



OWNERS CLUB BULLETIN



September / October 2025

RAILTON OWNERS CLUB

LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

Registered Office:

Abberley Cottage, 7 Dowles Road, Bewdley, Worcs., DY12 2EJ

Company Registration No. 574562 Founded June 1956

President : Sally Railton Joslin Vice President : John Dyson

HONORARY DIRECTORS

Chairman : MICK JARVIS

The Barn, Boulters Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 8TJ

Telephone: 01628 674116 E-mail: chairman@railton.org

Secretary : MAX HUNT

Abberley Cottage, 7 Dowles Road, Bewdley, Worcs., DY12 2EJ

Telephone: 01299 401135 E-mail: secretary@railton.org

Bulletin Editor : NEIL THORP

Ridgewood Grange, Chilton Road, Upton, Didcot, Oxon., OX11 9JL

Telephone: 01235 850756 E-mail: editor@railton.org

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Treasurer :

Financial enquiries should be sent via E-mail: treasurer@railton.org

Spares Registrar : MIKE STENHOUSE

17 Peasehill Close, Rawdon, Leeds, LS19 6EF

Telephone: 0113-2504896 E-mail: spares@railton.org

Registrar of Cars : TOBY SHARP

Hele Cottage, Hele Cross, Ashburton, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 7QX

Telephone: 01364 652948 E-mail: registrar@railton.org

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RAILTON OWNERS CLUB

The premier British club for enthusiasts of all
Brough Superior, Railton, Hudson, Essex and Terraplane
motor vehicles.

List of contents: September / October 2025

Editorial	4
Secretary's Notes	5
Membership News	8
Subscription renewal	8
Calendar 2025	8
A trip to Australia and a visit to FPH 388.....	10
1938 Railton Little Fairmile	12
From the sublime to the (slightly) ridiculous	14
Race the Waves	16
How What Why – Chassis	18
The Chairman's Column	21
Nairobi to Johannesburg Part 3	22
The 1935 Monte Carlo Rally	26
Correspondence	30
Technical Tips – Springs & Things	32
Market Place.....	33

The front cover shows Graeme Whiting and partner Zoe at the *Race the Waves* event at Bridlington. A report starts on page 16.

Photo: James Catley photography (Instagram j.c.moto)

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Railton Owners Club

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EDITORIAL

As I write this, the last speed event of the 2025 V.S.C.C. season looms large. This is the Prescott long-course hill climb where our Club honours will be upheld by myself in the Spikins Hudson and John Fack in the Light Sports Tourer. I pray that the weather will be kinder than it was at Loton Park where John & I also competed. (I ran the Spikins Bantam rather than the Hudson). It has been good to see the LST out again this year after major engine problems have been overcome and I hope John will write a season summary as he has done in the past. It would be good to have even more Club cars in action next year – certainly the Brough Alpine Grand Sport is once more having the engine rebuilt with that goal in mind.

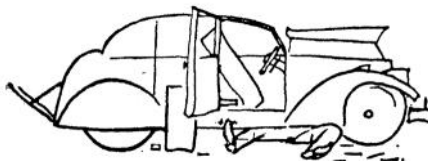
With rallying being more or less defunct (apart from the ever popular Measham event) I have entered the Ranalah saloon, Z 6201, in the last V.S.C.C. tour of the year based in Sussex. October may not bring the warmest weather but the car deserves an outing. Will any other members be joining me?

The restoration of the Fairmile fixed head coupé continues, but at a snail's pace until the competition season is over. Apart from the springs, (see Technical Tips) the car needs painting. I have been waiting some time for a local paint shop to find time to take on the work amongst their crash repair work, but am now reconsidering that option and currently intend to follow Robin Richardson's lead and use coach enamel. I have spray painted cars in the past but never without experiencing a few paint runs. The one exception was when I used an enamel-type paint. Excellent results can be obtained using a brush finish with specialist paint which is what I currently plan to employ with spray as a fall back. With both brushing and spraying, preparation is paramount. Brushing has the advantage that it is considerably cheaper as I will do the work myself. With continually falling values of pre-war cars, this has to be a consideration.

Finally a plea for an archive copy of the July/August 2025 Bulletin. If you do not retain your Bulletin long term, would you please contact Max Hunt as the Club's spare copies for that issue went astray in the post. He therefore received no hard copy at all and consequently the Club archive copy is absent. **Please help!**

Neil Thorp

CLOSING DATE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NOV /DEC BULLETIN IS THE 10TH NOV.



SECRETARY'S NOTES

You really don't expect to see a stylish young lady driving a modern drop-head Bentley perform a perfect "doughnut" in the narrow confines of the Shelsley Walsh paddock. This, however, was the chosen form of exit as one participant in the recent Hampton Court Concours Tour ended her visit to the famous hill climb on September 3rd. A startling conclusion to a memorable four hours – of which more anon. One could almost hear the sound of jaws dropping!

By early September, of course, memories of our highly successful National Meeting at Brooklands are fading; though, as I type, the Club Distance Award with my own name now added is glinting on my bookcase as a reminder. Happily, there has been much to enjoy over the succeeding weeks and I hope that other members, like me, have been able to take advantage of the hot, dry weather.

The V.S.C.C. meeting at Shelsley Walsh on July 6th just scraped into my last column. It was closely followed by the two days of Shelsley's annual Classic Nostalgia event when, I am pleased to say, CPD enjoyed a prominent position in the "black plate" car park. Freed on this occasion from commentating duties, I was able to mingle with the many hundreds of spectators and, of course, field all those "I've never heard of Railton" questions. Sadly, on this occasion there was no other member present to share the task.

More satisfactory was the local collaboration with friends from the Vintage Minor Register just a week later. Members may recall our linking up with the VMR's Pre-War Prescott event in 2023. This year the Register celebrated its 25th anniversary with a three-day event, and two Railtons were present both in the countryside tours and the spectacular innovation organised for Sunday July 27. For some years motor enthusiasts around the Herefordshire town of Bromyard have contributed to an annual "Festival of Speed". For 2025 something far more ambitious had been arranged.



A number of R.O.C. members from around the Home Counties have been regular supporters of the revived Kop Hill Climb – a non-competitive event on a temporarily closed public road recalling the glory days of the 1920s and 1930s. Now the Midlands has its own Kop. Herefordshire Council had been persuaded to allow closure of the mile-and-a half hill on the



Stourport road rising out of the centre of picturesque Bromyard up onto the Bromyard Downs. With sweeping bends and spectacular views over the Herefordshire countryside the course provided a day's delight for vintage and classic enthusiasts. So it was that Robin Butler, with the well-known ex-Geoff Moore JT, and yours truly with FPH, the 1937 Cobham, were to be seen lined up for the start after bacon baps and coffee on that fine Sunday morning.

I later discovered that some bright soul had taken video film of the proceedings which can be found somewhere (if you understand these things) and FPH is to be seen laying down a smoke screen worthy of a naval warship as she leaves the start line on full power.

After our second, afternoon, run up the hill my friend Linda and I decided to eschew the return road back into Bromyard and head off home to The Green using the scenic route. Those who know the area will realise that this gave opportunity to take in the notoriously (in vintage days) steep Ankerdine Hill and put FPH to the test. I am delighted to say that we made the climb in top gear – a very satisfying conclusion to a weekend of motoring delights!

And so to that annual pinnacle of vintage activity, the V.S.C.C. Prescott weekend at the beginning of August. Arriving this time with CPD, the 1935 saloon, at 9.00 am we found the Orchard car park already filling up; such is the popularity of this combined summer picnic and speed hill climb. Notable, of course, that the going rate for a bacon bap was nearly half as much again as the Bromyard offer, and with considerably less bacon! Railton honours in the

Speed Championship were being upheld by John Fack with the LST, and the Prescott commentators lived up to their lamentable reputation by telling the spectators how wonderful was the sound of the Railton's V8 as it accelerated out of Pardon! Never mind; another lovely day in warm sunshine. A chance to catch up with old friends, browse the autojumble and explore a spectator car park stuffed full with the most wonderful display of cars from a skeletal GN to the most colossal Rolls Phantom Three.

And so to that Hampton Court tour. Apparently, the prestigious Hampton Court concours event is preceded these days by a week-long associated tour, and some months previously the powers that be at Shelsley Walsh were approached by the organisers with an enquiry as to what sort of welcome we could lay on for their Wednesday lunch stop. So, at 11.00 am on September 3rd, with a shiny 1935 Railton strategically placed adjacent to the Shelsley entrance, we awaited their arrival. Eventually a series of interesting cars drifted into the paddock to be greeted by management and shepherded into the Black Barn. Here they appeared to enjoy a twenty-minute introduction to the UK's oldest motor racing venue from yours truly. Then, after a sumptuous lunch in the restaurant, it was on to a guided tour of the Shelsley watermill specially operated for the occasion to provide visitors with our stone-ground wholemeal. After an opportunity to drive the famous hill itself at "touring speeds", in the late afternoon the visitors headed off to their next overnight stop at Langoed Hall in mid-Wales – the young ladies having executed their spectacular "doughnut"! A fascinating and all-round enjoyable day for us all.

By the time this issue of the Bulletin hits members' doormats the V.S.C.C. Madresfield Driving Tests will have come and gone and someone will no doubt have taken another incriminating picture of your Secretary making a mess of one of the complex manoeuvres. With the Prescott Long Course event at the end of the month the 2025 season for our automotive enjoyment will then be pretty much over, but for your Club officials the annual Classic Car Show at the N.E.C. looms. Details will be found on the events page and we will hope to see some of you on the Railton stand in the Prestige Hall. It would be good if members managed to take advantage of the Club special offer code for prior booking. We are indebted to Messrs Adamson, Brough and Cook for making their cars available for a display which will mark the ninetieth anniversary of George Brough's venture into motor car manufacture.

Appropriately then, I go back **90 years** to September 1935 for my **archive piece**. On September 24th *The Motor* magazine declared that:-

"There is an extraordinary fascination in handling the Brough Superior, for it places really high performance at the driver's instant disposal; yet when this performance is not required – in crowded streets or narrow country lanes – there is a velvet refinement which soothes the most sensitive passenger."

George Brough must have been well pleased with that Tuesday's issue!

Max Hunt



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

New Members

Again we have just one new recruit this time, whom we welcome to the Club.

1286 Nicholas Sykes. 39 Barnsley Road, Upper Cumberworth, Huddersfield, HD8 8NR. Nicholas has joined the select company of Brough Superior owners, having recently acquired the 1939 six-cylinder Dual Purpose, BUH 665. He tells us that he is a retired plant engineer so, with luck, he should be more than capable of looking after a restored Brough.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL NOTICE

A reminder that Club membership subscriptions became due on 1st September. Rates remain unchanged even though the post office is continually increasing its prices. Please try to pay promptly, preferably using a bank standing order as a lot of effort has to be put into chasing those who have forgotten to renew. If, for any reason, you do not wish to continue as a member it would be helpful if you would advise the Secretary accordingly. You can also pay via the Club website, just click on the Membership tab.

A reminder e-mail has been sent to every active Club member, this can obviously be ignored if you have a standing order in place at your bank or if you have only very recently joined. If you have not received this message, then we may not have your current e-mail address, so please advise the Editor so that the Club records can be updated.

CALENDAR 2025

Friday 7th - Sunday 9th November

Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show

The Club will again have a stand at the show thanks to several volunteers stepping forward to make cars available and to help man the stand. Once more we are in the prestigious hall 1, on stand 1-825. Details of the reduced price ticket deal are shown on the back cover of this Bulletin. **Please use the Club code when purchasing tickets as it increases our credibility with the organisers!**

We look forward to seeing you at the N.E.C. and welcoming you to the stand. As usual, three cars will be on the stand; currently we are planning on displaying Nick Brough's 8 cylinder Brough Superior car (to mark the 90th anniversary of the car's launch), Peter Adamson's ex-Moretonhampstead Museum Whittingham & Mitchel saloon and Russell Cook's Special Tourer.

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A TRIP TO AUSTRALIA AND A VISIT TO FPH 388

Almost two years ago Ann and I decided to join some friends on a trip to Australia to follow the British and Irish Lions on tour. The tour itinerary to see all three rugby tests involved flying to Brisbane (via Dubai – over 20 hours in the air) for the first test then, after a short sojourn in Noosa on the Sunshine Coast, a flight to Melbourne for the second test. Following that it was yet another flight to Sydney for the third and final test after which the original plan was to return home.

We had decided not to fly back to the U.K. right after the rugby finished but to spend a few days with friends who live South of Sydney close to the town of Wollongong. Then in the May/June 2025 Bulletin an article appeared concerning Club member Bob Wilson and his Railton, FPH 388. The article explained in some detail how Bob had acquired the car, restored it from a very poor condition and was on the point of recommissioning it for road use. A quick consultation of a map showed that Bob's home in Ulladulla was easily reached from Wollongong so I contacted him to see if, while I was in the area so to speak (or at least within a couple of hundred kilometres), we could meet up? He enthusiastically responded yes.



Ann and me at our Hotel in Mollymook

We hired a car in Sydney and proceeded south. The drive to Wollongong and then further south to Mollymook (where we stayed) was spectacular, with breathtaking scenery along the coast. Our stay in Sydney was in appalling weather (it is winter there in July of course) but once we started south the weather improved and it was very reminiscent of a warm English springtime.

Mollymook is virtually next door to Ulladulla so, after arriving at our hotel, we went to see Bob the next day. Sadly we had been informed that Bob's wife had recently died but still he was ready to meet up. We recognized his home from photos in the Bulletin and as we pulled up outside the Railton was clearly visible.

The restoration of the car was truly remarkable as much of the work has been undertaken by Bob himself. Some trimming on the hood was yet to be done and door cards fitted etc., but otherwise it was ready to go. Bob is not a purist in the sense that he felt the car had to be taken back to original specification. He made the new dashboard himself adding a radio and he sees the car as needing to be

useable for longer Australian mileage trips so has the original engine married to a Ford Capri transmission with fourth gear serving as an overdrive for longer distance cruising. The ride is smooth and, even with no carpets or other sound proofing installed yet, remarkably quiet.



Interior with new dash and dials – the original was not salvageable



Smart engine compartment – note original style Railton wiring – all in black!



Bob and me at his home with FPH

Bob and his daughter invited us to join them for lunch at his local golf club which was right on the beach with great views. After lunch Ann and I headed off to drive towards Canberra through Kangaroo Valley – and when I say valley I mean one with hairpin bends down into it and the same climbing out!

I was really pleased to be able to meet up with such an enthusiastic and talented Club member on the other side of the World. We really enjoyed our Australian trip and plan to keep in touch with Bob and his family – who knows, he may need to come over some time for spares!

Mick Jarvis



Bob at the wheel – his daughter in background



1938 RAILTON LITTLE FAIRMILE

Peter Leith's 10hp Railton, BSL 186, was at the 2025 Brooklands meeting so the opportunity was taken to photograph it as this model receives very little attention in the Bulletin.

Peter has decided to pass the car on to another custodian; see his advert on page 34.





FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE (SLIGHTLY) RIDICULOUS

A Brooklands post script

Brooklands is a special place I have loved visiting over the last twenty-four years, always two-up on one of Howard's Brough Superior motorcycles or in BYL 131 'Billy', our BS straight-eight dual-purpose car.

For Brooklands Relived/The R.O.C. National Rally, we had both, with the Brough car towing an SS100 (which has period Brooklands history). We delivered the motorcycle, affectionately named 'Brooklands or Bust' on the Friday, as we had a wedding to attend on the Saturday in Billy at Hever Castle.

Up early on the Sunday, we drove back to Brooklands and joined the beautiful line-up of Railton, Hudson and Brough Superior cars and motorcycles, all looking splendid in front of the Clubhouse and pride of place, adjacent to the Finishing Straight. Brooklands Relived really was a feast for all the senses and with glorious sunshine to reflect off all the nickel, chrome and painted steel. Highlights included the Napier Railton, the Brough Superior "Works Scrapper" and Neil's speedy manoeuvring around the track in his Spikins Hudson Special with tyres smoking!



'Billy', 1932 Overhead 680 and 'Brooklands or Bust'.

So there's plenty on the sublime, now briefly on the ridiculous. For our journey back home to Bedfordshire, we decided to avoid the M25 Sunday evening chaos and chose a longer and quieter route with more minor roads so that we could continue to enjoy the evening sunshine and touring joy of the BS car with 'Brooklands or Bust' on the trailer.

We stopped for fuel in Chesham, about 40 minutes from home and then just after we left the petrol station and joined the main road, Howard called out "What's that noise?" I could then hear a sort of repetitive pat, pat, pat... "Oh", I replied "it's just a helicopter somewhere overhead". I looked up briefly and then realizing my ridiculous suggestion, I immediately leant over the door to see the trailer's completely flat nearside tyre pat, pat, patting... Howard pulled over down a side road as soon as possible and then surveyed the damage. 'Howard the Diligent', always carries a spare trailer wheel in the rear footwell but has never had to use it.



Pothole found!

Ditto for the vintage bottle jack, also never used but neatly stored in the integrated tool space under the bonnet. The challenge of course was how to change the wheel without having to take 'Brooklands or Bust' off the trailer. The bottle jack was intended for the car and was too tall to get under the trailer frame. The solution, Howard decided, was to carefully reverse the car and trailer wheel over a nearby pothole (they're plentiful in the UK!) and then the jack did its job, perfectly. Who would have thought a pothole could be of use to a motorist!

Special thanks to Mick, Neil and Max for organising a great weekend; and the weather too.

(For those of you wondering why 'Brooklands or Bust' is so named, it goes back to 2007 when, due to the machine's Brooklands connection, Howard was invited

to run it at the track's centenary event.

Unfortunately, when the invitation arrived the

motorcycle was an incomplete pile of bits. Howard had acquired the rolling chassis in 1989 and then located and purchased its original-numbered JTOR engine ten years later. It remained in pieces until the March of 2007 when the reassembly commenced and much midnight oil was burned to ensure the 1930 SS100 was together and running for the event, albeit in a poor cosmetic state. The intention was to strip it down, paint and chrome plate the parts and fully restore it, but I persuaded Howard to leave it in its lovely patinated racing form.)

Vivvy Hanney

RACE THE WAVES

I recently attended the *Race the Waves* event at Bridlington, which is a tribute to the days when Yorkshire's beaches were used for land speed record attempts and beach racing. Bridlington and Filey beaches hosted speed trials until 1924.

Race the Waves attempts to recreate the atmosphere of those early UK Motor Speed Trials and American desert and street drag races, with vehicles performing “spirited drag races” along the beach.

Of course, some enthusiasts of our marque may think it sacrilege to be taking a 1935 Railton onto the sand, but I figured my grandad (previous custodian of MG 4233) would approve and, as I already race the car in the V.S.C.C., it's had most of the preparation. The only thing I had to fit was a passenger seatbelt (an odd regulation considering the driver doesn't have a seatbelt!).



Beach racing is something I've previously done on vintage motorbikes (I run a BSA Bantam and BSA B40 for anyone that's interested), and indeed several of my motorbike racing friends have taken part in *Race the Waves*. These cars (and bikes) would have been taken on the beach in period, so no apologies for giving MG 4233 a trip to the Yorkshire seaside.

The format is relatively simple, two cars at a time sprinting on a 200 yard course along the South Beach in Bridlington, accompanied by a surprising number of spectators – apparently there were approximately 125,000 over the two day weekend. Walking along the front at lunchtime it was several rows deep for probably ½ mile of the prom. The pits area was on the beach also, which could be viewed from the prom – but no spectators were allowed on the beach.

There wasn't any race timing, no specific selection of who raced whom, no knock-out, just lots of fun between the competitors on bikes and in cars. There was a meet at a local village green on the Thursday daytime, then another meet with the local car club at Flamborough

Head Lighthouse on Thursday evening, then scrutineering on Friday at Old Town Green in Bridlington (which was also a great social event for competitors and spectators). In fact, the whole town of Bridlington was buzzing with vintage and classic cars and many of us drivers and co-pilots were wearing vintage attire all weekend.



The Railton performed impeccably, showing a clean pair of heels to several newer/potentially more competitive cars and giving others a good run for their money. My partner Zoe was co-pilot and we got to race against friends in their 1950s V8 Chevrolet; they pipped us by a chrome bumper over the 200 yard course. We also beat a much more modern turbo-charged Ford kit car. Our speed over the finish line was approximately 65 mph, not bad from a standing start on sand.

A friend was there racing his belly tank racer, and we enlisted the Railton to tow the racer on and off the beach on the Sunday, which was a great sight for the crowd and made some lasting memories and humorous stories. (photo: right Graeme Whiting)



So, once more, no apologies for taking the Railton on the beach, my grandad would've been proud and we had a fantastic time. We'll be finding sand in MG 4233 for years to come I imagine, so next time I think I'll be on a motorbike!

Graeme Whiting

Photos James Catley photography (Instagram j.c.moto) .

[Hudson provided a vade mecum for its salesmen which, to modern readers, especially those familiar with the cars, is frequently hilarious. Changes are never to overcome shortcomings of previous models and the credulity of potential purchasers must have been severely stretched. To tie in with the Technical Tip this issue, here is part of the section relating to the chassis — full of sales hyperbole and meaningless names!]

HOW WHAT WHY ABOUT THE 1936 HUDSONS AND TERRAPLANES

THE CHASSIS

Since its first cars were built in 1909, the Hudson Motor Car Company has been a leader in the improvement of chassis design and construction.

Many of the features which are now regarded as basic in chassis design were first developed by Hudson. Box-type frame cross members were first introduced in Hudson-built cars, and Hudson was first to employ a steel body floor as a vital frame cross member. Hudson is the originator of the patented splayed spring construction which gives Hudson-built cars greater stability.

And in 1936 the Hudsons and Terraplanes embody a greater number of important and exclusive improvements in chassis construction than any previous models.

RADIAL SAFETY CONTROL brings to Hudson-built cars the world's first safety chassis. Now, motorists can have steering that is almost automatic . . . smoother riding than has been known before . . . and straight stopping that is free from twisting or pitch. Radial Safety Control embraces a new method of springing and front end construction, fully explained in this section.

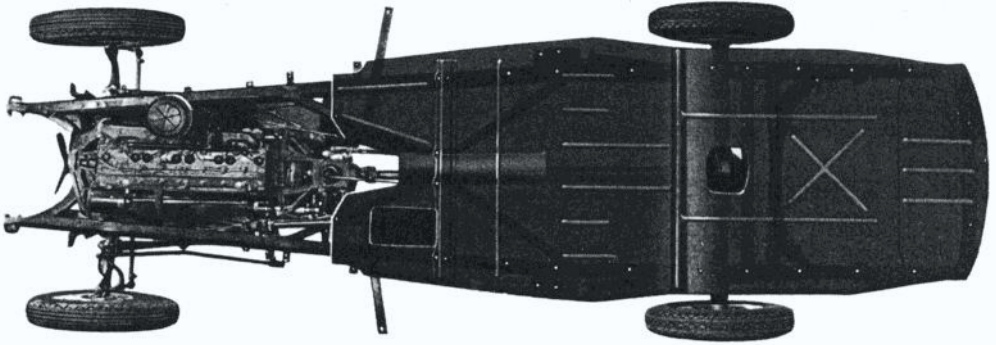
TRU-LINE STEERING is another feature made possible by this superior chassis design. It involves a new principle that enables the car to hold its direction without swerving or wandering . . . unaffected by spring action, braking or road conditions.

THE RHYTHMIC RIDE is brought to motor car owners for the first time in the 1936 Hudson and Terraplane. Longer and gentler springs, which have nothing to do but cushion the body from road shocks.

DUO-AUTOMATIC HYDRAULIC brakes . . . brakes which for the first time give the smooth equalized response of hydraulics combined with the absolute safety and dependability of mechanical brakes.

More than ever before the chassis will sell Hudson-built cars in 1936. Everybody will be asking about Radial Safety Control . . . Tru-Line Steering . . . the Rhythmic Ride . . . and Duo-Automatic Hydraulic Brakes.

No cars except Hudsons and Terraplanes will have even one of them.

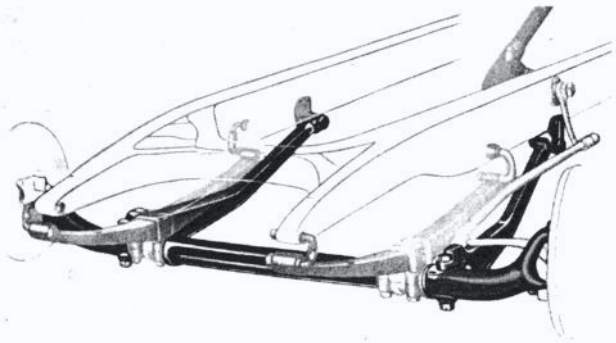


Plan-view Illustration of Hudson Eight Chassis, showing (in phantom) the Sheet Steel Panel that Serves as Both Chassis Cross-member and Body Floor

RADIAL SAFETY CONTROL

156 - What is Radial Safety Control?

It is the new, exclusive front end design on 1936 Hudsons and Terraplanes, which greatly improves the riding, steering and braking qualities of the cars. It provides the Rhythmic Ride and permits Tru-Line steering. Two sturdy drop-forged torque rods (one on each side of the chassis frame) are attached to the frame with rubber-bushed pivot pins at a point in line with the steering Pitman arm, the rods being able to rotate on the pivot pins. The front ends of the rods are fixed to the front axle at points just outside of the spring mountings; they serve to carry the propulsion from the chassis to the front axle and wheels, and also to transmit the braking action of the front wheels to the chassis. Since the rods are pivoted at the rear, they permit the axle to rise and fall freely as inequalities in the road are encountered, but the definite length of the rods permits the axle to move only in a true arc. The axle cannot move backward and forward with the spring-flex as it can do when the front springs are used as torque rods in the conventional front end design. The springs are not rigidly mounted on the axle, but are mounted by means of a lubricated saddle bearing, which permits the slight rotation of the axle as the saddle bearing follows its up-and-down travel. This is done because the springs now have no function except to cushion the car.



Radial Safety Control—Phantom view showing drop-forged torque arms which permit the front axle to move only in a true arc, and which greatly improve riding, steering and braking

(Further details of the Radial Safety Control design and of its effect on riding, steering and braking may be found in the sections on Spring Suspension, Steering and Brakes.)

SPRING SUSPENSION.

157 - Has any change been made in the spring suspension in the 1936 models?

Yes, a very important change. The Radial Safety Control, which is exclusive in Hudsons and Terraplanes, has eliminated the braking torque "duty" of the front springs (see question No. 156), so that their only function now is to cushion the car. It provides the Rhythmic Ride.

Without Radial Safety Control, the front springs must act as a torque-arm, transmitting the propelling power from the chassis frame to the front axle and wheels, and also transmitting the braking power of the front wheels to the chassis. This requires a much heavier, stiffer spring than is needed for spring suspension only. The 1936 Hudson and Terraplane springs have a much softer, slower action, and consequently give a much smoother ride. Since the front springs are not required to absorb brake torque, they are shackled at both ends.

158 - How much softer are the front springs used in 1936?

As an example: 235 pounds of weight were required to deflect a 1935 Hudson spring one inch; 120 pounds will deflect a 1936 spring one inch.

159 - What type of spring is used?

The semi-elliptical type, as on costly cars. They are made of silicon manganese steel.

160 - Is independent springing of the front wheels available?

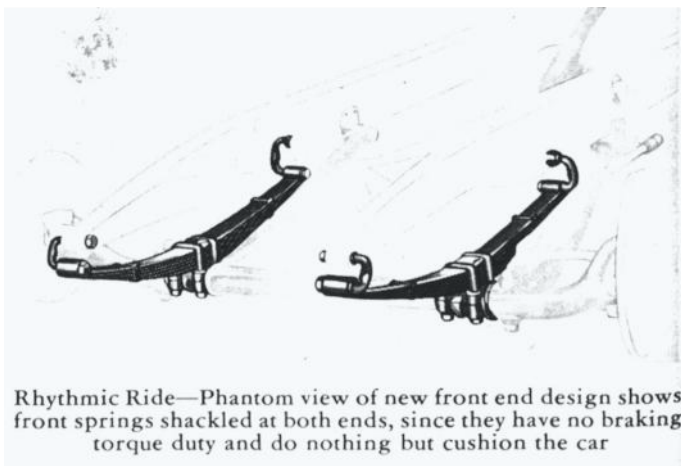
No; not in the "knee action" sense. "Knee action" was not needed in 1935 to give Hudson-built cars a superior "ride," and the Radial Safety Control in 1936 gives a still much smoother ride with the still greater stability of the two torque rods, in addition to the sturdy front axle.

Hudson-built cars have independent springing in the sense that each front spring acts independently of the other, and also independently of any brake torque action. Due to the softness of the springs, the deflection of one spring, caused by road bumps, has little effect on the other spring or the horizontal position of the chassis and body.

161 - Do 1936 Hudsons and Terraplanes have stabilizer bars?

No. Radial Safety Control performs this function, thus leaving the springs to perform their intended function of cushioning the ride.

162 - Why are leaf springs to be preferred to coil springs? Because (a) they do not tend to soften, as do coil springs, but retain their original characteristics to a greater degree throughout their life; (b) they are safer; the leaf spring is less likely to break because the winding of the coil spring in



manufacture stretches the outer side of the spring wire and compresses the inner side, giving unequal characteristics to the different sections of the spring; further, if a leaf of the leaf-type spring breaks, the other leaves support the car, but if a coil spring breaks, all spring support is gone; (c) the friction of the leaves gives a valuable “snubbing” effect that is not possible in coil springs.

163 - Have the springs been changed in 1936?

Yes. Both front and rear springs have been made longer, giving a softer, smoother ride. Front springs are shackled at both ends to provide a free and soft action.

THE CHAIRMAN’S COLUMN

My column in the July/August Bulletin was no more than an appeal to the membership for help. The issue of succession planning for our committee seems not to have resonated with members as the response has been a deafening silence.

I cannot stress how important this issue is to the Club and its future. Being such a small club, we obviously do not have the depth of membership where someone can almost always be relied upon to step up. Being a single marque Club of a fairly small and shrinking number of Club cars is also something of a problem – we just do not have much chance of growing as a Club and attracting new members willing to help.

We are not alone here of course but as the Railton was always a fairly special and somewhat select vehicle, many enthusiasts today have no real affiliation with the marque. We are not a Bentley or Lagonda club where younger enthusiasts join because of name recognition. In my engagements in shows and meetings throughout the year I cannot recall how many times I heard the refrain “I’ve heard of Railton but never seen one/ never heard of the car/never known anyone who owned one” etc. We are essentially victims of our own exclusivity.

My intention is to consult with the Committee that manages our Club and decide on a course of action. I laid out the options in my remarks in the July/August Bulletin, but we will soldier on for now. The Committee will be asked to identify key events that might make this *laissez-faire* approach unsustainable and will prepare for that accordingly.

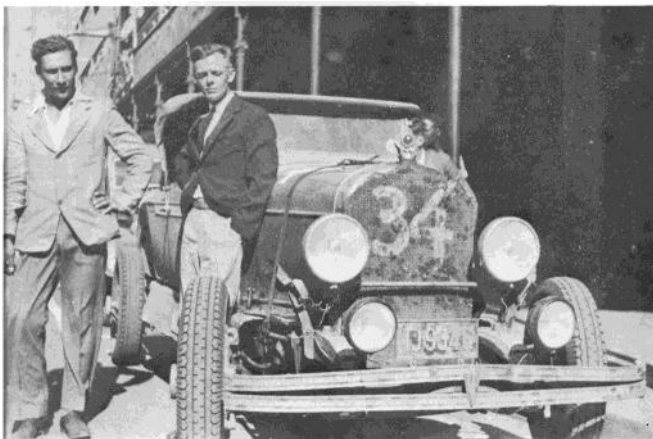
Meanwhile, if anyone is willing to help share the workload, please let me know.

Mick Jarvis

NAIROBI TO JOHANNESBURG

PART 3

After the 1936 Nairobi – Johannesburg race was over, there was talk of making it an annual event. This never materialised as you can only do this sort of thing once. However, forty years later in 1977, the Piston Ring Club in Johannesburg decided to stage a re-run of the finish. The original finishing point was located in the Johannesburg suburb of Northcliff and the idea was advertised in the motoring press. Who should reply but the original winner, Mr Engelbrecht himself. This was the catalyst that really got things moving. As the project gained momentum, three more Nairobi drivers came to light: Messrs. Broderick and Whitehead who came 2nd and 4th respectively and van der Nest who came 17th.



G. T. van der Nest (left) and D. G. Snelling with their Chrysler, one of the oldest cars taking part.



Boet Ferreira's 1936 Terraplane

A date of the re-run was chosen as close as as possible to the original date of October the 26th, and cars were carefully selected to match the original entries. Fifteen vehicles, including a navy blue 1936 Terraplane coupé, were eventually located. Each was allocated the same number that its original counterpart bore and drawn in such a manner as to enable it to arrive in correct sequence according to the official list of finishers. The owners of the vehicles were not expected to modify their cars to match the original entries as this would have meant removing the rear mudguards, increasing fuel storage and extra lights.

Mr Boet Ferreira had sportingly offered Mr Engelbrecht the wheel of his 1936 Terraplane and as he settled into the driving seat, he ran his fingers over the dash and remarked that everything came back to him, as if he had raced only yesterday. He hadn't forgotten how to put his foot on the throttle either, as Boet later commented. The 1977 crowd at the finish was nothing like the original, but the Terraplane's arrival drew applause from the appreciative spectators. The rest of the field came in over the next half hour or so. There was a "braai" in the evening where the original participants were presented with certificates. Mr Engelbrecht and Mr Whitehead both gave speeches with the assembled crowd hanging on every word. As somebody commented, it was "living history".

That winds up notes on the race itself, and I would like to acknowledge Alan Schikkerling of the Piston Ring Club on whose work all the above is based. Alan is unfortunately no longer with us and he was a founder member of the



NAIROBI-JOHANNESBURG COMMEMORATIVE RUN

October 26 1936 / November 12 1977

Presented to

Mr. C. L. Engelbrecht

following the Historic recreation
of the finish of the original race
in which he drove car no. 22
a 1936 Terraplane Sedan
to 1st place.

This 1977 re-run honours and
pays tribute to the cars and the
drivers who covered 2715 miles
over dirt roads and across rivers
to carve a milestone for them-
selves in Southern African
Motoring History.



The Piston Ring
Johannesburg



THIS CERTIFICATE WAS AWARDED TO EACH VETERAN
NAIROBI DRIVER.

THE BADGE IN THE RIGHT-HAND CORNER IS THAT OF THE
OLD ROYAL EAST AFRICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION
AND APPEARED ON THE COVER OF THE 1936 PROGRAMME.

Rhodesian strip road in 1960. In the picture, the carriageway has already been widened ready for a full width road. Even my Dad's "Zodiac" only just fits on the strips. In the Austin it was a lot more difficult.



Camping with the Hudson (Storms River mouth)



Camping with the Railton (Hans Merensky nature reserve)

Piston Ring Club. Teresa and I were also founder members and knew Alan well; I served on the committee for a while, and Teresa organised the refreshment side of things.

This moves on to our own experiences of motoring in Africa. Teresa and I migrated to South Africa in late 1966 and imported our 1934 Austin Ten and, later, our Railton. A year after we arrived, we drove north to Zimbabwe in the Austin for our summer holiday. We left early and were able to get to the border before it closed. We then motored a further 85 miles to an hotel at Lundi Bridge in Zimbabwe, a total for the day of 425 miles. This final section was on the strip roads and was on the race route. Not easy when encountering other vehicles where you had to put your offside wheels on the nearside strip to pass, narrow section tyres and track didn't help. This holiday saw us use a gravel road for a while. The general rule for a corrugated surface was either 15 or 50 mph. We elected to go at near the higher rate and it was like driving on ice. Nothing broke, but it is easy to see how sustained travel on this type of road would damage cars. The 1970 Rhodesian rally saw the Railton on strip roads for one of the sections, no real problem here. However, on gravel roads we lost 2 of the 'staples' that the bonnet clamps latch to. The bodywork rattled a lot, but the suspension handled it well. In part 2, there was a comment that "even in 1936, racing sold cars". This spilled over into 1937, and I knew of at least 6 cars personally. Starting with the Hudson that we had, now in Solihull. When bought, it shared a storage area with a convertible and a standard saloon with a large generator replacing the gearbox. A friend found a pickup truck which I helped recover, it was later restored by Boet Ferreira who also owned a 1937 car where the gearbox was replaced by a later one with overdrive. Another friend, Mike, was a Hudson fan and he created the RLA mentioned in the Bulletin a few years ago. He originally owned a 1933 Essex Terraplane 6 two-seat convertible and later found a tatty 1937 Victoria coupé and a restored saloon which stayed on our driveway overnight whilst I repaired one of the front brakes.



Terraplane stuck on our driveway waiting for repair to front brake - lining had come loose.



A photo taken in Malawi in the late 1960s, probably not part of the race route, but typical of an African gravel road.

Most of the cars in the race were late-model American with strong steel bodies. Coach-built bodywork would have stood little chance. I knew of two Railtons that were probably taken out to Africa when fairly new, and both had lost their bodywork. Member George Bennett had one in Zimbabwe which I think came from Malawi. George imported a Fairmile body which he had obtained from Pip Barker. Ken Hartley, also a member at the time, went down a different route and grafted a VW convertible shell onto the Hudson chassis. This also came up in the Bulletin a few years ago, and I commented about it at the time.



Austin Ten before being totally rebuilt - it took 10 years.

In 1979 I purchased a 1933 Austin Ten dickey seat tourer, probably imported new as it had export features. With this car, the steel bodywork at the rear had disintegrated with the dickey seat lid missing all together and obvious fatigue failure of the panels above and below the opening. I was able to obtain a replacement lid and re-created the missing panels.

Tony Flewollen

[Past Bulletins have covered the exploits of various Railtons in the Monte Carlo Rallies of the 1930s. At this year's Brooklands meeting, Paul Tickner found a copy of Rallies and Trials by SCH Davis of The Autocar, published by Iliffe & Sons in 1951. In Chapter 2 "Sweden to the Riviera", Davis recounts the 1935 rally in which he competed in a Railton. A radically shortened version of his entertaining account is reproduced below. Omissions are indicated by ~~~. Ed.]

THE 1935 MONTE CARLO RALLY

Of the many rallies in which I have competed, one in particular stands out in my mind as a first-class example of the kind of thing one is likely to find oneself up against, and for that reason is worth describing here in detail before going on to others. The year was 1935, by which date the organization of the whole thing had pretty well been perfected.

Which route to choose? The great gamble remained, but now there was a choice of a number of widely different starting points: Umea, snow-clad in the north of Sweden, Stavanger of the old Norse Sagas, Athens, with its wild run in the untamed Balkans, Palermo, Tallinn, since cut off by the Iron Curtain, Bucharest, and in our own islands John o' Groats, perched bleakly on the edge of the Highlands.

Extra mileage was now added to the route by compulsory irregular deviations all over the map, while the average speed had gone up to 25 or 30 m.p.h. minimum, irrespective of stops – and one had to drive all through the night. Thus you were faced in November with the conundrum: which of these routes was most likely to be clear of real snow in January? And it was necessary to choose a long one, for results depended on mileage. The cars which got through with the greatest mileage were, if they had kept time and not been penalized for mechanical faults, placed ahead of all others. Relative positions and, therefore, the Rally winner, then depended on some form of speed test at Monte Carlo itself.

Well, we decided to go to Umea with an open four-seated Railton, arguing that Swedish snowploughs always kept the roads open, whereas you could be hopelessly snowed-up in Scotland, you avoided the appalling run from Stavanger to Oslo up an ice-clad mountain, odds were against Tallinn and Athens on probable weather, while the mileage was good enough to win.

Now, it is true that you can take any car that is in good condition and just go to the start with every probability that you will finish. But if you prepare thoroughly beforehand you have more fun and things are likely to go better on the run.

So we started by equipping the Railton with a rear "scuttle" of hood fabric so that the driver off-duty of a crew of three could have some protection, then added a gigantic sleeping bag for warmth together with an exhaust-heated air system front and rear. To the ordinary chains we added others of Swedish pattern plus an unditching gear which was invaluable. All spares were properly housed, checked and packed. The tool kit occasioned serious study and what we could do to improve the lights and augment the dynamo output we did. To the ordinary battery another was added since the drain on battery current in three nights and four days,

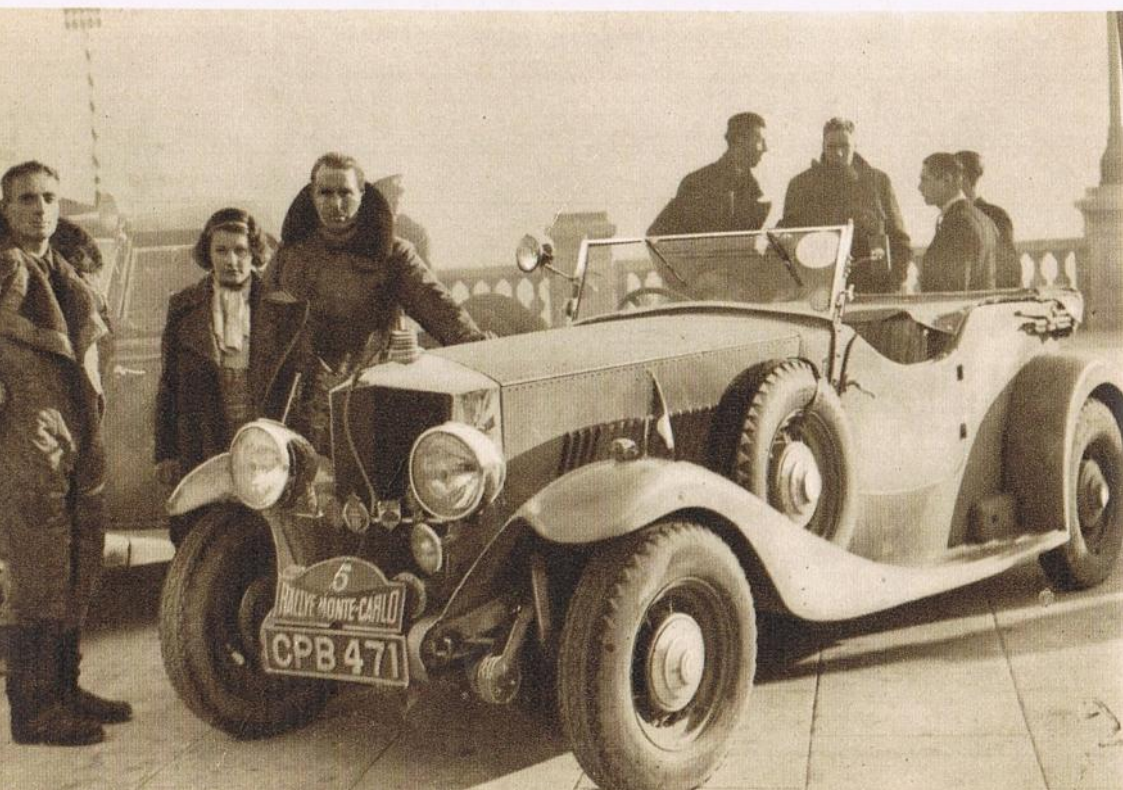
with much of the northern part of the route in darkness, is phenomenal. A navigation table with watch, compass, and map measurer sockets was a routine precaution.

Then the whole machine was taken for a long test in Rally conditions, greatly, by the way, to the astonishment of hotels at which we had meals, on account of our personal equipment the like of which they had never seen, and the occasion for which, if not antarctic, they could not guess.

Meantime, evening after evening, with maps, dividers and all the paraphernalia of navigation, we made out a route card, selected re-fuelling points, set the average with regard to known ferry times and generally planned the whole thing.

Finally, we arranged where to shed as much unwanted load as we could just short of the final check in preparation for the acceleration and brake test, which we practised at Brooklands until we were sick of it. The crew consisted, besides myself, of Charles Brackenbury, who was tough, and Mrs. Kay Petre who had been of the crew the previous year. Kay, whom I had met

The open Railton which was tenth from Umea in 1935 at the finish. Mrs. Kay Petre and Charles Brackenbury are standing just behind the car's radiator



earlier on and had helped when she began racing, was one of those puzzles that seriously upset elderly, ultra-conservative people to the point where they break blood vessels.

Small, amusing and decorative, she looks the last person who could stand hours and hours of driving, lap Brooklands at 130 and tackle any difficulty with the tenacity of a small cinnamon bear, especially when wearing the “butter-won’t-melt-in-my-mouth” expression. As a co-driver she is as tough as you make them; nobody takes the job more seriously, nobody can last longer when really tired.

~~~

If anything, the Danish roads were more slippery than those in Sweden, on top of which it began to snow and the white specks had a queerly irritating, possibly hypnotic, effect as seen in the headlamp rays through a glass screen. We had not too much time in hand but Kay was keeping the car well up to speed, our estimated time of arrival at Copenhagen Control being satisfactory. Then, and this is typical of the Rally, we were coming along a nice, wide ice-covered main road into the Control when a large car came down a small side road straight across our path.

Whether the driver did not expect anyone at that hour, whether he could not stop, or whether he thought the safest way of crossing main roads was at high speed, because you were on the danger spot less time, none of us will ever know. How Kay avoided a real crash I do not know – for remember we were on ice – but she did and in the ensuing hurly-burly all we touched was the other car’s overhanging carrier. The whole thing took only a few seconds, but you can think a lot in that time. I thought: “We’re going to be hit by that bloke good and hard. No, yes, I wonder what Danish hospitals are like? Now we’ll get him sideways. Ye gods, the chit can do it! Yes, no –”

Bonk, and a noise of loose ironmongery. The maker of mischief continued on his way. We stopped for a look-see. The damage was quite bad enough as it was. One wing was crumpled up, the left side light was out and – worst of all – the front wheels were out of track so something somewhere was bent. Not nice with 900 or so miles to go at an average of 30!

Well, we could have started repairs then and there but we decided to go into the Control – wherein one may not touch the car – have a good meal, rest, then get ahead of time sufficiently to commence the job.

And all the way to Hamburg, Hanover, Brussels and Paris that was just what we did. A frantic drive between walls of piled up snow that any moment might become a drift, the car most odd to handle. Then a planned hurry while Charles and I and any available garage got the wing right, the light into action. Another wild rush gave us an hour early at Hamburg during which we worked hard on the steering before we checked in. Yet another rush, more work at Hanover then at Yenloo and Brussels. But not until Paris did we get the steering sorted out and even then the turning circles right and left were uneven. But we checked in on time.

~~~

We entered Lyon, where all chief Rally routes converged, looked eagerly at the assembled cars and not a sign of the Athens contingent could we see. Perambulatory mudheaps from Tallinn there were but they had got through on the worst but one of all routes. We might have a

crippled car but it remained to do as well as possible. Every cafe that was open and the lounge of every hotel near the Control was full of unshaven, tired and rather dirty crews, the greater part huddled up in blankets like gigantic sausages to sleep wherever sleep was possible.

It was an odd night. Very little news of rival competitors on other routes filtered through. Ferreira's Railton had been badly ditched but extracted by its crew. Humphrey Symons had collided with a cyclist near Copenhagen, in the process arousing the wrath of a mob who could not be made to understand that the cyclist was chiefly to blame, while no one was hurt. Norman Black's Singer had retired. Stanley Barnes had had to dig his Singer from a ditch on the Stavanger route. Madame Mareuse, skidding off a curve on sheet ice, had had a head-on collision with another car which caught fire. Nearly everybody had had hair-raising escapes from complete disaster, all were full of stories of great adventure, and still more exciting rumour.

~~~

And so, at last, we came down in the dawn to Cannes, to sunlight and the blue of the Mediterranean, a marvellous sight after the darkness and snow from which we had come. It was like a sudden supply of oxygen. Before Nice, we stopped, went all over the car, adjusted the brakes, made sure of every-thing we could check. Then, well up to time, we drove downhill to the flags and glitter and welcome of Monte Carlo. And it *was* a welcome. Every official did his best to look after us. The car was checked over, then parked under guard, the luggage, such as it was, removed to a taxi. On each of us a large glass of champagne acted as supercharged reviver. Looking at Kay it occurred to Charles and me that we were not at our best. Two minutes' work with lipstick, etc., and our small co-driver seemed as fresh as when we started. Charles and I, fingering stubby beards that pricked, felt like two-pennyworth of heaven-help-us.

~~~

Remained two tests after a good night's sleep. First, to see how the engine would start from cold, second, a wild drive over a short, timed course including an infernally tight figure-of-eight turn and a brake test. We were all right on the first, but poor Humphrey Symons found that the battery of his M.G. was flat after the all-night rest. On the second test, which decided the car's place in the final order after mileage had been assessed, we came unstuck because the figure-of-eight was almost impossible with the damaged steering of the Railton, though the acceleration was magnificent. So, do what we could, we were no better than 10th in the Umea section, 31st in the Rally.

~~~

Followed intense work cleaning up cars in preparation for the equipment and comfort competition, for it is traditional that the machines should bear visible evidence of what they have been through until this final competition, at which all things shall appear spotless. Here, again, British cars did well. Pascoe's beautifully equipped Talbot won its class and the Grand Prix d'honneur which marks the best-found and most comfortable car that has completed the Rally. Brian Lewis' Jaguar was judged best in the open car class. Finally, there was a long, highly coloured procession in Rally order, through Monte Carlo up to the palace yard of Monaco, there, amidst flags and bands and gaily uniformed soldiers, to receive the prizes won or plaques to mark another Rally finished.

A magnificent finale to a great run. There started 149 cars of which 103 finished.



# CORRESPONDENCE

## From Tony Fleweller

My articles on the Nairobi to Johannesburg Race have led to some thoughts about our own Railton. We bought it in 1964 and took it out to South Africa in 1969. Initially, it was used for camping holidays, and for commuting daily for over a year. To give more space in the car, a trailer was purchased and a towbar fitted. We moved house in 1978 from the Johannesburg area to the coastal city of East London. By this time, the 1937 Hudson was up and running, and that became the default holiday transport. The Railton fell out of use, and this has been the case for the last 40 years or so. Reluctantly, because of the family history coupled up with the car, we are considering selling it to somebody who will get more use out of it. Not this year, but perhaps next year sometime. If anybody is interested, please contact me at [anthonyfleweller84@gmail.com](mailto:anthonyfleweller84@gmail.com)

Details: February 1934 Railton-Terraplane, drop head coupé with RT' on the radiator badge and hubcaps. Engine rebuilt, bodywork good and, by next year, new tyres. It comes with the trailer which you will need for the spares that I have for the car. Although I would like to use the car on local Club runs, the Railton is not ideal for the narrow North Devon lanes that "Devon Sevens" frequent. The 2-seat Austin Ten is perfect for these outings.

## From Robin Butler

A picture from the local V.S.C.C. August bank holiday annual meeting at the Royal Oak, Much Marcle.

A great selection of our type of cars, I guess about fifty or so, including a lovely early Morgan, many Lagondas, BMW, Riley, Bentley etc and, of course, JT.



## From Richard Hirst

Yesterday, BYP reached the grand old age of 90, having been first registered on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1935. The car has been much neglected of late as I have had other commitments and activities. However, I marked the occasion with a photograph and a video of the engine ticking over with a coin balanced on the cylinder head. I should like to think that, like BYP, when we reach the age of 90, we shall all be looking good, albeit somewhat changed from our youth, and that we shall all still be firing on all cylinders and still ticking over nicely!

## From Ivan Zaremba

Here are a few pictures of BNC 38 at the Rolex Monterey Reunion this past August. Because of Michael Straight's racing in the pre-war South African GP event, I was given an entry with the Grand Prix car at this biggest US vintage motorsport event. I bought the ex-Richard Fry special in the UK in 1994 and it arrived here in California in 1997.

It has been run in vintage circuit racing events regularly in eclectic pre-war groups. From Lime Rock Park in Connecticut to Laguna Seca in California, the Railton has amused and entertained those curious about the marque. While my strength and abilities as the driver have aged, driving on my 82nd birthday with enthusiasm allowed this unusual entry a place in the event. To be part of a grid with three ERAs, two Lancia D50s, Bugattis (T35s, T37s, T57, T59), Alfa 8Cs, and more was not an opportunity to win, but to show the Railton as a special machine.

Thanks are due to many in the R.O.C. over the years who have helped me make this all happen.



# TECHNICAL TIPS

## Springs and things

I have at last got around to tackling the springs on my Fairmile fhc. The front springs were incorrect insofar as the spring eyes were both above the top leaf but in 1935 Hudson had the front eye below the leaf. The Club spares at The Green stepped in and found me another pair of springs with the correct eye arrangement but unfortunately they differed from each other, having secondary leaves which differed in number and length and in having different curvature. Fortunately, new springs can be readily manufactured, and a matching pair has been commissioned from Jones Springs of Wednesbury.

The rear springs on the car were also wrong, giving too much ride height and an incorrect axle location. Hudson springs originally had  $3\frac{1}{8}$ " arch on the front ones and  $6\frac{1}{8}$ " arch on the rear; those fitted to Railtons may have had one or more leaves removed and were in general set up flatter to compensate for the decreased body weight.

I had a pair of dismantled rear springs in my garage (believed to be from a 1935 Cobham) which had ten leaves, including a half leaf on the front half which comes into play only on rebound. Once re-assembled by Jones with nine leaves and reset correctly, these should do the job. N.B. My Ranalah saloon, Z 6201, has eight leaves! Just at the time all this was going on, Michael Guerrier in Jersey experienced a broken rear spring but his car has the rebound leaf on the back half. A semi-dismantled spare from The Green exists, matching mine but with fewer leaves.

Through this I was guided by a spring data sheet prepared by the Club back in the 1960s. This has been helpful but, using Z 6201 as the reference for 1935, is not always correct especially regarding the eye configuration of the 1935 rear spring. I was going to reproduce it here but as so much of the information is doubtful I decided not to do so. The lesson to be learnt is that there is a bewildering variety of springs fitted to our cars; this is not a problem unless attempting to restore a vehicle with a chequered past. If merely getting a failed spring replaced just use the original as a pattern.

## Bump Stops

The bump stops on the front axle were badly perished, as seen here on the right, but replacements are not available from Club spares. Some people have solved the problem by attaching a rubber to the chassis similar to the design of the rear bump stops. However, I located a modern spring-mounted bump stop from an Ifor Williams trailer which looks the part. It needed some modification before it could be used as there is no hole for the spring centre bolt.



Neil Thorp

# MARKET PLACE

Denis Robson has sold his Fairmile III via Bonhams 7-day on-line auction. He sold it without reserve, something I would never do in the current depressed market.

As Bonham's storage facility is very close to home, I went to see it before bidding started. I noticed several features which will need to be addressed before it can be safely driven by the new owner but nothing that would be too difficult to rectify. The bidding ended at £22,601 (incl. 7% premium & VAT).

After the auction, Bonhams told me that the car is now off to a new life in a sunnier climate in the southern hemisphere.



## For Sale

Alwyn Williams is selling his very fine Railton, BG 3632.

Originally a 1935 Carbodies 4-door saloon, it suffered severe accident damage in 1965 and was rebuilt as a copy of a Ranaiah tourer, completed in 1995. Dark green, it has patination consistent with 30 years of use. More images can be found on pages 14 & 18-19 of the Nov/Dec 2016 Bulletin.

*[If you need a copy please contact the Editor.]*

£35k o.n.o.

Contact :

01492 640175

[alwynwilliams@aol.com](mailto:alwynwilliams@aol.com)



### For Sale

Railton Little Fairmile 1938 10hp.  
Registration BSL 186 (originally MG 6156). This the car featured on pp. 13-14.

This Little Fairmile has been in my possession since 1999. It is an original example of a very rare model, one of three survivors known to the Club. I have a full service history, including details of ownership since my purchase. It is in good condition and I would like the car to be purchased by a Club member. £16,000.

Contact: Peter Leith



### For Sale

1934 Railton Berkeley saloon, AUA 551

Partially dismantled; the car rolls and steers; the main body is in place, the wings, bonnet, radiator, bulkhead, interior all removed.

Engine has not been run since I purchased the car. Cylinder head is now off, pistons look new and cylinders appear to be newly rebored. More photos on request.

Life changes mean no time to complete, so for sale at £5000.

Located in Christchurch on the south coast. Tel: Paul Rose 07756 986641

[p\\_a\\_rose@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:p_a_rose@hotmail.co.uk)



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E-mail: [secretary@railton.org](mailto:secretary@railton.org)

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