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~ promoting the inspirational work of Dr Frederick, Frank and George Lanchester ~

Newsletter No.44

Restoration Award

April 2019

The Lanchester Trustees are delighted to award John Rossiter the 2019 Restoration Award for the magnificent restoration of his 1935 Lanchester Eighteen. The achievement of saving this dilapidated wreck was immense. John is blessed with being both optimistic and determined and as a result has a glorious car to enjoy for years to come. He will receive a cheque and the Trust's dashboard plaque to commemorate his success.

If you are considering entering your own Lanchester for the 2020 Restoration Award, don't be intimidated by the scale of John's work. Any Lanchester car with any amount of work done will be considered, whether it be a full restoration or part of a continuous renovation. Whereas we welcome new members, you do not have to be in the Lanchester Trust. Just contact the Trustees on www.LanchesterTrust.org with details and photos.

With regards from The Lanchester Trustees.

The 1935 Lanchester 18 Story.

In The August 2007 edition of The Driving Member, the Daimler and Lanchester Owners Club (DLOC) magazine on the restoration page there was a picture of a car described as a Lanchester 15/18 rusting away in a Welsh barn. From that picture I didn't recognise it as a 15/18 and the style of the body looked very interesting and unusual.

After some detective work I found the car in Pentre South Glamorgan and yes sadly it was rusting away.

Jamie Reece the owner told me that it was his fathers from new and that he had intended to restore the car himself but now had second thoughts as he wanted instead to restore the building it was housed in.

Jamie told me that it was a Lanchester 18 and that only a limited number of them were made. It was last driven in the 50's and that a half shaft had snapped therefore it was tucked away at the back of the barn and had been forgotten. On my second visit to see the car Jamie and I agreed a deal. I was to help him clear out the building and that I could take the car for nothing. I tried to assure him that I would restore his family car but he didn't expect promises he knew it was a challenge.

I collected the car in November of that year. My brother and brother in law helped me. Whilst clearing out the building as part of the agreement two of Jamie's young daughters helped, they decided to nickname us the "chuckle brothers". So to get my own back before leaving Pentre I jokingly told Jamie that the girls mustn't get married until the car is restored and that's what they will be taken to church in.



The journey to Somerset was very precarious. She was dragged on to the low loader on her three remaining wheels. The body was very fragile so she was sheeted and strapped down as best as possible. There is something really undignified when a once proud car is dragged on three wheels.

The journey home had weakened the nearside body of the car. That was the side of the car that had been stored tight against the damp wall of the barn. Luckily the offside was still in reasonable shape so patterns could be taken. At least she had survived the journey back to Somerset. Although my wife Mandy immediately nicknamed her "the rust bucket"

Now safe and secure the task of restoring her got under way immediately. Dismantling recording and storing everything, not throwing anything away. Plenty of WD40 on all removable parts. Lots of rust inhibitor all over the body work. Cleaning as you go along can soon start to give the car back some of its former glory.

I found a plentiful supply of seasoned ash for the frame as nearly all of it needed replacing. I didn't attempt to lift the body off the chassis due to its fragile condition. Instead I suspended the body above the chassis on four stilts. This made the task of working both on the chassis and the replacement of the ash coachwork all the more difficult. There was one saving grace regarding the body. In her past the sun roof must have leaked badly as it was completely covered with a sheet of Aluminium screwed all the way around the opening, this is probably what saved the body from losing its shape. When I finally came to removing the Aluminium sheet I was surprised to find the sun roof and all its working parts still in place.

The rear axle was shot so with the help of Dave Philpot Lanchester 18 registra from DLOC he managed to find me one from a club member in Cheshire. The engine was seized so it went to Cox and Turner Engineers near Yeovil, in Somerset. The petrol tank needed replacing, the steering box and the four shock absorbers appeared to be useable. One set of rear springs needed to be repaired. When finally the engine had been rebuilt it was lifted back on to the chassis to test the pre select gearbox. Fortunately the gear box and fluid flywheel were both in good working order. A new replacement dash board and all wood trim internally in the car was professionally restored/replaced by Dave French.

The biggest challenge was the steel body work. As mentioned before it was very fragile.

On the nearside the bulkhead was in a terrible condition, nothing left of the running board, front and rear wings completely rusted, doors too far gone to be restored and the centre door pillar collapsing into the inside of the car. The boot lid and tail gate of this unusual styled sports saloon was as bad as the nearside of the car. Three of the wire wheels were unfit for use.

Now it was time to start to look for spares/replacements. Wheels first!



Back in the 70's I had a wonderful 1932 Lanchester 15/18 Limo that needed restoring. I advertised it in the club magazine and it was sold to a member from Coventry. At the time I received a letter from Chris Clark enquiring about the car. I kept the letter out of curiosity and still have it today. I knew of his reputation with Lanchesters so I contacted him and asked if he had any wheels for sale for my 18.

I was in luck Chris could help me. I travelled up to the “Lanches” and returned back to Somerset with doors, wings, running boards, bulk head and a spare boot lid plus the wheels of course. That was the time I knew I would eventually complete the restoration.



It took me 10 years, every corner of the car needed extensive work carried out on it. What I lack in the ability to be a good mechanic I benefit from having patience and sheer determination. The journey I have been on and the people I have had the pleasure of associating with, all experts in their field will never leave me. Even while I write this I realise I am not doing real justice to the help support and encouragement I had received, that would take a whole book to write.

Sadly in 2010 Jamie passed away I believe from cancer he was younger than me. In 2018 I contacted Jamie’s family to let them know that the project is now complete and the girls can now get married, also it is my intention to drive it to South Wales to let them see the car now it is back to its former glory.

John Rossiter
Somerset
2019