

What Is A Classic Car?

by Nigel Champken-Woods

Nigel Champken-Woods recently gave an online presentation to OAD on the theme of Classic Cars. Nigel knows what he's talking about as he founded and is the Chair of Thame Classic Motor Club and owns two classics himself.

It is always difficult to say what a Classic Car is in fact it is easier to say what is not a classic car. A lot of people come up to you at a show and say what a nice vintage car you have and it's a 1962 Morris Minor!

So it is easier to start by going through those vehicles which have their own definitive classifications.

The first of these is **Veteran**.

This term refers to any car produced before 1904.
A good example is this 1903 De Dion Bouton.



(Image courtesy of National Motor Museum, Beaulieu)



(Image courtesy of National Motor Museum, Beaulieu)

Next comes **Edwardian** – that's any car produced up to 1918.

Our example here is a 1914 Vauxhall Prince Henry

Then we have **Vintage** which covers cars to 1931,
like this 1924 Morris Cowley



(Image courtesy of National Motor Museum, Beaulieu)

That was the easy bit! Those are *not* classic cars.

So, what is a classic car?

The Government does not have an official definition of a Classic Car but any motor car built before the end of December 1980 is exempt payment of Road Tax as an 'Historic vehicle'. Actually, they do have to be taxed but the fee is £0.00, though they must be insured in order to tax them.

They do not have to have an MOT if they were built more than 40 years ago but the majority of owners will have an MOT for peace of mind.

These are all examples of Classics:



Thame and District Classic Motor Club

The club was formed in 1997 when I wrote to the now defunct Thame Gazette suggesting we should form a club. At our first meeting we had twelve cars. Twenty three years later, the club is still going strong with about 100 cars altogether. The oldest is a 1919 Ford Model T and the newest a 2006 Porsche Boxter.

We meet on the last Thursday of the month at Thame Snooker Club except August and December we have films, quizzes, guest speakers and lots of friendly discussion and banter.

The Club organises two away weekends a year - one in the UK one to the continent.

These pictures from the trips give an idea of the range of cars owned by our members:



Concarneau, Brittany



At The Trench of Death, Dixmude, Belgium



Dambusters Tour, Woodhall Spa



Marmaduke, our Club Mascot, who was found in a puddle at the Channel Tunnel in 2001 and has been on every club trip since.



This is Laon in Northern France where they have a gathering of Classic and Sports cars every year with an average of 700 cars taking part.



One of the mountain passes over the Pyrenees which we visited about 15 years ago. The passes are very long climbs and cyclists go up there on their bikes on the Tour de France!



At the top of the Col

Look carefully and you will see that there is a modern interloper in the form of an Astra Convertible on the far left.

This is the reason for the Interloper.

Here's my Sunbeam Alpine in a ditch beside the A34 on the way to catch the ferry. I know I am an advanced driver but if you get a total collapse of the nearside front wheel bearing locking that wheel, you are going to go left and there is nothing you can do about it!





My Classics now

1962 Morris Minor Convertible & 2001 MGF Trophy 160 Special Edition

Laying Up A Car

Classic car owners often lay up their vehicles for long periods when they aren't driving them. A motor car can deteriorate quite quickly if it isn't used regularly, but there are few simple ways to keep an unused car in good condition.

- Rotate the tyres occasionally to avoid flat spots
- Leave the vehicle in gear with handbrake off to stop the brakes seizing
- If it is a modern car with alarm and immobiliser, disconnect the battery and use Discarnect or similar. Connect to the earth
- If you have Auto Stop/Start disable it so when you do use it you charge the battery all the time
- Use a Discarnect, as alarms etc will flatten the battery. But check with your insurers first.

[Discarnect Battery Master Switch](#)

