



ALLARD CHRYSLER ACTION GROUP

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Treasuring the past but keeping it alive

March 2008

PLANS TO GET ORIGINAL 1961 ALLARD CHRYSLER DRAGSTER INTO 'CACKLEFEST' CONDITION

During research for his book for Haynes Publishing called *Crazy Horses – British Drag Racing's Heritage*, motoring writer and past Santa Pod Raceway commentator Brian Taylor became very aware of the excellent condition of Britain's first dragster, the Allard Chrysler of Sydney Allard that initially burst into life in 1961. It had been stored undercover since it last ran in 1964. And being on display at the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu that now owns the car, it has received constant TLC. The internals are not complete, but the basic car is very sound being built like a tank compared to today's dragsters.

With the worldwide interest in getting some of these historic drag racing cars into 'cacklefest' mode (the ability to be fired-up and paraded), Brian sounded out a few people regarding getting the Allard Chrysler into such a condition, so that today's generation of drag racing fans could see and hear what started it all. Brian first spoke to Sydney's son Alan Allard and his sons Lloyd and Gavin. They were keen that Sydney's car be brought back to life. Brian then contacted Lord Montagu of Beaulieu who is a fellow member of the Guild of Motoring Writers. He was most enthusiastic and set up a meeting between Brian and Doug Hill, the National Motor Museum's Manager and Chief Engineer. Doug too was keen and prepared a paper for the Board of Trustees proposing that they seriously look at what would be required to develop the car into a working exhibit.

There are many ethical concerns with a project such as this and the National Motor Museum Trust's priority in all cases is the long term preservation of the vehicle to ensure it survives in as good a condition as possible for the enjoyment and education of generations to come. So it is not intended that the car should try for the mid 10 second times recorded in the early 1960s, because in historical terms it is far too valuable.

Doug said,

"I believe that the best way to preserve a motor car is to ensure that it is in full working order and then strictly controlled and documented as far as usage and maintenance is concerned. The archive that is with the vehicle is almost as important as the vehicle itself. And the project would be a tribute to Brian Golder who saved the car from obscurity and bequeathed it to the National Motor Museum Trust".

A feasibility study has now been set up to see if it is possible to realise an opportunity that Carl Olson of the SFI Foundation believes would result in the Allard Chrysler being one of the most famous and sought-after 'Cacklefest' cars in the world. The Americans would definitely want to see it at events and shows in the USA. It means that once working, it could more than pay its way and promote the National Motor Museum in a very exciting manner.

The first stage would be the stripping down of the car to see what is required to get it back into fire-up and parade mode. It is envisaged that this work would be carried out at the Beaulieu workshops. And the funding of the inspection and strip-down will be provided by members of the new Allard Chrysler Action Group (ACAG) – a group solely created for this project. It will consist of a fairly small band of selected enthusiasts committed to providing a minimum of £50.00 each and no more than £100.00 each to get things started. Expertise in engine, transmission and chassis skills would also be useful but not mandatory at this stage. Enthusiasm for and commitment to the task is more important.

The level of individual financial investment will depend on the number of enthusiasts willing to become involved at this first stage – a stage that may or may not lead to the goal of getting the car in 'cacklefest' mode. Until it is stripped down and inspected we will not know what is possible. However, once we have a measure of the support available for this initial stage, the intention is that the car would be stripped down and the required money to fund this work requested from ACAG members.

When the car has been completely stripped down, parts supplier supporters and chassis experts will be asked to locate and cost the parts required. Estimates regarding the work needed will be obtained and a budget prepared. Once feasibility has been agreed by the Trustees of the Museum, and a time frame for the work planned, official ACAG sponsors will be solicited to cover these costs. In return, the intention is that their names will be displayed on the trailer that will transport the car to different appearances.

The plan would be for the car to be initially fired up at a special event held at the National Motor Museum and hosted by Lord Montagu. ACAG members, sponsors and media would be invited and a selection of today's drag racing cars would also be asked to attend. Firing up the car would then become a regular Beaulieu event and it would be made available for limited appearances at other venues, with the intention that ACAG official sponsors would receive preferential appearance rates.

The car drivers and crew would be dressed in the usual apparel of the early 1960s – white overalls, shirt and ties. Sydney often drove it wearing his tweed sports jacket. Along with National Motor Museum staff, Alan, Lloyd and Gavin Allard will take turns in the driving duties to continue the Allard family link.

So there we have it. That's the plan. The first stage is to see how many enthusiasts will commit money to fund the inspection and strip-down. Brian Taylor will be the initial contact and act as Chairman of the ACAG for this primary stage of the project, liaising with Doug Hill at Beaulieu. But once we get on to rebuilding the car, a committee will be set up comprising of ACAG members along with National Motor Museum staff and Trustees. So if you want to be part of this exciting project to help the National Motor Museum bring this important piece of UK drag racing's past alive, contact Brian on 01395 579733 or e-mail him on brian@petrolhead.vianw.co.uk. ACAG membership will be limited so if you want your name to be in the hat contact Brian early.

Press note

A colour photograph of the Allard Chrysler dragster is available for press use. Contact Brian Taylor who will e-mail a jpg file. Quote National Motor Museum as the source.