High Standards at Daventry… in the sunshine

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Kim Henson gives his personal assessment of the 2023 Standard Motor Club's International Rally, celebrating 120 years of Standard cars…

Over the (mostly) sun-bathed long weekend of 23rd to 25th June, enthusiasts of Standard vehicles met at the Daventry Court Hotel in Northamptonshire, coming from far and wide to celebrate the marque, to admire the cars and to enjoy each other's company.

While there I chatted with club members from France and Australia, as well as from the far corners of the U.K.

Standard history

Before talking specifically about the Rally at Daventry, if you are not familiar with the Standard story, you might be interested to know a little more about the firm that produced the cars being admired and enjoyed at the Rally. The following represents just a brief sketch in words…

The Standard Motor Company built vehicles in Coventry from 1903 to 1963, with Triumphs produced thereafter continuing the tradition and also being 'Standards' in all but name.

From the outset the company was renowned and respected for building vehicles of good quality, but like many car firms in Britain, came close to financial oblivion as the 1920s ended and the difficult 1930s began. However, under the guidance of Sir John Black (and

others) Standard deliberately shook up its model ranges and concentrated on building affordable family cars, rather than luxury models that few could aspire to.

Sales gathered pace in the early 1930s, and as the company's fortunes improved during the 'post-Vintage' era, the 'Flying Standards' arrived in 1935, their innovative modern styling, affordability and inherent dependability winning even more hearts and minds among the buying public. As a result, Standard moved into the 'top six' of British motor manufacturers, and its fortunes steadily improved still further.

During World War II the firm was involved in vital work for Britain, producing vehicles, aircraft and military hardware to help the War effort.

When hostilities ceased, Standard re-introduced models based on the pre-War 'Flyers', then from 1948 Sir John Black's bold 'one model' Standard Vanguard policy worked well in promoting the Standard name, as the tough, reliable Vanguards were sold and used around the world.

From 1953, new compact Standard Eights and Tens competed in the small car market with the likes of the Austin A30/A35 and Morris Minor/1000, plus the small Fords of the era, and again were appreciated by buyers.

Progressive generations ('Phases') of the larger Vanguard were produced until 1963, including a two litre six cylinder model towards the end of the Standard era (with the engine going on to power the Triumph 2000 of the 1960s).

Rally Time



Dave and Val Salter on a road run to Coton Manor Gardens, on the Saturday of the Rally, in their 1934 10hp Tickford Drophead Coupé.

One of the fascinating aspects of the Standard Motor Club is that it caters for a diverse range of vehicles, covering a production run of 60 years and including many remarkably different models – helping to make any of the Club Rallies especially interesting to enthusiasts of classic cars.

In addition to the traditional ‘static’ display on the Sunday of the event, the Club had organised road runs and visits, including the National Trust’s Upton House (on the Friday), the ‘Armourgeddon’ military museum and the nearby delightful Coton Manor Gardens (both on the Saturday).

In the space of just one article it would be near-impossible to cover all the various cars and commercials in attendance at the Daventry Rally, but in the following text, using examples that I noted when touring the Rally site on the Sunday for the static display, I hope to give you a flavour of the vehicles that were there. There were many more that I haven't mentioned individually, but they were all adding to the atmosphere.

For the Sunday's static display the Standards were lined up in appropriate sections, and in this review I'll work through them approximately in date order…

The oldest vehicle entered was a 1913 Model S Rhyl, but there was a total of five Edwardian and Vintage entries, including Steve O'Hara's 1929 Teignmouth, being out on the road and enjoyed again after some time 'resting'. The photo below shows part of the line-up.



The Post-Vintage section comprised Standards dating from between 1st January 1931 and the arrival of the 'Flying' Standards in 1935. Among the beautiful cars on display were three dating from 1934 – a 'Big Twelve', Roger Dealtry's Ten (shown below) and a Twelve.



The 'Coachbuilt' Class included a magnificent ultra-rare 1934 Avon-bodied drophead (recently restored by Chris Bowden and magnificent – pictured below), a 1934 Tickford Drophead Coupé (on Standard's 10hp chassis, technically with Salmons bodywork but with the drophead mechanism by Tickford) and a 1936 Salmons Sunshine Coupé, another rare and possibly unique survivor. The Tickford model is owned by Dave Salter and is shown on the right in the second photo below, while the Salmons Sunshine Coupé belongs to Alan

Tibot, and is on the left of this photo.





Adding spice to the ‘Flying Standards and post-War derivatives’ section was Graham Hart’s 1937 Flying 20 V-Eight, shown in the two photos below. Very few examples of the remarkable V-Eight model were produced (in their time they were relatively expensive to buy and to run, with a prohibitive road tax liability each year) and just a handful survive, world-wide.



Graham's car has been off the road for many years. However it's back now with the engine having been rebuilt and sounding very smooth and sweet. The bodywork has been deliberately left in 'original' condition.

This model was the first Flying Standard to feature the 'waterfall' style grille that was applied to other Flying models from 1937/8. Powered by a 75 bhp 2.7 litre V-Eight engine, It was a fast car for its time, accelerating from rest to 60 mph in 18 seconds and with a top speed in excess of 80 mph.



Superb! The V-Eight's rebuilt engine.

For the first time ever at a Standard Motor Club Rally were no less than two Flying Fourteen Touring Saloons (below). This model was introduced for the 1938 model year and featured 'notchback saloon bodywork, a feature that was later used on other 'Flying' models. The car on the left in the photo is my own 1938 Fourteen, with George Schomburg's 1939 example (with chromed grille surround fitted to the 1939 models) on the right.



This post-War Standard Eight Tourer (below), based on the pre-War Flying Eight Tourer, has just been put back on the road by Martin Savage, following full restoration. It is in superb condition, a credit to the work put in by Martin, and his car deservedly won the cup and certificate as top prize in the Flying Standards and Post-War Derivatives class. The car was much admired by a fellow Standard owner Robert Browett (who was at the Rally with his 1924 Kenilworth), who was delighted to see the car again. It had been bought new by Robert's family and had provided transport for him when he first learned to drive. He hadn't seen the Eight for many decades. What a great true story!



Vanguards in their three different ‘Phases’ were well-represented and great to see. Mark Denton’s top-class very early ‘gold’ Vanguard is in the foreground in the picture below, while the rear view shot shows Michel Magnin’s left-hand drive 1952 Phase 1A. Michel drove the car from Bordeaux, where he lives, to the event.


OEV 800



There is a wealth of variety in among the Eights and Tens of the 1950s, and the colourful line-up of these cars at this year's Rally included most types. By contrast with contemporary competitor small models from Austin and Morris, all the Standard saloons of this era featured four doors.



This photo (below) shows some of the contrasts in the rear view appearance of the Eights and Tens, including single and twin door Companion estates, the quite elaborate Pennant, a saloon with ‘enclosed’ boot (i.e. luggage accessible only from inside the car) and another with a conventional bootlid.



Many contrasts also exist in the Phase III Vanguard models, produced from the mid-1950s, with an early example on the left of this shot and a later ‘Vignale’ model on the right.



The ‘Master Class’ comprised the prizewinners from the 2022 event, one of which was John Kennewell’s fabulous 10 Avon Waymaker II, shown below.



The ‘Open’ class for cars more than 40 years old included Mike McDowall’s wonderful condition 1979 Lancia Beta, a very rare car and great to see.



VERDICT

A terrific event, evidently enjoyed by all those I spoke to.

Personally I was unfortunate this year in that my own beloved Flying Fourteen suffered from mechanical problems that required my attention over most of the weekend. However, the good-natured, enthusiastic and comprehensive assistance from fellow rally goers cheered my wife and I during some trying times; our grateful thanks to all those involved. Their help and friendly banter typifies all that is good about the Standard Motor Club, I feel.

If you have a Standard vehicle, or are interested in the marque, it is worth joining the Club, or if you are a member already and haven't attended an International Rally, it is well worth

doing.

The Club's website includes much information, and for paid-up members there is a spares scheme that can help you to keep your Standard on the road, also much technical information is available too, from the Club's officers and from fellow members.

I should also mention the Club's excellent monthly magazine for members.

For more information please go to: https://www.standardmotorclub.org.uk/



Four very rare 1930s Standards in attendance… From left to right: Alan Tibot's 1936 Salmons Sunshine Coupé, Chris Bowden's 1934 Avon Drophead Coupé, Dave Salter's 1934

Ten Tickford Drophead Coupé and Roger Dealtry’s 1934 Ten saloon.