

HORSELESS CARRIAGE GAZETTE

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A Full Immersion London to Brighton Baptism



By Tracy Leshar

Here we are in a deluge coming across Westminster Bridge in John Biggs's "Annie" the 1904 Ford Model A. Richard Rimmer and Jude Cottrell are up front. Jeff smiles for the camera, while I am hiding from the rain behind Richard. (Photo by Zoltan Vass)

The London to Brighton Run is the premier Veteran Era touring event. This world-class pre-1905 auto rally happens every year—rain or shine, except for WWII and COVID. Compare that with the United States. Sure we have the BBC Tour, the Reliability Tour, and the New England Brass and Gas Tour. But you will rarely find any participant vehicles older than 1904 on those tours. And, if you find a one- and two-cylinder tour, you certainly would not find over 300 cars on it.

Before I describe the 2022 London to Brighton Run, let's go back to 1896. The Run celebrates English Parliament's passing of the Locomotives on Highways Act. The 1896 law replaced the 1861, 1865, and 1878 restrictive Locomotive Acts. The previous laws required anyone driving a horseless carriage or locomotive to have a person walking in front of the vehicle, preventing the driver from traveling faster than the flag man,

waving a red flag, and signaling to the villagers that a sputtering, clattering, bilious two-, three-, or four-wheeled vehicle was lumbering in their direction. At the time speed was restricted to two mph in villages and four mph in the countryside. When the 1896 Act was passed the speed limit increased to 14 mph. Whoopee! During the Inaugural Run on November 14, 1896 (Emancipation Run), 33 vehicles started in London and 17 arrived in Brighton.

After over two years of planning and waiting, it was finally time for Jeff and me to head to England for the 2022 London to Brighton Run. We originally intended to make this our 15th wedding anniversary trip in 2020 (not an official HCCA gig). Jeff and I were lucky enough to have John Biggs, and Hugo and Linda Vermeulen pick us up at Heathrow Airport. John belongs to the HCCA and the Veteran Car Club (VCC) in

England where he is from, and the Vermeulens are HCCA members from Ontario, Canada. All three are active members of the Early Ford Registry.

After checking in at the Thistle Hotel, Hugo, Linda, Jeff, and I set off to explore London. Getting around London is relatively simple. The bus, train, and subway (The Tube) options are well-coordinated unless a strike occurs. The four of us spent the next three days touring the city. We saw as much as we could. At the Tower of London, we learned that Sir Walter Raleigh and William Penn were prisoners there. Didn't learn that in any American history books! After the Tower, we hopped on an Uber River Boat and boated over to Greenwich (pronounced "Green witch" not like how it's said in Connecticut) for more history. And, of course, we took the obligatory photos at the Prime Meridian. (0° Longitude). We walked through Kensington Park, over to the Princess Diana and Prince Albert Memorials, meandered along the Serpentine through Hyde Park, went through the Rose Garden by the Rotten Row on our way to the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace. Jeff thinks King Charles III is trying to lighten things up with the Changing since the band played Chuck Mangione's "Feels So Good" and Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger." Completely unexpected. Enough of the field trip details.

At breakfast Thursday morning at the hotel, Jeff and I met up with Dave and Karen Ness from California. They shipped their 1903 Cadillac over for the Run. All shipped cars come into port at Southampton. Brit Pete Wood was a tremendous help to the Nesses. Dave and Karen's Cadillac has been in the family for several decades. His father ran the car in the London to Brighton Run back in the early 1980s. This event was a homecoming for them.

You might be wondering how and where all the participant vehicles are stored. During the Thursday and Friday before the Run many of the Veteran Era autos trailer into London, are dropped off at the Thistle Hotel parking garage for storage (or at other hotels), and tow vehicles with empty trailers caravan south to Brighton. Most owners ride the train or carpool back to London. Some participants utilize professional transports to get their Veteran Era autos back and forth. A word about towing and car trailers. Often mid-sized SUVs are the tow vehicle of choice. You'll rarely see monstrous SUVs and trucks like in the United States. (In the United Kingdom, the larger the vehicle, the larger the tax liability and road toll fees). Also, roads are much narrower in cities and villages. A typical car trailer is not much larger than the vehicle it carries. Once the trailer's back door drops down, the trailer tilts, allowing the auto to roll out. This is all done street-side in London.

Cadillac, celebrating its 120th anniversary, was the honored marque at the 2022 Run. Several fellow HCCA members ran their Cadillacs. Skip and Susan Tetz and Dave and Karen Ness drove their 1903s. Russell Marne and his 1904 Cadillac are on this cover. Russell's brother David drove a 1904 Cadillac too. There were 20 Veteran Era Cadillacs on this year's Run. Early Fords and Oldsmobiles were well represented too.

On Friday afternoon Hugo, Linda, Jeff and I headed over to Mayfair for the Bonhams Auction and met up with other Americans, including Robert Lederer, Dave Shadduck, Bill Austen, and 90-year-old Robert Monsen, who made his journey from California and had a ride with Dave and Kimberly Shadduck in their 1903 Ford. Robert Lederer brought over his 1904 White steam car.

At the Bonhams auction, John Biggs and Mike Spencer introduced me to many important people in the Veteran Era auto community. I had the honor of meeting brothers Daniel and Toby Ward, who own an impressive collection of Veteran Era cars; De Dion-Bouton expert Michael Edwards; and Adrian Goding, the Veteran Car Club Chairman of the Board. I know I have forgotten some names. I am usually good at remembering faces too, but this was overload. Bonhams auction house was packed. Several unique Veteran Era autos came up for sale. I enjoyed conversing with others and sipping on champagne during the auction.

Later that evening a small group of us had a lovely dinner together, including John's mechanic friend Richard Rimmer and Judith (Jude) Cottrell. Richard was to be our driver, and Jude our navigator in *Annie*, one of John's two 1904 Fords. During dinner Californian Bill Austen gifted me a lovely early HCCA button.

Saturday was the St. James's International Concours event near Clarence House, where King Charles III lived when he was just the Prince of Wales. Hugo, John, Linda, and I rode over to the Concours in *Camilla*, John's 1904 Ford Model C. This gave Hugo some practice driving in London too. Not that he needed it. Nearby RM Sotheby's debuted a fantastic array of exotic European automobiles ahead of their Saturday evening sale. Jeff and I were impressed with the inventory as we walked through the pre-auction tent. Also milling around was Edd China, from the television show *Wheeler Dealers*. I knew I recognized his flowing silver locks.

On Marlborough Road next to St. James's Palace, approximately 60 London to Brighton participants showed their autos in the rain during the concours. This display included, Genevieve, the 1904 Darracq of movie fame. If you have not seen the 1953 movie *Genevieve*, you must! It truly captures early automobile touring. Genevieve is currently owned by the Louwman family.

The Victorian period dress for the St James's Concours was outstanding. Jude made a fantastic example, complete with a bustle. Another exquisitely dressed couple looked as if they came out of the musical *My Fair Lady*. They spent a great deal of time indulging others with photos while stationed at a 1904 Mercedes Simplex, owned by the Mercedes Heritage Trust.

Jeff and I met up with Peter Martin, a Veteran Era car aficionado from Australia. I met Peter, his wife Sue, and daughter Harriette during Russell and Christine Holden's 2019 International HCCA Tour. Peter happened to be in London for business, extended his stay, and volunteered as a Hyde Park Marshal for the event.





Clockwise: Mitch and Wendy Gross's 1903 White steam car sits next to a De Dion-Bouton. There were umbrellas a plenty at the St. James's Concours including three of the late Sheldon Marne's vehicles: 1904 Cadillac (#254), 1902 Panhard et Levassor (#117), and 1903 Panhard et Levassor (#173). John Bigg's son Daniel and grandchildren Jack and Clara with John's 1904 Ford Model C. Joy Ogden photographed Barbara Dedman in her 1902 Deckert. Barbara was dressed impeccably in period clothing. I received a thumb's up from the driver of a 1898 Panhard et Levassor as he rolled by during the concours.



Clockwise: The 1904 Mercedes Simplex was a crowd favorite. More Victorian clothing on display as Marc Saabe and his 1902 Peugeot drives by. Robert Lederer pulls his 1904 White Steam car into his parking spot at the concours.





Dave and Kimberly Shadduck's 1903 Ford Model A.



An 8-hp 1901 Georges Richard motors along a wet Marlborough Road.



Skip and Susan Tetz arrive at the concours in their 1903 Cadillac.



Clockwise: Jeff and I had the honor of sitting in Genevieve, the 1904 Darracq owned by the Louwman Museum and family. A teddy bear wearing his goggles and Remembrance Day Poppy is ready to go touring on a wet Saturday. Here I am trapped in the lift with John Richards, Natasha Parrish, and Michael Dedman. (Not visible Jeff Leshner, Sean McFadden, and Barbara Dedman). Being stuck in a lift doesn't make for the most flattering selfies. In true London fashion, a little rain did not scare spectators and participants away.





Mike Spencer took Linda and me on a quick side trip over to John Lobb, the King's Bootmaker. We spoke to the shoemaker, who informed us that it takes several weeks to shape the wood foot forms for a client's shoes. You can have a pair of exquisitely handmade shoes for 12,000 pounds, just like King Charles III.

John Biggs invited Hugo, Linda, Jeff, and me to a sumptuous lunch at the Royal Automobile Club (RAC). After a busy Saturday of photographing in the drizzle, it was time to head back to the hotel for a good night's rest. But that's where the day's real excitement happened.

The hotel lift is where things got hairy. Jeff and I were the first in. Five others decided that it would be great fun to pile in after us. (Three of whom belonged to car #163, a 1903 De Dion-Bouton owned by John Richards plus his two passengers Sean McFadden and Natasha Parrish, and two from car #87, a 1902 Deckert owned by Barbara and Michael Dedman.) I punched the keypad to go up. We went up about six inches and kaput. That was it. All seven of us were stuck in a lift about the size of a standard-sized bathtub. Laughter is truly the best medicine. It was all we could do to stay calm until the fire brigade could rescue us. Don't count on the hotel staff having the lift key. Sean is also a fire brigadier and knew exactly what to say when we called 999. After being rescued, Jeff and I climbed the stairs to the seventh floor. There was no way we were getting in another lift!

Jeff and I tried to sleep Saturday night, but before we knew it the alarm went off at 4:15 a.m. and it was time to get moving. The hotel provided breakfast for all of us at 5:00 a.m. Richard prepped *Annie* for the day; topped her off with petrol; and the four of us headed for Hyde Park in the inky darkness. Run participants are required to arrive 30 minutes before start times. Both Richard and Jude had their period dress underneath their rain gear. Jeff and I layered up for a wet day. It would become the wettest day in England since the start of the summer. *Camilla* loaded with Hugo, Linda, John, and Mike parked next to *Annie* in Sector 11. (Many of the participant vehicles are given feminine names.) All of us were beaming. John, Mike, and I walked up to the start of the lineup so I could take pictures.





At the Thistle Hotel garage with Grant Pilchard and "Umpie" the 1901 Gladiator.



Natasha Parrish, Sean McFadden, and John Richards the morning after.



A typical Veteran car trailer unloads on Bayswater Road.



A look from Sector One through the crowd.




The three Napiers are ready to tear off. Left to right: 1903 Napier (#210) owned by the Louwman Museum, 1902 Napier (#208) owned by Daniel Sielecki, and 1903 Napier owned by the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu lead the Run. Sielecki's Napier won the 1902 Gordon Bennett Race—the first international auto race.



Valerie Carew and Gilles Laviolette stand with Bill Kennedy's 1904 Cadillac.



All ready to go! Left to right in Dave and Kimberly Shadduck's 1903 Ford Model A: Dave Shadduck, Dave Vigglesworth, Kimberly Shadduck, and Robert Monsen. (Photo courtesy of Kimberly Shadduck)

A photograph showing a group of people in vintage cars at a car run event. In the foreground, a red 1904 Ford Model C is visible with several people inside. The car has a large wicker basket on the side. In the background, other vintage cars and people are visible on a paved area next to a body of water.

Camilla the 1904 Ford Model C (#286) is ready to rock and roll. Pictured left to right: John Biggs (Camilla's owner), Hugo and Linda Vermeulen, and Mike Spencer. Mike holds the Child of Prague dressed in a grocery bag raincoat. Superstition dictates that the Child is supposed to keep bad weather at bay. The Child failed miserably.

You can't even begin to imagine the excitement that brewed in the thick, foggy air at the start of the Run. The three 100-hp Napiers were ready to go and officially opened the Run at 7:00 am after the tearing of the red flag. Sector One, with the first 20 cars, was scheduled to leave at 7:02 am. I took as many pictures as I could as the cars prepped to start. The oldest Veteran Era automobile was an 1892 Peugeot Vis-à-vis. Can you imagine, vehicle #5 an 1896 Salvesen steam car? This coal-fired steam car looks like a teapot on four wheels. There were also three 1898 Léon Bollée steam-powered trikes in this group. Body styles varied between a dogcart, a quadricycle, a couple of vis-à-vis, tricycles, and a voiturette.

Vehicles participating in the Run varied between electric-powered, gas-powered, steam-powered, and human-powered. Bicycles are a newer addition to the Run. One poor chap fell off his Penny Farthing and broke his arm before he started out.

The walk back to Sector 11 was a buzz. I was completely clueless as I walked past car #76, Nick Mason's 1901 Panhard et Levassor. Yes, that Nick Mason (drummer of Pink Floyd). Next time I will study the participant book better. I walked by John Richards (lift friend) in car #163 with his 1903 De Dion-Bouton, and he gave me a peck on the cheek. I blushed. I will also note that a fair number of young people and families participate in the Run too. Some Veteran Era cars transported three generations of the same family. And many autos had women drivers too. I cannot tell you how great that is to see.

Back at *Annie's* lineup spot, I thought it a brilliant idea to get a group picture of all eight of us (between John's two 1904 Fords, *Annie* and *Camilla*) before we set out on the Run. A strapping, tall, handsome gentleman walked past, and the others encouraged me to ask him to take our picture. Do you know who Andy Green is? I do now. The world's fastest man on four wheels took our picture. (This photo was my "Editor's Notes" picture in January-February.) Andy was also driving car #281, his 1904 Stanley steam car. This day just kept getting better. Hugo, Linda, Mike, and John hopped in *Camilla*, the 1904 Ford, and *Annie* with the four of us were ready to go. And away we went through Hyde Park to the gate for our start time. At 7:46 am it was time to rock and roll. The gathered crowd cheered and applauded as we left Hyde Park Gate.

The drizzle turned into a steady rain as we approached Westminster and Big Ben and crossed Westminster Bridge. It is essential to understand that even though this was quite early on a Sunday morning, London is very much a busy city. Veteran Car Run (VCR) organizers deliberately split each sector into two route groups: red and blue. On the red route, our *Annie* went one way across Westminster Bridge, while *Camilla* followed the blue route and drove past the Houses of Parliament. From there, each vehicle followed different road signage until everyone converged just north of the village of Croydon. Croydon is 9.4 miles south of London. Its history dates back 1,200 years and appears in the medieval 1086 *Doomsday Book*.



Behind Annie (#285) is the Boothman family in their 1904 Norfolk (#288).



Yes, he pedaled the entire route in the rain to Brighton.



Looking back at Camilla and other Veteran Era cars after passing Horatio Nelson's monument in the background.



John Richards driving his 1903 De Dion-Bouton with passengers Natasha Parrish and Sean McFadden. The Queen Victoria Memorial and Buckingham Palace are in the background. (Photo courtesy of the VCR)



Photographer Zoltan Vass captured Sheldon Marne's two-cylinder 1903 Panhard et Levassor swimming across Westminster Bridge. Richard Clark is driving, his father Jim Clark is the front seat passenger, and Robert Onslow is sitting in the back with the spirit of Dr. Sheldon Marne. Dr. Marne passed away a few short weeks before the 2022 London to Brighton Run.

London to Brighton drivers are not given tour route books like in the United States. There is a driver's meeting the Friday before the Run. The routes are well-marked with VCR road signs, and there are checkpoints along the way. Traffic lights on the way out of London are timed to benefit participants. Marshals along the way help to direct traffic. There are designated locations along the 60-mile route that required extra care, especially at the hills.

As we meandered along the route, several other Veteran Era vehicles needed to pull over for maintenance. The rain drowned out coil boxes and wreaked havoc on belts. As participant vehicles passed through village after village, people lined the route from start to finish. It is not unusual to have 500,000 spectators to line the route. Even in the rain people waited along the roadside, some under brollies (umbrellas), while others sat in the rain with no protection to watch as we drove past. I know 2022's Run didn't have the number of spectators as in years past; we can blame that on the miserable weather.

Alarmingly, Dave and Karen Ness's 1903 Cadillac caught fire outside Merstham (approximately 38 miles north of Brighton). According to Dave, a fuel line cut loose and shot gas all over the engine. He was fully prepared with a fire extinguisher. Everyone exited the car safely, and NPEngineering helped Dave with the repair. The Ness's Cadillac finished the Run. Dave and Karen were awarded a trophy by the VCR for their

persistence during the Sunday night dinner in Brighton.

By 10:20 am we reached Crawley in a deluge. The "pit stop" at Hawth Theatre was the official halfway checkpoint. There was ample parking for the 300-plus Veteran Era autos. The coffee was a welcome break and allowed us to warm up and dry out a little. The hand dryers in the loo were quite handy! In the theatre lobby everyone listened as a lovely string quartet played. I must admit that I felt as if I was on the Titanic. Do you remember that scene where the musicians played as victims slid into the icy waters? We may not have been that cold, but we felt that wet. Miraculously the rain subsided as we left Crawley and headed south towards Brighton. Unfortunately, it resumed raining and lasted the rest of the Run. By noon, it started to seep in at our collars and wrists.

Annie did not have trouble chugging up the hills that started appearing. There were two notable inclines at Red Hill after Merstham and Burgess Hill (West Sussex), approximately 12 miles north of Brighton. The roads were extremely wet; especially at the bottom of the hills. These vehicles are ancient and several struggled. Some passengers had to get out and push their auto uphill in the rain—no fun at all. This was a true test for everyone. At Hammermill both lanes of traffic were utilized as a one-way heading south to allow the faster Veteran Era autos to pass. Modern traffic was diverted. The same precautions were taken at Pyecombe, about 6.5 miles north of Brighton.



The Harrods Department Store's 1901 Waverley Electric gets a battery change in Burgess.

Time for a mid-morning coffee and tea break in Crawley.





The bicyclists take a break at Crawley too.



Mike Farrall and Trevor Ellis in an 1899 Decauville chug up Burgess Hill and pass a bicycle.



A traffic jam on London Road outside Burgess Hill.



Spectators stand outside the Jolly Tanners Pub in Staplefield to watch us go by.



Chris Woodhouse is intent on climbing up Burgess Hill in his 1904 De Dion-Bouton. Chris's daughter Sophia needed to hop out of the auto so the car could conquer the hill. This photo perfectly captures the spirit of the run.



Car #326, a 1904 De Dietrich, belongs to the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu.



A 4-hp 1899 Mercedes Dogcart.

We made it to the finish too!



We entered the outskirts of Brighton right around 1:20 p.m., and the sky really let loose with buckets of rain. It was both horrendous and comical to think that we rode in a 119-year-old Ford, spent nearly the entire ride in the rain, only to face another torrential downpour. It was as if we rode the whole route in a never-ending 60-mile car wash. We could have swum to Brighton or floated by raft. We made a left turn at the pier onto Madeira Drive, drove along the shoreline, and finished at 1:33 pm. *Camilla* with Hugo, Linda, John, and Mike completed the route around 1:41 pm. The first car to the Brighton finish line at 9:50 a.m. was a 1901 Decauville with brothers Daniel and Toby Ward. They must not have stopped for coffee. HCCA Member Andrew Herrala had his own storybook London to Brighton finish at 3:58 p.m., complete with a rainbow. The run officially ends at 4:30 p.m.





Camilla finishes the run! Hugo and Linda Vermeulen are interviewed at the finish line. Mike Spencer sits behind Hugo and John Biggs is behind Linda. (Photo courtesy of the VCR)

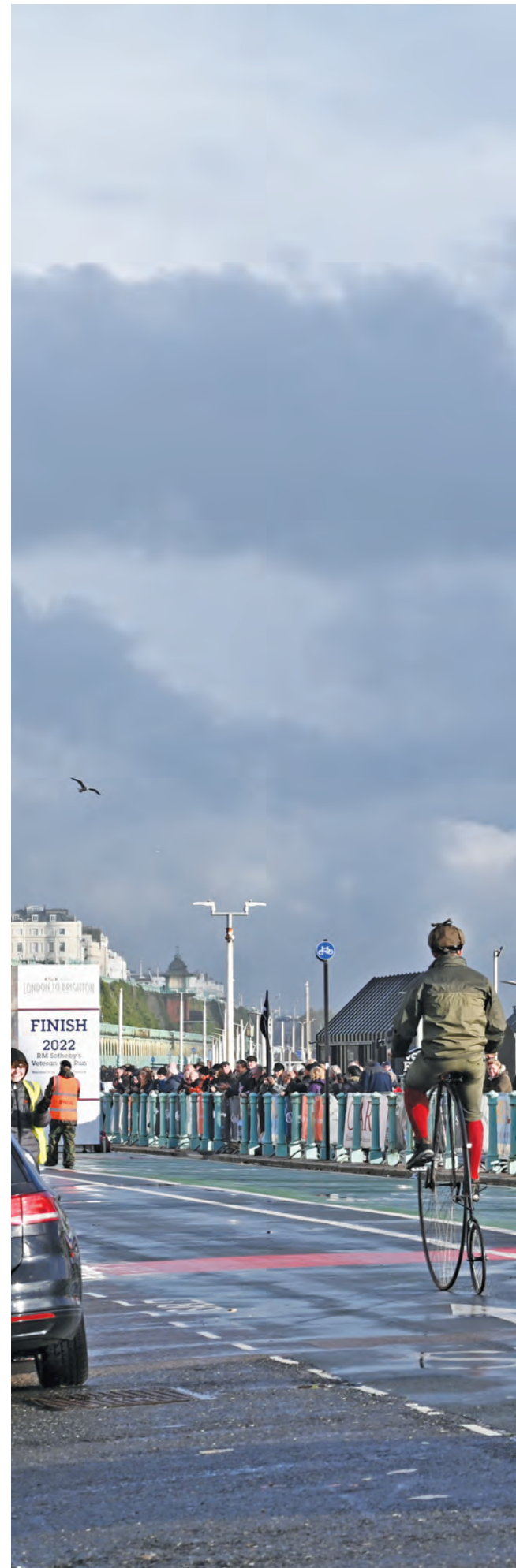


Pam Ness snapped a photo of Karen and David Ness in Brighton after their finish.

As each car finished the Run, participants were ushered into a massive tent for hot toddies and warm bowls of lamb stew. Everyone had a tale to tell. A fair number of people stayed overnight in Brighton and enjoyed the lavish awards dinner. Some, like Jeff and me, headed back to London by train or trailed their soggy Veteran Era vehicles back home. Pete Wood has footage of tour cars drying out in his garage (pronounced gare-ige). Seats and carpets were removed from autos, and commercial-sized dehumidifier units got the job done. Hopefully, this London to Brighton will be the wettest for a long time. One participant commented that he hadn't seen it rain like that in 50 years. Three hundred and sixty-four vehicles entered the 2022 London to Brighton Run. A dozen withdrew. Twenty-two did not start. Fifty-eight retired (did not finish). And 272 completed the Run, which was impressive considering the dismal weather.

Jeff and I will certainly remember our first London to Brighton, and it will not be our last. We owe John Biggs, who acted as our travel agent, the VCC, and the RAC a debt of gratitude for their incredible hospitality. The clotted cream on top of the scone is that we have new friends in Richard Rimmer and Jude Cottrell too. And next time, I'll stop by Nick Mason's Panhard for a chat and thank Andy Green for taking our picture.

Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrkKD1czw9A to see footage of Annie and Camilla (23:42) at the start of the Run. (Photos by Tracy Leshner unless noted otherwise)





The highwheel cyclist pictured on page 23 pedaled all 60 miles to the finish. Right behind him is the late Sheldon Marne's 1903 Panhard et Levassor.

