

Jim Wood



John Bentley's Type 57S won the George Harris Challenge Cup for the best Bugatti excluding GP cars.

Steve Cooper

I associate the annual Garden Party at Prescott with sunshine, picnics, long drinks and rather fine food. It is a time for unrolling the Panama and ironing the linen slacks. Be sure that the hamper is packed and don't forget the corkscrew. For years I have looked at the annual date with more thoughts of socialising and catching up with old friends (and a few young ones!) but most of all, I think of warmth and lawns, the breath of polish in the air more often than the thicker pheromones of R.

We delight in all that Ian Patton and the BOC officers and volunteers manage for us each year in this most lightly-stressed occasion. Once more we enjoyed a particularly well-attended gathering of Bugattis and members other cars. The event was held on a weekend when other diversions steered a few regulars elsewhere. As a contrast for us at Prescott Hill, whilst we had a moderate downpour for a while, I left others at Cholmondeley on Saturday under looming deep slate skies on Saturday afternoon. The rain-soaked Cheshire ground turned rapidly to a deep mud-bath in the heavy rains during their event in the north. We were thankful that we at Prescott were lightly served and managed a short and refreshingly light shower before brightening up for a much improved afternoon. The skies were full of cotton-wool clouds but high enough for the diners to watch some vintage aircraft passing, presumably from the Air Tattoo to the south of us.

There is a gently competitive element to the affairs of the Garden Party: the Concours. The club registrar is the team leader and gathers a varied set of per-



A BNC is a rare sight at the best of times but, when painted yellow and red, this French light car certainly catches the eye.

Adrian Ford

sonalities from the world of vintage and competition motoring, together with experts in manufacturing and design engineering. This team of judges considers the choices and selects winners, counting up a system of scores from the panel on the basis of various listed criteria. The judges look at the coachwork, the engine and the chassis, but in fact also consider the interest and the use of



Just 'a good ol' boys, Never meanin' no harm.

Adrian Ford



An varied mix of Bugatti models were in evidence but perhaps there were less than in previous years? Maybe the weather.....

Steve Cooper

the car as additive or mitigating factors. Every judge has areas of expertise and specific enthusiasms that also contribute to the views and attribution of scores.

There is a good number of classifications for prizes, and the increasing



Once the sun got out rides up the hill became popular. Keith Knight makes a determined getaway in his Type 49 with a full compliment of passengers.

Adrian Ford

popularity for the BOC Concours has increased the interest for the judges. A better range of post-war entries from the classic rallying and touring members has seen some more effective and discerning opinions in achieving a good result. Bring on the thoroughbred designs and the forties favourites, alongside those with reversed quarter-elliptics and hollow beams. Bugattis are always welcome and a good well-used car stands well with a highly strung showroom queen. I recall the several fine Bugattis presented with garlands in full race-grime and the patinata of extremis that we associate with the gods of the Grand Prix and the demons of the trialling world. The same applies for all classifications and we would encourage more owners to join in with this annual delight – there is even a scuderia award for a stable of cars!



The Jaguar XK 120 is a fine looking car and it may be that the designer was influenced by Bugatti's Le Mans winning 'tanks' but it hard to believe that the design is 60 years old. Most home market 120s were fitted with steel wheels and spats so Hugh Price's car is as it would have been when new.

Adrian Ford

Whilst not fully patinated by any means, we enjoyed the lovely AC 12/24 Royal two-seater with dickey, an Anzani four cylinder presentation from Mike Hallowes. In period, AC offered a second door for an extra charge of £5, but not found on Mike's car.

This Royal is something of a contrast to the 'exploding' Model T clown from Mike in 2008. The pristine AC has elegance from times long past and almost faultlessly representative of those early years after the Great War. This classic open sporting model from the early 20's was a popular choice at the time, selling for about £333 in 1925. I was enthused and researched these earlier cars in the sales pages of the Autocar and Light Car, and often found the AC represented on reliability trials and light hill-climbs in the first half of the 20's. It was obviously seen as an important showcase opportunity for the manufac-

turers. If the press is to be believed, it was a sound and reliable contender for some years.

Another AC, an Ace from the 50's with a recent aluminium cylinder-head replacement to the Weller engine was another contrast for the judges. An alloy-head in an AC Ace is several kilos lighter and the roll-centre appreciably lower, not to mention the balance moved back and the other benefits of modern engineering applied to these classics. A car that uses a transverse leaf-spring and telescopic dampers sings of a 1950's design special, but smaller manufacturers clung on to proven but possibly retrograde designs in the cost-conscious market. While Auto-Carriers produced invalid carriages and small commercials, the Ace was introduced as a tubular-framed chassis with all-independent suspension designed by John Tojeiro. The combination of a wishbone below the eight leaves of the transverse spring reminded me of those early 1172 specials that Arthur Mallock and Mike Cannon developed.

The standard Weller engine was good for about 85hp and just over the 100mph mark. The evolved two-litre Ace grew into the Cobra and became an icon of some note, of course. A well-sorted and useful car, this pretty AC Ace won the Porter Shield for Austin Weltman.

Several other contrasting cars visited Prescott. One of these was a tidy Zagato-bodied Bristol coupe, seen shortly after an involving look through the Bristol 411 of Gavin Coulthard. The Zagato is essentially the tighter and sophisticated design we have come to associate with the builder. The mannered and rather gauche walls of the 411 are actually quite interesting. There is an upright spaciousness, a feeling of generosity and classic presence in the less aerodynamic essay of Bristol's own commission. I believe the Zagato will nevertheless be recognised as the classic. The 411 stands some distance back from the earlier Bristol essays to my mind, whilst having evolved somewhat mechanically and ergonomically. Aerodynamics has become secondary with the 411 and yet the comfortable-chair factor is appealing and the whole is certainly more desirable than any mass-produced offering.

There was a good selection of the pur-sang Bugattis to dream about, to absorb the line and orchestration in the rather excessively pedestrian queues to drive up the hill. Many fine cars spent much time under the shade of the trees once the sun came out. Fewer Bugattis took up the challenge to introduce youngsters to the hill and entertain our guests with the smells and noises we all recognise from past Prescott days. Somehow the damp morning rather diverted the picnic rugs, and the fizz was a little flatter this year as a consequence. Let us rally and preserve the grand ideals! I have to say I was less inclined to be party to a social gathering at the edge of a traffic jam. Did I detect a few missing regular Bugatti drivers this year? I used to truly enjoy the flow of exotic cars smartly climbing away from the Orchard, Pardon and the Esses with good drivers, great cars, grinning children, friends and spouses trying out the seats of different grand marques. Whilst it is unfair to discriminate too much, it is appropriate to suggest that we will win over another generation by using a few more significant cars and possibly trying to find ways to encourage a little more quality and rather less of the high street.

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