

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022. PART II

FUTURE CLASSIC: ASTON MARTIN DB9

IMAGINE A CAR OF ALMOST INDESCRIBABLE BEAUTY. A CAR POWERED BY A CLASSIC NATURALLY ASPIRATED V12 SITTING IN ITS NOSE, POWERING THE REAR WHEELS ALONE. IMAGINE SUCH A CAR FROM ONE OF THE MOST REVERED BRANDS ON EARTH, A ROAD LEGAL CAR WHICH, IN COMPETITION WAS GOOD ENOUGH TO CLAIM OUTRIGHT GT HONOURS AT LE MANS.

YOU COULD NOW BE THINKING OF A FERRARI 250 GTO WITH A PRICE TAG OF PERHAPS £30 MILLION. BUT THE DESCRIPTION FITS THE ASTON MARTIN DB9 JUST AS WELL AND IN ALL REGARDS SAVE THIS: WITH PRICES OF CLEAN CARS STARTING BELOW £30,000, IT IS OVER 1000 TIMES CHEAPER...

I AM NO NOSTRADAMUS, BUT I CAN'T HELP THINKING THAT THE DAY WILL ONE DAY COME WHEN WE LOOK BACK AND SIMPLY GOGGLE AT THE FACT THAT A CAR SO BEAUTIFUL, FAST, AND FROM A BRAND SUCH AS THIS WAS AVAILABLE FOR THE SAME MONEY AS ANY NUMBER OF FACELESS CROSSOVER SUVs OR WARMED THROUGH HATCHBACKS.

ITS LAUNCH WAS HELD IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE AT A HOTEL LITERALLY BY THE SIDE OF ONE OF EUROPE'S FINEST ROADS. AND BY FREAKISH COINCIDENCE THE BRITISH PRESS WERE INVITED TO DRIVE THE FERRARI 612 SCAGLIETTI AND THE DB9 ON PRECISELY THE SAME DAY, BUT AS SOON AS FERRARI REALISED THEY'D BE HOLDING A DISTINCTLY BRIT-LITE LAUNCH, THEY HASTILY MOVED US FROM A MONDAY TO THE PREVIOUS FRIDAY.

WHICH MEANT WE ALL TURNED UP WITH THE DB9'S MOST FEARSOME RIVAL AS FRESH IN OUR MINDS AS WAS POSSIBLE AND UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN THE ASTON HAD TO CLIMB, EVEN TO PROVIDE A CREDIBLE

ALTERNATIVE TO THE SIMILARLY NEAR-6-LITRE, V12 2+2 COUPÉ FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE APPENINES.

SO THE FOLLOWING MORNING I CLIMBED INTO A SILVER GREY DB9 AND SET OFF, DRIVING WHAT WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST ASTON MARTIN IN HISTORY

DESIGNED ON WHAT ANY NORMAL CAR COMPANY MIGHT REGARD AS A REASONABLE BUDGET. IT WAS BUILT IN A BRAND NEW FACTORY AND UPON ITS SCULPTED SHOULDERS RESTED THE ENTIRE FUTURE OF THE COMPANY.



AND AS THE MILES ACCRUED, SO MY SMILE BROADENED. IT WAS FAST, IT WAS GORGEOUS, IT HANDLED LIKE A DREAM. IT WAS, BEING BLUNT, BLOODY MARVELLOUS. IN FACT IT WAS BETTER BY FAR THAN THE OUTSIZED, OVERWEIGHT AND OVERPRICED FERRARI OF SUCH RECENT ACQUAINTANCE.

AND THEN, A COUPLE OF YEARS BACK, I DROVE ANOTHER, ALSO AN EARLY COUPÉ. AND WITH JUST THE PRESS OF A BUTTON AND THE PULL OF A PADDLE, ALL THOSE OLD FEELINGS CAME RUSHING BACK. THE ENGINE REMAINS A

MASTERPIECE: SMOOTH, SONOROUS AND SOPHISTICATED, ITS YOWLING V12 SOUNDTRACK BELYING ENTIRELY THE MOTOR'S ACTUALLY QUITE HUMBLE ORIGINS WHICH CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE 3-LITRE V6 ENGINE USED IN THE FORD MONDEO AND OTHERS.

IT STILL HANDLES WELL TOO, AT LEAST FOR WHAT IS QUITE A HEFTY GT. THE EXTRUDED ALUMINIUM V/H PLATFORM UPON WHICH IT WAS BUILT IS NOT WITHOUT ITS ISSUES – IT'S NEITHER NOTABLY SPACE EFFICIENT NOR PARTICULARLY LIGHT – BUT IT PROVIDES A STRONG AND STABLE STRUCTURE UPON WHICH THE WISHBONE SUSPENSION CAN WORK, WHILE THE STEERING HAS HEFT, PRECISION AND FEEL. REALLY BOSS IT ALONG AND YOU'LL BE SURPRISED BY ITS BALANCE TOO; BUT BEWARE THE VOLANTE, ESPECIALLY EARLY VERSIONS, WHOSE STRUCTURAL RIGIDITY IS DRAMATICALLY COMPROMISED BY THE REMOVAL OF THE ROOF.

IT HAS OTHER FLAWS TOO. THE SIX SPEED ZF AUTO GEARBOX IS REALLY PRETTY SLUGGISH IN THESE DAYS OF INSTANT DOUBLE CLUTCH GRATIFICATION, WITH A DISCERNIBLE PAUSE AS IT PLODS THROUGH ITS RATIOS. THEN AGAIN, THE ENGINE HAS SO MUCH MID-RANGE TORQUE THAT FOR GIVE AND TAKE A AND B ROAD DRIVING, IT'S OFTEN BEST TO LOCK IT INTO THIRD OR FOURTH AND LEAVE IT THERE.

THEN THERE'S THE CABIN: THOSE OVER 6FT WILL FIND HEAD AND LEGROOM LIMITED AND EVERYONE WILL BECOME ANNOYED BY THE BEAUTIFUL BUT CONFOUNDEDLY DIFFICULT TO OPERATE DRIVING ENVIRONMENT. THE ERGONOMICS ARE TERRIBLE, THE NUMERALS ON THE DIALS NEAR ILLEGIBLE AND THE LESS SAID ABOUT THE JOKE SAT-NAV THE BETTER. BUT THE CAR HAS SO MUCH RAW CHARM, YOU'LL LIKELY FORGIVE IT EVERYTHING.

THE DB9 ENJOYED A LONG AND ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER, EVEN BEFORE WE CONSIDER ALL THE OTHER CARS LIKE THE VANTAGE, RAPIDE, VANQUISH AND DBS THAT WERE SPUN OFF THE SAME PLATFORM. IT RECEIVED A POWER HIKE FROM 450BHP TO 470BHP IN 2008 BUT THE BIG CHANGE CAME IN 2013 WHEN THE MOTOR WAS UPGRATED AGAIN TO 510BHP.



PRICES VARY HUGELY, FROM THE £30,000 THAT BUYS A SLIGHTLY LEGGY EARLY CAR TO THREE TIMES THAT AMOUNT IF YOU WANT A LOW MILES EXAMPLE OF THE DB9 GT RUN OUT SPECIAL FROM 2016. WERE IT ME I'D ALWAYS GO FOR THE BEST EARLY CAR I COULD, PERHAPS SPENDING AROUND £40,000 WHICH SHOULD BUY A 2007 EXAMPLE WITH FEWER THAN 30,000 MILES ON THE CLOCK.

I'D AVOID THE VOLANTES AND ALWAYS GET THE CAR CHECKED OUT THOROUGHLY: BECAUSE THEY DON'T RUST, THE ALUMINIUM PANELS ARE QUITE GOOD AT CONCEALING THE FACT A CAR MAY HAVE HAD A TOUGH LIFE.

AND BE REALISTIC ABOUT RUNNING COSTS: YOU'LL SEE 20MPG ON A GOOD DAY AND IN TERMS OF RELIABILITY, THIS IS AN OLD ASTON NOT A NEW 911. BUT CHOOSE CAREFULLY AND ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND BEST SOUNDING BRITISH GTs EVER CREATED CAN BE YOURS FOR THE PRICE OF A WELL-SPECCED NISSAN QASHQAI. MAKES YOU THINK, DOESN'T IT?

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE FOURTEEN CARS FROM THEIR IMAGES BELOW.





ANSWERS DIRECTLY TO ME ON, NEWSLETTEREDITOR@A-C-C.ES (ALL LOWER CASE).

A SMALL PRIZE IS WAITING FOR THE FIRST CORRECT ANSWERS!!!

LAST MONTH'S WINNERS' WERE STEVE AND MAGGIE HALES (AGAIN)

(YOU HAVE TO BE QUICK TO BEAT THAT PAIR OR OUR CHAIRMAN DAVID & SUE)

HAVE A GO.

'BRING OUT YOUR CLASSICS'.

DURING OUR FORMAL MEETING IN JULY, ALAN OFFERED TO THE MEMBERS A COMMITTEE PROPOSAL THAT WE MEET AS A GROUP, AS A CLUB, MORE THAN THE USUAL ONCE A MONTH. THE PROPOSAL IS AS FOLLOWS:-

MIDWAY BETWEEN THE FORMAL MEETINGS (SOME TWO WEEKS ON) WE HAVE A 'SOCIAL' GATHERING FOR A LATE BREAKFAST, EARLY LUNCH AND A POSSIBLE SHORT RUN OUT IN OUR 'CLASSIC' CARS. UNFORTUNATELY DUE TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES ALAN WAS UNABLE TO PROMOTE THIS PROPOSAL FURTHER.

REMEMBER WE HAVE NUMEROUS RUNS ALREADY PLANNED IN OUR CLUB BOOK. ALL WE NEED IS FOR MEMBERS TO PICK UP THE MANTLE AND ORGANISE. WE HAVE ANOTHER 6 MONTHS REMAINING IN THE CALENDAR YEAR. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FILL EACH MONTH WITH AT LEAST ONE CLUB OUTING IN OUR CARS.

ALAN HAS SUCCESSFULLY IDENTIFIED ANOTHER LOCATION WITH A SUITABLE SIZED ROOM, SO WE CAN MEET, DINE AND CHAT IN PEACE AND QUIET. 4/5 COURSE MENU DEL DIA FOR 12 EUROS. ALAN HAS PUT A LOT OF WORK IN PREPARING THIS PROPOSAL, LET'S ALL GET BEHIND HIM AND IT, TO GIVE 'OUR' CLUB THE BOOST IT DESERVES.

YOUR CAR IS INSURED, ITV'D (ONLY IF REQUIRED OF COURSE), NICE AND SHINY, READY TO GO - SO BRING IT OUT FOR SPAIN TO SEE. THIS ITEM SHOULD BE DISCUSSED AT JULYS' FIRST THURSDAYS FORMAL MEETING.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:- KEN OLIVER.

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THE CARS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

IN HONOUR OF OUR LATE MAJESTY.

FOR A PERSON WHO PROBABLY TRAVELLED MORE CHAUFFEUR-DRIVEN MILES IN HER LIFETIME THAN ANYONE ELSE ON EARTH, OUR LATE MONARCH HAD AN UNCOMMON URGE TO TAKE THE WHEEL HERSELF.

HER VIEWS ON THE CARS IN HER LONG MOTORING LIFE ARE NOT RECORDED. THERE COULD NEVER BE ANYTHING SO VULGAR AS AN ENDORSEMENT, OR A DENIGRATION. AND ANYWAY, QUEEN ELIZABETH II WAS ALWAYS HAPPY TO TAKE THE ROUGH WITH THE SMOOTH, RATTLING ALONG IN THE MOST RUGGED 4X4S OR ZIPPING ABOUT IN LEATHER-LINED LUXURY.

THE RANGE ROVER IN ITS SUCCESSIVE ITERATIONS IS THE VEHICLE THAT SEEMED TO SUIT HER NEEDS BEST. WITH THREE VAST ESTATES DOTTED ABOUT THE COUNTRY, THE GO-ANYWHERE RANGIE TICKED EVERY POSSIBLE BOX, SOMETIMES ALIVE WITH CORGIS, AND AT OTHERS WITH FOREIGN ROYALTY IN THE PASSENGER SEATS (SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA'S KING ABDULLAH IN 1998), OPEN-MOUTHED AS SHE ROMPED THROUGH THE BALMORAL COUNTRYSIDE, POINTING OUT FAVOURITE BEAUTY SPOTS. EVEN DAVID CAMERON, ONE OF THE 15 ASSORTED PRIME MINISTERS WHO'VE COME AND GONE DURING HER LONG REIGN, WAS ALARMED AT THE QUEEN'S "BREAKNECK SPEED" AS SHE SHOWED HIM ROUND, ACCORDING TO HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY *FOR THE RECORD*.



THEN-PRINCESS

ELIZABETH REPAIRING A TRUCK DURING HER MILITARY SERVICE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR. IT MAY COME AS A BIT OF A SURPRISE, THEN, TO RECALL THAT THE QUEEN NEVER TOOK A DRIVING TEST AND DIDN'T POSSESS A LICENCE. THERE WAS NO NEED TO. BRITISH DRIVING LICENCES WERE ULTIMATELY ISSUED IN HER NAME, SO ENGAGING IN ANY DVLC PAPERWORK WOULD HAVE BEEN FARFICAL. NOR DOES THE MONARCH'S CAR NEED ANY NUMBER PLATES ON THE HIGHWAY, ANOTHER UNIQUE CONCESSION.

PRINCESS ELIZABETH ENTERED THE SECOND WORLD WAR AS A 13-YEAR OLD GIRL AND ENDED IT AS A PROFICIENT 18-YEAR OLD MECHANIC. SHOWING THE QUIET DETERMINATION THAT WOULD CHARACTERISE HER IN LATER LIFE, SHE INSISTED ON DOING HER BIT, AND TO THAT END SHE WAS ENROLLED IN 1944

IN THE BRITISH ARMY, IN THE AUXILIARY TERRITORIAL SERVICE. TO THE QUIET ADMIRATION OF HER PARENTS, SHE LEARNED HOW TO DRIVE HEAVY ARMY LORRIES, AND ABOUT WHAT WENT ON UNDER THE BONNET.

SHE COULD ANALYSE AND FIX PROBLEMS ON RECALCITRANT ENGINES, CHANGE WHEELS, ASSESS ROADWORTHINESS AND, OF COURSE, NEGOTIATE AND REVERSE CUMBERSOME BEDFORDS WHERE EVEN SOME MEN MIGHT HAVE GOT JITTERY. NO WONDER, THEN, THAT THE QUEEN WAS MORE THAN AT HOME BEHIND THE WHEELS OF THE NUMEROUS LAND ROVER SERIES MODELS AND DEFENDERS KEPT ON ROYAL LAND.

THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY AIR FORCE HAD A FLICK THROUGH *THE AUTOCAR* AND CHOSE A DAIMLER DE27 FOR THE YOUNG PRINCESS AND HER FIANCÉ AS A WEDDING PRESENT IN 1948. DAIMLERS WERE THE MARQUE OF CHOICE FOR THE ROYAL FAMILY IN THOSE DAYS – THEY TOOK DELIVERY OF 80 EXAMPLES IN TOTAL – AND AFTER HER CORONATION IN 1953 ELIZABETH II WOULD OFTEN DRIVE HER YOUNG CHILDREN CHARLES AND ANNE AROUND THE WINDSOR AREA IN A HOOPER-BODIED REGENCY EMPRESS, WHEN SHE WASN'T IN THE REAR COMPARTMENT OF ONE OF THE LARGER DAIMLER LIMOUSINES STABLED AT THE MEWS AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

ONLY AFTER A TAX SCANDAL INVOLVING DAIMLER'S CHAIRMAN DID ROYAL PATRONAGE START TO SHIFT DISCREETLY TOWARDS ROLLS-ROYCE. THE FIRST WAS A PHANTOM IV IN 1954, FOLLOWED IN 1961 BY THE LATEST PHANTOM V. THIS 3-TON BEHEMOTH REALLY DID TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH THE QUEEN ON HER REGULAR COMMONWEALTH TOURS AND VISITS: IT HAD ITS VERY OWN GARAGE ABOARD THE ROYAL YACHT BRITANNIA, INTO WHICH IT COULD BE EASED ONCE THE BUMPERS WERE REMOVED, AND IT WAS IN ACTIVE SERVICE RIGHT UP TO 2002 WHEN THE CRAFT WAS DECOMMISSIONED.

WHILE THE QUEEN COULD OFTEN BE SEEN ON THE TV EVENING NEWS WAVING FROM THE BACK OF VARIOUS SPECIALLY CONVERTED, OPEN-TOPPED CEREMONIAL CARS, WHEN AT HOME AT SANDRINGHAM SHE PREFERRED THE

USE OF A PROPER ESTATE CAR. IN A LITTLE-KNOWN CAR MUSEUM IN A STABLE BLOCK AT THE NORFOLK COUNTRY SEAT, YOU CAN STILL SEE THE SPECIALLY-DESIGNED FORD ZEPHYR MKII WITH ITS SOMEWHAT HEARSE-LIKE CONTOURS THAT TOOK THE QUEEN, PRINCE PHILIP AND THEIR GUESTS ON MANY A SHOOTING PARTY.



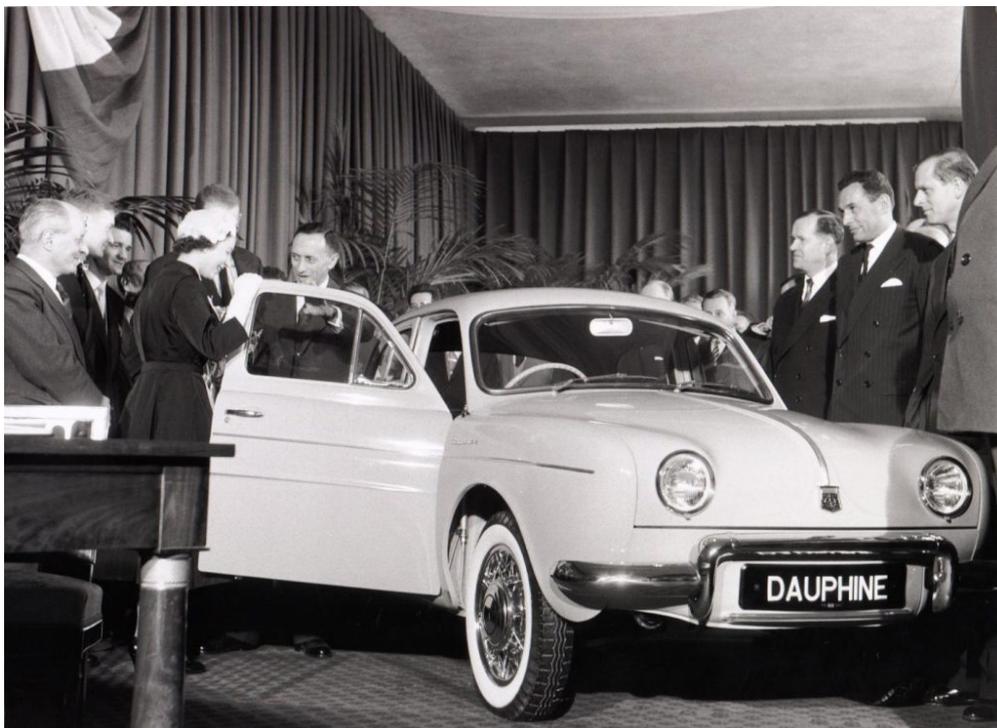
ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL ROYAL ALLEGIANCES WAS THIS VAUXHALL CRESTA ESTATE, STILL KEPT AT SANDRINGHAM.

UNLIKELY AS IT SEEMS, THOUGH, THE QUEEN THEN SWITCHED ALLEGIANCE TO VAUXHALL AND SEEMED TO REVEL IN HER PA AND PC CRESTA ESTATES. THE PA IS STILL THERE AT SANDRINGHAM, COMPLETE WITH ITS TONGUE-IN-CHEEK NUMBER PLATE: MYT 1.

HER MAJESTY NO DOUBT AGREED WITH HER HUSBAND THAT A CAR MADE AN EXCELLENT 21ST BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR THEIR CHILDREN. THEY GAVE

PRINCE CHARLES AN MGC, AND PRINCESS ANNE A RELIANT SCIMITAR GTE. FOR HER OWN USE IN AND AROUND WINDSOR, HOWEVER, THE QUEEN WAS DRAWN TOWARDS ROVERS. AT FIRST IT WAS A P5 3-LITRE BEFORE MOVING TO WHAT IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF HER ALL-TIME FAVOURITES, A P5B 3.5 SALOON.

WHEN BRITISH LEYLAND RATHER THOUGHTLESSLY STOPPED MAKING THOSE, SHE MOVED OVER TO JAGUARS AND DAIMLERS, APPARENTLY RACKING UP 12,000 MILES IN ONE DAIMLER DOUBLE SIX SERIES III THAT HAD A PLUMP CUSHION IN PLACE OF A BACK SEAT FOR THOSE PAMPERED, YAPPY WELSH DOGS TO SIT ON. EVEN AS RECENTLY AS EARLIER THIS YEAR QUEEN ELIZABETH WAS SPOTTED IN WINDSOR IN A SMART, GREEN JAGUAR X-TYPE ESTATE, SPORTING HER DISTINCTIVE VERSION OF A RACING HELMET – A HEADSCARF KNOTTED UNDER THE CHIN.



EVEN MORE UNUSUALLY, THE QUEEN WAS PRESENTED A DAUPHINE BY RENAULT FOLLOWING A VISIT TO THE BRAND'S ASSEMBLY PLANT IN ACTON, IN 1957.

IT'S VERY LIKELY THAT THE QUEEN WELL UNDERSTOOD WHAT WENT INTO MAKING GREAT BRITISH CARS. SHE WAS PATRON OF THE ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB WHERE, ON THURSDAY EVENING, CAR TALK STOPPED AND HEADS WERE BOWED IN SILENCE ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HER PASSING.

IN 1956, SHE PAID HER FIRST VISIT TO A CAR FACTORY WITH PRINCE PHILIP WHEN THEY TOURED JAGUAR'S BUSTLING HQ IN COVENTRY, AND IN 1957 SHE ACCEPTED THE GIFT OF A LIGHT BLUE RENAULT DAUPHINE ON A VISIT TO

RENAULT'S BRITISH ASSEMBLY PLANT IN ACTON, WEST LONDON. IN 2014 SHE OPENED JAGUAR'S NEW ENGINE PLANT IN WOLVERHAMPTON.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN 2002, ON THE OCCASION OF THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF HER REIGN, QUEEN ELIZABETH WAS FULLY INVOLVED IN CREATING THE BENTLEY STATE LIMOUSINE THAT WOULD CARRY HER ON OFFICIAL DUTIES FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS.



MORE RECENTLY, QUEEN ELIZABETH II HAS BEEN MOST ASSOCIATED WITH THE BENTLEY STATE LIMOUSINE, FREQUENTLY SEEN ON OFFICIAL EVENTS.

HER INNATE GOOD TASTE CAME TO BEAR IN REQUESTING THE MINIMUM OF FLASHY EXTERNAL CHROME AND COMFORTABLE, RATHER THAN OPULENT, TRIM AND UPHOLSTERY, WITH SOFT CLOTH AND NOT STICKY LEATHER, AND WIDE-OPENING DOORS CUT INTO THE ROOF OF THE BODY ALLOWING HER TO STAND FULLY UPRIGHT WHEN DISEMBARKING.

THE COLOUR SCHEME CHOSEN WAS BLACK-OVER-ROYAL CLARET PAINTWORK WITH RED COACHLINES, A LIVERY ORIGINATED IN 1902 ON THE DAIMLER TONNEAU OF HER GRANDFATHER EDWARD VII. CAR TRADITIONS, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, WERE VERY IMPORTANT TO HER.

AND YET, ON THE OTHER HAND, BRITISH CAR INNOVATIONS INTRIGUED THE QUEEN. ALEC ISSIGONIS WAS A FRIEND OF HER BROTHER-IN-LAW LORD SNOWDON AND JUST AFTER THE REVOLUTIONARY LITTLE RUNABOUT WAS LAUNCHED, IT'S SAID THAT ISSIGONIS TOOK A FACTORY-FRESH MINI TO WINDSOR GREAT PARK SO THAT A CERTAIN RATHER KEEN DRIVER COULD HAVE A SPIRITED TURN AT THE WHEEL...