

Edward Athelstan Halford – 1897 to 1989

Born in 1897, he was the son of a clergyman and public school educated at Felsted. To say he was a “character” is an understatement.

Known as “Ted”, he joined the army in 1915 and entered the Great War initially with the Wiltshire Regiment but eventually joining the Royal Flying Corps.

He claimed to have been shot down by one of the famous German WW1 flying “aces” and, after drinking alcohol with the officers who had shot him down, then spent nearly 3 years as a prisoner of war until the war’s end.

After WW1, he returned to the Wiltshire Regiment for another 10 years and was posted to the Far East, including Hong Kong, where he tried to “enjoy life to the full”.

After deciding to resign his army commission, as a Major, he was given a considerable pension and used it to buy a motor car repair business in Harringay, near London. He also acquired a GN car for racing. He competed at Brooklands in the GN in the late 1920s.

He joined Vale Motors (who made the Vale Special sports car, in Maida Vale, London) in 1933 where the company made about 50 cars between 1932 and 1936. Ted claimed to be the “Technical Director” but this may have been an exaggeration. The car was not successful and the company was slowly declining and he left in 1935.

At some time in 1934 he had met Godfrey at Brooklands, almost certainly through his GN racing exploits and connections, and learned of Godfrey’s ideas for a new sports car in the market place.

He teamed up with Godfrey and Robins and helped them build the H.R.G prototype in 1935, becoming a co-founder, owner, and Director of the H.R.G Engineering Co. in 1936.

At H.R.G, he was initially Company Secretary and Office and Sales Manager and did not perform as hoped at the first two, but the other Directors hoped his connections and exploits would help drive sales of the new car.

He competed at Le Mans, with Archie Scott, King George V’s bookmaker, in Archie’s 1936 H.R.G 1½ Litre in 1937, coming 2nd in the 1500cc class.

In 1938 he built a single-seater H.R.G, with a new, experimental, rotary valve cylinder head, designed by a young engineer, Roy Cross. The car was not very successful, being famously quoted as being “*cross but not very rotary*” and his second idea was to re-build it into a luxurious Coupe H.R.G with an “airline” style body. The latter was made at considerable expense, marketed and catalogued in 1939 but there were no takers. The car still survives in the US and has been beautifully restored and was sold, at auction, for a very considerable sum.

Ted left H.R.G in 1939, probably being “pushed”, and, after serving in World War Two in the Middle East and South Africa, he went onto other ventures including designing and patenting garden machinery.

He died in 1989, aged 92.

