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12 October 2022 | Genesis Electric G80



It's a drop tank from an RAF Tornado that I bought on eBay for £330. I stuck a Daimler 4.2 straight six in the back, steer it with the tiller from an Antonov cargo plane – and here we are!

'Here' is The Lundy Flyers Motor Club's annual beach race on Saunton Sands in Devon – a weekend in September of 1/8-mile sprints and 'slow and low' one-mile cruises for

hot rods and motorcycles up to 1965 or at least in the same style. Hot rods and motorcycles but also belly-tank specials, such as Mark Elsigood's aforementioned Tornado-derived 'Rocket', inspired by the streamlined Bonneville Salt Flats racers of the 1930s, and cyclekarts.

Imagine the Goodwood Revival beside the sea and a few decades further back in time – to the 1930s, to be precise. Stewards stride about in oily white overalls and bare feet

(it's sandy, remember), while the start line is marked by two magnificent pylons fashioned from discarded roof timbers donated by event co-founder, local tattoo artist Mike Stocks. On one side, closer to the shore, is an authentic-looking lifeguard observation tower built from the same off-cuts, and on the other what looks like an old Wild West jail that's home to Matt 'Smoke House' Brown, spinning 1930s classics.

Steve Newport-Hall is among the

40 or so entrants who have driven, but mostly trailered, their cars here. His is a 1932 Ford Model 18 flathead, once the model of choice for bootleggers running moonshine. To outrun the police, the 'leggers tuned and lowered popular family cars. In time, the tuned motors gave rise to stock car racing and Nascar but also spawned hot rods – ordinary cars that have been chopped and channelled to reduce their height and fitted with more powerful engines. →

A JOLLY GOOD SHOW

If the Goodwood Revival is too hip for you, John Evans recommends heading instead to 'The Lundy Flyers' annual celebration of 1930s automobilia. Just don't forget your flip-flops

PHOTOGRAPHY GEORGI GEORGIEV, VLADIMIR YORDANOV



Neville Reed's Model A hot rod was the joint most successful car



Tom Gels leads the way in his home-built belly racer



Bob Petersen's Chevy Bel Air won most desirable car



Newport-Hall has owned his Model 18 for four years. It's terrific, but I'm struggling to take my eyes off an immaculate Ford Model A parked alongside. Jamie Williams has owned the 1928 car for 10 years and fitted it with a 4.2-litre 'flatty' to create what he calls a 1940s period hot rod.

Toby Smith has brought his '57 Ford Popular, chopped, channelled and fitted with a glassfibre back so that it looks like a Model B pick-up. Under the bonnet is a humble four-cylinder 'Pinto' from a 1973 Cortina. "Over 60mph it's scary," he admits.

I wonder what it will feel like on the sand in the sprints. The idea is that two cars of similar styles and performance run side by side in one direction before changing 'lanes' and returning. Halfway along the lane nearest the sea, a depression filled with loose sand has developed that causes the cars to squirm violently.

"The best thing is to let the car find its own path," advises Newport-Hall.

One car that makes surprisingly light work of it is Steve Hillary's huge 1929 Packard roadster, powered by a later 5.5-litre Chevy V8. The luxury open tourer glides over the sand on a slug of torque.

Elsewhere and looking as if it's just been towed in from a scrapyard is Dan Dawson's 1956 Ford Fairlane 'Town Sedan. It is powered by a 5.9-litre Cleveland V8 and, remarkably, is right-hand drive.

"I reckon it was a diplomat's car," says Dawson. It dwarfs the 1933 Austin 7 alongside, owned by Graham Brook since 1976. "It's not a hot rod but the organisers welcome standard cars if you ask nicely," he says. "Its narrow track makes it dart around on the sand, so you have to be careful."

It's cute, but I'm lusting

after Brendan Finlon's 1965 Pontiac Le Mans coupé. Black, low and powered by a 6.5 V8, it looks the business. "It was in the film *Dead Man's Cards*," says Finlon.

But if I'm beginning to think you need big cash to own and run these cars, Bernard Reeves puts me straight with his 1928 2.8-litre Chevrolet, styled after a 1920s Daytona beach racer. "I built it in lockdown for £1000," he says.

Among the hundreds of curious

holidaymakers who have trekked the half-mile or so from the car park to the event, which is free, are the Coombes family from Southampton (pictured, below). "We love old cars and it's lovely down here on the beach," says Mrs Coombes. Mr Coombes is wearing a Normandy Beach Run T-shirt. "Covid stopped me getting to the event, in France, in 2019, so I bought the shirt," he says.

Stocks is very happy with this, the second Lundy Flyers beach race.

"It's a festival of extremes," he says. "This is the first day but, as news spreads, I expect tomorrow to be even busier. Last year, we couldn't do sprints, but Nora, the off-road motorsport organisers, helped make them happen this time. It's not a race; it's about taking part, which sums up Lundy Flyers." □



Adrian Gosling preps his cyclekart for action

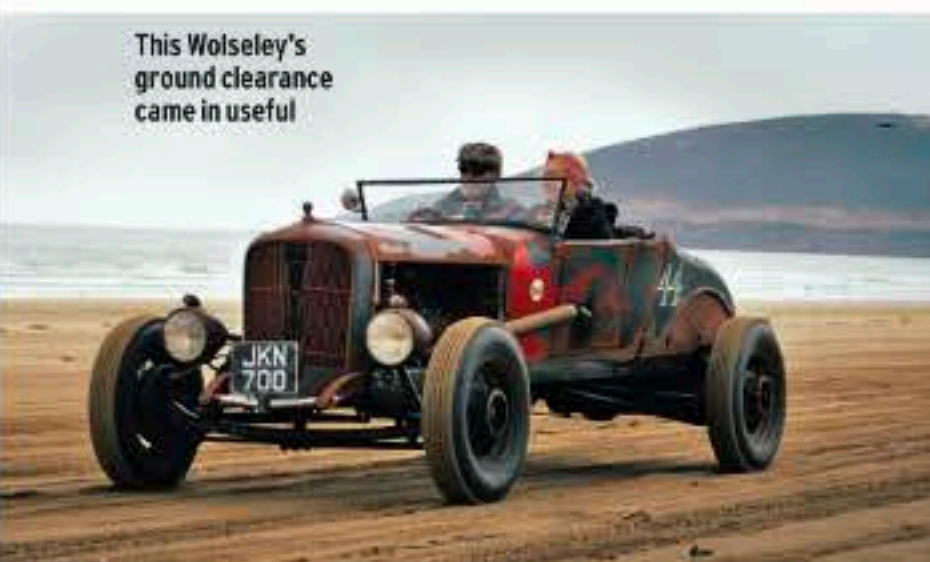


Saunton Sands racing includes 1/8-mile sprints

“A depression filled with loose sand has developed that causes the cars to squirm violently”



Mark Elsgood got good value from his £330 eBay purchase



This Wolseley's ground clearance came in useful



Period motorcycles are as welcome as four-wheelers on the sand

OTHER PERIOD HOT-ROD EVENTS IN THE UK



PENDINE SANDS HOT ROD RACES

vhra.co.uk
Organised by the Vintage Hot Rod Association and usually held in May, the annual event, for pre-1949 traditional hot rods and customs, runs over two days on this historic beach in Wales. The half-mile run-up and a flying 1/16th of a mile sees cars exceed 120mph.



PRESCOTT HILLCLIMB

vhra.co.uk
This VHRA event is held on August bank holiday weekend and is the perfect opportunity for hot rodders to test their cars on the bends, which - given that they were designed for the straights - makes for a thrilling spectacle.



YORK BARNSTORMER WEEKEND

backfirepromotions.com
This hot-rod event with a difference takes place in April or May and sees period hot rods and customs shaking their tails on grass rather than sand. That means no grit in your shoes but, if it rains, plenty of mud on your trousers.



RACE THE WAVES, BRIDLINGTON

backfirepromotions.com
Also organised by Backfire Promotions, this hot-rod meet is destined to return in April next year. The vintage automobile festival is a tribute to the motor racing and speed-trial events held in the UK since 1905.