



..... **The 1:3 scale** model of Gillian's much loved 1:1 1935 Singer Le Mans (to the fore) alongside another lovely large scale model of the 1925 Citroen 'Cloverleaf' built by Gillian herself.

Gillian with Parry Thomas' 'BABS' at one of the numerous classic car shows she has attended over the years.



..... **A recent photograph** of Gillian with her companion Max (who is a skilled model maker himself) and her Wolseley Hornet 1969. Gillian still drives this gorgeous BMC classic and will be showing it at the Welshpool Transport Festival/Air Show, with a stand promoting the museum on Sunday June 14.

The Gillian Rogers Collection

We talk to the woman whose life-long passion for all things automotive is now being shared with the public in a new exhibition on display at the Montgomery Institute in Powys, Wales...

Having questioned why we hear so little of the women involved in this hobby, MC reader John Nunn has very kindly bought the Gillian Rogers Collection to my attention.

Gillian's fascinating lifelong collection, which is now on display at the Montgomery Institute in Powys (where

John Nunn is one of the museum custodians), began some six decades ago, kick-started when her father bought her a couple of Dinky Toys. I found this in itself particularly refreshing to hear as I would imagine back then, in the 1950s, most would have chosen toys that were quite gender specific. Anyway, this early

interest clearly fuelled what was to become a real passion and led on to a career in then male dominated automotive industry and to Gillian following in her father's footsteps and becoming an avid spectator at motorsport events and classic car rallies. She can even boast having collected every London to Brighton veteran car run programme!

So I am delighted that this month the amazing Ms Rogers has agreed to talk to us...

Q. I understand your interest in all things automotive began with your father and that your collection started with a couple of Dinky Toys he bought for you. Which ones were they?

A. Yes: my father was an avid motorsport enthusiast, having been taken to Brooklands between the wars while still a lad himself. And, yes: the collection began with those two Dinky Toys he bought me while we were on holiday on the Isle of Wight in 1954: a Jaguar and an Alvis.

Q. You carried your childhood automotive interests on into the workplace too...

A. I did. I had a real interest in cars so I was fortunate to find a job in the parts department

at the Walls Motors factory in Worthing. Unfortunately, this didn't last long and when they closed the stores I needed a new job – because by this time I had my first car to pay for – so I got on my bike and found one in another nearby factory.

Q. How did you find working in what must have been a largely male domain back then?

A. Well, the boss at my new job, at the Smallbone Motor Factory in Worthing, wasn't too keen to take me on at first – but he must have been pleased he did because, as I was paid only half of what the men were earning, he subsequently took on four more female staff members.

Q. You mentioned that by this time you were paying for your first ever car? Can you tell us more about that?



A. On the strength of the first job I'd begun looking for my own car – for which I'd already saved £60. I looked at several but I had really set my heart on a red sports car. I left my name with several dealers and then Ian Raby, who was an amateur racing driver, wrote to say he had a 1935 Singer Le Mans that was red, priced at £120.

So Mum and I set off to see it. Ian had a small showroom in the back streets of Brighton – it was in a rather rough area and I remember we had to skirt around two men fighting as we approached the showroom! The Singer was standing on the forecourt and it was love at first sight! The car was a 9hp 972cc

There are some fascinating and somewhat more obscure models in Gillian's extensive collection. Here we see some Empire made friction drive Vanwall and Cooper racers, probably made in Hong Kong in around 1957, under ELM branding. These were sold in the UK in Woolworth's stores for around 2s 6d back then (12½ pence in today's money) but clearly worth considerably more now!).



..... **There is so** much of historic relevance in Gillian's collection. These Scalex clockwork cars were the forerunners of the Scalextrics slot car system introduced in 1957 and still going strong today.

..... **Gillian has collected** models from numerous different classic toy manufacturers over several decades. Here we see just a little sample of her stunning Solidos.



with twin carbs, overhead camshaft, magneto ignition and hydraulic brakes. The most interesting feature was a brass plaque on the wooden dashboard; it was the badge of the L'Automobile de L'Ouest and stated the specification and that 2,203 km had been covered. This special plaque was put on just 100 cars that featured the same spec as the car that had won its class at Le Mans in 1934. A quick drive round the block resulted in a £3 deposit and a "SOLD" notice being placed on the windscreen, with a promise of delivery the following week. Thus began a 40-year love with the car. In latter years it went on to raise lots of money for charity at various car shows around the south of England and I also have a 1:3 replica of it in my collection on display at the museum.

Q. I've seen photographs of your 1:3 scale replica of that car, alongside a model of the Fiat Topolino once owned by your sister. Did the two of you, then, share that same passion for cars?

A. The passion was more mine but Valerie got into it because of my interest and she acquired a Fiat Topolino, which she loved.

Q. You've demonstrated a life-long love for all things automotive, been an avid motorsport spectator and, I'm told, you have every programme for the London to Brighton veteran car run. I am sure you have lots of fantastic memories, therefore, but what would you say were the real highlights for you over all those decades?

A. The real highlights for me were going to Le Mans, the Nurburgring, Rouen, and my many trips to Goodwood – plus all car shows we attended with the Singer and various other cars and models.

Q. You have a truly spectacular model and toy collection. How much of it was actually accumulated as a child, and did

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you take a break from collecting as a young woman and then get back into it again at a later stage, or did you collect relentlessly after the acquisition of those first Dinky Toys?

A. The collecting has been continuous!

Q. Your collection contains everything from familiar childhood

classics to the somewhat more obscure. So, while clearly you have embraced the work of numerous manufacturers, are there any real favourites?

A. I very much enjoyed collecting the Matchbox Yesteryear models but I just really bought whatever took my fancy: Dinky, Corgi Toys, Matchbox, Solido, Crescent,

Charbens, Renwal and many more, including a number of one-off rarities. Marques include Bugatti, Bentley, Mercedes and Rolls-Royce cars, together with Grand Prix and World Land Speed Record breakers, plus buses, trams and vans of every description.

Q. More impressive still is that you have not only collected but also turned your hand to the art of kit building and model making. For example, you have a 1:3 1925

Citroen 'Cloverleaf', which I'm told you fabricated yourself by scaling up a 1:24 scale model. When and where did you learn those skills?

A. I was self-taught. I just picked things up as I went along.

Q Your collection is now on display at the Cloverland Model Car Museum in the Montgomery Institute in Powys. How did this come about?

A. Fellow collector, John Nunn, who's done a bit of restoration work for me, made members of Montgomery Institute aware of my collection and it was decided that it should have a new home where all could appreciate it. **MCG**



Believed to be the work of Bandai, Gillian's large scale Thomas Flyer.



There are so many lovely vintage vehicle models in Gillian's collection, including this Bandai Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost.



... -Brumm, Brumm... Differently scaled versions of this famous little car, with soft toy characters from the children's show Tots' TV, along for the ride in the large scale version.



Just a few of the fabulous kit built models skilfully created by Gillian, which can now be viewed along with the rest of her incredible collection at the Montgomery Institute in Powys.

Out & about
Viewing the collection

The collection is now on display in the Cloverland Model Car Museum at the Montgomery Institute, Arthur Street, Montgomery, Powys SY16 6RA and can be viewed through Thursday-Sunday from 10.15am to 12.45 and on also from 2.15pm to 4.45pm on Saturdays. Admission is charged at £3 per adult and 75p for each accompanied child between the ages of 5-18 years old (under 5s are admitted free of charge).