Splendid Standards at Cranfield

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Author: Kim Henson
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This year's Standard Motor Club International Rally attracted a wide variety of models and was enjoyed by participants from far and wide. Kim Henson reports...

The worldwide curse of Covid meant a gap of three years since the Standard Motor Club was last able to hold its International Rally, so that there was even more than usual eager anticipation for rally-goers ahead of the 2022 event.

Over the long weekend of 24th to 26th June, devotees of the Standard marque and Triumphs, plus their vehicles, gathered in Cranfield in Bedfordshire, at the excellent 'Venue Cranfield' which was much-praised for the friendly, helpful and efficient staff who helped those attending to enjoy their weekend.

For those who may not know, the Standard Motor Company operated from 60 years from 1903 to 1963, with models after that date badged as Triumphs and continuing to be built until the mid-1980s.

Participant numbers were somewhat lower than in previous years, with continuing Covid concerns and the high price of petrol probably high among the reasons. However, any slight shortfall in vehicle quantity was made up for by the diverse and fascinating array of vehicles that were in attendance.

One of the great things about the Standard Motor Club is that it covers such a wide range of models. As examples, this year among the vehicles at the rally were: A 1913 Model S Rhyl, a

selection of ‘family’ cars from the 1930s (‘Flying’ Standards and ‘pre-Flying’ examples), Vanguards ranging from 1952 Series 1A to 1961 Luxury Six and Vignale models, a wide variety of 1950s Eights and Tens (including a Ten 6 cwt pick-up), a Vanguard ambulance, and a wonderful Atlas camper van. My wife and I drove there in my own 1938 Flying Fourteen Touring Saloon.

The following photographs illustrate the variety of cars attending…



1913 Model S Rhyl, owned by Len Barr.



On the left in this shot is the 1934 Ten Deluxe of Roger Dealtry, next to the Vanguard Phase 1A saloon driven to the event from France by enthusiastic owner Michel Magnin.



From left to right: Graham Hart's 1948 Twelve Drophead Coupé, with Gwyn Selway's 1937 Flying Nine.



No fewer than three rare early Vanguard estate cars (Phase Ia and II) were on display, as well as saloon versions.



This unique early Vanguard ambulance attracted much interest at the rally.



Eights and Tens from the 1950s were well-represented, and pick-up plus Ten Companion (estate car) variants (not visible in this shot) added variety to the lovely selection of saloons.



Later Standards at the show included ‘Phase III’ Vanguard variants, Vignale and ‘Luxury Six’ examples.



An ultra-rare Vanguard Sportsman.



It was great to see this marvellous Atlas motorhome at the Rally. The Standard Ten/Triumph Herald type 948cc engine provides the propulsion.



Triumphs participating included a 1954 TR2, 1967 TR4A, 1976 Stag, TR7 and Dolomite 1300 saloon.

In addition there was an interesting selection of classics in the two ‘Open’ classes (for pre- and post-1983 cars respectively), including a ‘split screen’ Morris Minor Tourer, a 1979 Lancia Beta, a 1993 Mazda MX6 (shown below), a 1996 Jaguar X300 and a rare Bristol Blenheim 2.



The rally action started on Friday 24th June, with a visit to Bletchley Park, the World War II codebreaking centre, followed by an optional trip to the Red Bull Advanced Technology Centre, en route to Venue Cranfield, where a buffet dinner was enjoyed by those who were staying overnight.

On Saturday 25th, with the sun shining, rally-goers set off at intervals on a scenic road run to Old Warden Aerodrome, where the six hangars full of historic aeroplanes (plus some road vehicles) forming the Shuttleworth Collection were marvelled at; just wonderful and well-displayed.

One of the aeroplanes was ‘brought out to play’ while we were at the aerodrome; the 1945 de Havilland Dragon Rapide (well known in its heyday for covering the route from mainland Cornwall to the Scilly Isles and back) looked magnificent as it circled around the airfield at low level.

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Towards the end of the afternoon a maritime version of the Spitfire came in to land at the airfield. Another Spitfire and a Hurricane were on display ‘back to back’ within the museum.

The Saturday evening dinner was much enjoyed and was followed by an informative and candid talk (in ‘interview’ format) by Nick Black, youngest son of John Black, who was Managing Director of the Standard Motor Company from 1934 to 1954 (he was knighted in 1943).


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Nick Black with a 1938 Standard Flying Fourteen (his late father John posed for a photograph with a similar model when it was new!).

Nick gave a personal insight into his father's life and achievements. He had been responsible for saving the Standard company in the early 1930s, introducing the 'Flying Standards' line-up from 1935 (which propelled the firm into the top six of British car manufacturers in the late 1930s), was heavily involved in the 'Shadow Factories' scheme for wartime aircraft production, and introduced the 'one model' policy after World War II. The Vanguard was then the only Standard model available until the arrival of the Eights and Tens from 1953.

Sunday 26th June was the main 'static' rally day, with the cars lining up in their various classes within the grounds of Venue Cranfield. Much chatting and admiring of the vehicles was enjoyed as the sun continued to shine. Attendees were also able to buy and sell books, spares and Standard memorabilia. I found three 'new' Standard books to acquire…

After the raffle ticket winners had claimed their prizes, the main prizegiving took place. This was held at 3.30 pm to allow plenty of time for long-distance travellers to get much of their journeying home done in daylight.

To round off the day, a very special 'Standard' fruit cake with particularly spectacular and tasty icing was unveiled. Made by Margaret Park, the cake was cut up and distributed among the rally-goers; a fine way to end the rally.

Grateful thanks were expressed to the Rally organiser Steve George and his team, all of whom had worked very hard to make the event pleasurable for everyone attending.

Next year's Standard Motor Club International Rally moves a little further north, to Daventry in Northamptonshire. I am already looking forward to it…

The Standard Motor Club

If you own a Standard or are interested in the models produced by the company, for more information about the Club and how to join it, please go to: https://www.standardmotorclub.org.uk/

Further reading:

You may also be interested in these Standard-related articles on Wheels-Alive…

‘Flying Standards – A Transformative Range’; Kim’s history of Flying Standards

‘Standard’s Vanguard Story’; Vanguard story

‘Standard Motor Club Diamond Jubilee Rally Report’ (June 2019); Diamond Jubilee Rally Report

‘Early Standard Vanguards Brought Together’ (September 2019); Early Standard Vanguards Brought Together