

# Members Newsletter

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Issue 1

## Welcome

BY JEFF COOPE, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Welcome to the first edition of the British Motor Museum Member's Newsletter.

First, thank you for being pioneers, as the first supporters of what we believe will become a very large membership in the coming years. The motor industry in Britain has been one of this country's defining industries over the last 130 years. It has led – and continues to lead - the world through its technology, design and, above all, the sheer inventiveness of the people who worked within it. It has provided jobs for millions of workers and their families and had a dramatic effect on people who lived in and around the places where the companies built their factories. The preservation and celebration of all this enterprise, as well as the social stories that emerged from it, is the reason that the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust was formed and the British Motor Museum built.

For me it is also a personal story. I started my working life as an automotive apprentice and have been in the industry ever since. Over the years, I have worked with some of the most innovative and creative people this country and, indeed, the world has produced. Britain's motor industry was and remains truly global, with such a tremendous

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## Welcome continued

diversity of people. Their stories, through the work at the British Motor Museum, will live on for future generations to understand and enjoy. They will also inspire tomorrow's designers, engineers and scientists, who will find themselves with very different challenges and environment than today.

With the help of your Membership, the Museum will give an insight into how we lived and worked but also moved around in the amazing contraptions we simply call 'cars'. I often wonder what those future generations will think of us? Were we a little crazy to build high speed machines, fill them up with a volatile liquid fuel, set light to it and, strangest of all, let a human being control it – all in the name of transport?! I am sure they will think we were, but they will only be able to dream about the freedoms we had and the sheer joy our machines gave us.

We are passionate about broadening the appeal of the Museum, to make it a place for everyone, where everybody feels welcome. That's why we started our new series of mid-week evening events in the summer, Gaydon Gatherings. Free to attend and open to all, you can meet, eat, chat and enjoy cars, bikes, commercials, even tractors with like-minded people.

Recently we launched a winter programme of events inside the Museum, starting with our first 'Pie and Mash Quiz Night'. We are planning a variety of fantastic events for 2022 and, as a Member, you'll be the first to know about them.

We're delighted that you have joined us to support the Trust and all its activities. Please think of the British Motor Museum as your place, a place where you can enjoy all that it has to offer and know you will have a warm welcome whenever you visit. We have so many plans for the Museum in the years to come, which I am sure you will love and we'll be sharing them with you through Members' newsletters. In the meantime, please do let us know if you have ideas on how we can improve the service to Members or if you have ideas for future Members' events.

Welcome to our community - thank you for becoming part of it.

*Jeff*

## Keeping our veterans on the road

BY PAUL GILDER, WORKSHOP MANAGER

For a collection such as ours it's beneficial to maintain vehicles to a running standard, under controlled conditions, with our Workshop team keeping an eye on them. Just like any modern car, wear and tear can occur on the vehicles we run at the Museum and wheels are no exception! Recently this was the case for our 1904 Thornycroft, which regularly takes part in the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

Unlike the wheels on your car, the Thornycroft wheels are wooden, a throw-back from the days of horse carriages. During a recent routine maintenance check, the Workshop team discovered that one of the Thornycroft's wheels was showing quite a lot of wear so we sent all four off to our specialist wheelwright for further investigation. The result of their visit to the wheelwright was that, in fact, all four of the wheels would benefit from refurbishment.

The process of refurbishing the wheels involved retaining the original hubs and having some new spokes and felloes (the outer wooden rims) made from ash. A couple of the steel rims that hold the rubber tyre were also showing signs of distortion, due to age and use. Alongside the wheels, then, four new rims were added to the refurbished wheels. After painting, beaded edge tyres will be refitted to the car.

Your Membership helps support us in the conservation and maintenance programme for our vehicles and keeps the collection in running condition for the future.

Image of the Thornycroft wheels before and after restoration.





## Welcoming the Vauxhall Heritage Collection



BY CATHERINE GRIFFIN, CURATOR

If you have visited the Museum since August or perhaps been keeping an eye on our website or social media, you will know that recently the British Motor Museum became the new home for the Vauxhall Heritage Collection. Around 50 classics arrived from Vauxhall and now, up on the Mezzanine Gallery, there are 24 of these on display together, with a few others dotted around the Museum for those eagle-eyed enough to spot!

What you may not know is that this project has been a long time in the making, with discussions going backward and forward between the Museum and Vauxhall Heritage for many months. We're delighted that the cars are now here but the work is not yet complete!

Phase one was arranging for the Vauxhalls to be safely delivered, valeted and displayed at the Museum. With around another 30 cars going on display, this means the Curatorial team has been busy researching and writing information labels for each of these cars. Now the labels are out with the cars, we're working behind the scenes to put together some more special interpretation to accompany them on the Mezzanine and tell the story of Vauxhall more fully - using an amazing selection of images and objects from the Vauxhall Heritage Archive.

If you haven't already, make sure you come along and admire all these superb Vauxhall classics. And look out for the new display coming soon!



# The Most Beautiful Car in the World

BY CAMERON SLATER, VOLUNTEER

The Jaguar E-type was sixty years old this year. Obviously, such a significant event in motoring history could not be left unmarked so the E-type became one of the series of History Talks which the Life-long Learning Team has devised. The E-type team of volunteers Roger Gollicker, Andrew Pollard, Graham Robson and Cameron Slater, faced the small problem of a deadline – the talk had to be ready for performance by 15 March – the exact anniversary of the E-type's launch in 1961. We had about six months to do justice to this fabulous motor car and we made it – but only just.

Very soon 'The Most Beautiful Car in the World' moved from being a working title for the talk to being the actual one. After rather a long Covid-affected gestation period it is difficult to remember whose idea it was to call the talk that.

In the days when we all sat a long way away from each other, it soon became evident that there was a person at the meetings who knew a great deal about Jaguars and certainly about this one but wasn't actually one of the presentation team! That man was Tony Merrygold, who is the Vehicle Collections Manager of Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust (JDHT). His fund of stories showed us almost immediately that with his input, we had a real gem of a presentation. The team could happily research the facts

and the history, but Tony's fund of stories promised glamour, humour and real personal experiences.

Inevitably, there were many revisions of the script - we are currently on version 16 - but it's been a very rewarding process. The culmination of all that work was, of course, to present to a public audience. So far, we have done that twice. Once to a group of lovely people who had booked the talk as a birthday present for one of their Jaguar-mad friends, via the wonders of Zoom. The second was as part of the Warwick Words Festival when we faced a live audience of about 95 people in the Great Hall of the Lord Leycester Hospital in Warwick.

Of course, we were not alone. Emma Rawlinson and Bryony Goodwin from Life-Long Learning were always there to help and Karam Ram at JDHT was a wizard at finding the right image. We all enjoyed being part of this project and we hope our audiences get as much out of it as we did.

Graham Robson and Cameron Slater outside the Lord Leycester Hospital with a Series 2 E-type from the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust Collection.



# New to the Archive: Longbridge factory photographs

BY PARAMJIT SEHMI, ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST

Recently, the Archive has experienced an influx of generous donations. Arguably this increase could be attributed to the past year we have all experienced. A lot of people have been at home, clearing out attics and spare rooms and uncovering many gems in the process. We're certainly not complaining about it at the Archive!

One of our recent acquisitions is a box of photographs taken in 1998 of the Rover (former Austin) factory in Longbridge, Birmingham. The photographs in this donation are not just any images; these were part of an extensive project to help create a scale model of the then 400-acre factory. The purpose of this model was to illustrate proposed plans for the future of the site.

The photographs meticulously document all building exteriors, including the various site gates, recognisable buildings such as the showroom known as the 'Elephant House', the railway line and the conveyor bridge. Notably, these images complement and help contextualise other aspects of our existing collection. This is particularly relevant to objects diligently collected by our Collections team when MG Rover closed back in 2005.

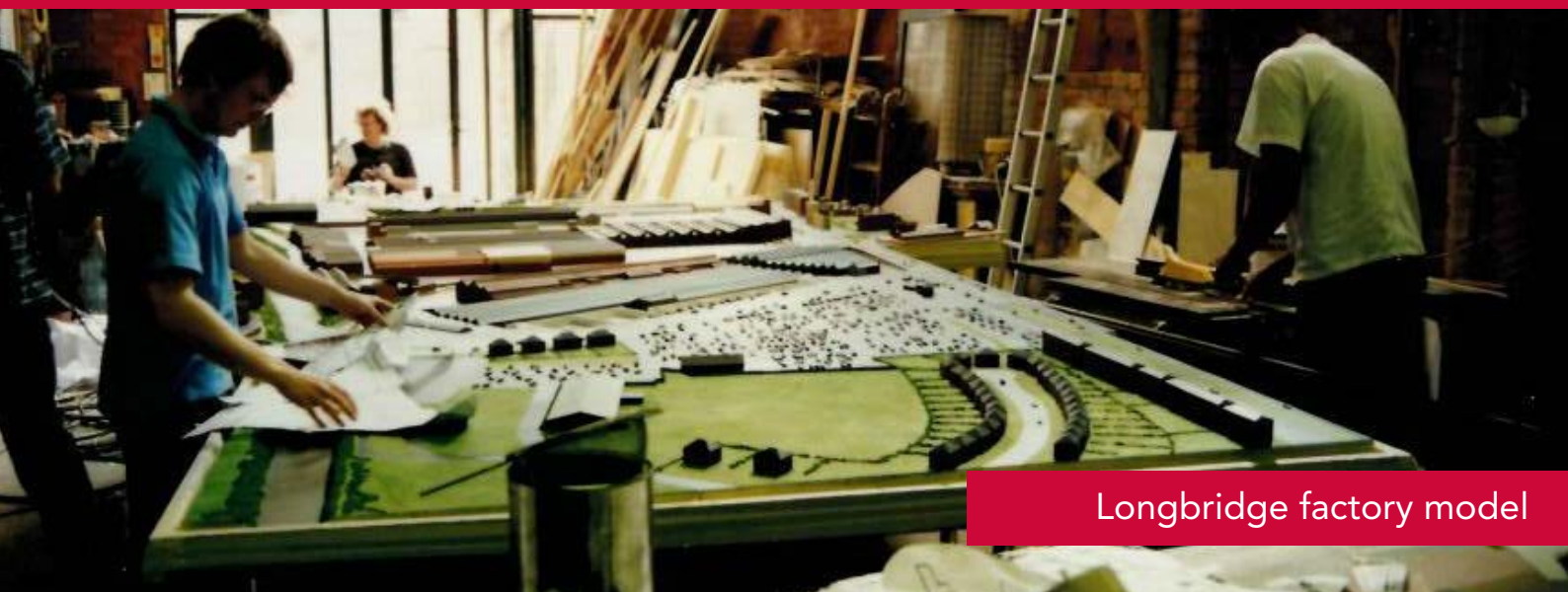
In these images we can see that the progress of the build was carefully tracked as modellers began to map out the basic architecture of the site and then slowly furnish it with an abundance of detail. These include the railway, as well as lampposts and trees. Some of these finer details, such as the cars naturally assembled in the model car park emulate real-life, giving character to the design.

## MEET THE TEAM



My name is Paramjit Sehmi and I am the Assistant Archivist at the British Motor Museum.

Despite working with a collection which focuses on the motor industry, my background is actually in art history. I completed a BA and an MA in History of Art at the University of Birmingham, specialising in nineteenth-century sculpture. Whilst completing my Masters I started volunteering at the Coventry Transport Museum – and thus began my introduction into archives and working with an automotive collection!  
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Longbridge factory model

For accuracy, many shots depict a man holding a measuring pole against the various buildings. This was evidently used to help modellers gauge the buildings to fit with the eventual 1:200 scale. Interestingly, the photographer had also captured images of the modellers at work on the scale model, perhaps knowing that one day the model-making process might become a piece of history too.



The images are not only a record of the layout of the site but, as our long standing volunteer and Longbridge local, Colin, found the photographs also brought back fond memories of the factory. "The wonder of the photographs is their comprehensiveness. They are a very thorough set of un-posed images of the exterior of the factory site, with cars parked and work in progress. BMW Group had plans for Rover Longbridge in 1998 and this generous donation of images sheds further light on that."

Colin has already rough sorted these images and placed them in acid-free enclosures as the initial steps of integrating this donation into our

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I have had several archival and curatorial roles and have worked with a range of collections including art, social history and library collections. I find history and the documentation of it very important and so I very much enjoy working with the Trust's Archive collection.

Here at the Archive we hold all kinds of material relating to Britain's car industry. As you can imagine, this is quite an expansive remit. The collection consists of business records, production records and ledgers, press and sales material, ephemera, as well as technical manuals and engineering papers. In addition to this, we also look after a very large collection of images and film in our Photographic Store.

As archivists, our daily tasks revolve around caring for the collection. This includes cataloguing material so that it is recorded accurately, digitising items so they are more widely accessible and conserving material so it is available for the future. In doing so, we are able to conduct research for a myriad of enquirers about specific vehicles, companies or personal and social history topics.



Longbridge factory model

Archive collection. The next part of the process will involve giving the material an accession number and documenting the important information about the items onto our cataloguing system. After this is complete, the boxed items will then be placed in our Archive Store and will be readily available for researchers to access.

A final fun fact about this photographic donation is that the Museum does hold a model of the Longbridge factory! This model was donated in 2014 and is a representation of plans for the site from the late 1990s. It is not presently confirmed whether the factory model in our collection is the same as the one in the photographs but now we certainly have the means to check!



## DATES FOR THE DIARY

### CHRISTMAS LUNCHES 12, 16 & 17 DECEMBER

Two course lunch with all the trimmings and a glass of wine. Book now - discount for Members.

### MUSEUM LATE FACTOR US IN TUESDAY 18 JANUARY

Meet the team behind the "Factor Us In" exhibition. Hear first hand the stories of how the motor industry has impacted on the local area, and enjoy a talk on the History of the British Motor Industry led by members of our volunteer team. Book online now.

### MUSEUM QUIZ NIGHT TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY

Following the success of our first quiz in November, Quiz Night is back with more fun filled rounds to test your teams motoring and general knowledge. Teams of up to 6 welcome.



## Making the most of your Membership

### Discount in the Gift Shop

With Christmas fast approaching don't forget that our Gift Shop is packed with ideal gifts and stocking fillers for the motoring lovers in your life. Members get a 10% discount and Premium Members get 20% discount. Plus every purchase you make helps us to further support the Museum and its collections. Membership is also a lovely gift to give to others.

### Private Tours for Members

One of the benefits of being a Member is to enjoy a private tour of the Museum. All our tours were suspended due to Covid, but we are hoping to be able to reinstate both public and Members tours in the New Year. More information along with how to book will follow in our next newsletter.

## INAUGURAL MUSEUM QUIZ DEEMED A GREAT SUCCESS!

Tuesday 9 November saw 18 teams come together for our first quiz night. The evening was free for Premium Members and just £10 for Members, including a 'Pie & Mash' supper.

Take look at the Museum blog for Catherine Griffin, the Curator's take on the night.

Click here> <https://www.britishmotormuseum.co.uk/explore/museum-blog/quiz-night>

## DATES FOR THE DIARY Continued.

### GAYDON GATHERING TUESDAY 12 APRIL

April will see the return of our popular evening Gaydon Gatherings, a fun and informal evening for motoring enthusiasts to get together and admire vehicles of all marques and models. These will be held the second Tuesday evening of every month throughout the summer.

### MUSEUM ON THE MOVE MEMBERS ONLY EVENT 29 APRIL 2022

Museum on the Move is an annual exclusive Members only event where we showcase a selection of cars from the collection and Members get the opportunity to ride in them.

Tickets for all 2022 events will be available soon.

[britishmotormuseum.co.uk/events](https://britishmotormuseum.co.uk/events)