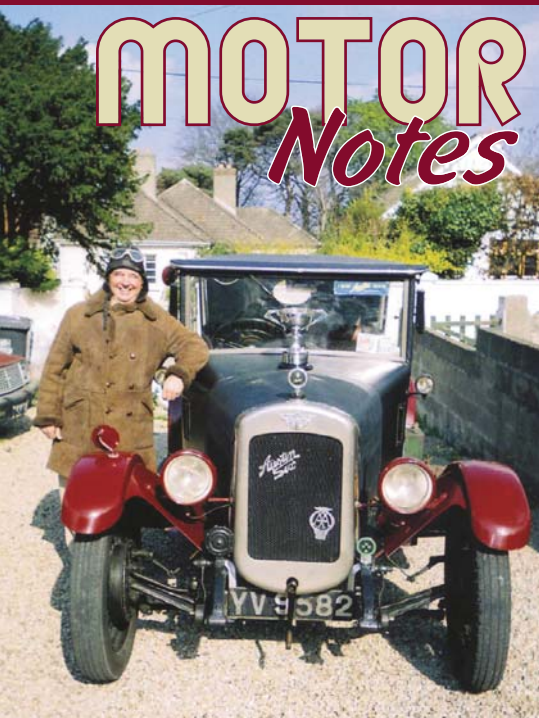


'A failure to proceed'

MOTOR Notes



By ALAN DONALDSON

Many years ago after using my Rolls-Royce, AI 8000 for a friend's wedding, which proved a great success; I was referred to a relation of the bride who requested that I provide a similar service for the forthcoming celebration of his daughter's marriage. Now I have to say weddings are not my cup of tea having, as a musician, experienced the excitement and high expectation engendered on these often fraught occasions. Still, lured by the fee offered to cover my expenses, don't you know, and against my better judgement, I undertook the engagement.

At around this time I must have been somewhat mentally distracted as I also entered into an agreement with a traveller tarmacadam contractor which resulted in his dumping about four tons of hardcore in a pile in front of my garage. He then of course disappeared for some time making it impossible to take out my slumbering Rolls to exercise and prepare it in advance of the great event. I waited and waited till finally the day before the wedding I was forced to take a shovel to flatten the pile sufficiently so as to drive over it which I managed with some difficulty and a great deal of effort, the job taking up most of the allotted preparation time.

This was fairly early on in my ownership but I had become aware that from time to time she displayed an awkward trait in that she was most reluctant to start when hot.

On the big day, as I pulled up outside the house, I was dismayed to experience the engine peter out. Hoping that she might cool down sufficiently while waiting for the bride I nervously approached the hall door. I was eagerly greeted by the father of the bride who immediately pressed the fee into my hand, thanked me most profusely for coming and offered me a drink which I eagerly accepted.

The usual hustle and bustle ensued during which I smiled and said nothing. At last we had the bride and her father ensconced in the back of the car. I pressed the starter button and the engine spun merrily but to no avail! Someone had suggested to me in the past that she lost compression when hot perhaps due to stuck rings or some such and this might be remedied by the pouring of a little oil down the plug holes.

By now, in panic mode, this was the course of action I adopted. I had taken the precaution of bringing a Port Wine bottle of oil for just such a contingency. Out came the plugs, in went the oil (much too much I suspect) back in went the plugs, press the button... yoy...yoy...yoy...still nothing!

Father of the bride suggested her brothers, of whom she seemed to have a disquieting number, should try pushing. Some way down the road she fired and ran roughly.

Now, due to the liberal application of

oil, and the poor condition of the exhaust system, a thick cloud of black smoke rapidly filled the interior. The bride made some comment concerning her vision and, sure enough, looking behind me it was difficult to discern the figures sitting in the back. To make matters worse we came upon a refuse collection and had to stop/start behind this for what seemed like an eternity! The church was in Shankill and we were approaching from the Bray direction so needing to cross the out bound traffic to enter the church yard. The traffic was very heavy and I thought very reluctant to give way; it was a wedding after all! A space came and I went for it only to stall...yoy...yoy...yoy...yoy...Oh God! No Go! A Failure to Proceed!!!

The father was speechless as he and the bride wound their way on foot through the cars, across the yard, and into the ceremony while I pushed the car on to the side of the road. With fresh applications of oil she started and I entered the church yard leaving her on a convenient slope to facilitate things after the happy couple emerged. All the while I was observed by the driver of an Austin Princess hired to carry the bridesmaids and her mother. He wore what I can only describe as a cruel smile. Henceforth, having thoroughly disgraced me, she ran faultlessly all the way to the reception in the La Touché Hotel, Greystones, via Enniskerry and a stop-off to visit a house-bound granny, all the time followed by the Princess, the driver no doubt hoping for further catastrophe. I dared not switch off till successfully reaching our destination!

I was at this point, I'm sure you will understand, in dire need of a stiff libation which I found I had to pay for myself, being uniformly ignored by all members of the party! Had I not made the day all the more memorable? A Rolls-Royce never breaks down; it merely "Fails to Proceed!"

