Standard Motor Club Diamond Jubilee Rally – Event Report

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KEEPING UP STANDARDS AT THE CLUB'S SPARKLING DIAMOND JUBILEE RALLY IN OXFORDSHIRE...

Kim Henson was there...

(Words and Photographs by Kim).

The Standard Motor Company produced a huge variety of models from 1903 until 1963. (It is also worth noting that with Standard having taken over the Triumph company at the end of World War II, from 1963 models built by the concern, in the Standard factories, were badged as Triumphs).

The Standard story is a fascinating one, with roller coaster changes in fortunes through the

years, and notably during the 1930s the firm rose from near financial wipeout to becoming one of the ‘big six’ motor manufacturers in Britain. During this time the company’s model range was completely revised to satisfy buyer aspirations and demands for affordable, reliable and attractive motor cars, which turned round the firm’s financial situation. The ‘Flying Standard’ range in particular sold well in the late 1930s.

Following the Second World War (in which Standard was heavily involved in producing military vehicles, aircraft and engines, for example), after a few years of building mildly updated pre-War car models, Managing Director Sir John Black introduced a bold ‘one model policy’, with the arrival of the Standard Vanguard.

There followed an evolution through three generations or ‘Phases’ of successful Vanguards, plus the introduction, from the early 1950s, of the popular compact Eight and Ten models to compete against the likes of the Austin A30 and A35, Morris Minor/1000 and the small sidevalve Fords of the time.

Sadly it is true today that many people, even some motoring enthusiasts, are unaware of the Standard company and its products, and its importance in the story of the British motor industry. With the last Standard-badged model having been produced some 56 years ago, perhaps this is not surprising, but the firm and its well-respected products are worthy of study and the surviving cars are still enjoyed by their owners.

The Standard Motor Club exists for those interested in the company’s products, for keeping the Standard name alive and helping members enjoy keeping their cars on the road. Each year since 1959, an annual Rally has been held by the Club, and this year saw the Diamond Jubilee International Rally event take place, based at the Oxford Belfry hotel near Thame.

The event lived up to its ‘International’ name; participants had travelled from all over the U.K., and indeed from around the world, notably from mainland Europe, Malta and Australia! Worthy of mention too is keen Club member Bob Alexander, who drove his diminutive Standard pick-up 499 miles to the event from Scotland (and back again!).

(Recently Bob was also very much involved in helping to save ‘Bluebell’, a Standard Ten, from being crushed under a Ford ‘scrappage’ part-exchange scheme).

I went along and joined in the Club’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations… I own a 1938 Flying Fourteen Touring Saloon, which at the moment (due to continuing work) is not on the road but attending the rally has re-inspired my enthusiasm!

The organisers of this year’s event had arranged a lunchtime get-together at the Oxford Bus Museum and Morris Motors Museum (on the same site) on the Friday of the Rally (21st June). This gave the chance for members who had travelled some distance to take part. There followed an excellent scenic road run through local countryside to the attractive Waterperry Gardens, then on to the Rally base for the weekend, the Oxford Belfry Hotel, where some participants stayed over the weekend, and enjoyed a buffet meal on the Friday evening.

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Saturday saw another superb road run through the sunlit Oxfordshire countryside, and notably taking in the idyllic looking village of Dorchester-on-Thames, with its historic Abbey (with around 1,400 years of history) and its connections with the TV series ‘Midsomer Murders’. (Indeed there were many opportunities throughout the weekend for rallygoers to visit places featured in/made famous by this series).



Two 1924 Standard Kenilworth models pause in front of Dorchester Abbey.

Saturday's road route, which was perfect for older vehicles, continued until participants arrived at Chinnor railway station, where they were able to enjoy two return trips on the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway. The 'Great Western' engine No. 5526 hauled the train through the sun-bathed rolling countryside to Princes Risborough, while for those who had pre-booked early enough, a wonderful ploughman's lunch was enjoyed on board.

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It was an unhurried meander back to the hotel in time for a gala dinner, after which guest speaker David Whale, Chairman of the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs, gave a short speech enlightening those present to the complex good work being undertaken by the Federation to help enable enthusiasts to continue driving their classics into the future.

The main Rally day, Sunday 23rd June, was less sunny than the Friday and Saturday but still very warm and a wide variety of Standard cars (from across the decades) were in attendance. Some owners had brought along their vehicles just for the day. Everyone was able to enjoy the vehicles on show (and they varied from 'concours' condition to 'rolling restoration' state), also the melodic sounds of the Chinnor Silver Band.

In addition to the Standards there were other classics in attendance in the 'Open' Class; among them, for example, a number of Triumphs (including examples of Herald, Vitesse, Stag and 2500PI), a Jaguar Mark V, a Riley RM, an Austin A35 saloon, two Morris Minor 1000 Travellers, a Maestro, a modern classic Rover 75 and a Mazda MX6.

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Stylish early Vanguards…

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A selection of Phase III Vanguards.

At lunchtime, a superb celebratory cake – made specially for the occasion by Margaret Park – was put on display and duly cut up and distributed among the rallygoers.



The prizegiving (with prizes presented by Simon Goldsworthy, editor of ‘Triumph World’ magazine) took place fairly early in the afternoon to enable participants to leave soon afterwards, thus providing plenty of time for their homeward journeys.



An exceedingly rare automatic Vanguard Vignale Luxury 6 (1961).

KIM'S VIEW

I thought that this was a very enjoyable event, with well-organised road routes, taking in some very interesting destinations, a happy classic train ride, and the chance to see Standards dating from the early days of the last century up to the 1960s. One of the great things about the Standard Club is that it encompasses all models produced over a 60 year period, and Standard certainly built a wide variety, from economy cars to luxurious saloons to sports models.

Members were able to buy spares from fellow owners, also Club regalia, and of course – and

crucially – had the chance to meet up with like-minded enthusiasts and to talk about the cars. Indeed the social side of the Rally was much appreciated.

I discovered much that I didn't know about my own Standard as well as other models, and I, like other attendees, enjoyed the great and much-appreciated company of fellow enthusiasts with a common interest.

My grateful thanks to everyone – all volunteers – involved in the hard work of organising the Rally.

Next year's event will be held over the long weekend of Friday 19th to Sunday 21st June at Market Bosworth in Leicestershire. All Standards welcome… please see below more information about the Club.

STANDARD MOTOR CLUB

If you own, or are interested in, any Standard car, it is worth joining the Standard Motor Club, and the organisation would be delighted to hear from you. In addition to putting on the annual rallies and having local groups, the Club, which has members around the world, produces an excellent regular all-colour magazine, provides spares for members, for a wide range of models (having rare components re-manufactured when possible), arranges discounts on products and services, and generally helps to keep fellow owners in touch with each other.

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

Alternatively please call Club Secretary Lynda Homer on (01727) 868405.