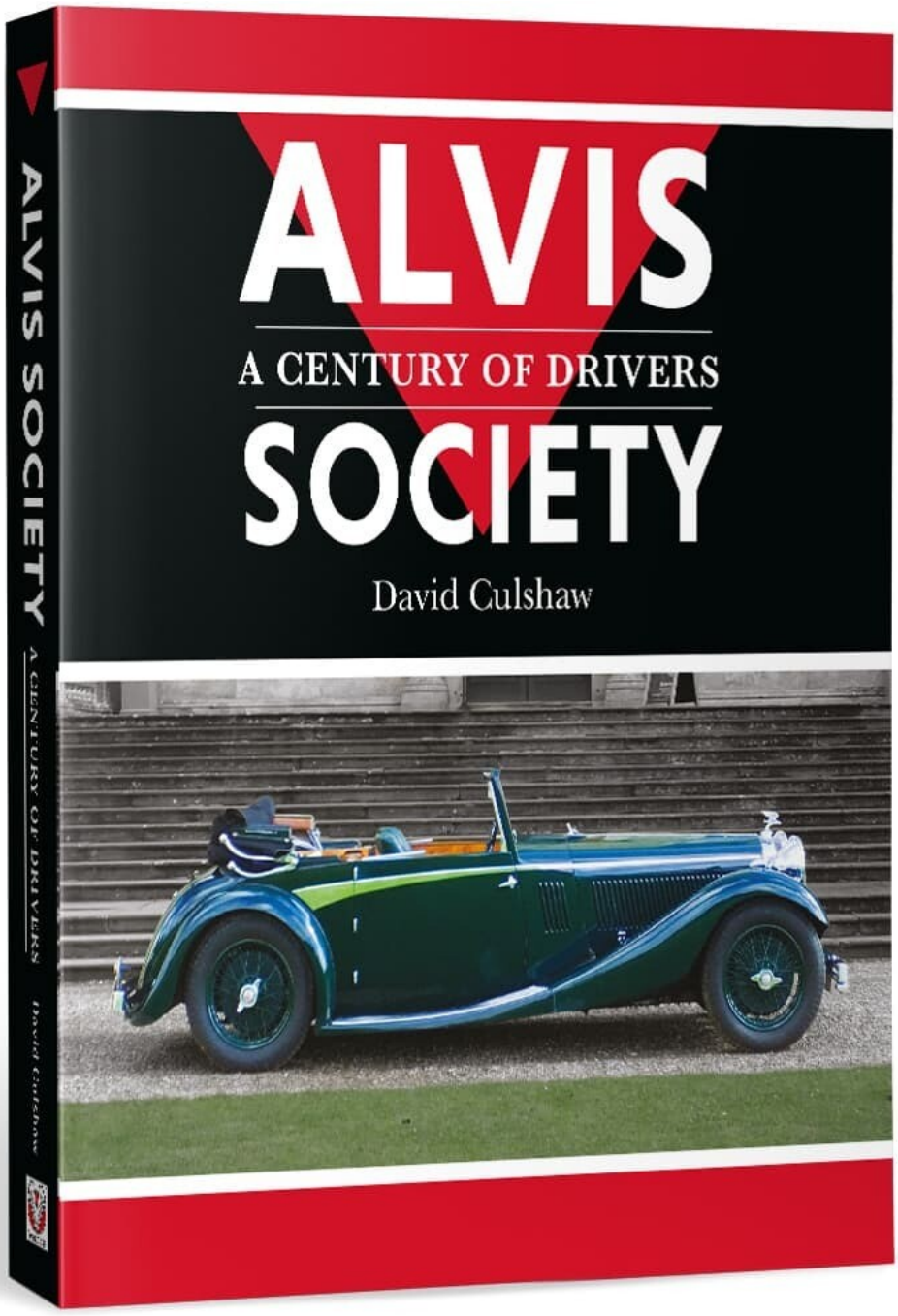
For Your Bookshelf – Alvis Society – a century of drivers

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For Your Bookshelf – Alvis Society – a century of drivers

Reviewed by Kieron Fennelly

Author: David Culshaw

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David Culshaw is to Alvis as Karl Ludvigsen is to Porsche: a committed historian whose knowledge has been gleaned over many decades. Like Ludwigsen, he is also a natural writer and the easy fluency of his prose alone makes him a pleasure to read. His new book, Alvis Society, is a compendium of every chassis number and model. If that sounds a little dry, the work looks too at some of the better-known owners and as Alvis cars were constructed between 1920 and 1967 (when the car marque disappeared during another infamous British Leyland purge) it is something of a social history and nothing if not eclectic.

Racing drivers and military men might be expected, but the author's research uncovers jazz musicians, composers, singers Nina and Frederik, actors, Trevor Howard, Will Hay and Jack Hawkins inter alia, entrepreneurs such as Peter Wheeler of TVR fame and BBC types, Nicholas Parsons and the incomparable Frank Muir who owned three. In his brief but amusing background to the comedian the author quotes Muir's advertisement when he sold one of his Alvises:

'This car has been used solely for transporting retired clergymen to Evensong and has been nightly sponged down with light hock.'

Although obviously the fruit of much painstaking research, Culshaw is so at ease with his material that one feels he already knew much of it anyway. An earlier definitive work on the post-war three litre Alvises is essentially technical, but its stylishness and authority endow it with an appeal which extends far beyond the marque devotee.

Verdict

Alvis Society again encapsulates the spirit of the company, this time in a rather wider setting. An extraordinarily readable and enjoyable book which will send any Alvis fan into raptures should perchance it turn up in his (or her) Christmas stocking.