Brooklands and at hill-climbs in Essex and Aston Clinton, Mays gained prominence when competing in Inter Varsity speed hillclimbing races. With Villiers setting up his cars, the duo went on to demand the respect of the motor racing community.

Joined by ex-RAF engineer Peter Berthon in the 1930s, Mays and Villiers received backing from Humphrey Cook to establish English Racing Automobiles (ERA) in November 1933. Marking the first step in broadening racing culture, English Racing Automobiles brought life to Bourne by providing jobs, inspiration, and success. In 1936 the motor racing brand topped the esteemed Maserati marque in world-class Formula 2 racing.

Sadly, the Second World War brought a halt to motor racing and the team's site in Bourne was sold. By the

time racing resumed in the late 1940s, Berthon and Mays had moved on to the British Racing Motors (BRM) project.

British Racing Motors Trust was born in 1946, built on a post-war foundation that utilised the budding workforce in the small town of Bourne. Alongside Berthon, Mays put British motorsport at the forefront of the racing industry. BRM's first engine design was an extremely ambitious 1.5-litre supercharged V16, with Rolls-Royce contracted to produce centrifugal superchargers, rather than the more commonly used Roots type.

Growing stronger each year, the team picked up wins at Goodwood and Zandvoort and, in 1962, won the Formula 1 Constructors' and Drivers' Championship titles with British driver

Graham Hill at the wheel.

The team went on to achieve a total of seventeen Grand Prix wins, the last one being at Monaco in 1972.

Nick Owen, of British Racing Motors, said: "Jackie Stewart has famously said if it wasn't for BRM, there would be no British motorsport. You can take that back a step to Raymond Mays because it was his vision that brought life to British motorsport.

"Everyone should be incredibly proud. Britain really is the home of motorsport, and Raymond Mays, having been a successful driver pre WWII, had that clear post-war vision of all he wanted to achieve for Britain, and all that was achieved, and is still being achieved today."



Raymond Mays kept his fleet of cars even during the Second World War of 1939–45. Here are his Bentley and three Rovers, lined up in the yard of Eastgate House, his home, in Bourne.

Not only did he put Britain at the forefront of motorsport, but Mays did so, in modern parlance, as an LGBTQ+ man in motorsport. Although Mays never officially came out (something impossible in his era), it is widely known amongst the team, the factory and all involved that the icon was gay. "He frequently came into the factory with one, or sometimes two, good-looking young men who he showed around the cars. He would engage us in conversation quite openly with no sign of embarrassment. Similarly, he would show up at testing or race meetings with 'company'", a factory worker said.

For those who crave to know more of this racing legend, there are many books and articles but, following his death, *An Appreciation*, a semi-obituary written in February 1980 by the editor of *Motor Sport*, the infamous Bill Boddy, says it all in impeccable detail:

"With the death last month of Raymond Mays, in his 81st year, the world of British motor racing has lost one of its most staunch supporters and someone entirely dedicated to the sport. Ray might well have been called 'Mr. Motor Racing', because he loved fast motoring in all its aspects and did enormously well at it and for it.

"Born before the turn of the new century, Raymond Mays was perhaps encouraged by his motoring father, who had a 30/98 Vauxhall, to think in terms of fast driving, although it was intended that he go into the family wool business conducted from the house at Bourne in Lincolnshire where much midnight oil was later to be consumed working with Amherst Villiers and Peter Berthon on Ray's numerous racing cars, which were also tested along the local roads.



Raymond Mays in a Brescia Bugatti at Porthcawl Sands, Wales

"While still at Cambridge, after Oundle School and service in the Grenadier Guards, Mays acquired a Speed Model Hillman Light car which was tuned to be effective in the early post-war, public road speed events. From the commencement Mays insisted, as an inviolate rule, that his cars should always be as immaculate as was his own dress, in which there was a preference for light blue. The aluminium Hillman was called "Quicksilver" and it performed well enough to face up to the works Hillman 'Mercury' driven by George Bedford. This was no mean feat of 'hotting-up', because the ordinary sports Hillmans were quicker in second than in top gear, and were flat out at about 60. Mays' car, however, eventually exceeded 80 m.p.h.

"This was nothing to Mays' Brescia Bugattis that followed, and which Villiers induced to run on alcohol fuel at engine speeds and power outputs that were regarded as sacrilege by other Bugatti racing men. It was with these two Bugattis that Mays took two great steps forward – he made F.T.D. at innumerable sprint contests and he thought of how to extract sponsorship for his two Bugattis, 'Cordon Bleu' and 'Cordon Rouge'. He also discovered that the game was risky. Although later he seldom put a wheel wrong with growing experience, with the Brescias he lost a rear wheel at Caerphilly hill climb and ran out of anchors at another sprint venue. Helped by Mumm's champagne and the Whitehead FWB company's sponsorship, Ray turned his back on dull business and decided to race semi-professionally. A supercharged AC gave S. F. Edge little return, for the boost was too much for its complicated and aged engine design, although Mays was seen at Brooklands with the 'canard' he gained free accommodation at a leading West End hotel when setting up London racing headquarters. He tried some drives for the British Mercedes-Benz people, in four- and eight-cylinder, 2-litre racing cars of that make and proved his bravery with the latter car on Brooklands, until convinced by Henry Ingrate that it was too dangerous to continue with.

"Villiers then began metamorphosis of a 3-litre TT Vauxhall for Mays, ending up with some 300 BHP which enabled Raymond to make fastest climbs at Shelsley Walsh in 1930, 1931, and 1933. He was also racing a white, low-chassis, 100 m.p.h., 4½-litre Invicta at this time, with sponsorship notably from India Tyres, a car with which he twice broke the Class C Brooklands mountain circuit lap record in 1931 and 1932.

"Then came the great breakthrough. Seeking ever more speed and acceleration, Mays and Peter

Berthon, with Victor Riley's blessing, thought up and produced the celebrated "White Riley", supercharging this six-cylinder can with a Jamieson blower. This Riley emerged from Bourne a definite winner; it twice broke the Brooklands Mountain lap record in class F, raising it to 76.03 m.p.h. by 1934.

"It was the technical integrity of this car that gave Mays the revolutionary idea of forming ERA (English Racing Automobiles) in order to have a British contender that could combat foreign superiority in pre-war voiturette racing. Humphrey Cook put up the money, Berthon coped with the engineering problems and, down at Brooklands, Reid Railton of T & T's designed and had made the simple chassis.

"ERA's Bourne headquarters not only raced a team of ERA cars, it also sold these impressive, supercharged single-seaters to would-be aces in 1,100 c.c., 1,300 c.c. and 2,000 c.c. configurations. One early customer was Dick Seaman, although he soon found fault with the inability of the courageous little "factory" to prepare his car properly and went over to a Ramponi-revamped 1927 GP Delage, which was a great incentive to the ERA challenge.

"For this patriotic ERA venture, Mays was well fitted. He had the business acumen to obtain the required support and his great personal charm (noticed not only by the ladies) undoubtedly helped. He had the aforesaid 100% enthusiasm for motor racing. Yet, at this difficult time Ray was also to prove his great skill as a very capable racing driver, whether in brief sprints or in long-distance races. He was very fast, without bending the cars he drove. He was extremely precise, was always beautifully turned-out, and justifiably delighted if he won.

"Space precludes a description of how often he did just that. Let me say, of his ERA years alone, he was right at the top. At Shelsley Walsh, where his later black, highly-boosted, 2-litre, Zoller-blown ERA R4D was a pre-war legend, as had his light-green ERAs been before that, Mays made F.T.D. at nine meetings, beaten in all that span only by Fane's Frazer Nash. He left the record at 37.37 sec.

"After the war, at the age of 48, Ray showed that he had lost none of his skills. At Shelsley Walsh he made five more F.T.D. runs, taking the hill record to 37.52 secs. He won the RAC Hill Climb Championship in 1947 and 1948. I remember the excitement of it; the word would go out that the black

ERA was being started up and the starter would be alerted not to hold Mays for more than a moment on the line, lest the ERA's plugs oil up. Previously, he would have inspected the condition of the starting area, and now he would blast away, to the shattering note of the exhaust, skilfully controlling the spinning of the twin rear tyres, changing up impeccably on the Wilson box, the car's steering-column cranked to his liking, incidentally, to set yet another F.T.D. or course-record. Not only at Shelsley Walsh, but at Brighton and elsewhere, was this absolutely polished control of the cars, with the creation of which Mays was so closely associated, to be seen. They were great moments for anyone fortunate enough to be present.



"However, it was in his race victories that Raymond May showed such true prowess. I can but list some of them here, a few of these races very close-fought indeed, as against Prince 'Bira', in another product of Bourne, for example. It is in his dark knitted helmet, wind-cheater and spotless silk blue tie that I think of Mays, forever flicking the steering wheel before corners to catch the incipient skid, but he remained a force for younger drivers to contend with into the era of compulsory crash-hats.

"Mays won the Eifel Rennen, was twice victor at Picardy, won at Albi with Cook as co-driver, was first in the International Trophy race at Brooklands, won the Empire Trophy and Nuffield Trophy at Donington, won the Formula Libre race at Phoenix Park and he twice won the coveted Brooklands' Mountain Championship race. He also won the Campbell Trophy race at that track and his 'places' in the leading events are legion. At the Crystal Palace he won the Coronation Trophy and Crystal Palace Cup races. A racing driver, Mays had little interest in the Brooklands outer circuit, but he will forever hold the absolute lap records for the Brooklands Mountain and Campbell circuits, the



Raymond Mays in a BRM 1½-litre V16 Type 15



former with a 1½-litre ERA in 1936, at 84.31 m.p.h., the latter in the 2-litre ERA in 1939, at 77.79 m.p.h.

“Mays drove other racing cars such as a Talbot-Lago at Reims and the Ferrari Thinwall Special. He then turned his attention to another enormous ambition, the creation of BRM — British Racing Motors — to try to put this country on the Grand Prix map.

“These were very trying years for Mays. Smoking cigarette after cigarette, he would attend the latest let-down of those fabulous but reluctant 1½-litre V16 BRMs, with their highly-blown engines in which tiny pistons and a centrifugal supercharger had been insisted upon. Perhaps, to grasp the essential finance and other help, too many industrial chiefs were stirring up Mays’ soup; maybe Rolls-Royce alone should have been asked to design and develop the BRM V16 engine.

“Alas, the project didn’t get going until too late. But Mays, as ever, devoted all his time and attention to this great venture until others took over and, even then, he retained very close associations with it and affection for it. It is said that so persuasive was Ray that he could arrive late at a board meeting of hard-boiled business executives and heads of industry, when they decided to throw in the sponge so far as helping BRM was concerned, and almost immediately he would charm more finance out of them.

“For these two patriotic endeavours — ERA, BRM — and his very fine racing career, but particularly for his enormous and undulled love of motor-racing, Raymond Mays will be forever remembered with affection, and not a little sympathy, by his army of friends and followers.

“Raymond Mays may have been born just much too early, before high-pressure promotion and universal sponsorship that would have carried his inspired ideals forward. He ran a motor business in a mild way, specialising in tuning equipment for Fords and selling Rovers. He enjoyed fast, long-distance driving on the road, before the war in Derby-built Bentleys, which he used for Continental travel to race venues and as practice-cars on arrival. He was a very good ambassador for the cars he used in this manner, many long articles about them appearing in the motoring papers, written for him by Dennis May when he was too busy to do them himself. This detailed analysis of his Bentleys and Rovers, up to his last Rover 3500, was another feature of Mays’ interest in good cars. That this tall, unchanging enthusiast, with the deep, even gruff, voice, who never uttered unnecessary platitudes but who knew absolutely what it was all about, will never again be seen is almost impossible to contemplate. All we can do now is to recapture the flavour of his busy, dedicated life by reading the many books in which he figures, and especially ‘Split Seconds’, ghosted for this great personality by Dennis May, with a foreword by C. A. N. May.

“At the time of his death, Mays was Director of Racing for the Owen Organisation. Chairman and Managing Director of Raymond Mays and Partners Ltd., Managing Director of T. W. Mays and Sons Ltd. and Chairman of Mays Chemical, Manure Co. Ltd. — W.B.’

Steve Horne

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Visit to Barnards Farm on Tuesday 22nd July 2025

The private home of Bernard & Sylvia Holmes, Barnards Farm in West Horndon covers 22 hectares of gardens with a significant collection of sculptures by famous artists and, in the garages, a magnificent collection of veteran cars in full working order, several of which participate in the London to Brighton Run each November. Our very own Roger Petheram has worked on some of them.

We last visited six years ago on a busy open day. In contrast, this is a private, midweek visit arranged by Richard Gibby for members of the Jaguar Enthusiasts and Rolls Royce & Bentley Enthusiasts Clubs. Unfortunately, the miniature railway around the gardens will not be steamed up and working, but we will be able to tour both the gardens with their sculptures and all the cars in the garages.

Our last visit was a great success and why not come this time and meet some fellow car enthusiasts from East Anglia?

Entry cost is £10 per person, payable in advance. Please bring your own picnic and note that dogs are not permitted anywhere on site because of local hares and other wildlife.

To book your place on this exclusive visit, **contact Richard Gibby** on **07866 268522** or **regibby@gmail.com**





I KNOW, I KNOW... WE'VE BARELY RECOVERED FROM THE CHRISTMAS BUZZ, BUT HERE'S A GIFT FOR YOU!!

Christmas Party 2025

Book now!

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£25 per person deposit

*We can't wait to see you,
again!*



Christmas 2025 at Pontlands Park Hotel

Those who attended our 2024 Christmas Dinner and Disco at Pontlands Park all requested a repeat in 2025. So, you will be pleased to hear we are doing exactly that.

The venue has offered us places at 2024 prices and so the Club has pre-booked four tables of ten place settings each. Here are the details:

DATE: Saturday 6th December

VENUE: Pontlands Park Hotel, West Hanningfield Road, Great Baddow, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 8HR

TEL: 01245 476444

TIME: 19.00 hrs (TBC)

COST: £69.50 per person

Dress: Smart to Party (Black Tie can be worn)

Menu: TBC

Should you wish to stay the night, the hotel has 35 rooms with prices ranging from £171 to £243 per room per night.

Already, we have over 30 members and their partners who have expressed their interest so, if you would like to be added to the list, please email neilshanley@btinternet.com with your name and how many places you require. The Club has reserved 40 places, so please pay your deposit to the Club at your earliest convenience to guarantee your place(s). The monies can be paid direct to the Club via bank transfer (details below), or at club night by cash or cheque payable to Jaguar Enthusiasts Club Essex Thameside.

CLUB BANK DETAILS;

NAME: Jaguar Enthusiasts Club, Essex Thameside

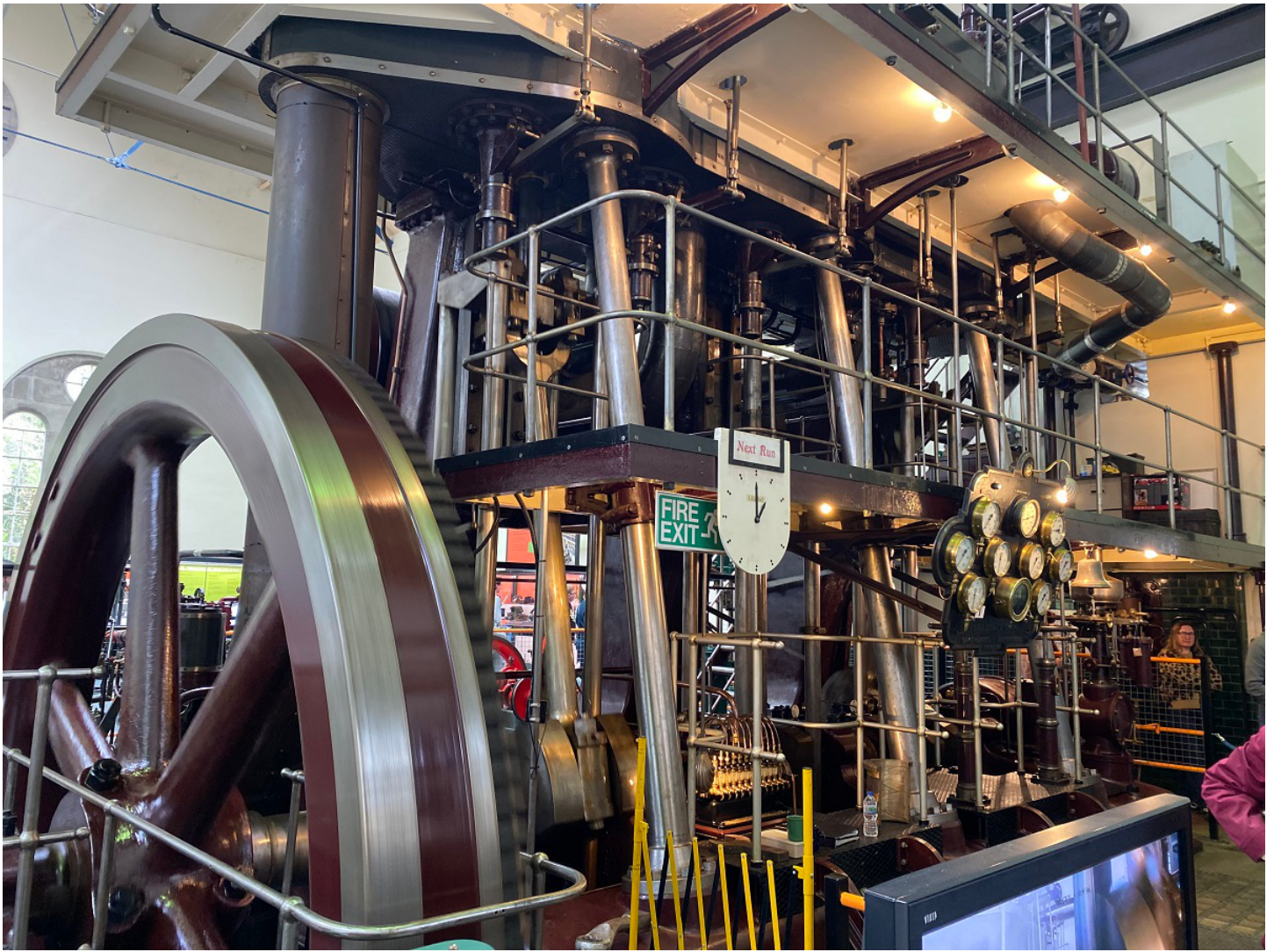
SORT CODE: 60-11-15

ACCOUNT: 54186439

Please specify Xmas Bash 2025

We hope to see you there!

Neil Shanley



Full Steam Ahead

Museum of Power Open Day

It's Sunday 20th April and we are visiting the Museum of Power Open Day, our first club outing of the year, and the weather is scorching.

Set in seven acres of grounds, the museum boasts a working "Marshall" triple expansion engine, a refreshment/meals area in the Steam Pump Tea Room, a miniature steam railway and, of course, many items relating to steam driven machinery. There is also a museum dedicated to objects reflecting life in previous decades and key inventions. Oh, and not forgetting the visiting classic cars parked in the grounds alongside traders stalls, heavy horses, buses and military vehicles.

Opened in 1929, the Langford Pumping Station was designed to provide a daily supply of seven million gallons of drinking water to the community. It originally housed two steam driven engines. A third

engine was installed in 1931 called "Marshall". It is the sole survivor and is the central feature of the museum. These three coal-fired pumps were replaced in 1960 by three semi-automatic electrically operated pump sets. In the late 1960s the original site was abandoned and replaced by a new complex on land adjacent to the storage reservoirs. This opened in 1970 and had a capacity of twelve million gallons of water per day. Also in 1970, the original Southend Waterworks Company amalgamated with the South Essex Waterworks Company to form Essex Water Company with the original pumping station eventually becoming a museum.

When we visited, the venue was already busy and, like the miniature railway, the Marshall pump was in full steam. There were plenty of classic vehicles to see with 14 Jaguars on our stand, with two not being members...yet. Lester expected 11, so a good turnout. Always a good show, so try not to miss next year's if you have not been before. Enjoy the photos.

Neil Shanley







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