

9-12 NOVEMBER 2023 NEC STAND – PERFECT PARTNERS – ALVIS OWNER CLUB

Once again, we had to consider how we could select cars conforming to the Lancaster Insurance Classic Car 'Perfect partners' theme. It was not an easy theme to follow, but we took the easiest route of pairing saloon or drophead coupe designs of certain models. Our choice was eventually two 4.3s, with two and four-door configuration, two Speed 20s and two Park Ward-bodied cars. We actually tried contacting owners this time using Facebook so see if they would volunteer their cars, and also to potentially include cars not in concours or excellent condition. Inevitably, this meant we were not chasing just highly restored cars which would dazzle the show visitors, but well-used or preserved cars with a patina of that use. Red Triangle supported us with transport and exhibition of Alan Stote's fabulous 3 ½ Litre chassis-ed Bertelli two-door saloon, thankfully not out of the UK on a 'Continuation Series Tour'; this car was upgraded with a 4.3 engine supplied by the Works before WWII. We also press-ganged an owner to drive his own car to the NEC venue, namely Nick Taylor and his incredible razor-edge Vanden Plas 4.3 saloon. Steve Wilson of Fisher Restoration transported David Lowe's 1963 TD Series two saloon and I had my 1936 Speed 20 Charlesworth drophead-coupe brought on a trailer alongside the van providing all the stand gear. DD Classics provided the 1965 TE 21 drophead -coupe which will shortly be at auction by Historics of Brooklands at an estimated £65-75k plus buyer's premium. The Facebook request brought offers of oily-rag versions of TA14 and Speed 25 saloon, but the one selected was the very fine 1935 Speed 20 SC Charlesworth saloon, making up the pairing of the models; more importantly, this was a saloon bought by an elderly owner from Bicester, now deceased, which is being retained in the family, and will be in the custodianship of his grandson Harry Miles, who together with his dad needed to learn how to get the car running, recover the car to Cheshire, and then to prepare it for delivery to NEC; a great partnership of two generations supporting the car at the event. And Harry, of course, has now joined the Club and learned a lot about the car whilst at the show.

New member subscriptions were around 11 this year, and we did have well over 70 club members either on or visiting the stand over the weekend. Amongst the new members, we have Speed 20, TA21 and TC 21/100 owners including the rejoin of James Howling, who inherited his grandfather's Speed 20 SA Vanden Plas drophead-coupe and a number wishing to acquire Speed 20/25 and Park Ward Series 2. I was able to help at least three with parts for their cars, including bumpers, starter pinions and BTH distributors and steer many others in the direction of rectifying faults on their cars. We had many requests of researching histories and finding current owners of 12/50s and Speed models and for indications of cars for sale.

We were once again in Hall 1, stand 860 this time, which was very close to the restaurant on the south side of the Hall where our usual supplementary LED lighting and gantry which lit up our stand brightly, in comparison to those neighbouring our stand; even Aston Martin and Rolls Royce stands appeared gloomy and we had them making enquiries regarding similar lighting arrangements for next year. The stand build up commenced on Wednesday, which gave a more leisurely Thursday to finalise all the display material and get the cars in place, and we broke down the stand on Sunday evening withing 3 ½ hours, the final collection of 5 cars being completed by Monday at 11:00. Public interest in our stand was amazing, with our volunteers almost flat out in engaging with visitors throughout each day. Footfall was, as usual, a bit less on Sunday but the quality of enquiry was really engaging and unusually it was the four pre-war cars that grabbed the visitors' prime attention.

I would suggest that visitor numbers were back up to pre-Covid years, given the footfall on our stand; NEC figures would indicate over 70000 came to the Classic Car Show.

Sadly, there was no financial support this year for any Lancaster / Classic and Sports Car reception and Club awards and I didn't notice any stand following the theme of the organisers, which rather tempts us to just follow our own ideas and put on a magnificent display of stunning Alvis in 2024, which will definitely draw the crowds. As commented by many of our visitors, the 2023 show will be a difficult one to follow, as there was a clear perception that our's was one of the best, if not The best stand this year.

Once again, an excellent show that was well supported by AOC volunteers for each day, and we offer our thanks to them and to those who displayed their cars this year, without whom none of this would happen.

Steve Horne