

CONTENTS

p.2 Christmas 2009
p.3 Chintzy or what!
p.4 Information sheets.
New Carlight china on the way.
Thank you.
Ron Starbuck, 1933-2010

Carlight

Carlight Newsletter

No. 2

July 2010

Carlight Display Weekend 15-16 May 2010, Tattershall, Lincs



Some of the Carlight Collection. From L to R: the 1930s Light Four, the 1940s Coronet, the 1950s Cosmopolitan, the 1960s Continental (just visible on the right).

[Photo courtesy of John Chambers]

The Display weekend was a huge success and thank you to everyone for your kind words that poured in afterwards. The part everyone seemed to enjoy most was that the caravans were all open throughout the event so that everyone could wander in and out of them at their leisure.



The 1940s Coronet
[Photo courtesy of Paul Ross]

It was lovely to see so many people enjoying the Carlight Collection and everyone seemed to like the format for the weekend. Seeing all the caravans lined up made us realise what a fascinating insight it gives into manufacturing history, with a very visible timeline to demonstrate the changes in methods and materials over the years. The human aspect was evident, too, from the many people attending who had worked on the caravans and been involved in their manufacture, and there were quite a few people there that had served their apprenticeship at Carlight and then gone on to start their own businesses. It was lovely to hear their many reminiscences of tales and exploits involved in producing the caravans over the years (you will read later of a reunion lunch we held earlier in the year). So the weekend was enjoyed by both customers and former staff. Talking of former employees, we had on hand several 'old hands' from the original factory staff, who were pleased to be able to answer questions and offer any help and advice they could.



The 1960s Continental
[Photo courtesy of Paul Ross]

It was also great to see such enthusiasm from everyone for their own caravans.

There is a huge depth of knowledge out there with all the owners, and several owners took the opportunity to share ideas on how best to maintain their Carlight. Taking this idea one step further, we are preparing a forum so that anyone and everyone can share this information, should they choose to, and so help fellow Carlight enthusiasts.



The Carlight Four, 1935, with an Austin J40 pedal car (the relevance of which will become clear later).
[Photo courtesy of Paul Ross]

It was good to see representatives from both Carlight clubs and, following discussions on the day, the Owners' Club has uploaded onto their website details of all the caravans made. We hope to develop this with them so that you can find your own caravan's build number and manufacturing details.



More of the Carlight Collection. From L-R: the 1970s Continental, the 1980s Commander 154 and 1990s Commander 152. The car to the right was brought along by a customer. [Photo courtesy of John Chambers]

As well as caravans, visitors were able to enjoy a (purely coincidental) steady stream of classic aircraft (including spitfires, a hurricane and the

Lancaster from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight based at nearby RAF Coningsby) flying overhead, which put the icing on the cake. Once again, many thanks to everyone that came.



The burger girls. From L to R: Jo Murchie and daughter, and Hannah Whitney.
[Photo courtesy of John Chambers]

Peter (Murchie) and his wife, Jo, provided drinks and food for everyone, and Jo and her daughter, together with Hannah, spent the weekend at the BBQ cooking for everyone. Food and drink was offered free, but many people kindly volunteered to give a donation to charity and, thanks to your fantastic generosity, well over £350 was raised for The Jane Tomlinson Appeal who we are continuing to raise money for as you will read later.

Christmas 2009

The middle of summer seems an odd time to talk about Christmas, but never mind. Last Christmas we held a Carlight reunion lunch and 28 people attended. It was lovely to see so many people there and everyone enjoyed themselves.

Prior to the lunch we had drawn up a list of all the people we could think of who had worked at the factory in Sleaford and passed it around the tables to see if anyone could think of any names we had missed off. An extra 34 names were added.

All in all, we're now up to 129 people who worked at the factory at some time or other over the years, and hopefully the full list will appear on the website in due course.

Chintzy or what!



Fine-line oak-veneered interior of a 1975 Casetta restored c.1988

I love this photo. OK, it's a bit chintzy, but this is the interior of what is now a 40-or more year-old caravan, and whether or not you like Sanderson's Rose and Peony upholstery and curtains, it doesn't detract from the fact that it's a great atmospheric shot.

I'm guessing a bit with the dates, but I think we must have restored this caravan around the late 1980s. We kept it at the factory for a while as a demonstration of the refurbishment work we carried out, and then after a while sold it on. It would be interesting to know if it's still around. It is unusual in that originally it was fitted with glass windows, but as part of the restoration work we carried out, we double-glazed it.

For any Casetta aficionados out there, this was one of the fine-line, oak-veneered interiors, which were fitted to the fibreglass-sided Casettas. This ply was later replaced with a "crown ash" vinyl-faced ply. The later crown-ash Casettas (1978/9-model years) were double-glazed from new, so are now quite sought after. So it's a question of personal preference as to whether you prefer the easy-clean and robust pale-coloured finish over the more delicate oak veneers. Whatever your preference, I loved this caravan and always thought it was full of charm and character. I wish we'd never sold it. The only good news is that we have a similar model hiding in the back of the shed that one day (it's going to have to be an awfully long day) we hope to restore, but not with Rose and Peony curtains.

Information sheets

We now have the following information sheet available, free of charge, if requested and sent by email (mail@carlight.co.uk).

Carlight Tuscan China Information Sheet

This details the history of the original Carlight china introduced in the 1950s. It gives details of styles, colours and also suggested valuations. We have had quite a bit of feedback about this (thanks to everyone for their help) and so have heavily revised this document to include the following:

"If you have a Carlight caravan and need odd items to make up a complete set of Tuscan china, or need to swap items to make up a matching set, we will endeavour to help when we can, and supply items if we have them available. This service is offered on a not-for-profit basis. The price is whatever the costs were to us, plus a donation to charity. Please email us your requests."

So if you need the odd item of Carlight Tuscan china, email us. We have a few spares, so we will do all we can to help out.

New Carlight china on the way

As well as the old Tuscan china, we also have some NEW Carlight fine-bone china on its way. The artwork is now ready and the first samples have been fired in Stoke on Trent, only a few hundred yards away from the site of the old Tuscan China Works. We hope that, like its predecessors, it is destined to become just as collectable, so if you are interested in the new range, just drop us an email (mail@carlight.co.uk) for more details.

Thank you

As a lot of owners are already aware, we try and undertake one charity event each year and this year is no different. This is now the

8th year that people have very kindly donated, and the total is now over £20,000. We stick to two simple principles: firstly, we pay all the event costs ourselves so that every penny you donate goes directly to the charity, and secondly, we only ask you to sponsor us for one event a year, being well aware that everybody has numerous sponsorship requests every year and we appreciate you simply cannot respond to all of them. That is why it is so encouraging that so many people are kind enough to donate year after year.

This year's event is another swim, again to raise money for "The Jane Tomlinson Appeal". You may recall that Jane ran marathons, cycled across America and from Rome to Leeds to raise money for cancer charities, whilst terminally ill with cancer. Jane passed away in 2007 and now her husband and children are carrying on her good work.

To help raise money for this great charity I'm hoping to swim across the Strait of Gibraltar in the next few days (we fly out on Friday). If you would like a few more details, or would like to donate to this great cause, the website is Justgiving.co.uk/fishbait.

Ron Starbuck (1932~2010)

It is with regret that we announce the death of one of Carlight's longest-serving employees, Ron Starbuck of Sleaford, who died suddenly on 26 February 2010, aged 77. Ron was employed by Carlight for over 50 years between 1946 and 1997, starting aged 14 as an apprentice joiner, becoming a cabinet-maker, then a machinist assistant, and finally a machinist. Ron and his wife, Marion, had attended the Carlight Reunion Lunch in Sleaford last Christmas. We extend our sympathies to his wife Marion, sons Paul and David, and grandchildren Victoria and Edward.

How can we help?

New caravans

Will there be a new Carlight? We sincerely hope so, but it's early days to say too much. However, we will be pleased to keep you informed with how things progress.

Used caravans

To buy or sell a used Carlight caravan, contact the only authorised Carlight dealer: Vantage Caravans Ltd at 57 Sleaford Road, Tattershall, Lincolnshire LN4 4JG. Tel: 01526 345670.

Spares and repairs for Carlights

Classic Caravans hold all the remaining stock of Sleaford Caravans (Sleaford Caravans were licensed by ourselves to manufacture the Commander range of Carlight caravans from 2003 until their demise in 2008). Classic Caravans have a wide range of spares etc and can offer help and advice for most Carlight models, and they also offer repair and service facilities for most makes of caravan. They can be found at: Heath Farm, North Rauceby, Sleaford, Lincs NG34 8QR. Tel: 01529 488837. Email: mail@classic-caravans.uk.com

Website

Our website is big and getting bigger. It has loads of information on it and is being updated all the time. If the information that you want isn't on it, then please contact us at mail@carlight.co.uk.

Free stuff

They say there's no such thing as a free lunch – well, with us there is. Our website has loads of free information and downloads on it so don't pay for copies of old brochures (we have seen several advertised recently) when you can download them for free from the site. Go to our home page at www.carlight.co.uk then click onto 'Past Brochures'. If what you want isn't there, then simply email us. If we have the brochure, we will scan it and send you a copy all free of charge (just call us Santa and save us a mince pie and a glass of sherry at Christmas).

Newsletters

If you know anyone who would like to receive our Newsletters, please just ask them to let us have their name and email address, and we will be pleased to email them a copy (mail@carlight.co.uk).

Keeping it in the family

Carlight is a family company with a manufacturing history dating back to 1857 and an involvement with caravan manufacturing since 1932. The current directors are great grandsons of the original manufacturer in Louth and grandsons of the founders of Carlight, Bob and Anne Earl.

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