

Great Finish for Motorsport Foundation

William Kimberley learns how the finish of a car is vital even when it is part of an engineering course

WITH help from its sponsors, including AkzoNobel and its Lesonal team, OUMF (Oxford University Motorsport Foundation) is working to close the automotive industry's skills gap by giving tomorrow's engineers a chance to gain vital hands-on experience. Open to students of any subject from Oxford's two universities – Oxford and Oxford Brookes – its activities are based on restoring, maintaining, exhibiting and racing classic cars.

"Many engineering students have an inborn fascination for working

with cars, but linking that passion with the thrill of motorsport can take their learning experience to a new dimension," explains Ding Boston, OUMF's co-ordinator. "We are tremendously grateful to Lesonal and all our other supporters who have the foresight to understand that only by helping and encouraging the teenage engineers of today can we ensure they choose careers that secure the future success and strength of the automotive industry."

AkzoNobel's support includes provision of Lesonal, one of its premium

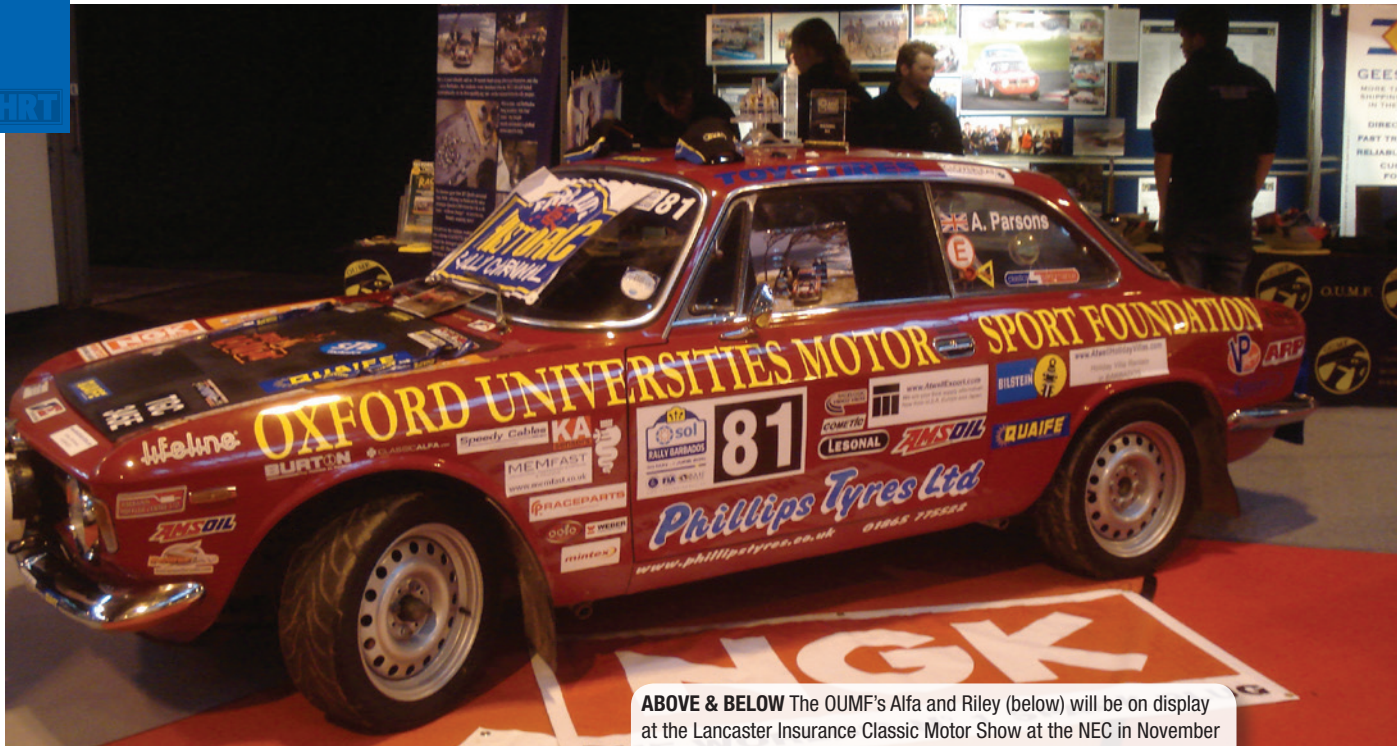
vehicle refinishing brands, as well as advice and training. You might be forgiven for thinking that paintwork would be of less interest to engineers than the mechanical parts that make a car perform, but nothing could be further from the truth.

"Of all the skills that students practise through OUMF, preparation of the bodywork and application of the paint is one of the most difficult and most important to master," says Boston. "Ironically, people tend to judge the quality of the students' work on a car by the finish of the paintwork. If a car's outer appearance fails to impress, visitors at shows and events may pass it by without taking time to talk to the students about their project. Lesonal's longstanding partnership with OUMF ensures that our students' projects 'shine' and properly reflect the enormous effort they put into what lies beneath the gleaming surface."

As a testament to their preparation skills and a great finish, two OUMF students were awarded the trophy for Best Presented Car at Oulton Park earlier this year. This reflected extremely well on the OUMF team and its immaculate Riley, in view of the many years of experience – and relatively enormous ▶

BELOW The Riley in action at the Donington Historic Festival 2015





ABOVE & BELOW The OUMF's Alfa and Riley (below) will be on display at the Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show at the NEC in November

budgets – of some of its competitors.

Jon Amor, VR Premium sales manager at AkzoNobel, agrees. “We share the belief that young people should be given the opportunity to gain practical insights and – importantly for our sector – develop essential bodyshop skills,” he says. “As a global leader in colour technology, AkzoNobel welcomes the fact that OUMF students are taught about the effect of their design choices – including colour and finish – on a project’s results. They need to appreciate how bodyshop professionals turn visions into reality and how subtle colour variations can make a big difference to the look of a car.”

INSPIRATIONAL

Students joining OUMF usually have little practical experience to begin with. However, they soon start getting their hands dirty through projects and field trips. The focus is on inspirational ‘historic’ cars, from the 1950s and ‘60s, whose relative simplicity makes them easy for beginners to understand and work on and allows technical repair principles to be clearly demonstrated.

Restored classic Alfa and Riley models have recently been raced by the students on rally stages in Ypres, in the HRDC (Historic Racing Drivers’ Club) series and in 12-car, Targa and road rallies. OUMF has been recognised as Britain’s top student motorsports team

on the historic car circuit.

“It’s really important to get young people involved practically,” stresses Boston. “These days it can be hard to drag them away from their ‘tiny screens’, and at university a lot of their design and engineering work is

necessary adjustments and, of course, presenting the resulting cars to best effect with a perfect finish.”

Marking its tenth anniversary year the OUMF team will be showing off its project cars – sporting Lesonal paint as always – at the Lancaster Insurance

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computer-based, so they can easily end up with a lack of real-life experience. OUMF helps to give them the full picture, from designing and applying solutions to testing them on the track, analysing performance, making the

Classic Motor Show, NEC, 13-15 November. The students are looking forward to talking to visitors about their projects – and raising the vital funds needed to continue OUMF’s investment in the future of the industry. **HRT**

