

## Places to go

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BARRY WISEMAN

# ATWELL-WILSON MOTOR MUSEUM

*The most surprising things turn up in the most unexpected places*



**Left and below**

Fabulously informal museum has a wealth of exhibits, from cars to enamel signs, automotive artefacts to model trucks. Its family-run feel is a further boon.

'9X experimental 1500cc' and was tuned to give performance over a wide rev band, so that only a torque converter was needed to provide drive.

Other unusual features are the fuel tank – positioned under the boot with the spare wheel, to give a much larger load area – and MacPherson strut front suspension. Fascinating! The car is on loan from the British Motor Museum, Gaydon, as are several others, including the 1990 ERA Mini Turbo parked behind it.

There are motorcycles, including a Brough Superior and Indian, pedal cycles, fine enamel signs and numerous display cases of automobilia from many eras. The cars on show are mainly British and American, including the Bishop of Kuala Lumpur's Chevrolet Nova (his Vatican car) and an immense Lincoln Continental.

The Jack Spittle Collection was opened in 2015. It's a shop-window display of 30 years of model truck building by ex-haulier Jack, made after he became unable to drive.

Alas, the Atwells are no longer with us, but the museum is capably run by a Trust. As is so often found in these places, the staff members are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and devoted to the museum and its future. Parking is easy and plentiful, making it a great place for car-club gatherings. There's a small shop, but refreshments are available only on request for group visits.

A tip: Go around the museum twice. You're bound to miss items of interest the first time.

*Atwell-Wilson Motor Museum is located just off the A4 in Stockley Lane, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 0NF. It is well signposted. Admission: Adult £7, Child £1. Website with opening hours and further details at [www.atwellwilson.org.uk](http://www.atwellwilson.org.uk).*

**THERE CAN BE FEW THINGS** a classic car enthusiast likes more than visiting a previously unseen motor museum. When the museum is found to be informally controlled and staffed by a group of friends as a warm-hearted, family-type business, the experience becomes even more memorable. Such a museum is the Atwell-Wilson Motor Museum.

Wiltshire's only motor museum, Atwell-Wilson's goes back to the early 1960s, when Richard Atwell bought a 1937 McLaughlin Buick, with rare convertible coachwork by the Carlton Carriage Company of Albemarle Street, London. It was found on a farm, being used as a chicken house – dirty, but sound. Cherished but never restored, it became Richard's wedding car and the basis of his museum. The trustees believe it's one of only two in the world.

Richard inherited a 1931 Singer Junior, owned by his family from new, and a 1934 Vauxhall 14/6, bought for £10. All these are still on show, and they – along with others, including a Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith and Daimler DR450 – earn their keep as wedding cars, a great way to make some income and keep those parts working.

In 1981 the collection was brought together under one roof, and 1989 saw the construction of the Main Hall, allowing the exhibits to

spread and be more visitor friendly. The Main Hall has a bit of everything, from a magnificent black 1961 Plymouth Fury convertible, which was driven across America before coming to England, to what's said to be the last Triumph Dolomite off the assembly line. The last Austin Maxi is there, too.

A particularly interesting exhibit, and worth the trip on its own, is the Issigonis gearless Mini. This oddity was purchased by Sir Alec in 1975, and used in his development programme for 17 years. A copy of the logbook bearing Sir Alec's details is still with the vehicle. Strangely, the car has sliding windows, external door hinges and a restyled nose, incorporating a Mini Moke grille/headlight panel. The engine is described as a

