

## A new series: "European Classics A-Z"

*Continuing the tradition of Les Jackson's "Full Classics A-Z" series, the Roadrunner will carry an occasional piece on European classics. These automobiles are less well-known to most of our members, but are Classics nonetheless. Perhaps this series will inspire a member to add to the variety of fine cars in our Region.*

## A.C.: One of the oldest British car companies still operating



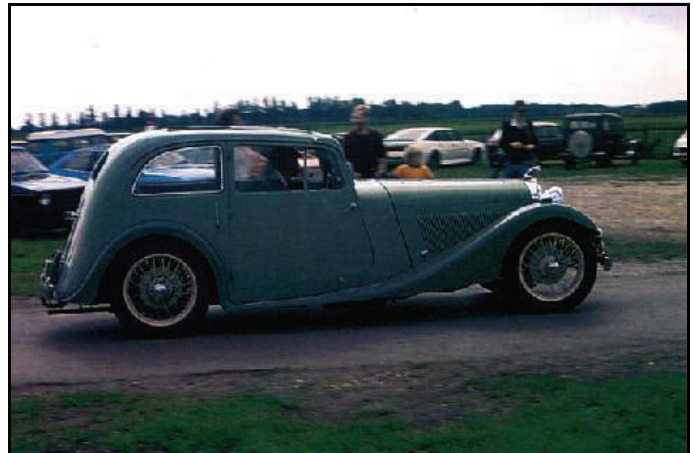
By John Ossenfort

Founded at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by a brilliant young engineer, John Weller, and financed by the owner of a butcher shop chain, A.C. first made its name in 1904 with a 3-wheel single-cylinder commercial vehicle, the Autocarrier (hence later A.C.). The first passenger version, the Sociable, was introduced in 1908. In 1911 the factory was moved to Thames Ditton, not far from one of the centers of the coming English automobile industry and the famed Brooklands Race Track.



The A.C. Sociable (nc), 1908-1914, was so named because the passengers sat side by side, rather than in tandem as was common with 3-wheelers at the time.

The company got its sporting credentials in the 1920's from two sources. The first was Weller's cleanly designed, lightweight, aluminum 2-liter straight six engine, with a chain-drive overhead cam running two valves per cylinder. The second source was a new director, S.F. Edge, the noted early race driver and engineer. Edge pushed A.C. to enter competition, and in 1922 they became the first light car to average 100 mph for an hour. Other speed records followed, and in 1926 an A.C. car won the Monte Carlo Rally.



1932 A.C. 16/66 Airline Saloon, a popular 1930's body style in England

In 1929, A.C., along with many other car companies, collapsed and Edge retired, and in 1930 Charles and William Hurlock acquired the company. Weller's original 1991 c.c. engine remained basically the same, but hydraulic brakes, a more modern suspension, and a synchromesh 4-speed transmission (with an optional Wilson preselector gearbox) updated the car. In 1936 a new sports chassis was introduced with a graceful two-seater body. Four versions were available: the 16/60, 16/70, 16/80 and the supercharged 16/90 (the second number refers to the engine b.h.p.). Weller's basic six-cylinder engine, with some modifications, continued until 1956.

A.C. Director Selwyn Francis Edge (1868-1940), born in Australia, was well-known first as a teenage bicycle racer and then as an automobile importer for DeDion-Boutons. He gained his greatest renown working with Napier, first in rallying trials and then as their driver in the Gordon Bennett Cup races. He won the 1903 Cup in a 17-liter Napier.



Above and below: 1936 A.C. 16/80, one of the prettiest English cars of the '30's. The same body and chassis were also used for the 16/60, 16/70 and supercharged 16/90.

A.C.'s greatest fame came in 1962 when an A.C. chassis and body was fitted with a small block Ford V8 to create the famous A.C. Cobra (nc). A.C. cars are still being built today after more than a hundred years.

All A.C.'s from 1925 to 1940 are CCCA-recognized Full Classics<sup>®</sup>. They include the 16/56 and 16/66 (1925-1933), and the 16/60, 16/70, 16/80 and 16/90 (1932-1940). There are no A.C. cars registered by current Arizona Region members. The 2008 CCCA Handbook lists 7 A.C. automobiles in the Club.



**Note: If you miss Les's writing, all his "Classics A to Z" articles and several of his recent "Featured Car" articles are available on the Region's web site at [www.arizonacc.com](http://www.arizonacc.com).**

## Editor's Notes

### Some big shoes to fill

By John Ossenfort

Readers may have noticed that this issue of the Arizona Classic Roadrunner is a bit different. This is my first attempt at editing the Roadrunner (actually, my first attempt at editing ANY newsletter, for that matter), so please be patient with me.

Les Jackson and Julie Sackett have done an amazing job as editors for the past six years. In fact, Les began editing the Roadrunner the first time around in the late '80's, and they did it again for several years in the late '90's. I've only been in the Region myself for about eight years, and Les's writing with Julie's photos has been most of what I've seen. As preparation for my new task, I've had the pleasure of browsing through the back issues and have been amazed at the professionalism they brought to this publication over the years. Utilizing their work as a template certainly will make whatever I do look significantly better than it would otherwise. Thank you for everything you've done, Les and Julie.

I would also like to thank Les, Julie, Gary Capra and Bill Ingler for the help they've given me in getting started, and special thanks to Bob Messinger and Sharon Briskman for their contributions to this newsletter. Note to all Region members: I'm at a bit of a disadvantage living in Flagstaff when most of the activities take place in the Valley, so please help me whenever you can by contributing or suggesting articles and photos. Reports on CARavans and National meetings that you attend are always of interest. And technical and historical articles have been a feature of the Roadrunner and are not my strong suit. So please help me to try to fill those big shoes!

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*Late breaking news! The Arizona Classic Roadrunner has won the National CCCA's 2009 Publications Incentive Award, given for excellence in publications by a small (less than 100 members) region. Arizona has won this award five times in the last eleven years, and has been in contention for top honors several other times. Les and Julie were editors for four of those first place awards.*