

# OWEN MOTORING CLUB

## CLASSIC VEHICLE GROUP

FOR ALL CLASSIC VEHICLE ENTHUSIASTS

[WWW.OWENMOTORINGCLUB.CO.UK](http://WWW.OWENMOTORINGCLUB.CO.UK)

*Polish it THEN use it !!*



(June 2020 - Issue No. 66)

I have deliberately left this month's newsletter to the end of June in case there was some miraculous news that car shows etc. could now go ahead, but I think realistically nothing will happen this year. The NEC sent out a questionnaire to see if exhibitors would still like to attend if various measures were introduced such as deep cleaning, a one-way system, wider gangways, contact less payments, hand sanitizers, face masks etc. I replied no. My reply was mainly because I do not want to wear a face mask for 4 days and if someone from our club did become infected with COVID-19 and the worst happened then I would never forgive myself.

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A lot of my Imp Club friends have the Singer version of this great car and they get fed up with people asking if it was made by the same company that manufactured sewing machines. Imagine my surprise when I came across this photo on the internet of a model made by someone. It caused a lot of amusement with witty comments when I posted it on the Imp Facebook page.

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There is a lot of articles on the internet now about the introduction of E10 fuel by our wonderful government which contains a higher amount of renewable ethanol. They say it is fine for any modern car, but not suitable for your classic car. Before the next edition I'll try and collate some data to help clear this up, so if you have any information or links to reliable web pages etc. then I'd be happy to receive it via the e-mail at the end of this newsletter so I can pass it on in the July edition, thanks.

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David Allman is in discussion with fellow members Nick Pollitt and Tim Beard about the possibility of running the Ernest Owen Trial at Catton Park on 27th September 2020 obviously subject to government restrictions and MSUK approval. They are hoping to make something work while adhering to social distancing as it is assumed this will still be in force to some degree by that date. A bit of an unknown is competitor numbers and if various club championships decide to go ahead or not. David is also aware that trials competitors tend to be slightly more mature than average and a few have told him privately that they are not going to risk competing this year which is quite understandable. There may be a strong possibility of picking up some local clubman entries from people desperate to do any kind of event! Obviously this is all theoretical at the moment but if anyone wants to be involved with this "socially distanced" event or if you want to comment on it then please drop him an e-mail [david-allman@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:david-allman@tiscali.co.uk)



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During this 'lock-down' period I've been working on Elaine's Sprite, carrying out some wiring modifications and a general back of the dashboard tidy up. I have



also bought and fitted a new combined oil pressure/water temperature gauge and an accelerator pedal due to the old one being badly bent, probably due to years of pressing trying to make this little car go faster! It was while I was searching for these items, I came across a good local contact called 'Traditional Old Motor Spares Ltd' run by Ron Leacy who is based in Walsall Road, Little Aston, Sutton Coldfield (B74 3AY). I said I would give him a mention in this month's newsletter as he is cheaper than the larger stockists plus you can pre-arrange to pick up at his house and save on p&p costs. His contact details are 0121 352 1801 (H) 07808 732098 (mob) or e-mail [ronleacy@me.com](mailto:ronleacy@me.com)

A link to his eBay shop page containing 380 items is here with more items at his warehouse in Birmingham. <https://www.ebay.co.uk/usr/traditionaloldmotorspares>



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The club now has 2000 brand new tri-fold publicity leaflets, recently printed, for our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year which are really good quality, highly informative and contain excellent photographs showing all aspects of our club activities. These have been designed by Anton in collaboration with our printer but

looks like they will have to wait until 2021 before being distributed. In the meantime if you need any for advertising etc. then please contact Anton.



I would like to thank Brian Austin for the following article on local car manufacturers which first appeared in the May 1999 edition of 'Owen Info'

## SWALLOW, KIEFT and FLETCHER

These are the names of three local car manufacturers which appeared in the Duncan Rabagliati 'Sale of the Century' about this time last year. Duncan collected cars which were less common or which were not properly appreciated, and his collection eventually numbered around sixty. This weekend, marques such as these rare British sports cars will form the central theme of the International Classic Motor Show at the NEC on the 1-2 May.

The Swallow Doretti was produced at the old Tube Investments/Hollowells factory at Wasall Airport. It was based on Triumph TR2 running gear in a chassis made from Reynolds tubing while the body, made by Panelcraft, was aluminium over a mild steel infrastructure. The car was aimed at the American market where it sold strongly. The name Doretti is Italian for Dorothy, which was the name of the American Importers daughter. Production and sales were increasing so well that William Lyons of Jaguar asked T.I whether it preferred making a real sports car or continuing to supply Jaguar with components. Although the Doretti made a profit it was not enough and T.I chose to keep Jaguar happy.

The Kieft was different to the Doretti in that it was a sports racing car which could be used on the road. Cyril Kieft had a successful career in industry when he turned to motor racing. In 1950 opened a works in Berry Street, Wolverhampton, and took over a 500cc Formula Three project designed by Stirling Moss and part of the deal saw Moss on the board of Kieft Cars. In addition, Cyril was on the board of Norton motorcycles which meant he got excellent engines. In the hands of Moss the Kieft F3 car was a winner, even more successful was a series of works cars driven by Don Parker who took nearly 100 race wins and came within half a point of a hat-trick of British F3 Championships.

In 1954 Kieft made a two seat sports racing car which was unusual for two reasons—it was the first car with a single piece fibreglass body and it was the first car to use the 1100cc Coventry Climax FWA engine. The Kieft Climax appeared at Le Mans in 1954 but retired after 10 hours with a broken differential. Two similar cars ran in the Tourist Trophy at Dundrod, one retired with collapsed front suspension and the other went on to win its class. (I made an unsuccessful bid for one of these cars at the Duncan Rabagliati auction). Although the competition potential was limited, it had good prospects as a production sports car, However, Cyril Kieft lost big sums of money on other projects which were not

completed. He therefore sold the car business which gradually became a general motor racing workshop. Cyril Kieft, now in his late eighties, is spending his retirement in Tettenhall.

During the production life of the Mini, many smaller companies have produced their own special versions. One of the most attractive was the Ogle SX1000 which Norman Fletcher, the boat builder in Burntwood, took over the moulds after David Ogles death in a road accident. Different from the Ogle by having recessed front headlamps, the Fletcher was first produced for competition work using the 1275 Cooper S engine. It went to the Racing Car Show where executives of Jensen saw it and borrowed it for approval to consider it for larger scale production. Ex Cooper works driver John Handley had some success in a Fletcher GT which prompted the company to market a road going version. However only four cars were built because of the lack of supply co-operation from B.M.C. Norman Fletcher, now Fletcher International Sportsboats, are these days making the bodies for Reliant cars, who have moved their manufacturing base to Burntwood after years at Tamworth. Fletcher and Reliant are now part of the same group of companies.

BRIAN AUSTIN