Winner of the Royal Automobile Club 2024 Motoring Book Of The Year is… The Austin Pedal Car Story

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The Royal Automobile Club tells us:

(Photograph and all words from the Royal Automobile Club).



David Whyley's *The Austin Pedal Car Story*, published by Porter Press International, emerged as the Royal Automobile Club's 2024 Motoring Book Of The Year at a special ceremony in central London last night, in the presence of acclaimed motoring and motor racing authors from around the world.

This exhaustive, entertaining and beautifully produced book chronicles the story of how the Austin Motor Company provided much-needed work for disabled former miners in South Wales, building small-scale versions of its roadgoing cars for lucky children.

The Austin Pathfinder and J40 cars were made from 1949 to 1971. Today the originals are highly sought-after by collectors. They have recently gone back into production, and there is an annual race for them – called the Settrington Cup – at the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

They rely entirely on pedal-power, with the fittest legs making them go the fastest. So this is the first time a book on cars without engines has won outright at the Awards, now in its 11th straight year and regarded as the 'Oscars' of the car book world.

David Whyley is acknowledged as an Austin expert. He grew up near the company's headquarters in Longbridge, Birmingham, and has spent decades researching the work, which involved interviews with many of the people involved at the time. It also includes numerous previously unseen photos.

Accepting his award for *The Austin Pedal Car Story*, assessed by a panel of expert

independent judges, he said: “To me, this book was all about securing future interest in our history, and I felt I needed to tell the story of how the motor industry helped the people of the Welsh Valleys.

“I began researching this in the mid-1990s, and I was fortunate enough to meet the designer as part of that – I couldn’t believe what he had to show me, and so I was gifted the opportunity to write about these miniature marvels.”

Jeremy Vaughan, Head of Motoring at the Royal Automobile Club, commented:

“The range of titles under consideration is so wonderfully varied this year, perhaps more so than for any year since we started these Awards back in 2013.

“David’s book may be about cars that none of us will ever drive on the roads, but the approach he’s taken to his subject, and the incredible detail he’s amassed and catalogued, is as accomplished as any definitive marque history.

“Here at the Club, we love to play our part in recognising excellence in book publishing, and we’re lucky to have judges who are open-minded, knowledgeable and, of course, completely independent. I thank them all for their contributions”

This was by no means the only book to scoop an accolade last night.

Other books to win on the night (topping categories with and without a £50 price limit) included: *Morgan: An English Enigma* by Martyn Webb; *BMW: Behind The Scenes* by Steve Saxty; *Goldi*e by John Mayhead; and *The Last Eyewitness* by Doug Nye. The Graham Robson Award for Best Debut Author was presented to Bob Evans for *Happy Lucky Days: My Life in Racing*. Full details of all the winners are listed below.

Sharing the history-rich limelight at the Royal Automobile Club on Wednesday evening was Dr Clare Hay, who was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her significant contribution to the UK’s motoring book industry.

Her first book, the highly acclaimed *Bentley: The Vintage Year*s, was published in December1986, not long after her 23rd birthday. Her 10 subsequent titles on the marque and the work of Walter Owen Bentley have cemented her reputation as the pre-eminent world authority on vintage Bentley cars.

Dr Hay told the audience movingly of her early life, and the grip that her subject took on her.

Receiving £3000 from an insurance payout after being knocked off her bicycle, Dr Hay was able to buy her own Bentley 3 Litre as a wreck in Scotland – at a time when she didn't have a driving licence or any means to get it home.

She added that "Nobody took any interest in me or what I was doing." But within a very short time, she had become the leading authority on vintage Bentleys, with unparalleled knowledge on each of the 3000 individual cars produced, and consulted by renowned collectors, including Ralph Lauren.

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The Royal Automobile Club awarded four category winners in addition to the overall winner, and best debut author. All category winners are listed below.

<u>The Motoring Book of the Year:</u>
The Austin Pedal Car Story
By David Whyley
Porter Press International, £85

<u>Books about motor cars and motoring, costing no more than £50:</u>
Morgan: An English Enigma
By Martyn Webb
The Crowood Press, £45

Books about motor cars and motoring, with no price limit:
BMW: Behind the Scenes
By Steve Saxty
Seven Spoke Publishing, £239.95

Books on a motor sporting subject, costing no more than £50:
Goldie
By John Mayhead
National Motor Museum Publishing, £20

Books on a motor sporting subject with no price limit:
The Last Eyewitness
By Doug Nye
Porter Press International, price £195

Graham Robson Award for Best Debut Author:
Bob Evans
Happy Lucky Days: My Life in Racing
BHP Publishing, £32.

Lifetime Achievement Award:
Dr Clare Hay

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Further information

About the 2024 Motoring Book of the Year Judging Committee
The award committee is led by non-voting chairman Simon Taylor and consists of six expert judges who are totally independent of the Royal Automobile Club. They are Gordon Cruickshank of *Motor Sport*, Mark Dixon of *Octane*, Mick Walsh from *Classic & Sports Car*, BRDC *Bulletin* editor Ian Titchmarsh, Ben Horton from specialist bookseller Horton's Books, and Christian Whitehead from famous Oxford bookstore Blackwells.

About The Royal Automobile Club
The Royal Automobile Club was founded in 1897 and its distinguished history mirrors that of motoring itself. In 1907, the Club was awarded its Royal title by King Edward VII, sealing the Club's status as Britain's oldest and most influential motoring organisation.

The Club's early years were focused on promoting the motor car and its place in society, which developed into motoring events such as the 1000 Mile Trial, first held in 1900. In 1905, the Club held the first Tourist Trophy, which remains the oldest continuously competed for motor sports event. The Club promoted the first pre-war and post-war Grands Prix at Brooklands in 1926 and Silverstone in 1948 respectively, whilst continuing to campaign for the rights of the motorist, including introducing the first driving licences.

Today, the Club continues to develop and support automobilism through representation on the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and RAC Foundation while promoting its own motoring events including London Motor Week and the RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run. This year the Club's London Motor Week – including the Motoring Book of The Year Awards – runs from Monday, 28 October to Sunday, 3 November. New for this year is the St James's Motoring Spectacle on Saturday, 2 November, a free-to-attend moto show on Pall Mall itself.

The Royal Automobile Club also awards a series of historically world-famous trophies and medals celebrating motoring achievements. These include the Segrave Trophy, the Tourist Trophy, the Simms Medal, the Dewar Trophy, the Torrens Trophy, the Diamond Jubilee Trophy, and the Historic Awards.

Kim adds: I reviewed this superb book on Wheels-Alive in November: If you would like to read this, please go to: for-your-bookshelf-the-austin-pedal-car-story-the-fascinating-history-of-austins-j40-and-pathfinder/