



ELVA Newsletter October 2018

At Last ... !

This is a VERY overdue Newsletter but not because I have been sitting on my hands, just the opposite, but because much time and attention has been given to other ELVA priorities, details of which will be shared with you all in the passage of time.

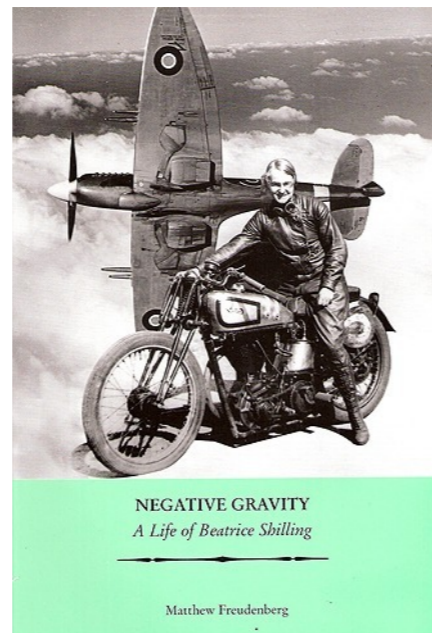
There has been a number of early ELVA cars discovered, some having been tucked away in one case for over forty years, several ELVA feature articles published and much enthusiasm from owners both existing and those new to the marque. Cars have been bought and others sold via the elva.com forum and some surprising prices achieved, although the market is picky and of course our favourite marque is represented by mostly competition cars that tend to be 'individuals' with variable but truly interesting histories.

I have been trying to sort through many boxes of correspondence and archive material collected over nearly forty years, much of it unique, and this will take time!

Here are a just a few of the stories that were lurking in those many boxes ...

The '007' ELVA Spy ...

Those of you who know ELVA Cars history and have absorbed the many thousands of words found in the ELVA 'bible', will recognise the name Arthur Rothan and will recall that he was the works foreman for 'Father' Frank and the ELVA team. It seems that towards the end of 1959, Arthur was directed to make contact with similar race car manufacturers who were likely to enter cars into the Formula Junior series. I found original letters sent to Arthur, one from Lola Cars Ltd., signed by Eric Broadley dated December 1959, and another from The Cooper Car Company Ltd., dated September 1959 with a delightful coloured letter heading.



Another letter relating to the Formula Junior series is headed Brabham Racing Developments Ltd., dated July 1963 and sent to Mrs George Naylor O.B.E., M. Sc., A.M.I. Mech. E. who was also known as Beatrice Shilling .. * Beatrice Shilling was a British aeronautical engineer and motor racer.

During the Second World War, she invented 'Miss Shilling's orifice', a small metal disc similar to a metal washer that restricted fuel flow to a carburettor. * This was an extremely important life saving modification to the Merlin engine fitted to the WW2 Spitfire aircraft.

I visited George and Beatrice several times (which is a story in itself), as they had owned the 1961 Hastings built prototype all-independent Courier Coupe and Formula Juniors, one of which was reborn as an ELVA Mk.VI.

'Negative Gravity ... A life of Beatrice Shilling' by Matthew Freudenberg (Charlton Publications). An excellent read. See also www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8H17vaTG9k

Beatrice, nicknamed Tilly, is fondly remembered in Farnborough with a J. D. Wetherspoons pub being named in her memory.



The Italian Job ...

Way back in the mid 1990's there was a short article which indicated the existence of a rather mysterious project car described as the PIGNATELLI-ELVA which described the company based in Sicily who apparently produced some extremely potent race cars, some of which were allegedly thought to have been shipped to the States with some expensive but illegal substances tucked inside.

It seems that the chief engineer at Pignatelli was impressed by the ELVA chassis design, and rather like the ELVA-PORSCHE partnership, there was something to be learnt from the strong but rigid ELVA lightweight chassis design. There was a plan to fit a V12 5.5 litre, four-cam engine into an adapted ELVA chassis which was then fitted with alloy bodywork with the expected Italian design flair. It is not clear if the car existed as there are rumours that the car was not drivable, the power unit blew up, or the car was apprehended by US Customs and just disappeared.



Anyone know anything about this story? Maybe it was written on April 1st or dreamt up after a few bottles of Italian wine! Would be good to know if true and that the car is awaiting a rescuer.

Could this be the car ... * while the V12 Maserati sounded wonderful and looked every inch a "Pignatelli" as imagined in Road and Track, with holes, louvers, filters, slots and bumps all over it and four enormous megaphone exhaust pipes sticking out of the humpy-back tail. Unfortunately the handling was far from right and the cockpit was like an oven, so that Bonnier was disappointingly slow. *.

Step forward Sherlock Holmes ...

Oil Slick or Slick Oil?



Spotted the following two magazine adverts, the first for RED LINE from a period when it was thought totally appropriate to have the fairer sex decorating the cars on display at various motor and racing car shows.

This one includes the beautiful ELVA-BMW GT160 (chassis #3) in case anyone hadn't noticed!

The wonderful Sixties ... happy days!

The second advert featuring REDeX Gold Cross makes an interesting read. I don't think anyone would have recognised the image as being an ELVA Mk.V sports racer albeit wearing rather less clothes than when it left the factory.

Driver is Alan McGahan with the entrant being Stanley Autos, at a 1966 Clubman's event at the Brands Hatch circuit. I wonder if the car survived?



The Courier Coupe with a 'C' not 'E'

Some time back Kevin Michael contacted me about two cars he had bought from the late Jon Clifton, one of which is a Courier Coupe with a chassis plate stamped C-1064. The Trojan-Elva built Couriers are listed as being numbered with a prefix E for .. yes you guessed it .. for ELVA.

However the dark and mysterious science of chassis plate stamping has been discussed elsewhere, as a Monday morning stamping could be very different in layout to the Friday afternoon effort due perhaps to the keenly anticipated weekend rush to the nearby UK pub.

Kevin seems to have watched many detective movies as he successfully tracked down the first owner of the Coupe, and Terry was delighted to relive the Courier story ..

I'm Terry ... a retired US Army officer but now a 'sailor' on a full time live-aboard cruiser enjoying various outdoor sports, SCUBA diving, trekking, rappelling and mountain biking.

The last I saw of the Elva was when I sold it to a repair shop in Atlanta, Georgia.

I had an interesting and sometime exciting time as the first owner of this car and so here is the background. I saw the car at the Paris Autoshow .. I believe in 1962. (1963?)

While admiring it I was approached by an American who asked if I was interested in the car. Turned out he was stationed with an American military organisation as a civilian somewhere near Paris. And he was the 'agent' for Elva there and was racing one of the Elva Courier roadsters. (possibly Norman Babcock thinks RAD).

The deal he offered was the car would be shipped back to England to be cleaned up from the Autoshow circuit and be delivered to me at La Touquet, France.

It was the first coupe produced by Trojan Motorworks as I recall ++

I wrote him a check for \$2000 and returned to Italy where I was stationed in the Army. Some months later I went to La Touquet to take delivery and drive back to Italy. But on the way I was to stop off at a racetrack near Paris to deliver some spare parts to this fellow that had been shipped in my car in the trunk.

I did that and even got a few laps in on the racetrack in this guy's roadster. On the way to Italy I followed the route of that year's Monte Carlo Rally headed to the Med. When I got to the France-Italy border I had no problem checking out of France, but at the Italian border about 100 meters further on there was a issue. They wanted to see the parts that were on the manifest and now no longer in the trunk. I returned to the French border but wasn't allowed back into France since I had not entered and left Italy. Back to the Italian border with a plan. In the trunk in a bag were several cartons of cigarettes.

I told the official he may have overlooked the parts and come look again. When he did I said this must be them, showing him a carton of cigarettes. As they disappeared into his tunic he stamped my papers and wished me a good journey. Ahh .. the beauty of baksheesh!

In those days I was an auto sports buff having owned an Austin Healy 100, an Austin Healey Sprite and a Morris Mini 850 (which I took to Italy). With the Elva in hand I sold the Mini. That car, by the way, I had modified to the 'Sebring Sprite' specifications with dual carbs, tuned exhaust, stiffer shocks, etc. .. years before Cooper put out one of their creations.

I continued doing rallies in Italy with the Elva while having a string of wins with the Mini.

From Italy I went to Vietnam after a short school in the States in 1964. I stored the car with the Elva agent in Riverside, California and paid for protected storage. He must have thought I wasn't returning because when I did come back after 11 1/2 months I found the car behind his garage, windows down, tires flat, engine blown and a roundel with a number on each door. It had done quite well in racing at Riverside! With the help of the sheriff I got the car after the engine had been rebuilt, the upholstery recovered and the car repainted. Maybe the .357 Magnum I carried in my briefcase helped a bit as well when I demanded a bill 'Paid in Full'.

He subsequently lost the Elva franchise!

I then went to Georgia Tech for a two year's master's degree program paid by the Army.

While there I was quite active in rallying in Georgia and the southeastern US. The SCCA Smoky Mountain Rally was one of my highlights where we brought back some trophies.

As part of a divorce settlement I sold the Elva in order to buy my soon-to-be ex-wife a VW for reasonable transportation. I then bought one of the first Mustangs that came on the market and took it to Germany where I continued my hobby.

Unfortunately all of the photos I had from that era were later stolen. *

A great story .. thank you Terry.

++ actually several Courier Coupes had been manufactured before a plate was stamped with #1064 .. the car is certainly listed as being sold to Terry but as a roadster model; RHD; painted white with red trim; MGA 1622cc power and supplied in May 1963. A letter dated January 1972 from Tony Ellis, who had by then become the focal point for ELVA parts and servicing, confirms that this car was supplied as a roadster and therefore it is assumed that the coupe conversion was a later modification.

Unless of course the typist at Trojan was on the pub watch and just made a typo!

Motoring Memorabilia

This is a rather unusual one, but a gentleman located in beautiful Devon wrote to ask that I give a mention to the huge collection of motoring literature that he wishes to sell .. his list apparently runs to 63 pages! There are many items including postcards, posters, prints, calendars, cigarette cards, brochures and photos plus magazines and other literature.

Sounds like a lifetime of collecting! However, Alec doesn't seem to have anything 'ELVA' but those with a wide interest involving other motoring marques might find something worthwhile. The seller is asking for £5 to cover the photocopying of the many pages plus a stamped addressed envelope, so if of interest please send to Alec Duncan, 4 Albion Close, Seaton, Devon, EX12 2XS

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