



# spalding classic car club and east elloe

No 162 December 2021

## XMAS NEWSLETTER



**'Getting the Bug' - special yuletide feature: page 3 ...**

### Forthcoming events

Sunday 12 December

#### CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Late afternoon gathering for our annual Christmas Lunch at a new venue: The Robin Hood and Little John at Aslackby, NG34 0HL. Meet from 3.30pm for a 4 o'clock sit-down. **BOOKINGS CLOSED**

Tuesday 11 January

#### QUIZ NIGHT

Never mind Christmas, we have fun, frolics and fondle-bags all lined-up for our January 11th quiz night! Nothing serious, just a few light-hearted teasers to get the brains in gear. A mix of topics too that will hopefully appeal to all. Our new-ish recruits, **Tim and Karen Davies**, have kindly stepped into the breach and welcome teams of 2, 3 or 4. Join us at Cley Hall Hotel from around 7.30 to kick-off at 8.00 pm. £3 per person, all proceeds to Motor Neurone Disease Association.

### Chair-Mann's CHATTER

**Joy Mann** [jmann@seeccc.co.uk](mailto:jmann@seeccc.co.uk)

Things are still hotting up here at the SEECCC HQ - and I'm pleased to report, touching wood whilst I type, the boiler readily kicks into life, thank goodness!

No, this is not a euphemism! I am indeed happy to have heating. Years ago, when I worked in the Mann & Son emporium, without any reasonable flicker of heat, Mr Mann tried to *sell* me a set of thermals!! British made of course...

Last month's newsletter also highlighted the "discussions" we have about unnecessary expenditure but I don't want you to think I'm betrothed to a complete tight-wad. He's simply still living in 1970 when fish and chips were five bob!

Magazine subscriptions, garage necessities and car paraphernalia all count as absolute essentials along with the obligatory Goodwood trip. But mention the hall, stairs and landing need decorating and he gets light-headed.



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*Chair Mann's Chatter, from page 1>*

The SEECCC 2022 calendar is almost complete with an impressive array of interesting events, talks, drives, visits and dining out. Thanks to all those lovely folk who have contributed, I am very grateful.

Talking of gratitude - thanks must go to Team Cornish for a very enjoyable brunch meet at The Ivy's. I learned two important things - 1) Ivy's looked after us very well 2) Do not wear your red SEECCC polo as the Ivy's team wears exactly the same shade...and I was accosted by two customers expecting me to show them to their table!!

Our Aslackby Christmas lunch promises to be a festive affair and I am very much looking forward to catching up with folk on the 12th.

Finally, thanks to everyone supporting SEECCC. Your generosity has enabled us to send £2,054 to the Alzheimer's Society which I think is absolutely fabulous considering the restrictions we've endured in 2021.

Nigel and I send festive greetings and all good wishes for 2022. Here's to many happy miles!

*Joy*

## SNIPPETS

### **PRACTICAL CLASSICS NEED A NEW HOME...**

Mike Callaghan has literally a ton of *Practical Classics* magazines to give away starting back in 2013 up until June this year - that's over a hundred copies to anyone who is interested. He's hoping to move home in the next few months, so they will have to go to the tip otherwise; contact him via email at [mikecallaghan10@btinternet.com](mailto:mikecallaghan10@btinternet.com) in the first instance if you're interested.

### **BOURNE MOTOR RACING CLUB**

BMRC have their monthly club night at Bourne Corn Exchange on Thursday 9th December, featuring a presentation by renowned motorsports/Radio Le Mans commentator **John Hindhaugh**.

John and his wife Eve also formed Radio Show Limited, which has expanded to produce over 5000 hours of motorsport and automotive TV and radio content per year, much of it live from trackside, at venues from the USA to Australia, working with national and international Networks including ITV, Motors TV, Sky Sports, NBC, ESPN, Fox and more.

He also enjoys competing on the track and has driven a wide variety of racing cars including Aston Martin GT4, Radical SR3, Ginetta G55 and a pick-up truck! John also acts as an

ambassador for the British Motor Racing Marshals' Club. So, there's lots to hear about. His talk starts at 8pm.

### **STOP PRESS**

#### **CLASSIC TEAM LOTUS TRIP, TAKE 3**

Patrick Limming is having another go at arranging our twice-postponed trip around Classic Team Lotus over in Norfolk. He has provisionally booked Saturday March 12th at 2.30pm.

If we can get 15 members willing to venture east, we can have our own private tour. Cost looks like being around £50 per head, but we will get a more definite price when we know numbers.

Expressions of interest at this stage please to Patrick at [limmipatri@aol.com](mailto:limmipatri@aol.com)

### **WISHING A**



**to all our members**

# Getting the Bug

## Readers' Cars: Bond bug

**Graham Faulkner** would have been around ten years old when he saw his first Bond Bug on the road soon after the model had been launched in 1970, and at that impressionable age the young Graham liked what he saw. However, while Reliant were unashamedly targeting the youth market with their tangerine dream, ten years old was a little too young and it would have taken Graham rather a long time to save up enough pocket money to get one. In fact, he had to wait until June 1992 before taking the plunge. At that point he was in need of a pick-me-up, saw a 1973 Bond Bug 700ES for sale



the ladder was the 700E which added such luxuries as an opening canopy and hubcaps to the mix. The ES had yet more minor extras such as the black stripes that ran up the sides and over the roof, padded headrests



and just thought: 'I'll have that!' The ES was the top of a three-tier Bug range. Reliant only made one example of the base model, which had a fixed roof and no side screens – not surprisingly, nobody wanted to buy that one. Next rung up

and an ashtray. Perhaps more importantly, it also featured a higher compression engine, one that Reliant reckoned was good for 70mph, 0-60mph in 19 seconds and capable of returning a frugal 73mpg. It is probably a fair bet that

the car Graham bought would have struggled to reach those heady performance heights though because, as the mathematicians among you will no doubt have already figured out, it was nineteen years old at that point. Any 19-year-old car is likely to have a few challenges for the new owner to face, but we can't help thinking that the kind of person to which a Bond Bug would have appealed in those early years was unlikely to have been the type of owner who lavished money and attention on their chosen steed. We could be wrong, but we reckon image and having fun would probably have been somewhat higher up their list of priorities than oil changes and checking tappets. Indeed, Graham does concede that the Bug was in a bit of a mess when he bought it. The interior had been covered with black carpet tiles for example, and somebody had painted the exterior – poorly – in white! But Graham still used it for two or three years as a daily car. Surely he must have been the only person in the country using a Bond Bug as a daily driver in the 1990s so all credit to him, but Graham doesn't see it as such a big deal.

'It was fine, really,' he insists. 'There is a small boot for luggage, it is quite nippy in standard form, and it was perfectly feasible to use it every day. I wasn't very keen on taking it on the motorways as you might imagine, but it would keep

up with traffic happily enough on A and B roads.'

However, Graham had always intended to return his Bug to its trademark orange livery and put it back to standard, so after those initial years of regular use, he decided that he really ought to make a start on that task. Initial progress was good, and before long the little Bug had been disassembled to its constituent parts. Things went more slowly after that, and it spent the next 15 years in this disassembled state stored in various sheds. It was not that Graham had lost interest or was daunted by the task but, in the meantime, he had bought a house that needed a lot of work, so the Bug just had to wait until it had risen to the top of Graham's Jobs-To-Do list. Eventually the house was finished, and Graham thought it was really about time he did something with the Bond.

Fortunately, he has a mechanical background, so putting it back together didn't present him with any particular problems despite the many years that had elapsed since he'd taken it apart. It helps that the Bond Bug is a simple affair, but that was still good going. 'I've not restored any other car to this level, so it was probably a good one to cut my teeth on,' says Graham. 'I do have a history with classics though. I used to help out at a classic car business so I know how these things work. Like all things they can be a bit frustrating when something doesn't go to plan, but overall it was a lot of fun.'

Fortunately, I enjoyed repairing it

nearly as much as I enjoy driving around in it. 'The chassis was well rotten though, and had been plated in several areas by previous owners. I bought some sheet steel and some gas welding gear and just got on with repairing it properly. There were various holes cut into the body too where people had fitted things like speakers and stereos. Somebody had even chopped out the instrument panel and fitted a piece of plywood instead, so over the years I had to do quite a bit of fibreglass work as well as welding.' Help- fully, despite its distinctive and unique body, most of the running gear is Reliant Regal based, so on the mechanical front everything you need is fairly easily available.

'The brakes are Mini, and I could get those from my local motor factor,' says Graham. 'For Reliant-specific parts, there is a company called Reliant Partsworld where you can get most things you need. You might run into problems if something like the steering box is no good, but I was lucky and didn't have any such issues.' It probably helped that the Bug had only done 57,000 miles, and with such a light car the mechanical parts would not generally have been under too much stress.

That is not to make light of the work that went into its restoration though, work that included a complete rewiring as well as an engine overhaul. 'The only job I

didn't do was the spraying and making the side screens,' says Graham. 'For the paint, I took it to an accident repair centre in Spalding. I dropped a bit of a clanger there by telling them that I wasn't in any rush and they could do it as and when – 13 months later and I still hadn't got it back, so I had to kick up a little bit of a fuss. I think the problem was that because it is so small, it was too easy to simply tuck the Bond away in a corner and forget about it.'



'The side screens, that can be fitted to the side openings where most ordinary cars would have doors, were missing,' continues Graham, 'so I borrowed a set of metal frames from another owner and, using them as a pattern, made up a set of my own. I then had the screens made to fit these frames by a trimmer, but everything else I did myself.'

Those other jobs included fitting the Bond Bug transfers, which are being reproduced by a couple of people. Reliant used decals instead of chrome or plastic badges not only because they were cheaper and stood out against the bright orange paint,



but also because they fitted the non-conformist nature of the car and, crucially they had strict weight limits to adhere to if it wanted to retain tax benefits. Not that the transfers were all black, because the colours were reversed on the boot lid with black paint for the panel and orange for the bond BUG sticker. Supposedly, that boot lid doubled up for the 'yoofs' of the 1970s as a notice board for stickers and chalked comments, Reliant being keen that they did not put stickers on what was a very shallow rear screen and reduce rearward visibility still further. We asked Graham if he had ever scrawled a message on his bootlid, and the look on his face makes it clear that he has not! Then again, he's not ten years old any more...

Weight reduction was possibly a fringe benefit of fitting the Bug with 10in rear wheels too, down from the Regal's 13in rims. However, that was probably more about making the new car more stable by lowering the centre of gravity now that (thanks to the Mini) tyres were freely available and cheap at that size. When Graham got his car it came with 10in Wellers fitted, but he bought a pair of the original style of Dunlop alloys, which had been an optional extra back in the day and almost invariably specified by buyers. Just the two Dunlops mind you – the front wheel buried under the wedgie nose is a Regal steel rim.

By our calculations, Graham's Bug returned to the road after a motor-ing hiatus of around 18 years. In that time, we presume that Graham had changed, and so would the road conditions have done, so we were curious to find

out whether getting back behind the wheel was like putting on an old pair of slippers or if it took him a while to adjust? 'It actually felt perfectly natural to be driving it again,' says Graham. 'As I said, I don't like motorways because you are dwarfed by the HGV wheels, but on all other roads it is fantastic. That's why, unlike some classics, this one really does get used a lot. I'll take it when I'm just popping into town, for going to the shops, or when I simply want to get out and go for a spin.'

'I'm off on a club tour on Saturday with my local Spalding Classic Car Club which will probably see me covering 130 miles in total that day. There is another Bond Bug in the club, as it happens, and that is my fault too. That's because I lent the Bug to my friend for a week and he loved it, so he spent the next three years looking for one of his own. He eventually found the right one early this year.'

So does Graham have any advice to offer prospective purchasers, we wondered? 'The value of Bugs has skyrocketed over the past 12 months, so they are a lot of money these days for such a little car,' he says. 'If that doesn't put you off, there are a few things they're prone to which you need to look for.'

The fibreglass around the hinges on the canopy can go if water gets in and expands the steel strengthening plates in that area, for example. The chassis can be a bit fragile and rust-prone too, but other than that, despite the unusual appearance and design, there is really nothing you can put

your finger on that is any different from any other car.

'The bigger test is to make sure that you are suited to a Bond Bug. They are not perfect, but for most people they are a brilliant car to use on an occasional basis rather than as a daily driver. Potholes can be an issue given the three-wheeled layout, and you tend to be very conscious of where the front wheel is when you are driving – it is a fairly stiff car with hard suspension, so if you clobber a pothole, it gives you quite a jolt.'

'They do have a tremendous grin factor though, both for you and for everybody who sees them. I find at shows that they are a little magnet for people. Children love them because of their size, they can't believe it is a real car, but as I hope I have shown, they can be surprisingly practical and usable too. In all the years I have owned the Bug, it has never let me down. It has not been faultless, but it has never actually let me down, which is more than I can say for my old TVR! That was a Chimera which I had for 8 years and even though I enjoyed that, it was nowhere near as much fun as the Bug and I sold it a few weeks ago. The Bond, though, is here to stay. It is my fun car.'



[www.classicsworld.co.uk](http://www.classicsworld.co.uk)

