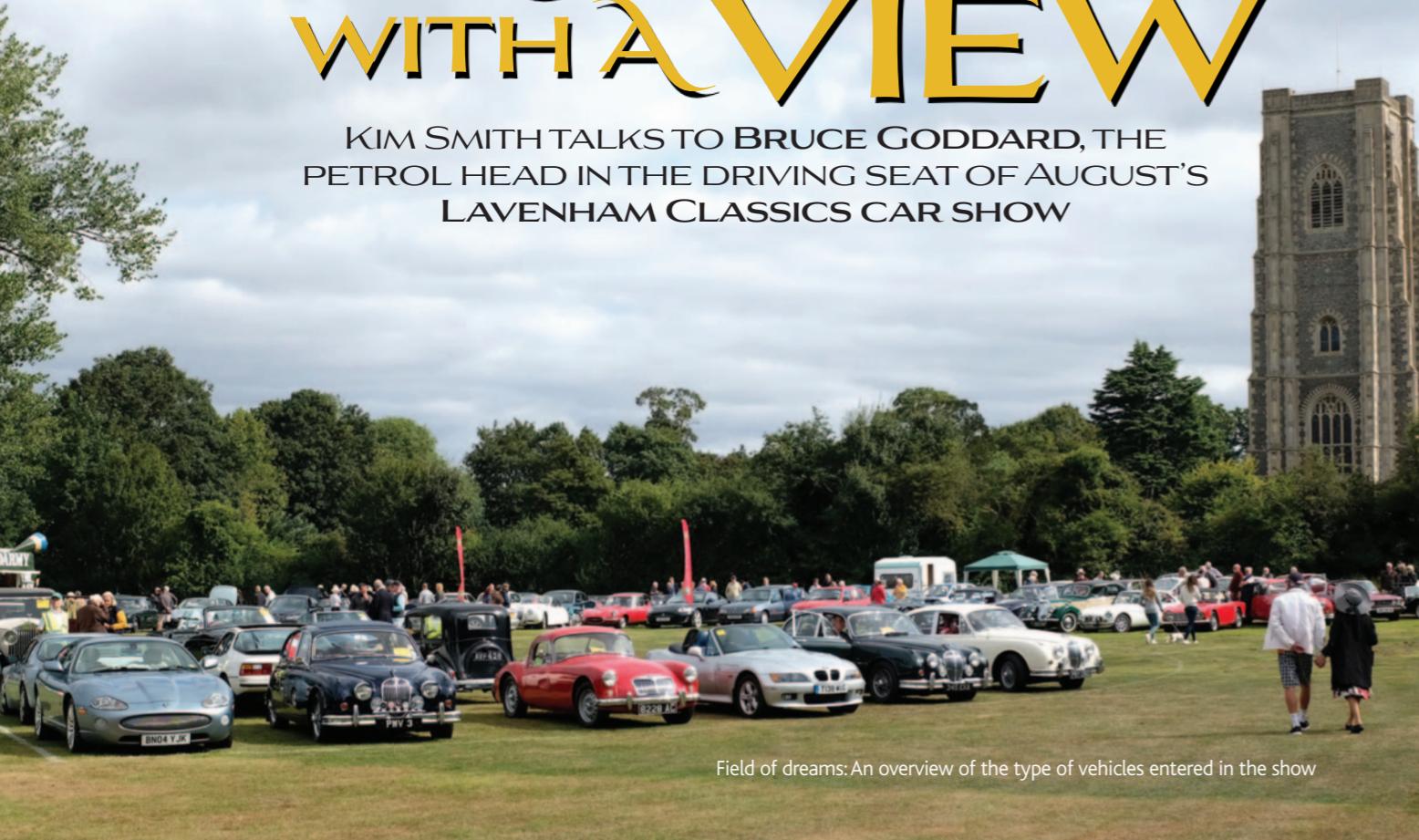




Beep pockets: You'll need plenty of cash to buy a Lamborghini Diablo like this

VROOM WITH A VIEW

KIM SMITH TALKS TO BRUCE GODDARD, THE PETROL HEAD IN THE DRIVING SEAT OF AUGUST'S LAVENHAM CLASSICS CAR SHOW



Field of dreams: An overview of the type of vehicles entered in the show



Magical history tourers: A pair of hand-built Morgan cars

I understand you're a fairly recent resident of Lavenham, Bruce. What drew you to the village and what do you love about living there?

I moved to the area following my retirement from the asset finance industry seven years ago. Lavenham wasn't new to me, having lived and worked in the area during the late 1970s/early 1980s. Apart from it being England's medieval gem and the fantastic infrastructure (only 2,300 residents, but seven eateries, three grocers, a butcher, baker, etc), there's also a genuine community spirit.

When did Lavenham Classics make its debut and did you have any previous experience of staging such shows?

I organised the first Lavenham Classics in 2016, having discovered that Lavenham Carnival, with its associated "Rare Breeds Car Show" was ceasing due to challenging financial issues. With a long association with the classic car movement, I felt compelled to ensure that this element should continue and so I raised my hand. It wasn't a completely new experience, having founded the Suffolk branch of the Jaguar Drivers Club and launched the first East Anglian Jaguar Show when I had lived in the area before. Having more recently been a part of the organising team for the British F1 Grand Prix probably helped a bit as well!

How many cars and bikes took part in the original event and how did you market it to the owners?

Through the good offices of a fellow villager, John Denton, who looks after the website and database for Lavenham Classics, I was able to canvass a number of exhibitors from the "Rare Breeds" days. However, my approach to the business case of running such an event involved my requesting that all exhibitors pay

an entry fee. Having enjoyed free entry to the former shows my rationale was subject to much criticism, but the first event yielded approximately 120 exhibitors – and we made a profit! Not only profitable but also enjoyable with everyone attending remarking upon the right crowd and relaxed atmosphere. We now have approximately 300 regular exhibitors and welcome more than 1,000 visitors each year.

Covid-19 forced the cancellation of many shows. How did you manage to keep going?

Fortunately, I took the gamble early on to proceed with the organisation of the event, recognising that it would be easier to cancel at the last minute rather than initiate it with no time for adequate build up. The gamble paid off, as Boris announced a relaxation in the pandemic restrictions and the event was able to go ahead. Observing the necessary safety protocols introduced a few operational challenges but, once again, the event was a success.

The profits are donated to local charities. How much have you raised so far and for whom?

I organise the event on behalf of the Lavenham Community Council (LCC), for which I am now a trustee, itself a registered charity which seeks to provide, maintain and develop recreational

activities for the inhabitants of the village. The charity operates the village hall, home to the pre-school and library, and the recreation ground, which is home to Lavenham Tennis Club and Lavenham Youth Football Club (who have just won the Suffolk FA Club of the Year). The event has raised more than £15,000 to date, all going to charity. The LCC is also a hub for donations for other village charities such as the Good Neighbour Scheme, Dementia Alliance and First Responders, along with St Nicholas Hospice and the East Anglian Air Ambulance.

You're obviously a petrol head. Does your interest in classic cars date back to boyhood and what prompted it?

I am undoubtedly a petrol head. I was a long-haired motorcycle hooligan until acquiring my first car at the age of 20, having realised that the fairer sex preferred comfort! I always lusted after speed and have thus always subscribed to the theory that the bigger the engine, the better the car. Unfortunately my limited budgets meant that I was having to buy older cars and maintain them myself. As time moved on, I appreciated the quality of the engineering of older vehicles and stuck with them (at the last count I have owned at least 70 cars over the years). In more recent times, I have been fortunate enough to have owned modern performance cars.

Do you have a motorsport hero and, if so, have you ever had a chance to meet him or her?

I was very fortunate in that I worked for a time for the National Governing Body of Motor Sports. It allowed me access to motorsport elite: Sir Jackie Stewart, John Surtees, Nigel Mansell, Damon Hill, to name but a few, and, of course, a young lad from my then neighbouring village, Lewis Hamilton.

However, my motorsport hero was Stirling Moss, in his day the most successful Grand Prix driver ever who never won a world championship. I met Stirling on a number of occasions and he was a true gentleman and a great sportsman. ▶



Ready to strike: An AC Cobra draws admiring glances from onlookers

Are you fortunate enough to own a classic car or is that still an ambition?

Now enjoying retirement and not needing to drive vast distances on a regular basis, I tend to use one of my own classic cars most days. I have a small collection of Jaguars that keep me both amused and poor – but I love them all. Certainly more fun than an ISA!

What would be your dream vehicle?

That is a very difficult question! While the natural tendency is to aspire to something fast and Italian, I think I would opt for a pre-war tourer, a Lagonda perhaps – but budget and space preclude that unless I win the lottery.

Can you offer any advice to those interested in buying a classic car or bike?

Buy what you like, and not what your peers tell you. Never buy for possible investment potential, consider who is going to maintain it, be it you on a DIY basis or paying for someone else to do the work, and remember that older machinery does need to be kept covered in winter, so storage is a major consideration. Budget within your means – if you spend every last penny on the beast of your dreams, then how are you going to be able to maintain it? Most importantly, drive/ride before you buy. It is amazing the number of times that I hear of people buying on impulse, then selling on because they found that they couldn't manage the idiosyncrasies of actually driving older machinery.

Are they a practical purchase, ie, can they be used as an everyday vehicle or are there restrictions placed on them?

Most classics are certainly capable of everyday use as long as they are maintained. With modern vehicles having, in some cases, 100,000-mile service intervals, having to service your classic every 10,000 miles is a consideration. Most keep pace with moderns, especially in East Anglia with the lack of motorways. Indeed, with low-cost classic vehicle insurance and for vehicles over 25 years old, free road tax, they make a compelling argument. In some instances your purchase may actually increase in value over time, depreciation is rare.

Have you ever competed in a race or a hill climb. If so, when, where and how did you fare?

Back in the 1990s I regularly competed in circuit racing in various series' for historic sports cars and won a few pots, including second place in one championship. I became quite heavily involved in what was then quite a new version of motorsport – track days. They are now very popular and allow non-competitive driving and riding with a passenger on most circuits.

Which transports of delight can people expect to see at this year's Lavenham Classics?

Entries received so far include a wide cross-

section from a modern Lamborghini to a vintage Bugatti and some very rare one-offs that are rarely seen in public.

When is the cut-off date for car and bike owners to enter?

There is no published cut-off date but due to restrictions on the space available and wishing to maintain the no-crowding ethos, I restrict the total number of entries, thus early application is recommended on <http://www.lavenhamclassics.com>. I would particularly like to see more motorcycles this year.

How much are the tickets and where can people buy them?

The event and parking are free for visitors, although donations are encouraged via a team of volunteer "bucket shakers". Refreshments of varied types are available and dogs are welcomed, provided that they are kept on a lead. People just have to turn up from 11am to 4pm at Lavenham Recreation Ground in Bridge Street Road (CO10 9SH) on Sunday 28 August.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Yes, I would like to say thanks to the volunteers who help me on the day, without whom the event could not take place.

Picture credit: Images by Bruce Goddard and J Halden-Goddard

Roar of approval: Bruce with a couple of his prized Jaguars

