



Santa's Wolseley

What better alternative when your reindeer need a rest -; horsepower instead! Santa tries out an 1899 Wolseley, one of Britain's earliest motor cars. This little voiturette was Wolseley's first four-wheeled car and was designed by Herbert Austin, who later went on to produce vehicles under his own name.

Powered by a single cylinder engine and capable of a top speed of 20mph, the Wolseley is steered using a tiller rather than a steering wheel, not too far removed from a pair of reins. The Wolseley was a participant in The Thousand Miles Trial in 1900, a motoring endurance event around Britain. Herbert Austin drove the car himself and the Wolseley was awarded a first prize in this class. The car survives today, taking pride of place in the Trust's collection and it is one of the oldest cars on show at the Heritage Motor Centre.



1911 Rover 8hp – arriving at the ceremony in style

The cyclist certainly seems most interested in this Rover 8hp. Although the motor car had been around for more than a decade before this picture was taken outside the Old Forge, Gretna Green in 1911, it was still a novelty for many. The passenger in the Rover does not look so amused. Perhaps it was an exciting journey or maybe he is having second thoughts at the prospect of a "runaway marriage".

Introduced in 1904, Rover's 8hp was the company's first foray into the motor car market, being a manufacturer of pedal cycles and motorcycles before that. It established Rover as the maker of reliable and well-built motor cars. An 8hp was the first car to be driven across Europe, from England to Constantinople (now Istanbul).

The oldest surviving Rover 8hp, dating from the first year of production in 1904, is part of the Trust's collection and on display at the Heritage Motor Centre.



The perils of motoring adventures

The new found freedom that came with the motor car was not without peril for the pioneer motorist. Besides the capability to rush by Britain's countryside at the heady speed of 20mph, the driver had to contend with poorly-made and pot-holed roads, together with the slower and unobservant horse, cycle or pedestrian traffic.

In common with, but more so even than the present day, an accident drew a crowd of on-lookers, many of whom would have never seen a car before. It is unclear what the fate of the occupants of this early Wolseley was but those that thought that this new fangled machine was a nuisance to the public would be looking on with some consolation. Early cars were of sturdy construction so this Wolseley's owner would, no doubt, soon be back behind the wheel.



To be the fastest...MG record car EX135, 1952

Another record smashed! Goldie Gardner reaches the finishing line behind the wheel of MG EX135 during his record attempts at Utah, USA in 1952. Lieutenant ATG 'Goldie' Gardner, was born in 1889 and had a distinguished military career. His forays into motor racing began in 1924 at Brooklands, where he drove a variety of cars during the next few years. By the 1930s he had become a regular pilot of the successful racing MGs.

In 1938 Gardner, with the Nuffield Organisation, purchased EX135, an MG K3 Magnette that George Eyston, another maverick record-breaker, had used at Brooklands. For Gardner's record attempts, EX135 was given a new aerodynamic body, designed by Reid Railton, who had recently designed John Cobb's world speed record car.

In 1939, EX135 was taken to the newly-opened autobahn at Dessau in Germany. In spite of the impending war, the German



authorities made sure that all the necessary facilities were available for record breaking on their state-of-the art highway. Gardner duly smashed the existing class records, reaching speeds of more than 200mph, the first car with an 1100cc engine to do so.

After the war, Gardner continued to break a variety of class records, fitting a range of MG engine of different sizes in the car and even a larger Jaguar engine. Sometimes the car would run with only two of the six cylinders in use, so that the car would satisfy the 500cc or 350cc class rules.

For EX135's last record runs in 1952, the car was fitted with MG's new XPAG engine, which was supercharged for the challenge. Taking the car to the famous salt flats in Utah, Gardner attempted to break a series of records. In spite of the car's potential, the wet or 'slick' salt meant that Gardner could not control the wheel spin and only reached 190mph, rather than the anticipated 220mph. On one attempt, Gardner managed to totally lose control of EX135, spun and hit a marker post, which smashed through the Perspex bubble and hit him on his head. In spite of the bump, he continued driving.

Gardner planned to return to Utah in 1953 but became ill before he could do so. He never attempted record breaking again and, after a long illness, died in 1958.



Austin Healey Sprite Le Mans Coupé, 1967

The 24-hour race at Le Mans is one of the most famous and long-running of all motor sport events. From the outset in the 1920s, British cars have been successful at Le Mans, great names like Bentley, Jaguar and Aston Martin being victorious.

British cars have been just as successful in the competition for the smaller classes, Austin Healey included. A team of two Sprites, clothed in special lightweight, fibre glass bodies, was entered in 1960, one winning the 1,000cc sports car prototype class and coming a respectable 20th overall.



The next few years were lean ones for the Sprite but, by 1965, fortunes had once again improved. In preparation for the 1965 race, Healey enlisted the expertise of Austin's research department to help the car to become faster. The result was the definitive Sprite Le Mans coupé shape. Two Sprites were entered for the race that year, both being finished in a most distinctive lime green colour. The French authorities considered the colour to be dangerous and ordered that the cars be repainted a darker green for the race! One of the Sprites, piloted by Paul Hawkins and John Rhodes, went on to finish 12th overall, the best ever result for a Sprite at Le Mans.

The two coupés were entered again for the 1966 race but neither finished. In 1967 a single Sprite was entered, fitted with an experimental five-speed gearbox. Pictured above, the number 51 entry of Clive Baker and Andrew Hedges reached 15th overall and was awarded the Motor trophy for highest placed British entry.

In 1968 Austin Healey entered for the last time as an official works team. Again, a single Sprite coupé took part, taking 15th place and the Motor trophy, mirroring the result of the 1967 race.



1908 French Grand Prix; Austin 100hp

In the winter of 1907/8, Austin built a team of 100hp cars to be entered in the French Grand Prix, an event which had first been held in 1906. Two of these had chain drive and two shaft drive but both the shaft-driven cars crashed in practice and the parts were amalgamated to build a 'fifth', shaft drive car. Three Austins were brought to the starting line driven by Warwick Wright, Dario Resta and J T C Moore-Brabazon (later Lord Brabazon of Tara). Warwick Wright retired with a seized engine but Moore-Brabazon and Resta finished in 18th and 19th places, the only British cars to finish the race.

Grand Prix racing then was a far cry from the (relatively) safe and clean world of modern Formula One. The course of the 1908 French Grand Prix, which took place at Le Mans, now famous for the 24-hour race, was 47 miles (76 km) long and the Austins took nearly nine hours to complete the race. The track was not at all smooth, being the ordinary public potholed, dirt roads of the day. By the end of the race, as this picture of Moore-Brabazon and his co-driver shows, taken in the paddock after the race, the drivers were completely filthy, aside from where their goggles protected their eyes.

The sole surviving Austin 100hp is in the Trust's collection today. This is Moore-Brabazon's car, which was sold off after the race to Sir Hickman-Bacon, the premier Baronet of England, a motoring enthusiast who lived in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Sir Hickman had a touring body made for the car, which he kept until the 1950s before returning the car to the Austin Company.



Centaur Cycle Company prototype

Although many villages have changed in the past century, some have remained more undisturbed than others. One such place is Grandborough, a Warwickshire village situated between the towns of Leamington Spa and Rugby.

This was the scene in 1904, outside of the Shoulder of Mutton public house, a hostelry where one can still enjoy refreshment to this day. A car would have been an unusual sight and people came out of their houses to watch it go by.

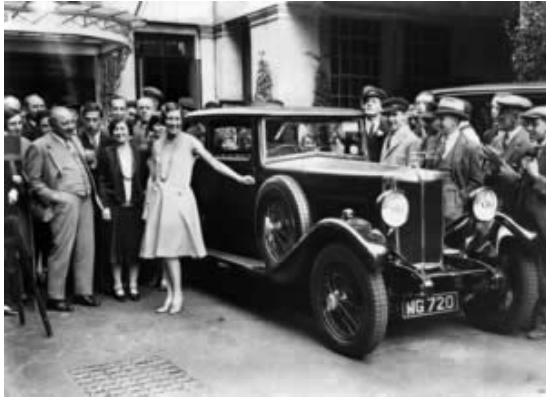
The car is a prototype made by the Centaur Cycle Co. of West Orchard in nearby Coventry. At the wheel of the car is Edward Mushing, Managing Director of Centaur and his wife is travelling in the rear seat. Next to Mr Mushing is John Henry Trickett, who was the car's designer. This model didn't go into production and Centaur was eventually sold to the Humber company.

We are grateful to Mrs E Shaw of Aylesbury for donating the picture to our Archive.



Rover Light Six Sportsman Saloon

In 1929, the 'Light Six' was added to the Rover model range. The car was described as having a remarkably lively performance and bodywork consisted of a lightweight Weymann fabric body. Production of the 'Light Six', however, only lasted for one year. A Rover Light Six Sportsman's saloon was used by the well-known motoring journalist Dudley Noble in January 1930 for his famous run from the French Riviera to Calais, beating the French luxury express, the Blue Train, by 20 minutes and covering the distance of 750 miles in less than 20 hours. This achievement attracted so much attention that this particular model of Rover car has been known as the Rover 'Blue Train' ever since. An example of the Light Six Sportsman can be seen amongst the Trust's collection.



Amy Johnson presented with MG 18/80

The British aviatrix Amy Johnson became the first woman to fly from England to Australia. Setting off from Croydon in her de Havilland Gipsy Moth plane, which she called Jason, on May 5th 1930, she flew solo, arriving 11,000 miles and 19 days later in Darwin. Johnson was awarded the Harmon Trophy and the honour of the CBE for her endeavours.

William Morris was so impressed with Johnson's achievements, that he presented her with an MG 18/80 salonette. The 18/80, introduced at the 1928 Motor Show, was the first specifically designed MG and the first model to carry the distinctive MG radiator grille, which featured on MG cars into the 1950s.

Amy Johnson's 18/80 was adorned with a special radiator mascot – a model of her plane Jason. William Morris had a similar model in his office at the Morris factory at Cowley. This very model can be seen in the re-creation of Morris' Office, on display at the Heritage Motor Centre. The Gipsy Moth plane itself is exhibited at the Science Museum in London.



Triumph TR3 in Paris, 1958

1958 was a significant year for the Triumph sports car in a number of ways. One was the introduction of the TR3A, a revised version of the TR3 both mechanically and in style. In the world of Standard-Triumph's motorsport activities, team manager Ken Richardson made another significant addition, this time in his driver line up. Anne Soisbault, an enigmatic French woman driver, was signed up to the works rally squad. Soisbault had already made a name for herself on the French rally scene, including driving her own TR3 successfully in competition. She was a consummate sportswoman, being a tennis champion as well as a racing driver. Despite several victories, Soisbault narrowly missed gaining the European women's rally title in 1959.



Austin Atlantic at Indianapolis, 1949

In April 1949, an Austin Atlantic made motoring history. The car was driven continuously for seven days and nights, stopping only for servicing, refuelling and changing drivers. It covered 11,850 miles at an average speed of 70.54mph. It broke sixty-three records hitherto exclusively held by American cars.

This bold adventure was devised by Alan Hess from Austin's Publicity Department, to promote Austin's latest model, especially in America where, as its name suggests, the car was aimed to appeal. Armed with a budget of just £3,000 and the backing of Austin's Chairman, Leonard Lord, two of the three drivers, Charles Goodacre and Hess himself, set sail on the Queen Mary on the journey to America's renowned circuit at Indianapolis. They were accompanied by a team of Austin mechanics and the Sporting Editor of Autocar, SCH 'Sammy' Davis, an accomplished driver himself, who was to give moral and practical support. Once in America they were to meet the third driver, Dennis Buckley.

At 9 am on April 9th, an absolutely standard Austin A90 Atlantic convertible began its first competitive lap of the famous Brickyard circuit. Two days later more than 40 Class D and Unlimited AAA records had been smashed. On the 12th, the car again set out on the circuit, this time for its most daring trial; 168 hours of non-stop running. Seven days later, having survived mechanical traumas and inclement weather alike, the Atlantic passed the chequered flag, having claimed 63 new records, prising them for the first time from American models.

The credits rolled in, including a cable from Leonard Lord: "Heartiest congratulations to all of you from everybody at Longbridge on a really marvellous performance Stop If you have any money left have a drink with us if you are spent out borrow some Stop LORD."



Austin J40 Pedal car and Lenny The Lion

Ventriloquist Terry Hall and his furry friend, Lenny the Lion, starred in their own show on the BBC from 1957. Terry Hall was one of the first ventriloquists to use an animal puppet and Lenny was one of the first dummies with moving arms. Lenny had trouble pronouncing his 'R's and frequently buried his head in his arms from embarrassment.

Lenny the Lion became an extremely popular children's show and two more series followed – Lenny's Den and Pops and Lenny. The Beatles made one of their early appearances in a 1963 episode of Pops and Lenny, singing their first big hit "Please Please Me". It is reputed that, as a child, David Bowie was a great fan of Lenny the Lion and that Bowie's father ran the Lenny the Lion fan club.



Hall and Lenny are sitting in an Austin J40 pedal car, a junior version of the Austin A40 car. The J40, together with the Pathfinder which was modelled on a 1930s Austin racing car, was built in a factory at Bargoed in South Wales. The Bargoed factory was set up to provide employment for miners who were no longer able to work down the pits because they suffered from the respiratory disease, pneumoconiosis.

The J40 was very popular, with more than 32,000 examples being produced between 1949 and 1971. The Bargoed factory, which also manufactured small pressings for full-sized motor cars, remained open until 1999. One of the very last J40 pedal cars to be made, which was on display in the reception of the Bargoed factory until its closure, is now exhibited in the museum.



Bullnose Morris at Morris Garages

Who better to look after your new purchase than the company that made it? For the owner of a Morris Oxford or Cowley, it was Morris Garages in Oxford, where you could have your car serviced, fuelled and the tyres checked. Putting air in the tyres cost two pence per tyre or six pence for all four – proving that the supermarkets were by no means the first to use the “buy three, get one free” offer.

The Morris cars in this 1923 scene were known as “Bullnose” models because of their distinctive rounded radiator shape. The Bullnose was the most successful car of the period – by 1926 Morris had 41% of the industry market. The Morris Garages was soon to lend its name to Morris’ new sports car venture – MG – which was formed a year after this photograph was taken.

As the Morris owner left Oxford he could take satisfaction that he had followed William Morris’ advice – he had bought British and was proud of it.

British Victory; Monte Carlo Mini comes home, 1967

Fresh from victories in 1964 and 1965, BMC returned to the Monte Carlo Rally in 1966, expecting more success with the mighty Mini Cooper S. Although a works Mini passed the finish line in first place, the Rally authorities soon disqualified it on a technicality.

And so BMC arrived in Monte Carlo in January 1967 more determined than ever to win again. The 1964 victor Paddy Hopkirk and 1965 winner Timo Makinen both took the wheel of works cars, together another flying Finn, Rauno Aaltonen. Rules had changed, significantly in the number of tyres that could be used.

Cars were restricted to two full sets for the competitive stages and all eight tyres had to be carried on the cars – hence the Minis employing roof racks to accommodate them.



By 1967, the Mini's dominance on the world rally stage was beginning to diminish. Yet, despite stiff competition from the fast Porsche 911 and the Lancia Fulvia, Aaltonen and co-driver Henry Liddon crossed the line in first place, a mere 12 seconds ahead. In this view, they are seen celebrating their success. Of their fellow competitors, Paddy Hopkirk drove to 6th overall but Makinen was less successful, in only 41st place, having damaged his car by hitting a large rock whilst travelling at over 70mph.

This was to be the Mini's last victory at Monte Carlo. In 1968 it made its last appearance on the Rally and by 1970, BMC's Competitions Department had closed down altogether, a victim of the formation of the British Leyland empire.



Girl Power; Kay Petre at Brooklands

Kathleen Coad 'Kay' Defries was born in Toronto, Canada, in 1903, the daughter of a wealthy barrister. The family soon moved to England, where many of her father's clients lived.

In the 1930s, Kay's husband, Henry Petre, bought her a Wolseley Hornet, which she raced with some success at Brooklands. With her white racing leathers and matching helmet, Kay added glamour to the paddock and became the darling of the motorsport press. More importantly, she was to become perhaps the most successful woman racing driver.



Kay moved on to race an Invicta and a Bugatti but the abiding image of her is in the titanic struggle with fellow British driver, Gwenda Stewart, to gain the title of fastest woman driver at Brooklands. The car in which she competed for that accolade was the mighty ex-Cobb 10½ litre V12 Delage, which dwarfed her diminutive 4ft 10" frame. During 1934 and 1935, Petre and Stewart traded fastest laps until the latter finally secured the title at 135.75mph.

From 1934 to 1936 she was a regular on



the British circuits of Brooklands, Crystal Palace and Donington, together with the hill climb at Shelsley Walsh, many of her successes in Riley models, as in these pictures of her at Brooklands. She also became well renowned on the international racing circuit, competing in Grand Prix and at Le Mans.

By 1937 Kay had become a member of the Austin team, competing in the side valve, single seat Seven racing car. It was whilst practising in the Austin at Brooklands that her racing career would come to a premature end. Whilst lapping the circuit, Reg Parnell misjudged his speed and his MG clipped the back of Petre's car, causing her to crash heavily. She was rushed to Weybridge Hospital with serious injuries. Despite having made a successful recovery and returning to try out a Riley at Brooklands in 1938, she decided to retire from motorsport.

Kay Petre went on to become a journalist and also designed fabric patterns for the Mini. She died in London at the venerable age of 91.



Standard Saloon, Kenilworth Castle, 1935

Many automobile manufacturers promoted the freedom that car ownership gave the motoring public. By the 1930s buying a car was an option for more of the population and, for many, opened up the possibility of exploring the British countryside without relying on a coach or train.

The Midlands firm of Standard, which began car production in 1903, made good use of the delightful countryside which surrounded its industrial home of Coventry. Many of its publicity shots featured landmarks in the county of Warwickshire. This picture, from 1935, features a couple who have driven to the grounds of Kenilworth Castle in their Standard car, only six miles from the factory in Coventry. They are enjoying the view over the fields where the Castle's

Great Mere once lay, a grand lake for boating festivals enjoyed by many a King and Queen of England.

Kenilworth Castle itself has a motoring connection. Originally a Norman castle, it later became a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I and King Charles I but was largely ruined in the English Civil War, only the gatehouse being occupied after the 1650s. In 1937, John Davenport Siddeley, who had founded the Siddeley Autocar Company in 1902 and went on to manage Armstrong Siddeley, purchased the Castle and subsequently gave it to the Nation. In the same year, Siddeley was given the title Baron Kenilworth. Kenilworth Castle can still be visited today, now the property of English Heritage.