

ANOTHER IMPORTANT MARKER IN THE RESTORATION OF EUROPE'S FIRST DRAGSTER

May 10th at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu marked another important date in the restoration of Sydney Allard's 1961 Allard Chrysler dragster – a full inspection of the rolling chassis (qualifying condition and identifying part numbers) and the fitting of the Booth-Arons recreated engine into the chassis. Bob Roberts, Andy Robinson, Chris Eames, Syd McDonald, John Hunt and Brian Taylor volunteered for the tasks that were carried out in the museum's workshops.



Shoehorning the engine into the chassis. John Hunt left, Syd McDonald right with Andy Robinson and Bob Roberts at the sharp end. Chris Eames was working the hoist. *(source; Tim Woodcock)*

There had been worries about the spacers used on the rocker covers and inlet manifold creating fitting problems but these proved to be unfounded. The team had to remove the injection unit and the blow-off valve to shoehorn it in, but once manhandled through the frame the engine fitted like a glove. Not only that but the existing body panels fitted almost perfectly and the group sigh of relief could be heard in Southampton.

The pipes from the blower to the inlet manifold are clearly not correct and the assumption is that they came from the dragster that replaced the 1961 car in 1965. As the need to replace these because of their condition had been anticipated it's not such a big problem. For the first time since 1964 the car has an engine where it should be and is now on display at Beaulieu in that condition.



Chris Eames, Syd McDonald, Andy Robinson, Brian Taylor and John Hunt. The guy at the back is a Beaulieu ghost. Bob Roberts took the photo which is why he is not in the team pic. (source; Bob Roberts)

Andy Robinson and Chris Eames focussed on the rear end and transmission while Bob Roberts, Syd McDonald and John Hunt concentrated on the front end. Everyone (including the Beaulieu crew) helped out with the actual engine installation. Fortunately the rest of the inspection confirmed that most components are in good order with basic refurbishment being required rather than component replacement.

Allard Chrysler Action Group Chair, Brian Taylor reports,

"We discovered such anomalies as the need to remove the front brake callipers before the wheels could be taken off. There is also a sheared half-shaft and only one set of rear brakes, plus some of the cockpit controls need fabricating. But all in all we spotted no insurmountable complications. Chris Eames tried to locate the original paint by rubbing back the existing colour but it appears that it was all stripped back before applying the current metallic blue. And we did identify the dark colour on the chassis and rear panels as being a dark navy blue rather than black. Unless we get any additional evidence about the original colours applied we will match the existing colours".

Andy Robinson said,

"Considering the car hasn't been used since 1964 I was pleasantly surprised at the good condition of the components when we stripped them down. The National Motor Museum, Beaulieu have obviously looked after the exhibit well. Although there is still much to do, it looks like the restoration work should not be quite as extensive as originally thought".

Brian Taylor said,

"I must thank the team who joined me at Beaulieu and carried out the installation and inspection. Although most of us consider it a privilege to work on this project it's all done on a voluntary basis and is much appreciated by myself and the museum management. And a special thanks to the Beaulieu team who helped with the lifting and preparation of a hydraulic test rig to check out the callipers. Now we have a car with an engine in place I can get down to fixing some public appearances during the summer. The Hot Rod Drive-In at Beaulieu June 18th/19th is confirmed as is Dragstalgia at Santa Pod July 16th/17th. I will be looking for volunteers to man our display shortly. But we do desperately need more funds to progress the work".

In celebration of this important stage of the restoration Paul Whitehouse has completed another excellent painting of the 1961 Allard Chrysler – this one based on a photo taken at Silverstone in 1963. Many think it is his best yet.



The 1961 Allard Chrysler at Silverstone in 1963 by Paul Whitehouse

Paul has really captured the excitement of the occasion and the car is quite 3-dimensional. In the background you can see the empty grandstand at Woodcote Corner where the old Club Straight met the circuit. There's Allan Herridge's Straight 8 Buick and the Worden dragster to the right. The gouache painting is currently being scanned, mounted and framed, and after being signed by Nick Mason and Alan Allard the original will be auctioned for funds. The last originals went really quickly so those interested in bidding should contact brian@allardchrysler.org or phone him on 01395 579733. Prints will be made available full size and in A4 Mini print format.

Editors Notes

This release is available in Word with jpg attachments. Contact Brian Taylor on 01395 579733. brian@allardchrysler.org