

CLASSIC DRIVER

Like father, like daughter at the Restocar workshop in Montreux

Lead
Once a violinist in the Philharmonic Orchestra of Hong Kong, David Twaites has since established one of Europe's most respected workshops for pre-War cars in Montreux, Switzerland. Now his daughter Carolyn is about to take the reins of the business - we paid the pair a visit...



What are your earliest automotive memories?

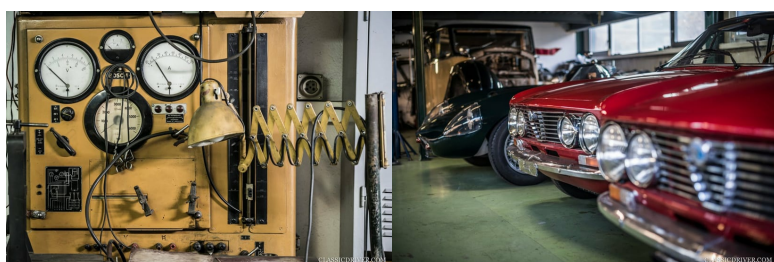
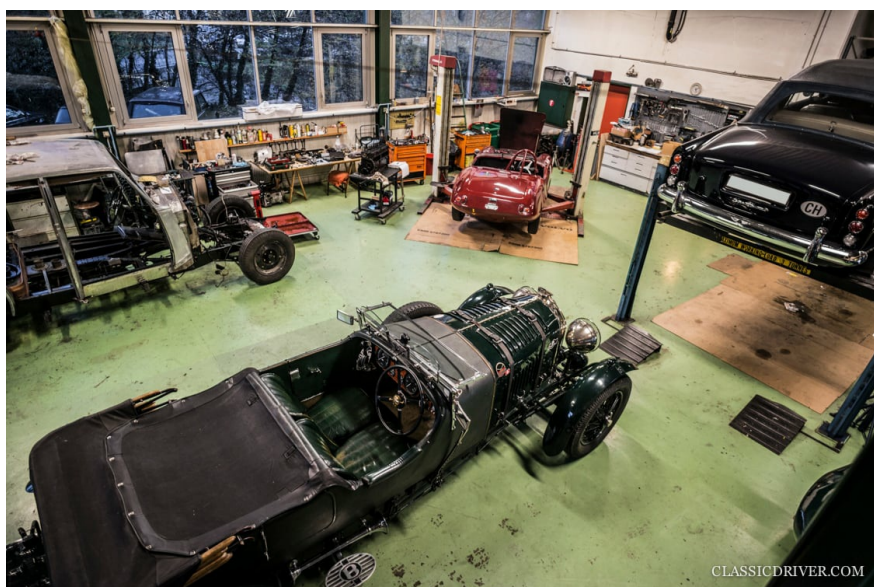
David: I was born and grew up in South London, and I remember most people repaired their cars in the street. I often saw cars with their axles, wheels and engines removed, and solving mechanical problems with neighbours soon became second nature.

Carolyn: There were always lots of cars at home and friends visiting with their classics. We used to hang out at my dad's garage and were fascinated by the cars. I particularly remember when there were racing events on such as the Mille Miglia, and my fathers' cars would set off from home.

Are these the reasons that you're both so passionate about cars?

David: At that time, the cars were not old, but yes, it's this period that made me so attached.

Carolyn: It was just natural having grown up around the cars. It was an automotive adventure.



David, could you tell us a little more about your career - have you always worked on classic cars?

I started playing the violin at the age of six. I trained intensively and was the leader of the school orchestra by the time I was 14. After the Suez Crisis of 1956, a friend and I set up a workshop in Croydon decarbonising engines and generally looking after cars during the on-going petrol panic. When I joined the Royal Air Force, I was fortunate enough to be posted to Hong Kong, where I joined the Philharmonic Orchestra and played for four years. I returned from Hong Kong and left the Air Force, built a boat in Cheltenham and sailed to Spain. Then fate intervened, and brought me to Switzerland, where I established Restocar.

You specialise in pre-War cars - what makes them so special in your opinion?

When you get in a pre-War car, it's a very different feeling to a modern car - everything was made by hand and when you drive it, it comes alive. It stirs the senses because you can appreciate that it was put together by hand and was built to serve a clear purpose.



Carolyn, you're now preparing to take over your father's workshop - did you always know you wanted to stay in the family business?

It was always in the back of my mind. I worked abroad, but whenever I was in Switzerland I'd spend my weekends in the garage working on our cars. Now is the right time for David to hand over the reins of the business.

You are obviously fond of pre-War cars, but you've got a particular penchant for cars from the 1950s and '60s. What fascinates you about this era?

I think the cars from this era are just fantastic, and so diverse. I'm lucky to have driven a 1965 Porsche 911 for many years. I started rallying with a Porsche 911 and an Austin-Healey 100/4, before moving to circuit racing with a 911 once again - it's such a versatile car. I'm also very fond of pre-War cars and am discovering more and more about them each day.





Are you going to change the philosophy of Restocar to encompass these more modern cars?

David will still be very much involved with the pre-War side of the business, while I'll develop the post-War side.

David, are you happy to be handing over control of the business to your daughter?

I'm very happy about the change and it feels like a natural evolution. I'm extremely proud and know Carolyn will take things to another level, particularly as she is more involved in the historic motorsport world. In my new role as a consultant for the pre-War cars, we'll still be working together. Of course, I'll always be here to support her and help her to progress, but I'm confident that she'll find her own way.



Carolyn, could you tell us more about what services you offer at Restocar?

We've built up a strong team of expert mechanics who can apply their skills to both pre-War cars and those built right up until the 1980s. We offer a wide range of services, from engine rebuilds, full restorations, competition preparation and collection management, to general maintenance, importation, buying and selling cars and consultancy. We're going to continue with the same philosophy and spirit in order to give the best service to our customers and to ensure their cars meet their expectations, be it for road driving, rallying or racing. We also organise technical workshops for our customers to get to know their cars better.

There are few women working in this industry, let alone in such a mechanical workshop. How does this make you feel?

It's always been a male-dominated world, but over the years, more women have made their way into historic racing and the classic car business. I'm really happy to see more women involved in the classic car scene – it's a great sign for the future.



Through customer support, you've had plenty of experience in historic motorsport - what did that entail?

I've been fortunate enough to have customers taking part in some of the most exciting and exclusive historic motorsport events in Europe. It was our job to prepare their cars and make sure they finished the races - I also was a navigator on a number of occasions. We did the Mille Miglia 15 times, in addition to hill climbs and circuit racing. We also entered the Coppa d'Italia and the Rallye Monte-Carlo.

Has racing better prepared you for working in the garage?

I live my passion by sharing it with friends and customers, whether it's discussing cars over a coffee on a Saturday morning at the garage, going for drives through Switzerland and France, or taking part in track days, rallying or racing. The latter has given me more understanding of my customers' needs and how these cars can be used to their full potential.



David, what's the most memorable car you've worked on in the workshop?

The Cunningham C2 because of its conception and complex technology. In fairness, most of the cars we look after are incredible.

Regardless of budget, what's your dream car?

David: All of them! (laughs)

Carolyn: Probably a Bugatti Type 35 or a Lister Knobbly. I'll keep dreaming...

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic © 2017

Gallery

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