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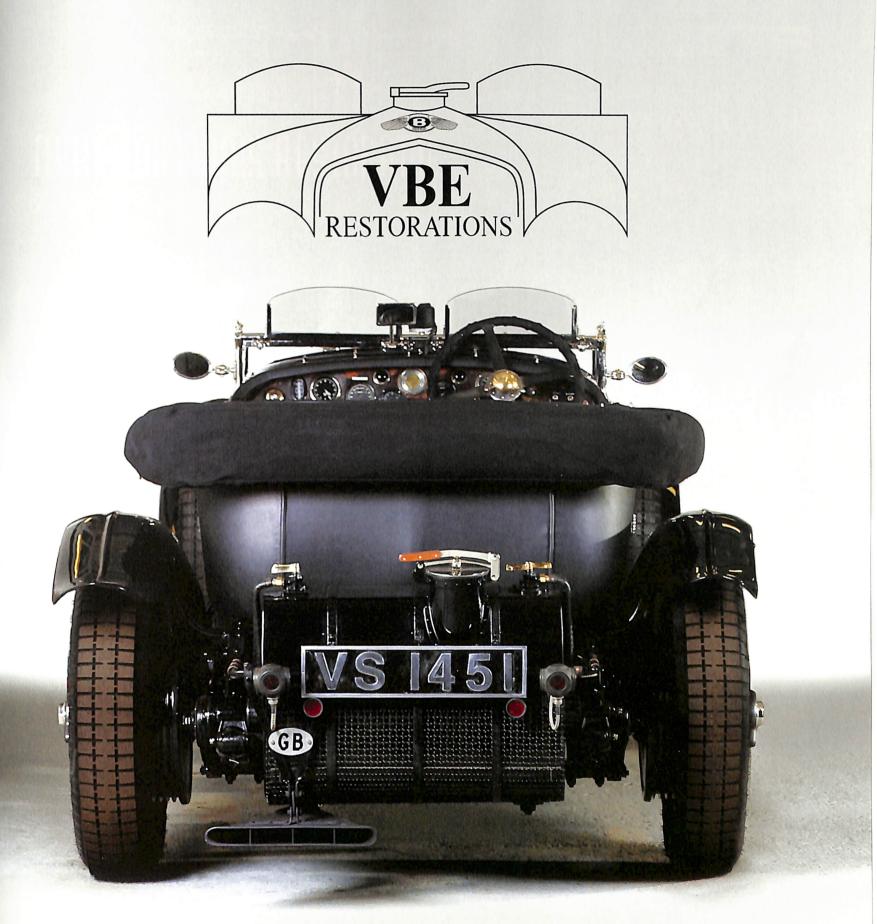
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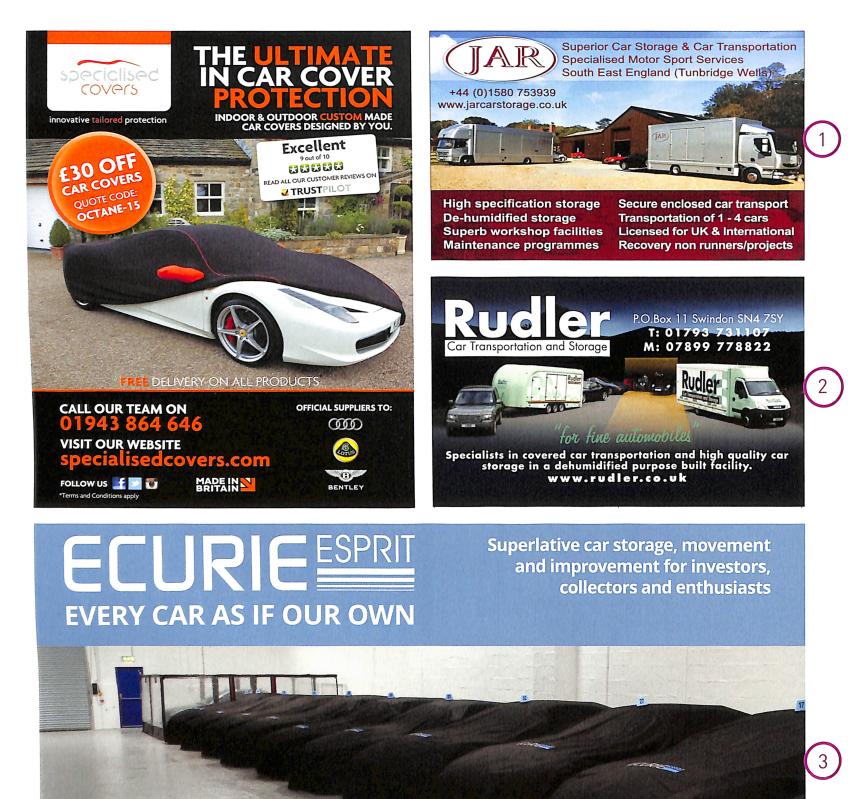
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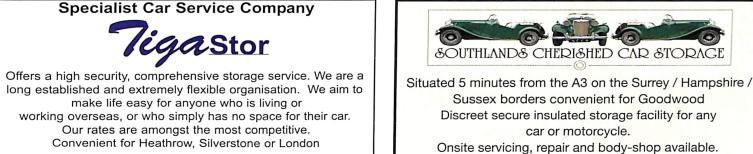
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STORAGE & TRANSPORTATION



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Adrian Sidwell

This classic auto instrument specialist is also a historic drag racer and hot-rodder

LIVE IN A 200-year-old cottage in a small, quiet village in Somerset. I was born in London but during my life I have progressively moved west – I'll probably end up in Cornwall. My alarm goes off at 7.20am, I draw back the curtains and am greeted by the black-faced sheep that live in my field. After black coffee, fruit and cereal, I check my emails and open the post before heading off to my workshop, which is in an old cowshed on a rare breeds farm.

After more coffee, I start work around 10am. I clean, repair, refurbish and re-calibrate auto instruments dating from around 1900 up to 1980-ish; after that, there were too many electronics and too much plastic involved. I like mechanical things. A lot of what I do is like watchmaking, and my grandfather was a watchmaker.

Although I have always enjoyed working with my hands, my father pushed me towards academic subjects and I ended up with a degree in Civil Engineering. However, my lifelong passion has been cars. I've always been a petrolhead and I like modifying cars. Virtually none of the many cars I've owned, including a Daimler V8 and a couple of Aston Martins, remained standard for long. I have always worked on my own cars but repairing the instruments was a bit of a black art. About 15 years ago I took a couple to be repaired and was intrigued; so much so that I then learnt how to do it myself and started up my own business. In the first few years I went to loads of classic car shows and autojumbles, where I not only offered my services but bought hundreds of old car instruments. I now have an enormous stock.

It is not financially viable to machine new gears and parts, so instruments are repaired with recycled parts from my stockpile. There are so many different types. For speedometers alone, there are five main types. Most common is the magnet and rotating disc, then the gear-driven chronometrics, early governor movements with flying bob weights, the complex AT type as found on 1930s Rolls-Royces, and weird and wonderful Bonniksen mechanisms. The governor mechanisms, as used on Austin Sevens, are actually very timeconsuming to refurbish. Sometimes, when I quote people, they say they can buy a brandnew replica instrument for less but it's not the same as retaining the original piece.

I'm 62 and now I only do the shows I really want to, including September's Beaulieu

'A lot of my work is on MGs, Jaguars, and Triumphs but I really enjoy customs and specials'

Autojumble. I get a lot of trade work from classic car restorers and from the various car clubs I'm involved with, which include the Aston Martin Owners Club and the National Street Rod Association. A lot of my bread-andbutter work is on MGs, Jaguars, Healeys, Triumphs and suchlike but I really enjoy the customs and specials work. I put together the instrument sets for the Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato Sanction IIIs and for an Aston Martin DP214 replica; also a rare 1934 Jensen Ford V8 Woodie and several Jensen specials. I take an immense pride in what I do.

I am currently working with the Allard Chrysler Action Group on the restoration of Sydney Allard's original dragster, which is housed at Beaulieu, and I am trying to coax the 1960s American Cartronics tachometer to respond to the magneto ignition system on the car, while retaining as many of the original bits and appearance as possible.

I've always loved drag racing and hot rods. In 1974 I bought an OPUS Ford hot rod with a Ford Cortina 1500GT engine, which I still have. I drove it on the road and then, in the late '80s, I also started running it on the drag strips. I subsequently blew it up big-time at Shakespeare County Raceway and pushed it into the garage, where it sat for several years while I sourced new uprated parts for it. I rebuilt it as a beefed-up 1700 with a rare ex-Sydney Allard Dragon Shorrock C142 supercharger. In 2001 I was invited to display it at the Goodwood Festival of Speed and I have since regularly run it on the drag strips.

This year I'm planning to build an Allard Dragon replica and I'm restoring a 1930s International pick-up, into which I've installed a supercharged 5.0-litre Chevy V8 to act as a tow car. Plus I've got a few other classic cars in various stage of restoration.

Mid-afternoon, I pack the repaired instruments and catch the 4.30pm post before heading home and doing some paperwork. After dinner I'll fettle my cars or read up on supercharging in front of an open fire. I'm normally in bed around 10.30pm. I have found a happy medium between being a petrolhead in my spare time and earning money doing something from which I get satisfaction.

Octane USPS 024-187 is published monthly by Octane Media Ltd, 5 Tower Court, Irchester Road, Wollaston, NN29 7PJ, United Kingdom. The 2015 US annual subscription price is 99 USD. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by Agent named Air Business, c/o Worldnet Shipping USA Inc. 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, NY 11434. US Postmaster: send address corrections to Octane Media, 3330 Pacific Ave. Suite 404, Virgima Beach, VA 23451-2983, USA. Periodical postage paid at Jamaica NY 11434. Subscription records are maintained by Dennis Publishing Ltd, Octane Media Ltd, 5 Tower Court, Irchester Road, Wollaston, NN29 7PJ, United Kingdom.



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