

A V.S.C.C. OCCASION

TO celebrate the 21st Anniversary of the Vintage Sports Car Club a rally was arranged at Goodwood circuit on September 10th, and a truly memorable and picturesque occasion this proved to be. A total of 253 veteran, Edwardian and vintage vehicles (the actual sub-divisions were 16 veteran cars, 55 Edwardian cars, 168 vintage cars, and 14 Edwardian and vintage motor-cycles) took part in a mass Concours d'Elegance, their presence in the Paddock stalls making a positively breath-taking spectacle for old-car enthusiasts to examine, while thirteen teams each of two cars competed in a series of driving tests for one-make honours, in which the Bentley team—D. M. Armstrong's 1928 4½-litre and B. Mountfort's 1924/30 4½-litre—scored top marks.

For the delectation of the large number of spectators who filled the main grandstands and lined the rails facing the Paddock area, various demonstrations were made by the different groups of pre-1931 cars during the afternoon, and this culminated in a grand parade, by makes, of all these cars, thus concluding in a manner dramatic beyond the power of my pen to describe a truly memorable day in the September sunshine.

As a large gathering of non-competing vintage cars was present as well, Goodwood certainly offered an extraordinary sight on the occasion of this V.S.C.C. 21st birthday party.

Naturally, when the gates opened the large assembly took some time to marshal through, as the B.A.R.C. staff officials took the entrance fees, which caused a mild traffic jam in the road outside. During this congestion a pork-pie-hatted occupant of a mediocre Hillman Minx shooting-brake wound down his window and shouted out that he had never before seen so many idiots in his life—from that moment onward we felt a special pride in being one of an individualistic and distinguished company!

The previous evening the President, Committee and officers of the V.S.C.C. had held an exclusive wine party at the R.A.C., to which we were welcomed by Cecil Clutton and Anthony Heal. Amongst those present were Kent Karlake, Forrest Lycett, Laurence Pomeroy, Scott-Moncrieff, H. J. Aldington and his daughter, Terrence Breen, John Eason Gibson, Baron Henri Petiet, Roy Pearl, Nevil Lloyd, Cyril Posthumus, Tom Walkerley, D. B. Tubbs, Mr. Hutchinson and his son, and many other celebrities. On the way home in the VW we overtook J. M. Paterson's 1903 Winton making its steady way Goodwoodwards, oil lamps alight.

The next day we were up early to energise the 1922 Talbot-Darracq in which my wife proposed to travel to Goodwood, via the light-car convoy, driven by Tom Lush. The road through Haslemere and Midhurst seemed dominated by vintage vehicles and once in the Paddock the presence of so many covetable and exotic motor-cars was almost overpowering—moreover, the vintage car owners seemed to have brought along non-vintage lady companions.

There is insufficient space to describe in detail points of interest amongst more than 250 exciting vehicles. But it may go on record, from random observation, that H. M. Brodie's 1929 Star saloon wore one of those adjustable-for-height Auster front bumpers, D. H. Sayers, 1923 Deemster had a British Anzani engine, R. E. Winn's clean 1919 Chevrolet tourer had a notice "Rugs under seat" in its back compartment, B. B. Whitehouse's 2-litre Ballot saloon had the authentic, very fine Ballot mascot of trumpeter standing over a beautifully-detailed marine engine, of the two Essex coaches G. T. Wade's 1929 model had wire wheels, his 1930 model artillery wheels, S/Ldr. K. H. Wallis' 1924 Rolls-Royce was disfigured by a queer if exotic coupe de ville body, and P. B. Moore's 1930 Chrysler saloon looked later-than-vintage, even to traffic dents in a front wing.

Proceedings opened with a bending episode which, instead of recalling painful schoolday memories, involved the competitors in driving swiftly in and out of a line of oil-drums, swinging round, and doing it all over again. In this exercise J. V. Skirrow was brilliant in his 1930 Frazer-Nash, really trying, and all but contacting the final drum in a power slide, to make f.t.d. in 26.2 sec. But Jack Sears was outstanding, being only 0.2 sec. slower in the 1914 T.T. Sunbeam. Both D. M. Armstrong in his Bentley, tongue out, and G. Crowther in his 1928 Frazer-Nash, sliding his car's tail round to the accompaniment of a vicious exhaust note, managed 30.0 sec. J. A. Williamson in Clutton's 1908 G.P. Itala overslid in turning round but clocked 30.2 sec. Laurence Pomeroy worked hard in his Prince Henry Vauxhall, B. Mountfort was very fast and tidy in his Bentley, but J. H. Ahern was very sedate in his Invicta tourer, his teammate, J. Harris-Reed, in spite of a trilby hat, being over 7 sec. quicker.

This test was followed by the dreaded garaging-cum-acceleration exercise, which was fun because the cars went at it in pairs. Sears was again exceedingly neat, Sir Francis Samuelson spoilt his time by stopping after coming out, both the Bugattis, Eric Giles in Peter Hampton's 1913 chain-drive "Black Bess," and Hampton in his delightful 1923/5 Brescia, were exceedingly good, while Mountfort's Bentley front axle juddered shockingly in reverse. Both Hispano-Suizas were so sedate, yet so very neat, but Harris-Reed was brutal to his reverse cog, and Ahern, Leo in his Lagonda and S. H. Darbishire in his 14/40 Sunbeam touched marker drums while reversing.

These tests concluded, we enjoyed a demonstration of Edwardian and vintage motor-cycles, after which the distinguished guests were served an excellent lunch, during which Laurence Pomeroy, Lord Brabazon of Tara, Cecil Clutton the club's President, and Forrest Lycett made brief speeches, and it fell to Mr. Lycett to perform the pleasant task of presenting an antique workbox to Marjory Carson, the hard-working Assistant Secretary and wife of Secretary Tim Carson.

Mr. Lycett then re-opened the course with his immortal 8-litre Bentley, after which the 70 or more veteran and Edwardian cars did demonstration laps—incredible is, I think, an appropriate word for this part of the proceedings, which I viewed from the lofty eminence of the comfortable tonneau of A. D. Englefield's 1904 Clement-Talbot, driven with some verve by Charles Meisl.

The team-cars then went in pairs at a short s.s. acceleration test, the results of which appear at the end of this report.

After this came a mass demonstration by makes of vintage cars, in which A.C., Alfa-Romeo, Alvis, Amilcar, Ariel, Austin, Ballot, Bayliss-Thomas sports, Bentley (in force), Bugatti, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Deemster, Delage, Essex, Fiat, Frazer-Nash, G.N., Graham-Paige, Hampton, Hispano-Suiza, Humber, Invicta, Jowett, Lagonda, Lancia Lambda, Lea-Francis, Marquette, Mercedes, "bull-nose" Morris, Napier, O.M., Peugeot, Rolls-Royce, Salmson, Senechal, Sizaire-Berwick, Star, Sunbeam, Swift, Talbot, Talbot-Darracq, Vauxhall and Wolseley were there to be recognised and admired. A truly representative parade, although I am at a loss to account for the unfortunate dearth of Aston Martins.

In a unique parade of this kind it is quite impossible to even start to mention all that impressed or was admired, but I saw Bunty Scott-Moncrieff swallowed up in a huge two-seater Sizaire-Berwick, Miss Martineau enjoying herself in a deer-stalker hat and G. P. Salmson, David Allen driving his 1922 Grand Prix Sunbeam, and I liked the yellow 1920 2½-litre Peugeot of J. M. Fleming.

Next item on the programme was lappery—most of it very rapid—of celebrities in appropriate cars, a splendid idea rather in tune with my repeated suggestion in MOTOR SPORT for a motorised garden-party.

Baron Henri Petiet, the famous French motor historian, had a fast ride with Williamson in Clutton's 1908 Itala, with C. Bianchi, Jarrott's riding mechanic of fifty-two years ago, in the exposed back seat. Lord Brabazon took his old mechanic of the 1908 French Grand Prix, Charles Lane, for some rapid laps in the 1908 G.P. Austin. George Lanchester drove Hutton-Stott's 38-h.p. Lanchester, Sir Harry Ricardo, designer, circulated in a smart yellow 14/40 Vauxhall two-seater driven by R. P. Creagh-Osborne. Percy Kidner drove with Laurence Pomeroy in the latter's Prince Henry Vauxhall, Kidner and Pomeroy's father were great Vauxhall men. H. Kensington Moir recalled his youth by going furiously in a 4½-litre Bentley, Georges Roesch drove a smart Talbot that he designed, and Archie Frazer-Nash and H. J. Aldington handled, appropriately, chain-drive Frazer-Nash cars. The Duke of Richmond and Gordon showed us that his driving has lost none of its skill as he got away in Clutton's E-type 30/98 Vauxhall. Pioneer racing driver Sir Francis Samuelson drove Stanley Sears' 1914 T.T. Sunbeam as his own was suffering from a malady in its complex lubrication system. Fred Bennett, waving his grey bowler, in his 1903 Cadillac, was exceedingly popular, but perhaps most nostalgic sight of all was H. R. Godfrey, the "G" of G.N., with his wife, in his own 1919 G.N. cyclecar, which he also drove to and from Goodwood, eschewing the kind offer of G.N. Ltd. to loan him their 1922 G.N. which arrived in a truck. Godfrey, taking no chances with the fateful shellac, had two adjacent 180-deg. magnetos for his i.o.e. engine and when these refused to switch off, causing him to appear round lap after lap, his smile was as cheery as ever it was in the days of the 200-Mile Race.

It was grand to see those pioneers and vintage gentlemen performing and nice, too, apart from these mobile celebrities, to see Gerald Rose, Clive Gallop and other celebrities present. Incidentally, Tom Rolt did yeoman service as Deputy Clerk of the Course, in his 12/50 Alvis, and enthusiast Paul Freze had come over from the Continent to be one of the "idiots."

After the Concours d'Elegance had been judged and the winners led by the presidential cars round the circuit, the Grand Parade was released, to eventually ebb away at the close of one of motoring's most entralling afternoons.

A nice sight in the background had been the immaculate 1926 model-T Ford tonner van brought by Walls Ice Cream for the occasion, and two small bodies in the dicky-seat of my little Talbot-Darracq joined me in calling it a truly outstanding day.—W. B.

TESTS			
Heading :			
J. V. Skirrow (1930 Frazer-Nash)	...	...	26.2 sec.
J. G. Sears (1914 Sunbeam)	...	...	26.4 "
G. Crowther (1928 Frazer-Nash)	...	...	30.0 "
D. M. Armstrong (1928 44 Bentley)	...	...	30.0 "
J. A. Williamson (1908 Itala)	...	...	30.2 "
B. Mountfort (1924/30 44 Bentley)	...	...	30.4 "
L. Pomeroy (1914 Vauxhall)	...	...	30.6 "
M. C. Crowley-Milling (1923 Alfa-Romeo)	...	...	31.2 "
M. L. Quartermaine (1927 30/98 Vauxhall)	...	...	31.2 "
M. Leo (1930 Lagonda)	...	...	31.8 "
C. W. P. Hampton (1923/5 Brescia Bugatti)	...	...	32.0 "
E. L. Giles (1913 Bugatti)	...	...	32.8 "
D. G. Preston (1927 12/50 Alvis)	...	...	33.2 "
D. W. Price (1920 Lagonda)	...	...	33.4 "
A. P. Southon (1920 30/98 Vauxhall)	...	...	34.2 "
Sir F. Samuelson (1914 T.T. Sunbeam)	...	...	34.4 "
P. M. A. Hull (1927 22/90 Alfa-Romeo)	...	...	34.6 "
H. F. M. Scott (1924 Hispano-Suiza)	...	...	35.0 "
W/Comdr. A. S. Judson (1926 twin-cam Sunbeam)	...	...	35.0 "
Capt. J. E. Castle (1926 Twenty Rolls-Royce)	...	...	35.0 "
E. K. H. Karlslake (1919 Hispano-Suiza)	...	...	37.8 "
S. H. Darbishire (1926 14/40 Sunbeam)	...	...	39.0 "
J. Harris-Reed (1929 Invicta)	...	...	41.4 "
S. E. Sears (1905 T.T. Rolls-Royce)	...	...	46.8 "
J. H. Ahern (1927 Invicta)	...	...	F
H. Clarke (1925 12/50 Alvis)	...	...	F
* Plus 5.0 sec. f.s. penalty. F = Failed.			

Garaging :			
J. V. Skirrow (Frazer-Nash)	...	...	15.2 sec.
J. G. Sears (1914 Sunbeam)	...	...	16.6 "
D. M. Armstrong (Bentley)	...	...	17.4 "
M. Leo (Lagonda)	...	...	17.6 "
E. L. Giles (1913 Bugatti)	...	...	18.2 "
B. Mountfort (Bentley)	...	...	18.4 "
C. W. P. Hampton (Bugatti)	...	...	18.4 "
D. W. Price (Lagonda)	...	...	18.8 "
W/Comdr. A. S. Judson (Sunbeam)	...	...	19.8 "
L. Pomeroy (1914 Vauxhall)	...	...	20.2 "
H. Clarke (Alvis)	...	...	20.2 "
M. L. Quartermaine (Vauxhall)	...	...	20.6 "
P. M. A. Hull (Alfa-Romeo)	...	...	20.6 "
A. Southon (Vauxhall)	...	...	21.0 "
D. G. Preston (Alvis)	...	...	21.4 "
S. E. Sears (1905 Rolls-Royce)	...	...	21.4 "
Capt. J. E. Castle (Rolls-Royce)	...	...	21.6 "
S. H. Darbishire (Sunbeam)	...	...	21.6 "
G. Crowther (Frazer-Nash)	...	...	21.6 "
E. K. H. Karlslake (Hispano-Suiza)	...	...	24.4 "
Sir F. Samuelson (1914 Sunbeam)	...	...	24.8 "
J. M. F. Scott (Hispano-Suiza)	...	...	25.0 "
J. A. Williamson (1908 Itala)	...	...	28.4 "
J. Harris-Reed (Invicta)	...	...	28.8 "
J. H. Ahern (Invicta)	...	...	36.4 "
M. C. Crowley-Milling (Alfa-Romeo)	...	...	44.8 "

Acceleration :			
B. Mountfort (Bentley)	...	...	12.6 sec.
D. M. Armstrong (Bentley)	...	...	12.8 "
M. Leo (Lagonda)	...	...	13.0 "
J. V. Skirrow (Frazer-Nash)	...	...	13.2 "
E. L. Giles (1913 Bugatti)	...	...	13.4 "
J. G. Sears (1914 Sunbeam)	...	...	13.8 "
C. W. P. Hampton (Bugatti)	...	...	14.0 "
Sir F. Samuelson (1914 Sunbeam)	...	...	14.6 "
J. A. Williamson (1908 Itala)	...	...	14.6 "
M. L. Quartermaine (Vauxhall)	...	...	14.6 "
A. P. Southon (Vauxhall)	...	...	14.8 "
L. Pomeroy (1914 Vauxhall)	...	...	15.2 "
G. Crowther (Frazer-Nash)	...	...	15.2 "
D. W. Price (Lagonda)	...	...	15.4 "
E. K. H. Karlslake (Hispano-Suiza)	...	...	15.6 "
M. C. Crowley-Milling (Alfa-Romeo)	...	...	15.8 "
J. M. F. Scott (Hispano-Suiza)	...	...	16.0 "
P. M. A. Hull (Alfa-Romeo)	...	...	16.6 "
H. Clarke (Alvis)	...	...	16.8 "
S. E. Sears (1905 Rolls-Royce)	...	...	17.4 "
D. G. Preston (Alvis)	...	...	17.0 "
W/Comdr. A. S. Judson (Sunbeam)	...	...	17.6 "
Capt. J. E. Castle (Rolls-Royce)	...	...	17.8 "
S. H. Darbishire (Sunbeam)	...	...	18.0 "
J. H. Ahern (Invicta)	...	...	18.4 "
J. Harris-Reed (Invicta)	...	...	19.0 "

Tests :		
First Team :	D. M. Armstrong/B. Mountfort (Bentley)	166 marks
Second Team :	G. Crowther/J. V. Skirrow (Frazer-Nash)	148 "
Third Team :	C. W. P. Hampton/E. L. Giles (Bugatti)	142 "

Concours d'Elegance :
Veteran (Tie) : H. T. Clarke (de Dion) and C. W. P. Hampton (Mercedes)
Edvardian : 1st : S. J. Skinner (Rolls-Royce); 2nd : D. R. Grossmark (Napier).
Vintage : 1st : C. W. P. Hampton (Bugatti); 2nd : R. D. P. Wilkinson (Rolls-Royce); 3rd : R. C. Wheatley (Bentley).
Motor Cycles : D. J. Dunford (Singer).

PRAISE FOR VINTAGE

Sir,

Mr. Rawnit is right—one should not refer to the modern car as "tinware," and, however often I may have offended in the past, I will try never to do it again; because it has just occurred to me that tin is a valuable metal today, mainly because it does not rust . . .

The British, Mr. Rawnit, are a nation of supporters of lost causes. Hence the number of people who drive around in cars twenty and thirty years old, which still continue to give good service because they were made (not produced) slowly and carefully by men who had never heard of Detroit, or pressed steel, or zinc-base alloy die-castings, or odd bits of badly chromium-plated metal insecurely fixed on to unlikely places to improve the "lines" of the thing. They were pessimists, these men, for they put starting handles on their cars, although their electrical equipment was far better than it is now, and their batteries were not overloaded by myriads of flashing fairy-lights. They put the works where you could see them and touch them, and they told you what to do if it went wrong—and it did not involve taking the car to the nearest Service Station, where the offending component would be exchanged for a "factory reconditioned unit"! And some of us feel flattered to be treated as the driver of a motor car, with responsibilities for its well-being, rather than as the moronic operator of an automobile.

The motor cars they built in those days had character; they required a little skill to drive them, and when you held the steering wheel you held the pulse of the car, feeling what the front wheels were doing and what the car thought about what you were doing. Hands up those to whom the steering wheel of a modern car looks like slimy frozen blanc-mange, and feels like soggy suet pudding when moved!

And those motor cars were strong, and sensibly shaped, so that if you were clumsy enough to touch the garage doors, or if someone clouted you in a crowded car park, the running board or wing bent a little, and there was no enormous dent along the whole length of the thing—the underlying reason, I believe, for the enormous cost of insurance nowadays.

Perhaps, of course, Mr. Rawnit needs a car for business—a nice new shiny car to show how prosperous his firm is, so that he has a new one every year. In that case I am sorry for him, for it takes me about a year to get to know a car, and then I find I am getting attached to it, and, as W. H. Charnock so nicely put it . . . "it is seasoned, and unobtrusive, and friendly." And after a year I find I am getting to know the car and its little ways—sorry, Mr. Rawnit, your sort of car doesn't have "little ways"—it is smooth and sleek, and you have to remember its registration number to know it from all the thousands of others like it, for they are more alike than peas in a pod. I drove one of this sort recently—it went very nicely, faster, more quietly and with better acceleration than my old 12/40 Lea-Francis. Even if its steering did feel like chewed string it rode smoothly over roads that shake your back teeth loose in my car. And it got round the corners all right, even if it did roll a bit. But I wonder if it will find an enthusiastic and loving owner in twenty-two years' time, and if people will come up and admire it, and say how they knew it was a '55 model because its chromium-plated front was die-cast and not pressed steel!

Of course, there are good motor cars built today; my firm makes very good ones indeed. Unfortunately they don't pay me enough to be able to afford one! But even so, will as many people get as much pleasure from the A30 as from the Austin Seven? And will history declare the current Rolls-Royce (with bolt-on wheels and pressed-steel body) as great a car as the Silver Ghost?

Don't think I am against modern cars. It's only that I can't for the life of me see how anyone can enjoy driving the vast majority of the things, or be proud to own them!

I am, Yours, etc.,

Bristol.

J. M. SLOPER.