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Welcome to our first 4-page spread of 2021. As I write this at the end of January, we're still in lockdown in the midst of the pandemic and storm Christoph has just done its worst with severe flooding in the midlands. This all paints a rather apocalyptic picture, but in fact we seem to be over the peak of infections, daily deaths will fall and the roll-out of vaccines in the UK is proceeding at pace; in fact we've just had our first vaccinations. I'm confident that things will start opening up again by Easter and we'll have a summer packed with classic car events to satiate our need for such things. My VA Tourer is receiving some bodywork attention and I've reviewed the fire precautions in my garage as you'll read below. We've also taken a look at the Charlesworth company and two of our members have been flying the SVW flag in TV productions.

Our stay-at-home lifestyle has certainly led to more use of social media, including our Facebook group and the MGSVW forum (you can find links to both on our website). The Facebook group now has 194 members and recent topics have ranged from auctions to wheel spinners, with parts for sale / needed, period photos and even videos from the Australian Outback. Hopefully it keeps us all sane and inspired.

Register Chairman's Jottings

Normally in these first Chairman's Jottings of the year I take the opportunity to look back over the last year's events and look forward to the events this year. Regretfully, the majority of us could not participate in any events last year and currently this year's events may still be under some restrictions. It will be some months before we have confirmation on what we will be allowed or not allowed to do. Let's all hope we can all again meet up at MG Live in June and at our SVW event in July, plus other events.

There are two television programmes to look forward to in 2021: Great British Rail Journeys and Bangers and Cash. I drove my VA Tickford down to Kimber House in early August last year for the Great British Railway Journeys feature on MGs at Abingdon. Mark Boldry kindly agreed to have his SA Saloon filmed in Pickering in September for an edition of Bangers and Cash where they were auctioning two SA Saloons (not Mark's). Whilst filming took half a day, we do not know how much we will feature (if at all) but it was an enjoyable experience. Both programs are expected to be broadcast in the spring. Hopefully we will be able to publish the dates in advance on our website and forums. If not, we will have to take advantage of TV catch up or when they are repeated. (See Mark's item on his experience in these pages – Ed).

Our SVW cars have received more publicity as they are well represented in Malcolm Green's new book "The MG Story 1923-1980" - my VA is one of the many SVW cars photographed.

We, like many others, have used Zoom for our committee meeting. Because of the restrictions we did not hold an AGM in 2020. If we cannot have our 2021 AGM in July at our SVW event in East Sussex, we will be arranging a Zoom AGM.

Thank you to those members who replied to my request for VA Engine information, I will be submitting a follow-up article in this year's SVW Review.

Looking forward to using my VA again!
Jim Andrews

FIRE PRECAUTIONS!

It often takes an incident to make you reflect on what could have been and to take appropriate precautions going forward. So it was when I was working on my 1957 Austin A95; all I wanted to do was remove the dash-mounted clock to see why it wasn't working. The car had been converted from positive to negative earth by a **previous** owner and it seems the clock was overlooked. Somehow, the action of sliding it out from the metal dashboard made contact with something and smoke started to emit from the dashboard. Luckily, this car has a quick-release clamp on the battery, so I removed it in a flash amidst smoke from under the bonnet. I should have remembered to disconnect the battery before I started, bearing in mind a clock has a permanent live feed. It had only burnt out one cable, but in such circumstances one doesn't want to be struggling to find the right spanner! I either have quick-release terminals or cut-off switches on all of my old cars and I would urge everyone to do the same. The battery on the VA Tourer is under the passenger seat of course; almost impossible to access quickly, so in this case a cut-off switch is the answer.



Every cloud and all that – it inspired me to review the fire precautions in my garage where I only had a couple of weedy extinguishers, which had both reached their expiry dates years ago! Within a week I had ordered three fire extinguishers and three fire blankets (the latter allowing for one in the kitchen and another in the cabin). I made up a stand from MDF and sprayed in MGB Flame Red (nice touch I thought!) from an old can I had on the shelf. The equipment was remarkably cheap and arrived the day after ordering.

CHARLESWORTH BODIES LIMITED

I was looking for material for this 4-page spread when up popped an email from Simon Charlesworth asking for any details we may have on the Charlesworth-bodied SVWs. As we know, the SA Tourers were all bodied by Charlesworth as were the WA Tourers (although only nine of the latter were produced with one survivor, making it the rarest of all MGs).

Blimey I thought, could this be a descendant of the Charlesworth family looking for family history? Alas no, Simon is a motoring writer who contributes regularly to Classic and Sports Car magazine! He's writing a history of the company and their products.

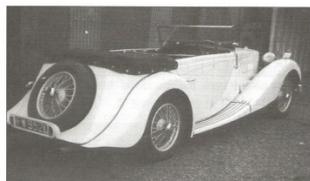
In fact, the name Charlesworth does not have a clear origin. Wikipedia have it wrong when they say the company was founded by three partners: Gray, Hill and Steane. The Wikipedia entry also shows a VA Tourer, the body panels for which were produced in-house by Morris Bodies and had no connection to Charlesworth. Founded in 1907, the name Charlesworth was formed from the Christian names of the two owners, Charles Gray Hill and Charles Steane; we can only surmise where the 'worth' part of the name came from. The business failed in the wake of The Great Depression but was rescued and initially renamed Charlesworth Bodies (1931) limited, later dropping the 1931. Charles Gray Hill was originally a builder and his premises in Much Park Street

in Coventry became the coachbuilding business. One of his biggest building projects must have been the mansion known as Coundon Court, near Coventry, now a school.

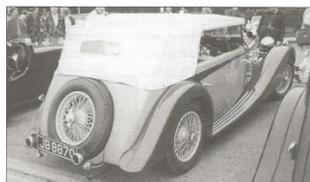
Our late friend, Peter Pimm, owned a lovely Type 3 SA Charlesworth (SA2249), which I photographed at the SVW Weekend in Hampshire (New Forest) in 2000. Peter wrote an article in Issue 9 of The SVW Review that year in which he described the three SA Tourer styles produced by Charlesworth. The photo shows the images Peter used in the article. The photos are in the wrong order though – you need to switch the top and bottom photos (leaving the captions as they were) to get Types 1, 2 and 3 from top to bottom...if you see what I mean!



SA0345



SA1726



SA2249



Left - SA Charlesworth Types (Peter Pimm)
Right - Peter Pimm with SA2249 in 2000 (Paul Campbell)

Simon's research suggests that the SA Tourer designs may have been inspired by the Cross and Ellis design of the Alvis Speed 20 Tourer, reinforced by the fact that Charlesworth were awarded the contract to continue making the Alvis coachwork after Cross and Ellis went bust. Comparisons are more often made between the SA and the contemporary Jaguar 2 ½-litre. We eagerly await Simon's article in *Classic and Sport Car* in due course.

A DAY'S FILMING WITH AN MG SA SALOON

In the December and January editions of Safety Fast! we reported on two SA Saloons that were auctioned at Mathewsons, eventually selling for £12,000. When there are cars of particular interest, the production team often looks for similar cars and their owners to add some historical background. Mark Boldry takes up the story of their involvement.

It all started with an email from SVW Register Committee Chairman, Jim Andrews, asking if we would be interested in and prepared to be filmed with our 1936 MG SA Saloon for an episode of the television series *'Bangers & Cash'* filmed by the 'Yesterday' Channel (<https://yesterday.uktv.co.uk>) and produced by 'Air TV'- <https://airtv.co.uk>).

A few messages back and forth between Ali from the TV company and myself and a date and time were set.

Covid was not going to allow us to take the car to the *Bangers & Cash* venue in Pickering, so a lone cameraman / sound engineer / interviewer (Joe) was to come to my parents' home near York where we keep our cars.

Absolutely on time, Joe arrived. We put in place all our Covid precautions then quickly went through what was planned and discussed how he would start the filming; our thoughts were very similar. We'd start with actually opening the garage doors to reveal Dad's pride and joy, his 1936 MG SA. Our garage doors are very heavy and slide sideways, awkwardly rolling along to the inside wall of the shed. They are damned hard to push (good for security) and even worse if gravel gets into the bottom runner!



Filming gets under way (Mark Boldry)

The camera set, we roll... once, twice and on and on. A slightly different angle next time, then another. The opening of the garage doors must have taken 30 minutes and we hadn't even started the car, never mind got it out of the garage. And so it went on. The start-up was filmed, then driving it out of the garage followed by lots of detailed shots of the engine compartment, the interior, me opening the bonnet (each side) and then fastening it again.

Filming took a short break as I sat on a carefully positioned chair, with car in shot, to 'have a chat' about the purchase, restoration and ultimate pleasures of ownership of an MG SA. This took place as a form of interview with Joe asking carefully chosen, but unscripted questions. A few years ago, there would have been no way I could have done that on camera, but whilst living in Australia, I had joined a 'Public Speaking' group called '*PowerTalk*' which gave me the confidence and practice at such a challenge. Dad was next to go through the interview process, but unlike me, he was so natural albeit, his recollection of events after so long were a little cloudy. Dad however, spent a lot of his life as a performer on stage playing Violin, Ukulele and singing, so was far more at ease than me. [*Many of us will remember Jim's performance on the occasion of his 80th birthday at the SVW event in Chichester – Ed*].

More filming of the car followed with even more detailed shots of the interior, under both sides of the engine compartment and numerous shots of me opening and closing each bonnet side again. I guess as the day went on, the angle of the sun changed and the quality of the available light altered too.

Finally, some driving shots - a few trips up and down the road with Joe at the side of the road waiting for me to reappear. Drive by this way, drive by the other way, again and again. A second nearby location, but a much narrower road allowed for longer shots to be taken also with many turns in the road and another drive by.

All in all, many hours of preparation and filming; in fact, by the time we had finished, I'd guess around six hours in total. What will that condense down to? Two to three minutes I'd guess.



Jim and Mark Boldry with SA0656 on an atmospheric day (Sue Boldry)

As I write this, the programme has not yet been screened but I'm hopeful that it is still scheduled to coincide with the publication of this article in *Safety Fast!* (now delayed until the autumn – Ed). Watch it if you can....

Mark T Boldry
SA0656