

Finds & **DISCOVERIES**

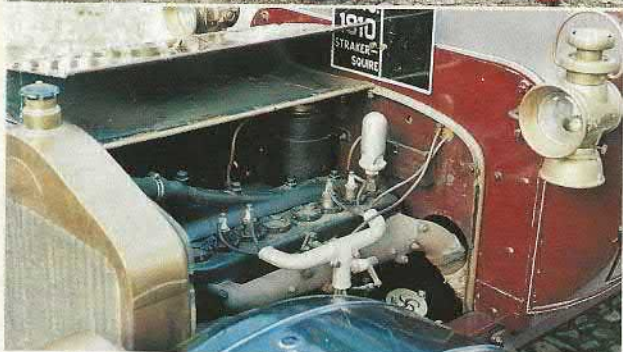
By Michael Worthington-Williams



Below and main picture: Off the road since 1961: 1910 15hp Straker-Squire Windham tourer. By undoing a couple of large wing nuts the rear mudguards can be detached.

Inset top: A full acetylene and oil lighting set is fitted, as well as a bulb horn

Below right: The body features a detachable rear half, patented by Walter George Windham



EARLY STRAKER-SQUIRE

Following hard on his acquisition of the Wolseley-Siddeley originally owned by HM Queen Alexandra (*The Automobile*, December), Peter Harper, of Stretton, near Warrington, has unearthed another completely original gem — a 1910 Straker-Squire 15hp Windham tourer. Although it has probably been off the road for 43 years, it is known to the Veteran Car Club, who dated it in 1952. It was manufactured by Brazil Straker and Co Ltd, of Fishponds, Bristol, and supplied through Sidney Straker and Squire Ltd, of Shaftesbury Avenue in London's West End, to their agents Mitchells Garage, of nearby Wadour

Street. Mitchells' plate on the dashboard helpfully provides lighting-up times.

The customer was one Hubert Osler Shephard Ellis, a barrister who lived in an old house called The Grange, in the High Street of the village of Meldreth, about 15 miles south of Cambridge. The notoriously parsimonious Ellis continued to use the car, with its acetylene headlamps and oil sidelamps, until 1933, steadfastly refusing to replace it with a more modern conveyance. By then quite elderly himself, he was reluctant to swing the engine over. He overcame the problem by taking his handyman with him whenever he went out driving, so that worthy could re-start the engine for him. He always took the wheel himself, however — which was rather like chauffeuring your own chauffeur.

His parsimony extended to a refusal to pay his contribution to the maintenance of the fabric of the local church, despite enjoying the use of Glebe lands adjoining his house. These belonged to the church and carried with them an obligation to help with the upkeep of the building. On his death in 1940 the churchwardens put the matter to rights by successfully claiming £2000 from his estate.

Ellis was generous in other ways,

Left centre: Note the intertwined letters S-S on the pedals and the whistle activating pedal on the left
Far left: This is the engine whistle, operated by pedal from the driver's seat. Left: The original leather upholstery is beautifully patinated

however. He never refused to give local people lifts in the car, especially at election time. They would delay voting until nearly closing time, hoping to be driven to the polls in the antique car, which even then was an anachronism. Our thanks to John Gipson, who lived in the village and remembers both the car and its eccentric owner well.

When Ellis died the car passed to his nephew, John H Ellis, a Norfolk jeweller. Because of the lack of petrol in wartime the Straker-Squire was not taken to his home town, Norwich, until the early 1950s. Mr Gipson remembers getting the car started at that time to move it to the railway station, from which it was transported to Norwich by train. The last tax disc, dated 1933, was still on the windscreen.

Having been on the road when the Motor Car Act of 1920 was passed, the car was re-registered (probably with its original number) as CE 3728 (Cambridge) on 2nd April, 1921. At that time the chassis number was recorded as 589. It turns out that this was really the body number: chassis and engine numbers are in fact both 504.

The Windham body is interesting. Its patented design allows the rear half to be removed, converting the vehicle into a two seater. The various body plates on the car give no clue as to the coachbuilder. The Patent Office files held at the British Library tell us that Walter George Windham took out four patents between 1906 and 1907 for improvements in, or relating to, detachable bodies for vehicles. There is evidence that earlier applications had been filed.

Described as a Captain and King's Messenger, Windham lived at 22a St John's Hill, Clapham, in south west London, at the time of his 1906 patent. It seems likely that he would have licensed others to use his designs rather than build the bodies himself.

According to the archive record of the registration held in Cambridgeshire Record Office — which has enabled me to recover the original registration number for Peter — the last registered owners were J Harvey and Co, of Hethersett, Norwich, and the car was last licensed on 30th November, 1961. The record indicates that it was then exported. The Veteran Car Club records the last owners as being Johnson and Brown — presumably a company. Judging by the fact that the paintwork and upholstery are original, the car has seen little or no use since 1961. Even the carpets seem to be those supplied when it was new.

Among the delightful features are a pedal which operates a whistle on the engine, a Stepney spare wheel made in Llanelli, and a Morville screen — a fairly complex device which was patented in 1907. This remarkable Straker-Squire car stands

an imposing seven feet tall when the hood is erected.

CHANNEL ISLAND CHUMMY

Tony Lucas, of Cirencester, Gloucestershire, recently acquired the 1928 Austin Seven Chummy you see here. For the past 50 years it had been on the isle of Alderney. It bears car number A6802 and chassis number 58449, with engine number M 58867, all of which date it to between March and April, 1928. The registration number, however, is AY 233, which on the face of it would appear to be from a Leicester series that ended in 1922.

My feeling is that what we have here is not a mainland mark at all, though I was previously unaware that Alderney has a separate system like Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. Can anyone confirm this?

RALLIED RILEY

Rileys with a competition history have cropped up more than once in this column. Now Roy Preston, of Papplewick, Nottingham, sends me these rather sad photographs of the 1937 12/4 Lynx he is rebuilding. It was dismantled in 1963 and came to Roy as the result of a chance remark made at the annual Riley get-together at Coventry. And so he found himself driving up the A1 to a village just north of Scotch Corner to see it. Why can't these discoveries ever be just round the corner from where you live?

Since 1963 the Lynx has had several owners, all of whom carried out various repairs or bought new spares for it, though no-one had actually managed to complete the restoration. Apparently the car competed in the 1952 *Daily Express* Rally, carrying the number 271. Various photographs survive showing it during the event, which was held from 12th-15th November. If anyone has the rally plaque which the car wore at the time, or any more photographs, Roy would love to hear from them.

The rebuild is, at last, now well underway: the chassis has been completed and the engine is coming along well. The gearbox has been sorted and when Roy wrote to me the rear part of the bodywork was receiving a new ash frame and alloy skin. The scuttle has been rebuilt and the windscreen fitted.

The car is registered EPL 221, which fortunately is on the Swansea computer. AV5 came with it, together with the historic photographs. Roy would love to get hold of reports of the rally, and I've referred him to the Newspaper Library at Colindale who, I am sure, would be able to supply photocopies.

GALLIC GAS PRODUCER

In occupied France during World War Two, petrol was in extremely short supply. The expedients resorted to by

Right: The 1928 Austin Seven Chummy found on the island of Alderney

Below left: As found under a tarpaulin north of Scotch Corner: the 1937 Riley Lynx

Below right: The scuttle and screen have been rebuilt and body framing is progressing

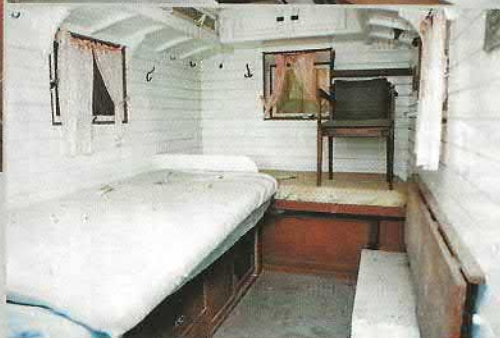
Below second row: The chassis is now rolling and restored; the gearbox has been sorted



Above centre: The car taking part in the 1952 *Daily Express* Rally. Above: Taken during the rally. Can anyone identify the location? Left: Does anyone have copies of the rally report, programme or other information?

This elderly Citroën is fitted with a strange device. Is it a producer gas generator?





Main picture above: Shabby but sound, the 1939 Morris-Commercial LC motor home. Inset right: Although built for a titled lady, it is quite spartan inside. Inset above: The cab has just one seat. Obviously the Hon Janet did not encourage hitchhikers. Right: Fitted cupboards and folding tables make good use of space



Top left: As the 1935 Rolls-Royce 20/25 looked in happier days – and following repatriation from the USA in 2004 (top right). Above left: Paintwork is poor but otherwise the car is very sound Above right: It's mechanically complete, too

the population to keep on the move were many and varied. They ranged from pedal powered Vélocars and horses and carts, electric microcars and humble bicycles, to some ingenious gas producing plants devised to convert existing cars and trucks.

Rowland Collins from Tyne and Wear tells me that when his wife's sister and her husband were in France on holiday last summer they came across this old Citroën saloon parked at the roadside. To the rear of the front wing, where the running board begins, one can just make out the end of a stout tubular structure which apparently runs right across to the other side of the car. Mounted above this is a large rectangular box, with a disc-shaped object on the upper surface.

At the front of the car is a small sign which proclaims *Procédés Gouhin-Poulinc*. Rowland has searched the Internet for anything resembling this but has found nothing. Is this one of those ingenious devices fitted during the war to manufacture producer gas? Answers on a postcard, please.

MORRIS MOTOR HOME

Chris Burlace, from Letchworth, Hertfordshire, needs no introduction to caravanning and camping enthusiasts: he writes regular features for the caravan press. Not surprisingly he was intrigued to learn of this 1939 Morris-Commercial LC model on which Skinners, of St Leonards, East Sussex — who were both coachbuilders and motor coach operators — built a motor home for The Hon Janet Whistler. She was the daughter of Lord and Lady Ashton, of Hyde, and the daughter in law of James Whistler (1834-1903), the American artist who settled in England and famously painted his mother in 1872.

It has been off the road for the past 15 years or so, when it last passed its MoT test, but although the paintwork is now a little shabby the vehicle is complete and bodily quite well preserved. There's some light rusting to the steel panels but the timbers underneath survive intact. They demonstrate Skinners' craftsmanship in the elegant framing of its Mollicroft roof, and are in remarkably good condition.

Sadly, the piston rings of the two-litre overhead valve petrol engine have seized, and considerable mechanical work will be required before it can take to the open road again. A portable camping stove and an enamel bowl would have served as kitchen equipment on board this practical prewar camper.

GURNEY NUTTING ROLLS

Terry Talbot, of Lytham, Lancashire, is well-known in Rolls-Royce circles and has a good nose for unrestored

examples. Here you see the 1935 long wheelbase 20/25 he acquired recently. It had been off the road for some time in the USA before Terry re-imported it into the UK. It bears chassis number GPG 47 and engine number A 4 W, and was originally delivered on 3rd April, 1935, to H R Owen for stock. They sold it to A S G Chunn, of Monte Carlo, fitted with Damita saloon bodywork by Gurney Nutting, which it still wears.

Although the paintwork has suffered from long years of storage in both North Carolina and Florida, it's absolutely complete and basically very sound. Originally registered JYO 42 (London), it spent some time in Cardiff in the mid-'50s and was later re-registered SC 733 — a number I've just recovered for Terry under the DVLA's V765 number recovery scheme.

JONES AND JORDAN

I last met up with Chris Wybrow, of Castle Douglas, Dumfries and Galloway, back in 1988. We met at Sorn Castle in Ayrshire, when I was presiding over the sale of the late Bobby McIntyre's collection. In those days Chris was driving an Austin 20/4 and I recall going for a quick spin around the estate in it. Bearing in mind that this model had been inspired by Herbert Austin's ownership of a Hudson Super Six during the Great War, it's not surprising that Chris's later vehicles should have been of US manufacture.

The first of these was in fact bought at another Sotheby's sale which I was in charge of. This was held in December, 1988, at the Honourable Artillery Company's headquarters on the fringe of the City of London. The car was an extremely rare 1918 Jones Six Speedster bearing chassis number 5099. It was powered by a six-cylinder Continental engine, number 9N 30894. Although unrestored it was completely original and in running order — we had it ticking over gently at the auction like a contented old dray horse.

The Jones was made in Wichita, Kansas, and as the firm were in business only from 1915 to 1920, survivors are few. Here you see the car as it was when Chris owned it. Subsequently it went back to the USA to a collector named Jones.

Bob Jones lives in Tennessee and owns all four surviving examples of the marque still in private hands. A fifth car, dating from 1916, was donated to its native city and is now on permanent display on the upper floor of the municipal museum in the centre of Wichita. It is 'built in' and it would take a crane to remove it.

A cutting from *The Wichita Daily Eagle* dated 19th February, 1920, which Chris obtained from Wichita Public Library, describes the \$200,000 fire which devastated the Jones factory and precipitated the demise of the marque. He also has an obituary of John J Jones dating from 15th November, 1941. It is interesting to

note that there is an aeronautical connection. Clyde Cessna began producing aeroplanes in a corner of the Jones factory in 1917, while later, in the 1940s, the Culver Aeroplane Co occupied the rebuilt plant.

After his Jones went back to the USA, Chris understandably began to miss the effortless power and good performance of a big American side valve. When the opportunity to purchase a 1920 Jordan Model M Silhouette touring car presented itself, he couldn't resist it. In rather better cosmetic condition than the Jones, but unrestored nevertheless, the car was shipped over from the USA and was found to be running sweetly and driving well. The leather upholstery is original and will be saved. It's amazing what a drop of hide food will do.

Underneath the paintwork, which dates from around 1951, is a dark green which is probably the original finish. Chris is toying with the idea of returning it to that colour. Even the rubber mat is original to the car, and the lack of pedal wear and general 'feel' of the transmission leads to the conclusion that this is a low mileage vehicle — a complete contrast to the Jones, which was well used.

Generally speaking, UK Customs are still amenable to allowing the five per cent VAT rate and nil duty to apply to pre-1950 vehicles, provided sufficient proof of age is supplied and a BTI application is made by a body considered to be responsible and knowledgeable. I can assist anyone wishing to import such a vehicle, and did indeed advise Chris on the Jordan.

Ned Jordan is better remembered for his lyrical advertising prose — still revered on Madison Avenue. It's said that Ogilvie and Mather made all their apprentice copywriters learn by heart his *Somewhere West of Laramie* copy for the Jordan Playboy. But even Ned's flair for publicity could not prevent his company from succumbing to the Depression in 1931. McFarland will shortly publish a full history of the make.



Main picture above: The 1918 Jones Six Speedster as acquired. It was complete and original but had led a hard life (above right). Power comes from a lusty six-cylinder Continental side valve engine (left). Inset top left: The distinctive Jones emblem is repeated on each hub as well as on the radiator



Top: The 1920 Jordan Model M Silhouette is also unrestored and original. It, too, relies on a large six cylinder Continental power unit (above left) Above right: The driver's controls of the Jordan are similar to those of the Jones



Above left: The hood is intact and the paintwork is in rather better condition Above right: The distinctive Jordan radiator badge