

## **Conservation: from a Tradesman's point of view.**

### **Col Ogilvie - Question and answer session**

**Chris Knapp:** You were explaining the difference in approach between an engineer and a conservator and what you've learned. Do you enjoy using the new skills that you've learnt; do you get fun from what you do?

**Col Ogilvie:** You know I've spent 20 years as a teacher of automotive engineering, then the next 15 or so in private industry in my own business. The last - three? I think four - have been up at the museum. I wish I'd done it thirty five years ago. The skills I've learnt up here are totally different - it's an appreciation of historical culture, engineering-wise. And that is the big thing. An acceptance by a mechanic, fitter and machinist - I've got multi-skilled trades here. Having to manufacture a part gives you an appreciation of engineering culture, but over a period of time that engineering culture suffers - such as the type of material we've used and so on - what happens to it. Since I've been with these pair of chemists I've learnt a lot. I now know not to make some things out of what I used to make them. I know now that I put on a pair of white gloves, not because it's going to put dirt on the car or it's going to put dirt on me, it's because I know I'm not going to corrode that car in any manner, shape or form. So I've learnt one hell of a lot and it is important not only that conservators learn engineering, but that engineers learn conservation. It's an absolute must. That's one of the big problems I foresee with our volunteer program, that we should educate them first, before we bring them in.

**Fred Haynes:** I know where you're coming from because I've got a trade background myself; I trained as a scientific instrument maker - one of those lost trades. How do you resist the temptation of getting those things looking all nice and shiny and making them work again? If you've got no conservators hanging around to make you do it!

**Col Ogilvie:** One of the biggest problems for me to come into this conservation mode has been to restrict my activity and to slow it down. You see, being in private industry you tend to go hard at something and go for it. And the consequence of that has always been - it's economically correct, but historically brrrgh - mightn't last too long. Now I've got to look at it the other way and get it historically right, so that in 200 years some bugger can come up, turn the key, start it and drive off. If he can do that, I've done my job and that's the way I've got to think now. A lot different to tomorrow - jumping in, turning the key and driving off.

**Fred Haynes:** Yes, I can appreciate that feeling because I came from the background of an instrument workshop - had to prepare things to as-new, workable condition for the navy. When I went out to Spectacle Island there was all that stuff waiting to be repaired and made as-new again and yes, coming to a couple of these courses here has made me appreciate that's the difference. And I might just make the comment about conservators and mechanics and engineers - there was an engineer who said he would have made a conservator, but he didn't have enough parts...