



# We've picked our green car winner (but it's still secret)

**THE Midland Group has been busy picking its favourite 'green' cars and the results will be made public at the Houses of Parliament in November.**

When we were approached earlier this year by The Green Organisation, which asked the Midland Group of Motoring Writers to vote for their favourite green cars, it wasn't hard for us to say yes.

The Green Organisation, which is based in Northamptonshire, is a not for profits group which invites entries from all parts of industry for its annual Green Apple Awards, presented at the Houses of Parliament each autumn.

There are lots of categories and previous winners have included blue chip names like the BBC, BP, Aviva, Eon and B&Q. Car makers (including Fiat, Ford and Jaguar) have also been winners, but for their environmental practices, not their cars.

Many of our 31 members, who write about motoring for publications all across the UK and beyond, spend their working week at the wheel of the latest models from the world's car makers.

Their work takes them all over Europe, and sometimes beyond, in the quest for news for their readers about how the latest cars behave on the road (and off).

In the process the Midland Group members learn much more about a car than the simple economy and emissions figures the manufacturers are bound by the rules to give, and which are rarely matched in real world use, away from the laboratory.

So, when The Green Organisation asked us for our current green champions we wanted to go further than some other awards and look beyond the official figures and rank our favourites in the real world, taking into account how they performed in our hands.

We also pointed out to our members before they began to consider their votes: 'As keen drivers, we rate cars on more than simple on-paper figures. Some cars can be both economical and

good to drive. We'd like your decision to reflect that too.'

We have not tried to make awards for every category of car. Instead, we've looked at cars where economy counts perhaps more than anything but also acknowledge that plenty of drivers want a vehicle that's sporty or large and luxurious but don't want to waste money on fuel or pollute the world.

The voting resulted in a wide spread of vehicles collecting a mention and with one standing out comfortably ahead of the pack.

Our voting members are sworn to secrecy about the overall winner and the cars that took category wins too.

All will be revealed at the Houses of Parliament on 14 November.



The footwear gives the game away; the chap hanging on to the sidecar for dear life is our own Syd Taylor and he's about to enjoy (?) the ride of a lifetime during press day for the Cholmondeley Pageant of Power. For a picture of Syd minus helmet (but plus plenty of hair) please turn to page 3.



**We're getting steamed up for our big day out: See page 2**



**Our Phil Award winner in her own words: See page 4**



**Roger gets that World War Two feeling: See page 5**

DRAFT

## We welcome our newest member to the Group

THE Midland Group has a new member following a vote which saw Tony Adams join our 30 active and five social members.

Tony (60) is a freelance journalist,



whose publications include Shropshire Magazine, Shropshire Star, Express & Star, Bridgnorth Journal and Motorsport News.

He lives at School House, Nordley,

Bridgnorth WV16 4SC with wife Jocelyne and lists motor sport, golf, shooting, tennis and squash as interests.

Tony's email address is adams.schoolhouse@virgin.net and his phone number is 01746 766977.

## Renault continues rapid roll-out of new models

RENAULT has produced two new models in two days, one called Edward and the other Neve.

First to arrive was Edward Anthony Townsend, weighing 7lb 11oz and a delightful handful for dad Jeremy, press relations manager at Renault UK and mum Suzanne.

The following day saw the arrival of a slightly lighter model (at 7lb 8oz), named Neve and offspring of Mike Gale, product affairs manager at Renault UK and his partner Caroline.

## Worldwide interest in Group's website

MONDAY is the busiest day for visits to the Midland Group's website (mgmw.co.uk) according to statistics for June, with Wednesday the least visited.

A total of 458 visits were made in the month with our events listings page the most turned to.

Most hits came from the United States (54), with 17 from Bangladesh and even 14 from Nigeria, without a hint of any member winning a surprise £1m.

The very thorough statistics we receive each month show the most frequently used search term was 'evening', followed by 'writers' and then, amazingly 'rover'.

No surprise, perhaps, that 100 per cent of searches were made on Google search engines of some sort.



## No trouble at t'mill when we take time out with our friends in the press offices



**OVER the years the Midland Group's Industry Day has gained a reputation for being a fun, family day out that involves nothing to do with cars or any great effort, apart from that required to enjoy yourselves.**

We have also made sure there's very little expense involved for our guests and made sure we fund the event ourselves. After all, motoring journalists spend their working hours being hosted by car manufacturers and we think that once a year we should fund an event ourselves.



Our venue this year is rather unusual, even unique, and there are interesting options for our guests that should ensure a fun day is had by all. The all-important date is Sunday, 25 September and our base is Cromford Mills near Matlock on the edge of Derbyshire's beautiful Peak District.

Cromford Mills was the true start of the industrial revolution when in 1771 Richard Arkwright began cotton spinning and became a pioneer of many industrial and social employment firsts that we take for granted today.

Apart from being able to hear all about Richard Arkwright we have one or two other treats in store. For those who like steam trains you will be able to travel through some of the Peak District's most beautiful scenery courtesy of Peak Rail, or see a unique view of the Derwent Valley from the Heights of Abraham cable cars.

## Nick adds titles and joins the campervan set in the south

NICK Fletcher has added two new outlets to the list of publishers he provides with motoring copy.

The first, which takes road tests and car news from Nick is House, Style & Living magazine, a 160 page glossy lifestyle mag which covers Dorset, and unusually, is published every fortnight.

The other is also a glossy lifestyle mag called HOT, which covers high-end lifestyle topics in including cars, and which circulates along the south coast.



Nick and wife Cassie are now motoring around their south coast base in a newly-bought set of stylish wheels. Nick writes: 'We have just bought an elderly VW campervan (pictured) which despite being 23 years old, has incredibly done only 80,000 miles from new, and has its full service history and previous MOTs. We plan to use it for short breaks in Dorset and Cornwall. It's full of strange gadgets such as windows you have to hand-wind, and a heater with sliding levers. And the side lights and headlights are on separate switches conveniently sited on opposite sides of the console.'

## Two feel a bit tired at Cholmondley



Brrmmm...brrmmm... or BRM, actually, as Derek and Syd pose with one of the motors from Bourne, while INSET is Syd after his run on the sidecar, looking less than his usual immaculate best

**A COUPLE of classics turned up for the Cholmondeley Pageant of Power preview day – and posed for the camera before looking at the old cars on display.**

Derek Hill and Syd Taylor, were at the press day for the pageant, which drew crowds of more than 50,000 to the three day event held in the grounds of Cholmondley Castle, some miles west of Nantwich in Cheshire.

With them (and taking the pictures above) was John Swift, who reports that the preview day was 'a great event, blasting around in Group B stuff, no helmets, no health and safety rubbish. Later (after his usual hearty lunch) Skid (Syd) went on a sidecar. The pic (on the front page) shows him in the chair and afterwards (pic above) with his hair looking even more strange than normal!

PS – you couldn't make it up...true to form the BRM wouldn't run. A low fuel pressure problem was traced to.....a fuel leak. Nothing changes then!

### Speaking of motor sport...

**John Swift** has been out on track this year in his classic Formula Ford single seater and told Update:

'I'm doing OK this season in the Champion of Oulton. Three outings so far have resulted in two class wins and a second place which was one of my closest races ever - wheel to wheel the whole race and just 14/1000ths of a second separating us at the flag. I lost count of how many times we passed each other and in places I wouldn't normally try but it was brilliant fun from start to finish.

'It's such a relief to be in the car again and doing OK. I haven't really raced since early 2007. I got the car out at the start of last year but there was an engine issue which we simply couldn't trace so I missed all of last season.

Had a full rebuild over the winter (the engine,

not me) but got to the first two races in April which I won, but there was an awful misfire under load.

'In the pits it was fine, revving as sweet as a nut, but on the track I got a neck ache from the on-off power at high revs. We cured it by the hi-tech method of binning the electronic ignition pack and going back to the old points. It worked and in my last race, where I came second by a whisker, the engine ran just fine.

'I'm out again at the end of this month (July 30) at Oulton again for two races and if I can win both then it will be looking good for winning my class championship this year with a couple more races in the autumn, but there is some tough opposition from two guys in particular, so we'll see.

'I'm just rusty and need more mileage because there is absolutely no substitute for seat time and I need to find that extra tenth or two of a second a lap and have the confidence to really attack the braking – I guess I'm up to five metres or so too early on the stoppers at the moment in the harder corners.

'My brain's saying 'wait a bit longer' but the self-preservation muscle in my right foot has a mind of its own... you know what they say; the older you get, the closer seem the barriers.

'It's definitely a subconscious thing, because in the last race the other drivers I was fighting were racing really hard inches apart and I loved every second of it and definitely wasn't fearful even when fractionally apart, sliding side by side through somewhere fast like Island or Old Hall bends at 115 -120 mph.

'It's frustrating as hell because I know I'm not at 100 per cent of what I'm capable of – which isn't much. but it is satisfying to drive as fast as you can.

'More track time - that's all it is, a bit more track time. And budget for testing. And new tyres. And less grey hair: None of which will happen.'

Andrew sets up a new website with a technical slant



ANDREW Noakes has launched a new website (**cartechanical.co.uk**), kicking off with reports and interviews from the Shanghai motor show.

He explains: 'Cartechanical champions car technology in an accessible and authoritative way. Cars are becoming more sophisticated every day, so there's never been a more important time to report and explain car technology.'

In addition to news reports on new technology the site includes features, interviews, road tests, guest columns from automotive engineers and researchers, and an illustrated glossary of technical jargon with hundreds of entries.

Andrew, who is the lecturer in automotive journalism in Coventry School of Art and Design, has a degree in automotive engineering and has written on car technology for numerous car magazines.

Coventry University is the only institution which teaches the full range of automotive subjects - automotive journalism, automotive design and automotive engineering.

## Have your say when press and PRs get together

ONCE a year people from the motoring industry public relations offices get together with journalists from the national and regional motoring writers' groups to talk about items of common interest.

This year's meeting is being hosted by Volkswagen at its Milton Keynes headquarters on 16 August and the Midland Group will be represented by chairman Ian Donaldson.

He would welcome any discussion topics from Group members which could then be included on the agenda.

**In her own words:** The winner of the Midland Group's 2011 Phil Llewellyn Award for a youthful piece of writing about motoring and travel was won by Serena Gough, 13, from Shropshire. Here, in her own words and with her own design layout, she outlines how she is enjoying taking up the prizes on offer. Look out for a further installment in a future Update.

### Driving Ambition!

I first saw the competition in the Shropshire Star newspaper and was instantly interested. In honour of the late Phil Llewellyn, the Midland Group of Motoring Writers were asking 'budding motoring writers aged between 10 and 16' to write a story about their ideal car and the first trip that they would like to make in it.

I knew that my love of VW campervans would come in handy one day, and this was it. The many prizes made me enthusiastic to enter and share my love of those old vans. When the phone call came on Christmas Eve I was ecstatic to hear that my writing had won. This remarkable prize included £1000 worth of Thomas Cook travel vouchers, the use of a top of the range Audi or a week, a family trip around the Aston Martin factory, at Gaydon in Warwickshire, followed by an exciting ride in one of the newest models, as well as a one hour Driving Academy experience in a new Mercedes A-class model at Mercedes-Benz World, in Surrey, with a lunch for the whole family.



The first of the incredible prizes that I took part in was the tour around the Aston Martin factory and a marvellous ride in an Aston Martin. It was terrifically interesting and I will retain the memories forever. Seeing all the old models of Aston Martins and learning about the delicate manufacturing process was a highlight, but the best part for me was the exhilarating drive. With speeds of over 100 mph, it was certainly thrilling. With views of the picturesque Warwickshire country side all around, the Aston Martin fitted in beautifully.



A 'Kids Driving Experience' at Mercedes-Benz World at Brooklands in Surrey was the next exciting part of the prize for me to experience. As my first ever time driving I will certainly remember it for ever. Driving on part of the original Brooklands race track was undoubtedly an honour. After some expert advice from my lady instructress, I manoeuvred an automatic car through cones and around roundabouts, before practicing smooth stopping. Following several circuits of the course and practice at reversing I was asked to evaluate my performance in my 'Driver's Log', which offered the opportunity to return for more advanced tuition. Whilst in Mercedes-Benz World I went on a tour of the show rooms, even visiting the VIP suite, which was not usually open to the public. This contained some of the most expensive Maybachs. I also enjoyed the 4D 'Build' cinema which simulates the car's journey through production and sitting in a Mercedes whilst being turned upside down as an example safely exercise. Mercedes-Benz World was really fun. The three course lunch in the Gullwing Restaurant which overlooks the track was wonderful. I am now eagerly anticipating enjoying the remainder of my prize!

PICTURE SPECIAL....PICTURE SPECIAL... PICTURE SPECIAL... PICTURE SPECIAL

CLASSIC LINE UP: Rob and Nicky Marshall and Jean and Ian Donaldson pose with their cars outside the lovely chateau chosen as the base for this year's Guild of Motoring Writers annual classic car long weekend on the Continent. Ian's Porsche 911, fresh from a wallet wounding engine rebuild, behaved itself on some challenging French roads while the nicely restored Triumph Dolomite of the Marshalls gave the same unflustered service as it had some months earlier as their wedding car. Inset: The newlyweds received a John Lewis voucher from the Midland Group to help furnish their home together; it was presented to them at a Honda-sponsored partners' event earlier this year.



JEEPERS: Roger Anthony puts on his best General Patton expression as he tries an early Jeep for size. It took pride of place in the lunch marquee when the latest Jeep Grand Cherokee was launched, with an off road section beside the Donington race track.



... AND, FROM THE MIDLAND GROUP ARCHIVES, SOME PICTURES THAT GOT AWAY!



FLAT OUT: Trevor Johnson demonstrates his domestic skills during a competitive ironing interlude at the end of a partners' event hosted by Wayne Bruce at Infiniti to mark the opening of a showroom in the Midlands. Yes, you did hear correctly... competitive ironing.



COLD COMFORT: Pete Carroll uses the new BMW X3 to help keep upright on the slippery slalom devised by BMW to show the car's ability on its Austrian launch.



WAVE HELLO: Midland Groupers pose for the camera, left, on the Spanish launch of Toyota Auris Hybrid while, above, there was a strong Midland Group turnout for an Aston Martin driving day at the firm's Gaydon HQ. Lurking in the background is Beth Llewelin, looking every inch a potential owner for one of the Aston One-77 models, pictured, and likely to cost more than £1 million.