



Mr Jacques Fecherolle with his Stanley Vapeur and behind a Simca 8 Sport.



A nun with a beard, anything goes in Laon especially if you drive an early 2CV.



James and Elaine Sidwell first timer visitors from Coventry really enjoyed the buzz of Laon.



Rob and Annmieke from Holland bribed the Concours judges with cakes to ensure a prize with their Minor.

and again both were enjoying the weekend's adventure. Way back in 1956 just prior to their wedding day, John and Jill Reece from Suffolk remember that when leaving the cinema they were confronted with a two tone blue and cream Nash Metropolitan parked outside by a local dealer. As John pointed out, in those days everything in England was black and white, not just the news reels, so the brightly coloured Nash was a revelation for the times. Just three weeks before



↑ Huge variety all joining the procession, BMW, Citroen, MG and Porsche to name but a few.
↓ Toot, wave, rev and shout; the more noise the more the locals appreciate it.



The 'belle of the ball' American La France from 1914 driven with enthusiasm by owner Julian Grebby.

their 16th consecutive trip to Laon one came up for sale that was identical to the car burned in their memories, the rest you can guess and the Metropolitan sat proudly in the square surrounded by doe-eyed enthusiasts. "What brings you back every year?" I asked. They both agreed that it was the atmosphere and the rally experience, followed by the excitement of Sunday afternoon's parade that just makes Laon a totally unique event.

EVENT INFO

CIRCUIT HISTORIQUE DE LAON

ENTRY CHARGE

Spectators enter for free. Taking part in Saturday's rally plus Concours and Sunday's parade is 110 Euros for cars registered 1945-1985. Pre 1945 vehicles package is just 50 Euros with a maximum allowed of 700 vehicles total. Club packs are available, minimum of 10 cars each paying 75 Euros (www.circuit-historique-laon.com)

GETTING THERE

Crossing to the northern most channel ports will make the journey to Laon much easier; from Portsmouth take Caen or Le Havre with plenty of overnight options. For more information visit: www.brittany-ferries.co.uk

GETTING AROUND

Fuel is slightly cheaper in France with the premium grade recommended for classics, expect to use around £70 dependant on your route and consumption. Toll charges for this journey are extortionate at around 30 euros each way so plan your journey avoiding the main routes. A week in France will ensure savings made in tolls can contribute to hotel accommodation plus a much nicer journey.

When driving in France you are required to carry a warning triangle, a breathalyser kit plus your registration document. Your classic must also have headlight adjustment tape and a 'GB' sticker attached.

STAYING OVER

We chose a budget hotel chain and like anything you get what you pay for, at 40 Euros a night the room was certainly not premier but just a place to rest your head.



As more visitors completed their tour of the town the congestion at the top became significant and a few were suffering from overheating as they finished their circuit and looked to begin another. This was mainly due to sheer volume as the groups from the lower car parks joined the cars already at the top, so bear this in mind if your steed suffers from remaining static for too long; there are however plenty of opportunities to pull over and cool off everywhere around the circuit. One car that caught my attention relaxing amid the bustle was the 1962 Harrington Alpine of Derek Hewitson, a first timer from Cheltenham he acknowledged that the event was a great experience and certainly one to be repeated. To conclude; Laon is the furthest in distance I will cover in this series but with a couple of days either side of the weekend the journey can be enjoyed as much as the event. Your destination will thrill and impress and the welcome you receive will make the effort worthwhile. The only issue I can foresee next year; if most of the 2015 participants return space will be limited, so get in early. Circuit Historique de Laon, un week-end de grands moments.

NEXT MONTH

Something a little different with a day visit to Retro Festival Caen. The Circuit de la Prairie used the perimeter roads alongside the horse racing track and featured F1, F2 and sports cars from 1952-58. Stirling Moss took victory in the last GP held there and locals revive the excitement every summer.