

# BOOK REVIEWS

## VANWALL - THE STORY OF BRITAIN'S FIRST FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONS

**Authors:** Denis Jenkinson and Cyril Posthumus, with Doug Nye

**Publisher:** Porter Press.

[www.porterpress.co.uk](http://www.porterpress.co.uk) or 01584 781588

**Price:** £90. Hardback (11.8 by 11.8in). 288 pages with more than 200 b&w and colour photographs

**ISBN:** 978-1913089252

Anyone who has read Jenkinson's and Posthumus's original 1975 Vanwall book will understand its value as one of the most comprehensive and scholarly motor racing histories, an essential text for those wishing to learn more about the high-stakes world of 1950s Grand Prix racing. This book, nominally a 'new edition', takes the authoritative text of the original and treats it to a 21st century makeover.

As Doug Nye recounts elsewhere in this issue, the enormous archive of period photographs and documentation deserved to be seen by the wider public, and what better way to publish it than as a framework for a new edition of this book? The result is a large, square-format delight; a masterclass in what is possible with decent source material and a smart designer. With more than 200 photographs, many of which haven't been seen before, this is a visual feast which transports the reader back to those heady days when it looked like a British car could conquer the world of motor sport. The mixture of pin-sharp monochrome and gorgeous colour images is bolstered by documents and ephemera, almost certainly unseen for 70 years.

Just a tiny selection of these can be seen in our preview on page 48, so there is no need for this review to be unduly wordy. Needless to say, this is an excellent book which is essential for anyone interested in this evocative subject. **S B**

## UNIPOWER GT

**Author:** Gerry Hulford

**Publisher:** Self-published. Available from

[www.unipowertg.uk](http://www.unipowertg.uk)

**Price:** £39.95. Hardback (8.5 by 10.6in). 172 pages with 420 b&w and colour photographs

**ISBN:** 978-1399904773

Whilst the Unipower GT, the mid-engined Mini-based sports car from London, falls slightly outside the purview of this magazine, this interesting new book is certainly worthy of consideration for those readers whose tastes extend beyond our 1960 cut-off date.

The potential to make BMC's baby go faster became evident almost as soon as the model was launched in 1959, and it didn't take long before the utilitarian bodywork was being reimagined by enterprising garagistes up

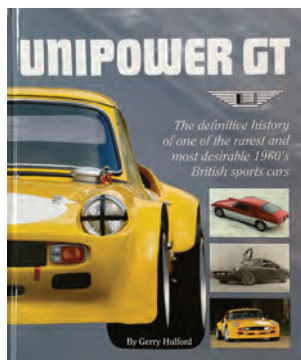


and down the country. The first re-worked Minis were already on the road in 1960, and by 1962 there was a veritable cottage industry surrounding the car, with sterling efforts from Ogle, Deep Sanderson and Butterfield available to buy. The Unipower GT came a little later, in 1965, but was one of the most advanced and interesting efforts of the decade.

Most notably, the Unipower's designers placed the A-series power unit behind the driver at a time when the mid-engined configuration was still very much in its infancy, at least for road cars. A specially-designed chassis tub was constructed and found to have excellent road-holding and acceleration, and a remarkably clean, low body was fitted – initially in aluminium, then glassfibre for production cars – which was as exciting and modern as the mechanical layout. Whilst the author of this book insists on referring to the Unipower as the 'mini Miura', to us it always looked more like a baby GT40. The resemblance between Dearborn's Ferrari-beating Le Mans car and the Perivale pocket-rocket was more than coincidental, as both cars were penned by Ford designer Ron Bradshaw – coincidentally, the Unipower also stood at just 40in high, a remarkable bit of packaging.

Whilst the design was sound, the car suffered the usual issues of British low-volume manufacture, with owners becoming an unwitting r&d team. Teething troubles aside, the basic package was universally admired and the car was a cut above what many small manufacturers were producing at the time. It certainly didn't deserve its eventual fate – the all-too-familiar undercapitalisation, supply issues and eventual demise after just 73 cars had been built.

Around half this book concerns the history of the marque, with the other half a survey of the car's competition record and a register of chassis numbers and race victories. There is a great selection of period photographs, and all the principal players have been interviewed. Whilst the author is clearly a dedicated fan, this is a balanced and generally unbiased history which reads well. For what essentially



## BOOK ENDS

Roger Nathan, the competition driver and onetime constructor of svelte Imp-based racers, detailed the early part of his life and career in a 2017 biography which focussed on his racing life. He has now written a second volume, **Roger's Run:**

**A Life On The Edge**, which picks up where the first book left off and covers his extensive post-motor sport ventures. Although his on-track life was exciting, it pales in comparison to what came next. Nathan was mixed up in everything from the Lebanese civil war, diamond mining in Sierra Leone and even a meeting with the Pope. It's a cliché to say it reads like a Hollywood film script, but it's less believable than many blockbusters.

The 200-page hardback costs £30 and can be ordered direct from the author by visiting [www.rogernathanbooks.co.uk](http://www.rogernathanbooks.co.uk)

The latest tome from Evro is **Lola: The T70 and Can-Am Cars** by Gordon

Jones. This huge 570-page hardback is a detailed look at Eric Broadley's most famous creations and includes no fewer than 700 photographs of cars in action. Although most of the subject falls outside *The Automobile's* remit, there is plenty here to entice fans of all eras of motor sport. Production values are good, and it's difficult to imagine a more thorough book on the subject. It costs £95 – see [www.evropublishing.com](http://www.evropublishing.com)

Our regular contributor Peter McFadyen has compiled a photobook of his own images taken at the **VSCC's Pomeroy Trophy** event between 2007 and 2020.

The perennially-popular Silverstone event, to try to identify the best touring car, is one of the Vintage Sports-Car Club's calendar highlights and always attracts a varied and fascinating entry. Peter's photographs are complemented by captions and results tables for each event. If you've taken part, or just spectated, over the past decade or so, you will probably want to pick up a copy. It costs £39.99 and can be ordered via Peter's website at [www.petermcfadyen.co.uk](http://www.petermcfadyen.co.uk) where you'll also find galleries of all the other events he attends

amounts to a 'club publication', it's nicely put together. For fans of this subject matter – the doomed British plastic sports car – this will be a most welcome addition to your library. It's a limited print run and is sure to sell out, so grab a copy while you can. **S B**

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AUTOMOBILE

**Author:** Miles C Collier

**Publisher:** Collier Automotive LLC.

Available in the UK from Hortons Books.  
www.hortonsbooks.co.uk

**Price:** £150. Hardback (8.8 by 11.4in).  
392 pages with more than 270 b&w and  
colour illustrations

**ISBN:** 978-1735645100

It's a rare event when a title joins the motoring-book market which could prove to be as significant a publication as American collector Miles Collier's newly-released *magnum opus*. Way back, the sum total of published automotive history was enhanced immensely by such works as *From Veteran to Vintage* by Kent Karlake and Laurence Pomeroy, the latter's *The Grand Prix Car* and Griff Borgeson's *The Golden Age of the American Racing Car*, while Ronald Barker and Anthony Harding probably also qualify for their *Automobile Design: Great Designers and their Work*.

None of these centred on one specific make nor model, nor on one specific personality or event. Miles Collier's new book is equally generalist in content, but oh my does he tackle his wide-ranging subject in forensically targeted individual detail.

I must declare partiality here. I have known Miles for nearly 40 years and have worked with him closely on his renowned Connoisseurship Symposia at his Revs Institute, formerly Collier Collection, museum in Naples, Florida.

As a lifelong car enthusiast born into a pioneering American road-racing family, Miles is not only one of the most wide-rangingly knowledgeable people I have ever met (and I've met a few), he is also blessed with an extraordinarily enquiring – and open – mindset. He regards the automobile as one of the most influential social-change factors of the 20th century, and beyond. With good reason he considers its world-shaping influence and importance to have been 'remarkably unrepresented in general scholarship', and his book, in many ways a heartfelt love letter to the automobile, sets out to show how archaeology examines 'the imprint of the past inscribed in matter' – 'the matter' in this instance being the automobile itself, in all its forms.

Early on, the book highlights the remarkable fact that, at the dawn of the 20th century, five acres of feed were needed to sustain a single horse for a year. In the US of 1910, the nation's 26 million horses alone needed 130 million acres dedicated to producing

fodder, necessitating the wholesale removal of forestry. That's one demand the adoption of the automobile removed. The social mobility the automobile provided, eventually for the masses, transformed the world and the lives of millions, not least those employed in motor manufacture. Collier goes on to analyse the progress of the car from novelty, to status symbol, to plaything, to engine of war and to accepted necessity, before exploring its rapid transition 'from ratty old relics decaying in recycling yards to valuable and treasured collectibles of lifestyle accessories'.

He recalls his early teenage fascination with Abartths, moves on to explore the almost instant-classic status of the Duesenberg Model J which he contrasts with the 1934 Chrysler Airflow, a commercial fiasco in its day but highly appreciated in modern times. Miles is very much a polymath not only in his personal interests – he is both an accomplished and well qualified artist as well as an engineer – but his all-embracing enthusiasm and personal experience embrace everything automobile from his own Porsche-engined VW Beetle 'Q-car', through Mini-Cooper back to 1914 Grand Prix Mercedes and Peugeot *Voiturette*, to 1919 Indianapolis Ballot, to 1928 Stutz Black Hawk, 1939 Grand Prix Mercedes-Benz

W154/163, to 1966 Ford GT Mark II and the Cunningham team cars, preserved in staggeringly original condition, to a 1955-56 Jaguar D-type, and countless others.

Miles writes at length about the automobile as a surviving object, and how 'The archaeological imagination depends upon an object's particularity – the physical clues that the investigator can tease out of its form, function and surviving structure through close reading.'

And such close reading is then explained and explored with painstaking inspection and analysis of such factors as sanded-through paint layers, forensic comparison of what survives into the 21st century compared to what was captured photographically back in 1919, 1939, 1971 or whenever. He explores the automobile as a 'legacy artefact' and highlights the fact that 'All restoration is fiction' – restoration itself being unavoidably a process of obliteration of the genuine finish and condition which in many cases has endured for decades. But he explores its acceptability as a process to preserve the artefact for future generations' appreciation, understanding and enjoyment. He considers conservation/restoration under the heading *When to Block the Road to Ruin?*.

This is all typical of the man. He is the deepest-thinking, most analytically-inclined (and mercilessly self-critical) major collector I have ever encountered. He has always had an interest in teaching, but this is no deadly-dry instructional manual because he has always, I believe far more significantly, had a compulsion to learn. It's the synthesis of his lifetime's learning about the automobiles that he plainly adores that is set down in these near-400 pages. He understands the importance of entertaining to capture interest and what could so easily be an over-dense and earnestly dry American-academic text is relieved repeatedly by personal and remembered anecdotes and illuminating asides.

It's still not the easiest and most rollicking of tales, but that is not its function. Here is a standard-setting, philanthropically-minded super-enthusiast and collector offering posterity, and in many ways the restoration industry, a highly-detailed and thought-provoking blueprint for identifying, resolving, understanding, best-preserving and perpetuating our motoring world's finest products for posterity.

For the thoughtful reader, for the professionals within the Veteran, Vintage and classic car world, and for fellow dyed-in-the-wool enthusiasts, I cannot recommend this volume too highly.

**Doug Nye**

