

CLASSIC DRIVER

'Racers - Memoirs of the Gentleman Drivers': A new book from Palawan Press

Ian Skailes and Sir Paul Vestey (left and centre, both profiled in the book) enjoy some southern European sunshine with Alain de Cadenet and Mario Cabral © Sir Paul Vestey

Any book that includes a quote describing Enzo Ferrari as “a great bloke to work for” has clearly explored the more cobwebby corners of motor racing history. But what else would you expect from Palawan?

The latest volume from the West London-based publisher is devoted to that species now more familiar in historic, rather than modern racing: the 'Gentleman Driver'. And while that expression more commonly means wealthy individuals able to indulge in a rich man's passion, most of the subjects of the book can be described as 'comfortably well-off', rather than staggeringly wealthy in the Briggs Cunningham or Woolf Barnato sense.

The central thread, though, is one of well-organised, understated British amateurism with a well-hidden sense of competitiveness. And some, such as Cliff Allison, Noel Cunningham-Reid, John Miles and Tony Rolt, went on to become top-flight international drivers in F1 and at Le Mans.

Many of the biographies and subsequent recollections have a common theme: brought up in the immediate post-War period; member of the family business; a spell doing National Service (the UK's compulsory duty in the armed services); the purchase of a Lotus or Jaguar; occasional works drives; early retirement from racing to rejoin the family concern.

And then in later years, quite possibly, a life spent somewhere warm – the Algarve or Southern France, perhaps.

128 **OPPOSITE** In September John drove his Chevrolet 1.6 1600 at the 1000 Miles race at the Montlhéry Grand Prix Circuit in France. On a wet track he drove magnificently in his Lotus Roadster (left) and Malcolm Mayne (right) 4.5.

BELOW John was the Championship. After this period he drove a Lotus 47 with a 1.6 litre engine and more importantly a Chevrolet 1.6 1600, which was a great race car and engine which was also when a gentleman driver really started. All of us had



had Trenton fuel injection and we didn't get anywhere with the car at all – the engine kept popping and banging – until we removed the fuel injection and put it back on Weber carburetture.

I had never driven a car like the Chevrolet, so it all came as a bit of a culture shock, but then Nigel and I began to realise how good a car it was. My best performance that year was in the Montlhéry 1,000km race in which I had Peter Gethin man-driver. The engine had been built by Chris Steel and he owned it. We had put it on the car on the Tuesday before the race and tested it. The water temperature was 110 degrees and the oil pressure was 25psi. It did, however, rev quite freely up to 6,000rpm, which, in theory at least, was quite impossible with a Ford twin-cam.

I told Chris that I didn't see how we could use the engine. His attitude was simple enough, it's my engine – control your own business. When we got to France, the French Champion was there with a Lotus Elan and he came and looked at the Chevrolet, which was basically a plain three-cylinder kind of car, he engaged and walked off. I had forgotten to look any hotel rooms and we had to sleep in the cars. Peter Gethin went out to practice, but then came in and said to me, "You'd better have a go". So, I went out, did two laps, came in and said, "Where the hell does

the circuit go, Peter? I'm certain that I can't remember! We went to talk to David Piper, whose Ferrari had blown up, and took over his hotel room. The next day we went back to the circuit and the little man from France was still giggling at our Chevrolet because we had been something like 15 seconds off the pace. I went out and gave it the treatment – we knew that the Chevrolet was much faster than the Lotus – and so it proved. I was 8 seconds faster than him in one flying lap. During the race the head gasket blew, but Chris kept waving money at Peter and he kept going. We finished eighth overall and scored in the 1,000km class. That was how we introduced the Chevrolet to France.

For 1967, I kept the B3 and ran in the *Motoring News* GT Championship, which was a big, season-long series. Overall, during the year, it had about 150 competitors. The strongest opposition came from John Miles with a new Lotus 47 competition GT car entered by the works Gold Leaf Team Lotus. With a large number of unusual places and the retirement of Mr Miles's Lotus 47, which caught fire with monotonous regularity because of its Trenton fuel injection, I ended up by winning the Championship. In that series, there were 14 races and I won every race in which I competed.

Frank Johnson of a new B8 in 1968 and then some simply improved versions of the earlier B3 and B4 cars. My car had a 2-litre BMW engine. At the front, there was an adjustable anti-roll bar, which I understand Derek described as a psychological modification. I know exactly what he meant by this, he had a great thing about not making his cars adjustable by racing drivers. He thought that drivers knew nothing about suspension settings. If you had non-adjustable Hinton shock absorbers, non-adjustable roll bars and you could adjust the brake balance – that was good enough. If you told him that you wanted to adjust something he would say, "You can't, hard luck, and walk off."

For me, the 1968 season was the worst that anyone could possibly have. I had front-end, gearbox failures, engine failures, suspension failures – you name it, I had it. For 1969, I took delivery of a new blue BMW-powered B8 and I was going to run it normally as a work-related home racing car. I took it on the trailer to Oulton Park and drove round in it. Then I took it back to Chevron and

RACERS John Lepp





IT WAS NOT UNTIL I MARRIED ROY

Bloxham is a racing and motor sport enthusiast who was a partner in a long-established garage business at Gressend House in Buckinghamshire, that cars came back under his care. Roy taught me to drive and I took my driving test in a desert installation. These cars were made in a place called Bill near Bradford in the West Riding of Yorkshire and were flat-four 1,500cc sporting saloons with a very good performance and competition record. The company that made them was headed by the Jewett brothers, based in Leeds as the 'Jewett boys' and most of the sales were in Yorkshire. Many people had no idea what the cars were and, not surprisingly, the examiner was one of them. He told me, 'Well, I am passing you, but you do drive too quickly.'

In about 1951, I took and passed the test of the Institute of Advanced Motorists and with money from a small inheritance I bought an early Lotus-Martin D821. I lost this time. Roy completed building his own Ford Ten Special to enter in Club races. So, off we went to the Dole circuit in Hampshire at the end of April. Young

Mike Hawthorn and Roy Salvadori were there and also Fatsy Dart, who was, probably, the best known lady driver at the time and was competing in circuit racing with a new Lotus-Martin D821 prepared by Bob Walker's garage.

My husband thought that I should have a go at racing with my D821, but, actually, I was against the idea. I believed that if I was going to race I should have started when I was younger and, in any event, I lacked confidence. Without telling me, he entered me in the Ladies Race at Goodwood on what Monday I was terrified when he told me a week before the race. Some famous names were entered in the Ladies Race, including Nancy Mitchell (a very successful rally driver, Pin-Mon (Stirling's sister and successful in both races and rallies), Fatsy Dart and Elizabeth Gibbs (who rode motorcycles and competed regularly in Club events with her HRG).

It was a handicap event, but even so, I surprised myself by finishing third. The season was running and my love affair with the Lotus-Martin had begun. I went on that year to compete at Silverstone, winning two First Class Awards in High Speed Trials, gradually gaining experience, and I took first and third places in races on the Club circuit at Silverstone.

And so started what has to have been the biggest and most enjoyable years of my life. My D821 had the original 2,500cc engine and I sold it early in 1956, replacing it with another D821 (registered HFR 2) that belonged to another racer Billy Woods. This had a large capacity 2,620cc engine as fitted to the latest D821 model and, as it was full D821 race tune with three Weber carburetors, it was much faster than my previous Lotus.

In the latter part of 1955, Roy had acquired SAE's, the famous aerodynamic Lotus-301, typed the Mk 8, raced by young Colin Chapman as his work car in 1954. He had sold it at the end of 1954 to Guston Nime, a Birmingham motor trader, and it had now replaced Roy's Special. I had some good results with the D821 early in the season and then I had problems at a race meeting at Silverstone. I was going well and it looked as though I would win the race, but the oil pump was dropped. That meant immediate retirement on the penultimate lap, so repairing a damaged engine was more than we could afford.

RACERS Jean Bloxham



ABOVE: Jean Bloxham racing in front of the 1955 Lotus Special with Colin Chapman at a 1954 Automobile Racing Club Member's meeting, during 1955. She was the only woman to participate regularly in the club and finished 3rd in the 1951 race.



RACERS Jean Bloxham



RIGHT: In late 1955, Jean Bloxham, behind the wheel, fought the dangers of Chapman's Lotus Mk 8. F1C, but Bloxham never got a racing licence in Birmingham. As a result, competing with the car at Silverstone Club in May 1956.

Peter Sutcliffe - part of a Yorkshire, mill-owning family - started racing in a Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica, then proceeded to campaign what would nowadays be a stellar collection of cars: D-type Jaguars, a new Lightweight E-type, a Mk 2 Jaguar saloon, a Ferrari 250 GTO and a Ford GT40. In 1967, he also raced as an occasional member of the works Ferrari long-distance team, finishing 5th at Brands Hatch in a P4.

Jaguar drivers Peter Blond and Jonathan Sieff were in the rag trade, Kenneth McAlpine (who financed the Connaught GP team) a member of the McAlpine Construction family, Tommy Sopwith was the son of Sir Tom Sopwith, of Sopwith aircraft, America's Cup yacht racing and Hawker-Siddeley fame. And so on.

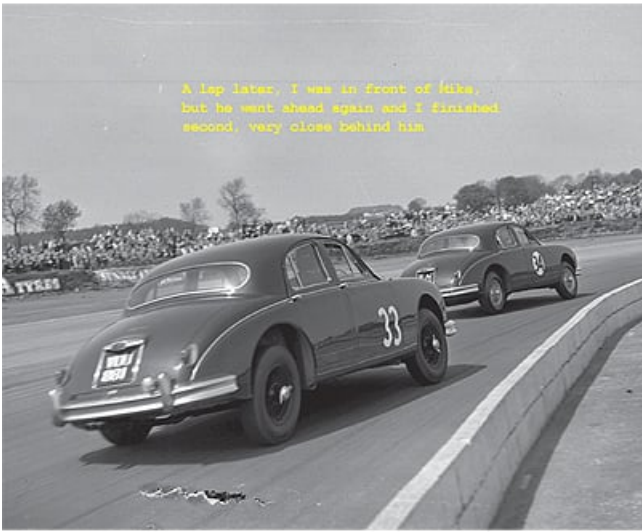
□ The Vestey/Sadler Gp. IV Porsche 910 at the Vila Real 500km, Portugal, in 1969 © Sir Paul Vestey

It was Cumbrian-born (to a family of garage-owners) Cliff Allison who made the down-to-earth comment about *Il Commendatore*. Allison, having graduated from 500cc Coopers to spending many years behind the wheel of works Lotus Le Mans, F1 and F2 cars, was engaged by Ferrari in 1959 to drive sports cars and be an occasional member of the single-seater squad. A return to Lotus in 1961 resulted in the inevitable 'Bad Accident in a Lotus' and retirement from the sport.

A fascinating tale - as are the other 25 - in the 432-page, 288mm x 238mm, beautifully laid-out book. Two versions are available, a numbered, cloth-bound edition of 500 (£250.00) and a leather-bound, signed and numbered run of just 25 (£700.00).

For Palawan collectors it's a 'must', as it is for enthusiasts of this now sadly long-gone era of uniquely British motor sport.

BELOW The battle continues and although Ivorov continued to lead Mike, he was out and about again and Ivorov's race by Tony Sopwith.



A lap later, I was in front of Mike, but he went ahead again and I finished second, very close behind him

RACERS Tony Sopwith



Seave first drive for the team at Silverstone in June, but after Ivorov's trouble he finished second behind Ivorov.

IT WAS A VERY SAD BLOW WHEN IVOROV suffered fatal injuries on a Formula 2 race at Croft on 17th July because he was a good chap every way. He was tremendously famous because he inherited Williams' bloodless health drink and the general public knew him for better for this than as a racing driver - even though he was a Le Mans winner. At the end of August, Jack won the Saloon Car race at the International meeting at Brands Hatch with Gwynne, who started from the back of the grid after missing practice in second place. We ran in only one race in 1959 and that year's Touring Car Championship went to Cliff Urry (Pilot/Erzhy) who had consistently won his class.

Jaguar introduced the MK II version of the saloon in late 1959 and we found this model in 1960 as a 1.8 litre car. I also bought the first Aston Martin DB107, Roy Parnell, who had been running the Competition Department of Aston Martin, told me that they were introducing a short-wheel-base of the DB107 and I said that I would have one of these. It was finished, as cars like this always were, at about two o'clock on the morning of its first race. It was an immensely quick car and a very exciting performer, but as Daggett and about Bentley's 'They make the fastest horses in Europe' and up to a point the same was true about the DB107.

In 1960, Jack Seave drove for the team on a regular basis and Gwynne was still racing with us. Our first race of the year was at Croft on Easter Monday.

RACERS Tony Sopwith

Mike Anthony's Lotus MK6 at Croft in July 1961. It was a good day for Mike and Ivorov. The 1961 race at the end of the year, the British Sports Car race, was won by Mike Anthony. He had the Lotus MK6 and Ivorov had the Lotus MK6. The race was won by Mike Anthony.



RACERS Mike Anthony

of people in his position would have taken the 'heavy-handed' parental responsibility line. He didn't do that at all. One evening at home he looked at the mirror by saying, 'Motor racing! Do you want to be the World Champion?' I said, 'No. Why not?' he replied 'So I said, 'Finally, because I'm not good enough and, secondly, because I haven't enough time.' He then said, 'Well you seem to be doing all right. Why do you bother to carry on racing?'

That was his line. You had achieved what you wanted to achieve - why not do something else? He was obviously an alerted about racing as my parent would be. So I said all right and finished the contracts for that year and retired. Having such a famous and able father was an enormous advantage in life. I was a tremendous admirer of the 50th until the day he died at 101. We must have had disagreements, but I don't remember them.

I was the only child because his first wife died and he married my mother comparatively late in life. In fact, history has repeated itself. He was 43 when I arrived and I was 25 when my elder daughter was born. So, she was 90 years younger than her grandfather. When she was born, we rushed her down to take pictures of them together, but he lasted another 11 years.

I don't recall that we had any help from the factory in racing the Jaguars. Lefty England looked after quite a number of private Jaguar owners, but he never did that with me. I got on very well with him, but we were treated purely as customers. I suspect that someone at the factory could have commented. Do you remember when he had to work all night to machine some parts for your race the following morning? There may be some stories like that, but we always paid for parts for what they did. They were certainly not unhelpful in any way, but we did not have any special assistance.

Following my retirement, I called Ivor back to drive for us in 1960 and I also asked him to race his car. Jack Seave, who had raced an Austin A105 Westminster, also drove for us in a couple of races. I had known Jack for many years as a friend and competitor and it was natural to ask him to drive for me. Early in the season, we had serious opposition from Roy Seave who was driving a 3.8 for John Coombe. The results of the first three races were the same: Durr - Seavelet - Ivorov. Jack

streamlined Lotus MK 6 had been crashed and as he pointed in my car. Instead of me being just a Lotus customer, we became great friends. Both Ivorov and Colin were very friendly and we continued to get on well until the following year. After the Croft Park race, I went back to the machine shop and suggested that we should weld the steel liners into the cast iron block. We did this and it worked very well.

The MK 6 understeered like mad, although we were so naive that we didn't understand understeer or oversteer. The front-end adhesion was so poor that it was easy to initiate a four-wheel drift, even though the engine developed only 75hp. In my youth, I suffered from the delusion that I could go round corners faster if I didn't use the brakes. I used to slow the car on tyre scrub and the steering.

When we decided that we were going to run in the British Empire Trophy at Croft on Parkin, Agri, Chapman suggested that he (with his 1200cc-powered MK 6) enter Gwynne (who also had a MK 6 with an 1200cc engine) and myself should run as a team under the name Team Lotus - the first time that the name was used. We used the same several times later during the year and the first occasion was the Sports Car race at the International Trophy meeting at Silverstone in May. Colin won the 1.500cc class, with Gwynne third and me fifth in the class - it wasn't good enough for the team prize, which went to Eddie Irvine with his Jaguar C-Type.

We ran again as Team Lotus in the 1.500cc Sports Car race at the British Grand Prix meeting at Silverstone in July. Colin won the race, Gwynne finished second and they both beat Hans Herrmann with a 1.800cc twin-cam-engined Porsche Typ 1000 Spyder. I took fourth place and this time we did win the team prize, but of course Eddie Irvine were not competing in the same race. Later in the year I set a new class record at Prescott Hill Club and won my class at the Brighton Speed Trials, but I hadn't done as well as I had hoped and in 1961 I decided to move over to a British-powered car.

British engines were dominant in the 2-litre class of British Sports Car racing, with the exception of the Maserati A655C run by Roy Seavelet for the Gully Engineering team. The A655C was a powerful, heavy car

BELOW Mike Anthony and Ivorov at Croft in July 1961. It was a good day for Mike and Ivorov. The 1961 race at the end of the year, the British Sports Car race, was won by Mike Anthony. He had the Lotus MK6 and Ivorov had the Lotus MK6. The race was won by Mike Anthony.



and, although they had achieved a lot of success with it, it was primarily a car for endurance racing and its left-hand drive caused some problems on British circuits with mainly right-hand corners. As it happened, Gully transferred the Maserati engine to a Cooper chassis for 1962. However, this was not an improvement, as the new Cooper-Maserati understeered to an extreme.

The most successful British-powered car was the works Lotus-Bentley directly Archa-Scott (Bentley had first appeared at the British Grand Prix meeting at Silverstone in July 1951), designed all this with Colin Chapman and we concluded that a MK 8 Lotus as raced in the 1.500cc class by Chapman in 1954, but with a Bristol engine, would be lighter, faster and corner better than the Lotus. We were right, except for the fact that we did not allow adequately for the brilliance of Archa's driving and, although the new Lotus MK 10, as it was designated, was a very good car, no one could match Archa's skill with the Lotus.

During the winter, while the car was under construction at Homey, Colin came up and said, 'Would you like die brakes on your car?' I said that time, no Lotus had been fitted with die brakes. I thought that it was a brilliant idea and when I asked him how much it would cost, he said, 'An extra thousand pounds, which



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