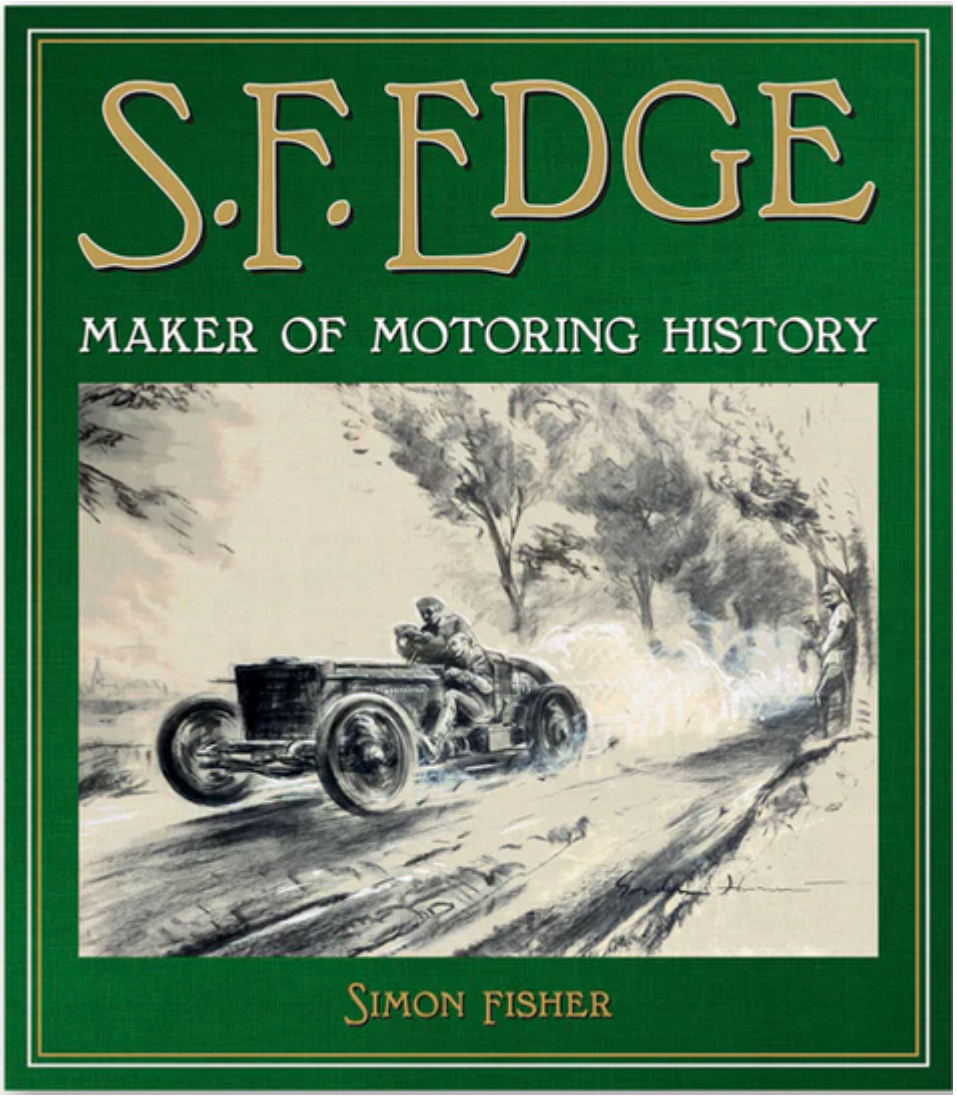
For Your Bookshelf – S. F. Edge – Maker of Motoring History

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For Your Bookshelf – S. F. Edge – Maker of Motoring History. Reviewed by Kim Henson.

Author: Simon Fisher

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Selwyn Francis Edge was one of the most important motoring pioneers in Britain, having been a keen cyclist towards the end of the 19th Century, before turning his attention to the motor cars that were starting to gain prominence.

He was very keen to promote British manufacturers, at a time when cars from France were making the running in road and early motor sport use. How he tackled this task – successfully, so that British car makers were put on the map – is described in great detail by author Simon Fisher in this comprehensive book all about the life and times of S. F. Edge.

Included is much information about his association with Napier cars and his other automotive interests through the years, and I found it fascinating to discover more about his determination to succeed in promoting British-built vehicles.

Notably in this regard the book describes in detail Edge's participation in the gruelling 1000 Miles Trial of 1900, and victory for him and for Napier in the 1902 Gordon Bennett Cup Race. Both of these significant occurrences did much to promote the cause of motoring in Britain, and especially bringing to public attention the British car manufacturers of the time.

By a strange coincidence, I finished reading this captivating book just the day before the 2022 'RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run', this year celebrating 120 years since Edge's momentous win in the Gordon Bennett Race. It is wonderful to report also that the actual car which he drove in that event all those years ago took part in this year's rain-soaked 'London to Brighton'. To read more about the event, as reported on this website, please go to:
https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/a-rain-washed-london-to-brighton-veteran-car-run-is-enjoyed-despite-the-weather/

One aspect of this book that I found especially helpful was that the life story of S. F. Edge is told in logical chapters, and chronologically, gradually and effectively building a picture of him as a person.

From talking about his early years it moves on to cover his cycling interests, endeavours and sporting achievements, then detailing his realisation of the potential that the new motor cars offered from around the turn of the century (19th to 20th), and the way that he consistently worked long hours to promote motoring, especially in British-built cars.

One of the most amazing and important of his motoring exploits, covered in depth in this book, took place in 1907 when he drove solo in a 60hp Napier around the then-new Brooklands track non-stop for 24 hours (apart from refueling and tyre changes), at an average speed of 65 mph gaining publicity for the circuit and for Napier. Two other Napiers accompanied him during this feat.

His complex business dealings through the years are also covered in depth, and of course are an essential part of the story, alongside the motor cars themselves, plus his family life.

The engaging text in this book is helped by the profusion of wonderful evocative photographs, each one giving a snap-shot glimpse of the harsh realities of motoring in general, and in particular motor trials/motor sport of around 120 years ago. In fact I spent a long time studying each of these images. To say that the book is 'well-illustrated' is an

understatement.



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VERDICT

Enjoyable to read, informative, and lavishly illustrated with superb contemporary images, this book is well worth reading by anyone with an interest in the early days of motoring. It explains how Selwyn Edge was so important in the history of motoring worldwide, and particularly in Britain.