LIGHT HEADED
Neon genius creates bespoke Mokka art

SIM CITY
GM creates cutting-edge driving simulator

GHOST TO COAST
Spooky Astra takes on European rally

A LIFETIME OF SERVICE
Vauxhall’s longest-serving salesman tells his story

THE FLIPPER FITS
Vauxhall’s animal-inspired adverts win design award
IN THIS ISSUE

24
Pin It to Win It: John Lowing shares his extraordinary life as a pro-wrestler

16
Renaissance Van: New Vivaro gets a world premiere at the NEC’s Commercial Vehicle Show

12
Drop the Question: Andrew Meddes proposes in style - falling from 13,000 feet

25
Chocks Away: Vauxhall’s D-Type Staff Car meets a WW1 companion - the Biggles BE-2

REGULARS
03 IGNITION
11 GM NEWS
20 PEOPLE
25 HERITAGE
26 COMPETITIONS
27 MARKETPLACE
28 MEET THE TEAM

PAGE 20
BRIAN BAXTER
JUGGLES RUNNING A RETAIL GROUP WITH SUPPORTING THE RETAILER FRANCHISE BOARD

GET IN TOUCH, MAKE OUR DAY!
Have an idea for a story?
Please tell your on-site correspondent or email the Editor at doug.peck@vauxhall.co.uk
Events, personal and work-related achievements, efforts for charity unusual or interesting hobbies or sports – we want to know!
This is your magazine; so tell us what you would like to see in it.

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British neon artist Chris Bracey has collaborated with Vauxhall to create the Cool Britannia Collection, a series of new and original artworks in celebration of the Vauxhall Mokka.

Taking inspiration from the car’s design, Chris Bracey chose three words describing the car to include in his pieces – Power, Refined and Adventure – and created three bespoke pieces based on phrases that evoke the spirit of the UK. The artworks were then auctioned for charity Kids Company and a social media competition was run giving the public a chance to have their very own phrase mocked up in Chris’ inimitable style.

Chris began his 40-year career in neon by transforming the Soho area in the 60s, and since then he has created pieces for iconic films, from Tim Burton’s Batman to Blade Runner and Eyes Wide Shut. Hundreds of Bracey’s artworks are housed in his Walthamstow studio God’s Own Junkyard, a neon wonderland filled with signs, reworked salvaged materials and props.

Denis Chick, Director of Communications at Vauxhall Motors commented, “The Cool Britannia Collection allows Vauxhall Motors to reflect our Don’t Blend In campaign through Chris Bracey’s work. God’s Own Junkyard is an extraordinary space so the photography of the Vauxhall Mokka inside demonstrates its design cues and compact modern form.”

Chris’ artwork is revealed in a short film which offers an insight into the process and inspiration behind the designs. View the film at: http://youtu.be/42Qt1GUJw3w
IGNITION NEWS FROM VAUXHALL

VIEW FROM THE TOP

TIM TOZER
CHAIRMAN & MD,
VAUXHALL MOTORS

In my second Torque column, I want to focus on how we must all work continuously to improve the way we capture the business of prospective customers, whether for vehicle sales or service. Our 20 per cent sales effectiveness – conversion into a sale of those who consider a Vauxhall – is good by industry standards, but we must not stand still. Customer behaviour is moving quickly in a very clear direction: research is done on the web, social media is used as a source of reference on both the brand and retailers, and buying decisions are being made from the comfort of people’s sitting rooms as they browse.

In this new world, decision making processes can be influenced positively by, at one level, website designs, their ease of use, search engine optimisation (to raise us up the response rankings), and the ability to respond to tablet and mobile enquiries and chat forums at any time of day and night. At another level, examples of influencing factors include great photography and providing all relevant details (e.g. two sets of keys, service history, etc.) on used cars. In a nutshell, to really improve our chances of selling vehicles and services to prospective customers we must all pay critical attention to these areas of our business – if we engage with prospects when, where and how they want I am sure we will sell them more of what they want!

On page 16 you will read about the recent Birmingham Motor show reveal of the Great British new Vivaro Van. This breakthrough new product, alongside the recent launches of the whisper diesel engine in Meriva, Zafira Tourer and Astra are an absolute testament to the whole new product story that is starting to come at us. Exciting times. And a final point, please make sure you drive one of the new whisper diesels to see how transforming they are!

Animal magic

These incredible images are part of an advertising campaign for Insignia that has won Vauxhall and creative partner Graymatter a coveted Drum Design Award.

The campaign, called Beautiful Technology, was designed to encourage fleet decision makers to reassess the new Insignia as a car they thought they knew. The creative style was designed to stand out and make readers double-take, and it had to work in traditional page advertising, on the Fleet website and within Vauxhall’s email bulletins to fleet customers and prospects.

Simon Harrison, Creative Director at Graymatter commented: “The challenge was to simply communicate a message about technology combined with an environmental twist to demonstrate aerodynamics, stamina and efficiency. With animal metaphors in mind, we played around looking for the most powerful and interesting shapes and retouching painstakingly for the best effect.”

Fleet Marketing and Motability Manager Paul Adler couldn’t be happier with the result: “We are delighted with the award and with the creative outcome too. Recent fleet research also shows that this was the most recalled, relevant new car launch, so it looks like the new Insignia launch is certainly working effectively.”

The proof is in the pudding, with sales of the new Insignia up 62 per cent in Q1 2014 versus the same period last year – a great success story for Vauxhall.
Vauxhall’s annual weekend promotion
The Big Event was a huge success as customers flocked to take advantage of £500-worth of free fuel with their vehicle purchases.

The weekend of Friday 16 May to Monday 19 May saw a repeat of the ever-popular sales promotion, which this year also offered a range of market-leading finance offers in addition to the free fuel. As well as passenger cars, the offer was also open to commercial vehicle customers, while a 20 per cent discount was offered on all Vauxhall Accessories.

Chris Haugh, Sales Manager at James Haugh Ltd Dumfries, commented: “The event was a massive success for us. We put a thorough marketing plan in place ahead of the activity to boost awareness; from prospecting sales and showroom customers to those who we only see through our service channel, our aim was to spread the word as far and wide as possible. This also involved showcasing models bearing livery and flags at a local supermarket and placing liveried Vauxhall vehicles in various car park locations.

“The effort we put in certainly paid off: we sold 16 cars during the event period alone, with ADAM and Mokka models proving the most popular. It certainly helps to have a plan in place; we were keen to do all we could to make the most of the fantastic opportunity this event presented for both the dealership and our customers."

Nicholas Waite, Dealer Principal at Evans Halshaw Nottingham was equally impressed with the turnout: “We were incredibly busy throughout the entire weekend. Customers could barely believe the amazing offers that were available: free insurance, Retailer contributions, partners discounts, lifetime warranty and a £500 cash gift available. I’d have to say it was one of the most successful events we have ever hosted.”

A group of 23 Vauxhall Retail Executives has won the trip of a lifetime to watch the England football team in the balmy climes of Miami.

They took part in a sales incentive called March to Miami, a competition where the winners are flown out to the Sunshine State for four days to watch England’s final warm-up game against Honduras at the Sun Life Stadium in Miami Gardens. The prize even includes a stay at the Mandarin Oriental, the same hotel as the England team!

The criteria for winning were pretty straightforward. Achieve 130% or more of your Q1 volume bonus target, and you were placed in one of three leagues. These leagues were then split by Retail SEG and final positions were based on performance versus a combined March and April target. Those who finished in one of the top seven winning positions of each league have flown out to Miami!

As an extra incentive, one wildcard place was made available in each league based on the assessment of up to four TrackBack LeadIT call recordings. These were assessed against a set of criteria and the average score used to determine the lucky winner.

Dean Bowden from Walkers, Worksop, was one of the wildcard winners: “It’s always pleasing when you pick something up when you’re competing against 400 dealers. To score particularly well in that area is always a reflection on the dealership and it’s nice that we’re recognised for our performance for a more process-type activity. I’ll have to get myself an England shirt and fly the flag!”

Andy Howard from Burton Brothers is pleased that his luck has finally changed: “I’ve been here 30 years and this is the first time I’ve won anything in 20 years! We’re a small family business, and we try very hard in today’s world so it’s nice to win something when we’re up against the big boys.”

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Fleet customer BT has again put its faith in Vauxhall’s vehicles by ordering a further 242 vehicles for their BT Fleet drivers.

The deal is largely made up of Vauxhall’s cutting edge new Insignias employing the 2.0CDTi 140PS engine with award-winning ecoFLEX technology. Offering an impressive combined fuel consumption of 76.3mpg and CO2 emissions of just 98g/km, they present attractive whole-life costs and low benefit-in-kind taxation.

The rest of the fleet is made up of a mixture of Corsas powered by the 1.3CDTi 95PS ecoFLEX engine, the Astra Hatch and the Astra Sports Tourer, giving BT’s drivers a wide choice of vehicles.

“We are dependent on our vehicles in order to offer the best possible service to our customers, so having a reliable fleet is vital. Having ordered 560 vehicles from Vauxhall between 2011 and 2012, we are familiar with the reliability and impressive build-quality,” said Duncan Webb, Commercial Director, BT.

“It is great to be selected again for a fleet order of this volume and importance. The addition of the new 98g/km Insignia will lower BT’s overall fleet CO2 average as well as directly benefitting the finances of the end-user,” said James Taylor, Fleet Sales Director, Vauxhall.

Flooring contractor Alan Bessell couldn’t believe his luck when he was told he had won a new Movano complete with a host of Stanley Tools.

The competition was part of a collaboration between Vauxhall Commercial Vehicles and DIY retailer Screwfix to offer one lucky winner the £25,000 van and £1,500 of Stanley Tools hand tools. Alan was picked from over 90,000 entries after he bought Stanley products through Screwfix.

The new van was handed over at Drive Bristol Vauxhall by Business Manager, Alastair Soper, and Alan was quite overwhelmed: “I can’t believe I have won this amazing prize, it’s not every day you win a brand new van by simply going to your local Screwfix store. I am really grateful, as the Movano will really help with the day-to-day running of my flooring business.”

Steve Bryant, Brand Manager, Vauxhall Commercial Vehicles added, “It is great to have been involved with two brands with whom we share many customers to give away one of our award-winning vans. We are pleased that it has gone to a deserving winner who will really get the most from it. The competition has also given us a great opportunity to promote our hardworking network of Vauxhall Retailers.”

Making its debut at the recent CV Show in Birmingham was a new taller and longer Combo called the L2H2 Panel Van, which has been added to the range following popular demand.

Offering an extra 245mm of additional height over the H1 specification, the L2H2 provides a maximum load height of over five feet. This now gives the Combo an impressive cargo capacity of 5.0m³, combining an overall height of 2125mm and an overall length of 4740mm while still boasting the same one tonne payload as its shorter H1 siblings.

The L2H2 has been carefully designed with the end user in mind: with a width of 1230mm between each wheel arch it is easily capable of carrying a Europallet. Powering the new van is a choice of two 1.6-litre diesel engines with 90PS or 105PS, both coming with fuel-efficient Start/Stop technology as standard.

“IT’S NOT EVERY DAY YOU WIN A BRAND NEW VAN BY SIMPLY GOING TO YOUR LOCAL SCREWFIX STORE”

“WITH A WIDTH OF 1230MM BETWEEN EACH WHEEL ARCH IT IS EASILY CAPABLE OF CARRYING A EUROPALETT”
MAX POWER
The Vauxhall Professionals programme has undergone a comprehensive overhaul to make it easier for Retailers to recognise service excellence through MAX.

The reward and recognition scheme has been vastly simplified in response to feedback from Retailers, who were often confused about how the ranking system worked and found the nominations process too onerous.

Chris Holmes, Campaigns and Retailer Incentives Manager explained: “We wanted to create something that was more transparent and easy to use. This programme is Vauxhall-funded, and is designed to recognise and reward in-house best practices.” The move to simplify things is already paying off. The number of nomination forms year to date compared with 2013 are already up by 57 per cent, and in April alone over 90 nominations were received.

The new system not only offers some great prizes but the opportunity to earn electronic badges that are displayed on your MAX profile. In line with the simplification, the website is now split into three main sections: Network Stars, Programme Quizzes and Customer Kudos.

Network Stars
This section is about highlighting and sharing examples of excellent service or performance and is split into four nomination categories. Going the Extra Mile is for people in the retail network who go over and above for a customer, and every entry is read by Regional Operational Managers and Head of Customer Experience Andy Gilson. Aftersales Operations Coordinator Sarah Featherstone explained: “It’s high on a lot of Directors’ agendas because they’re keen to see what’s happening across the organisation. The nominations contain a lot of useful lessons in customer service, and are important in recognising the staff and Retailers who do a great job for customers.”

Winners from each region will be announced every month, with one additional winner being selected by Andy Gilson from the very best nominations. The winner receives a certificate signed by RND Director Chris Roberts, a trophy and a prize, and they will get a photo of their award presentation posted on MAX as well.

Programme Knowledge Quizzes
These will take place at the start of each quarter, and are based around new programmes or aftersales offers. They’re designed to challenge the network if they’ve read and understood all the communications and are up-to-date with all Vauxhall’s offers.

If you get every question right you will earn a profile badge and be entered into a prize draw for prizes such as a Blu-ray player, digital camera or speaker system. This forms a very important feedback loop as Sarah explained: “The tests can flag up holes in people’s knowledge but if a lot of people are getting the same question wrong we can look at where we need to reinforce or modify our communications. We can then reuse the question to ensure the message is getting through properly.”

Customer Kudos
This section shows where customers have left feedback to members of staff on the service they have received. If you are nominated through a customer letter or email you will be put into the prize draw, and will receive a Customer Service Star pin badge as well as an electronic badge for their profile regardless of the outcome.

Remember, the Vauxhall Professionals programme is completely free - are you making the most of it?
CHILD’S PLAY

A survey commissioned by Vauxhall and entitled, Are we nearly there yet? revealed over nine in 10 (92 per cent) of five to 18-year-olds are occupying themselves with a phone or tablet during long car journeys. However, traditional car games such as i-spy, car snooker and waving at other drivers, are not completely out the window. It seems the survival of the traditional car game has lasted the test of time despite the introduction of new technology, with over eight in 10 (87%) of parents encouraging children to play games not involving technology.

The survey uncovered the most off-putting niggles that long car journeys with children undoubtedly bring. Over half of respondents (52 per cent) loathed siblings fighting in the back of the car and nearly half (45 per cent) disliked the constant requests of, ‘are we nearly there yet?’ with other deterrents including multiple requests to stop for the toilet (39 per cent), a third (33 per cent) worried about car sickness and over a fifth of respondents (22 per cent), found constant demands for music insufferable.

However, there are tools and techniques for surviving long car journeys with children. The most popular after phones or tablets were portable DVD players (27 per cent) followed by snacks, music, games, talking books and toys.

More than two fifths (43 per cent) of those with children have driven to Europe with them. On average the furthest motorists drive with a child under one is four hours, for those aged 12-18 the average is six hours.

“As Vauxhall leads the car industry with advances in technology, including satellite navigation systems, IntelliLink and Siri Eyes Free, journeys are easier. Family road trips to the seaside or visiting family remain a staple part of British life,” said Vauxhall’s Managing Director Tim Tozer.

Top 5 games to play in the car
1. i-Spy
2. Registration plate alphabet
3. Car snooker
4. Number plate cricket
5. Eddie Stobart truck bingo

EXCITE-ING TIMES

A focus on Customer Driven Behaviour is being recognised through the EXCITE programme following the roll-out of the EASY programme earlier this year.

The C in EXCITE has always stood for Customer Driven, but maintaining momentum for EASY is being seen as a priority, so for a 12-month period the EXCITE award will reward this behaviour. One major enhancement to the programme is that external people can now nominate Vauxhall staff by following instructions that are automatically placed at the foot of every email sent from the organisation.

The most recent winner of the award is Carlite Controller, Michael Gibbons, who was nominated for his hard work and dedication, especially during the Vivaro run out. Michael’s nominee said: “He was fantastic in March with regards to the Vivaro by trying to prioritise and help customers. He was extremely positive and always upbeat despite the huge pressure the department must have been under and with his help managed to keep customers and the Retailers happy.

“In general, the Vivaro run out has been an extremely complicated process due to strong order intake and Michael has handled it extremely well.”

Michael received £100 in vouchers and the EXCITE trophy for the month, which was presented to him by MD Tim Tozer.
Van you spare a dime

The brand-new Vivaro that was recently revealed at the NEC in Birmingham (p16&17) will cost £450 less than the outgoing model.

List prices for the cutting-edge new van start from £17,995 excluding VAT, with first deliveries expected in September. The lynchpin of Vauxhall’s multi award-winning van range is available now in two trim levels: Vivaro and Vivaro Sportive, and four body styles: panel van, double cab, 9-seater combi and platform cab.

Pricing has also been announced for the nine-seater combi starting at £25,699 to £27,749 on-the-road including VAT, and for the platform cab starting at £20,658.33 to £21,858.33 list price excluding VAT.

“It’s great news that our all-new British-built Vivaro enters the market at such a competitive starting price,” said Steve Bryant, Brand Manager, Vauxhall Commercial Vehicles. “Vivaro is the highlight of our van range and boasts a new design, class-leading build quality and practicality and all-new fuel-efficient powertrains.”

The nation’s media got to experience Vauxhall’s motoring history as well as its future as part of a recent Media Drive Day.

Journalists from national, regional and consumer publications came from as far as Scotland and Ireland to try out Vauxhall’s latest models at the Heritage Centre in Luton, but it wasn’t all work. Aside from the shiny new cars on offer they also got to drive classics such as the Lotus Carlton, VX220, HA Viva, and the Mk1 and 2 Cavaliers that live at Vauxhall’s car museum, and the opportunity to do so was a welcome distraction for them.

Product PR Manager Simon Hucknall commented: “Every year we take our new models to events around the country, but the benefit of holding it here was that we also had access to our heritage fleet and key Vauxhall personnel. We organised presentations and interviews with Mark Pinkney, Marketing Programmes Manager, and Chris Roberts, Retail Network Development Director, giving the press an informed insight into Vauxhall’s strategic direction that they wouldn’t normally get at this type of event.”

The journalists were also treated to a tour of the Heritage Centre by Senior Vehicle Restorer, Andy Boddy, and for those who hadn’t been before it was quite a treat. The feedback from them has been excellent and the all-important column inches have been racking up already.

It’s not often you can be thankful for advertising, but Rebecca Heron from Nottingham certainly was when she won herself a brand-new Mokka on Ant and Dec’s Saturday Night Takeaway.

Whilst appearing on the ITV show, Rebecca took a gamble on the Win the Adverts segment and bagged the new SUV worth over £16,000 in its hottest new colour, Orange Rocks.

“I was beyond excited picking up my brand new Vauxhall Mokka. Taking the risk live on the night was nerve-wracking. At the end, I couldn’t quite believe what I had won.” said Rebecca. “The Vauxhall Mokka is perfect for me and my fiancée Malc, offering us plenty of space and allowing us to get out and explore.”

Rebecca was presented the Vauxhall Mokka 1.6i Tech Line in FWD, by Lee Blanchard, New Car Sales Executive at Evans Halshaw in Clifton Boulevard, Nottingham.

“We were excited to take part in the prime time award-winning Saturday night TV programme and give one of the audience the chance to win themselves our adventurous Vauxhall Mokka,” said Denis Chick, Director of Communications. “We wish Rebecca and her family many miles of safe and happy motoring.”
Vauxhall demonstrated its commitment to business continuity in April by hosting a one-day conference for its local supply chain and Bedfordshire-based businesses to explain its importance.

Called Project Griffin and held at Luton Plant, the event opened with speeches from Managing Director Tim Tozer and Chief Constable Colette Paul from Bedfordshire Police, highlighting the collective partnership between local authorities and business.

Delegates were given an insight into a variety of business continuity issues, with briefings on the current threat and a session on how to spot fraudulent documents. Those who attended the awareness day gained a better perspective of continuity planning and how to deal with adverse situations. John Jack, GM UK BCP Coordinator said: “For us, hosting Project Griffin allowed us to fulfil a major requirement of embedding the importance of Business Continuity with our supply chain and to fulfil some of our social responsibilities towards our neighbours and partners.”

Working in collaboration with Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Bedfordshire Police, Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council, Vauxhall has led the way in continuity matters having been accredited with the highly coveted ISO22301 in June 2013.

SURVEY THE SCENE

Vauxhall has continued to build its relationship with a valued fleet customer following the sale of 90 new Insignias to Countrywide Surveying Services.

The cars will be provided as part of a benefits package to property professionals learning to be residential surveyors on the company’s Trainee Surveyor Programme.

“We were delighted to secure the new Vauxhall Insignia to help us underpin our benefits package and help to attract the best quality candidates in the market. Vauxhall has formed the cornerstone of Countrywide Surveying Services’ car fleet for many years and it’s a real pleasure to extend this valued relationship into the next generation of Surveyors,” said Paul Chapman, Managing Director of Countrywide Surveying Services.

“We wish all of Countrywide’s Trainees success as they embark on the new chapter of their careers, with these new Insignias providing them with a sophisticated, reliable and economical set of wheels with brilliant benefit-in-kind tax advantages.”

said James Taylor, Fleet Sales Director, Vauxhall Motors.
LIVING IN A BOX

GM’s Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly plant is collaborating with Detroit’s non-profit Michigan Urban Farming Initiative (MUFI) to help build the city’s first occupied shipping container home.

The home is about 40 feet long, eight feet wide and 10 feet tall, and will be constructed of 85% scrap materials donated by GM, and built in part by employee volunteers. When completed this spring, the home will feature 320 square feet of living space with two bedrooms, a bathroom and kitchen.

Clever use of materials runs throughout the project. For example, Chevrolet Volt battery cases will be reused as bird houses and planter boxes, wood pallets and other scrap wood will be reused to build furniture, including a table and bed frame, and vehicle sound-deadening material will insulate the walls.

“This innovative project allows our facility to give back even more and be an integrated community partner, while reusing materials that would otherwise be discarded,” said Doneen McDowell, Detroit-Hamtramck Plant Manager. “MUFI’s plan to reinvent urban agriculture is a creative approach that helps Detroit’s renaissance in a sustainable, efficient manner.”

SEEING IS BELIEVING

General Motors’ Research Driving Simulator is now one of the most sophisticated of its kind, and is currently being used to test a new semi-automated driving system called Super Cruise.

According to the US National Highway Safety Transportation Administration, human error causes more than 90 percent of all crashes, so advanced driver-assistance and safety features will play an increasingly important role in road safety. Super Cruise is designed to ease the driver’s workload on motorways only, in bumper-to-bumper traffic and on long road trips, but driver attention is still required.

The simulator has now been fitted with a 360-degree high-definition projection screen integrated with a 2-terabyte-second image generator which allows visuals to dynamically respond to steering and pedal force inputs within 70 milliseconds. These enhancements let Super Cruise developers measure driver control interactions, eye-glance behaviour, and evaluate driver approaches before full-system vehicles are available.

“Simulator testing helps our vehicle teams understand the consequences of design decisions quickly and early in the development cycle,” said John Capp, Director of GM Electrical, Controls and Active Safety Research. “Ultimately, the work done here enables the rapid development of sophisticated systems like Super Cruise and leads to improved driving experiences for our customers.”

Race research

A new research facility for GM’s race engines and electric motors has now begun construction.

“The GM Performance and Racing Center will serve as a resource to help our race teams and drivers continue to win races and championships,” said Jim Campbell, US Vice President, Performance Vehicles and Motorsports. “It will also advance technical sharing between racing and production engine programmes.”

The electric motor lab will produce prototype electric motors and validate manufacturing processes used in the production of electric and hybrid vehicle motors.

Cruze control

GM’s best-selling car, the Chevrolet Cruze, has reached a significant milestone as the millionth model rolled off the line at the Lordstown Complex facility.

The hot red LT model with optional RS package is being bought by two sections of the United Automobile Workers union and will be raffled to a Lordstown employee with all ticket proceeds donated to local charities.

Meanwhile, GM has announced a $50 million investment for a new flexible Trim Shop and upgrades to the Press Room at the Lordstown Complex for the next-generation Chevrolet Cruze compact sedan.

New VP of HR

John J. Quattrone has now been announced as the new Senior Vice President, Global Human Resources for GM. John succeeds Melissa A. Howell, who is leaving GM to pursue other interests.

“John brings to the job a deep and rich breadth of experience across all levels of the enterprise,” said GM CEO Mary Barra. “This background is invaluable as we create lasting change that puts the customer at the center of how we work and how we measure ourselves going forward.”
In the dropzone

Vauxhall employees from around the country are raising money for charity at 13,000 feet

The thrill of skydiving has always been an experience that Vauxhall PR Assistant Rebecca Mansfield has wanted to share. So what better way than to organise a series of jumps for Vauxhall colleagues, all while raising money for charity? She explained: “I wanted to give more people a taste of a sport that I really love, and I thought why not support a charity that I feel really strongly about as well. Get Kids Going is a great cause that helps to get disabled children to get into sport through support and equipment, and it looks after them through their first match right up to Paralympic level. I’ve always done a lot of work with them and know the owner very well. I’ve seen the impact that it has had on young people’s lives and it really is an amazing cause.”

So far 23 brave employees from across Vauxhall’s four sites have taken the plunge at Nottingham’s Langar Airfield with another 20 waiting for their turn in the plane. Viv Royle, a Supervisor at Ellesmere Port, took the plunge with his daughter Jess, and thoroughly enjoyed his first freestyle: “It was fantastic, the most surreal experience I’ve had. I’ve always liked fast bikes and cars, and I thought there’s no way I can get a speeding ticket for this! It was so well organised, and we had blue sky and no clouds. The guy Jess jumped with had done over 18,000 jumps, while mine was a vertical skydiving champion – I could tell as he jumped out inverted! I was fine when I went up there, it was only when I watched the DVD when I got down I realised I had gone quite pale. My wife came down to watch and I think she got as much as a buzz out of it as we did.”

According to Rebecca, no-one has come down without a smile on their face, with many wanting to go back up. And smile they should; at the last count they have raised over £4,200 between them for the charity.

“I WAS FANTASTIC, THE MOST SURREAL EXPERIENCE I’VE HAD. I’VE ALWAYS LIKED FAST BIKES AND CARS, AND I THOUGHT THERE’S NO WAY I CAN GET A SPEEDING TICKET FOR THIS!”

DROP THE QUESTION

Proposing to the one you love is viewed as one of the most nerve racking events in a person’s life; most people stick to the nice restaurant, down-on-one-knee approach. However, Andy Meddes is not ‘most people’. After signing up for the skydive in May, he decided to break the mould and propose to his fiancée, Sam, in freefall.

At 13,000ft Andy popped the question to an unsuspecting Sam, who was none the wiser until Andy’s video was played back in the club house. The bride-to-be’s shock and elation was evident when, after the video had ended, she turned to a kneeled Andy. Through tears of joy she accepted his brave and unique proposal before hugging her fiancé while the room exploded with cheers and applause. “No words can describe the feeling of jumping from a plane at 13,000 feet,” said Andy. “It was such an incredible feeling and what a buzz! But I was more nervous about the proposal, with four months of careful planning and loads of help from Rebecca, it all went without a hitch and Sam didn’t have a clue.”
Navigating and dealing with the many hazards and traffic systems in busy urban environments requires a great deal of driver attention. The high density of road users and complex traffic situations means there is significant potential for accidents to happen, but in future technology will take a great deal of the risk away.

The UR:BAN research project looks to provide drivers with forward-looking support, tailored and customised to driving in urban traffic. Thirty-one partners from the automotive, electronics and software industries, together with research institutes and local authorities, are developing intelligent assistance and cooperative traffic management systems.

The project is divided into three pillars: Cognitive Assistance, Networked Traffic Systems, and Human Factors in Traffic. "Opel/Vauxhall is a partner in all three project pillars," explained Michael F. Ableson, GM Europe Vice President, Engineering. "The focus is always on the human being. Teams of engineers, physicists and traffic psychologists are exploring assistance in difficult situations, the intelligent networking of vehicles and infrastructure, driver behaviour, and the appropriate human-machine interaction for urban driving."

**COGNITIVE ASSISTANCE**

The Opel/Vauxhall team is developing an advanced driver assistance system that takes advantage of the extra road space created by a steering intervention to help avoid collisions with vehicles and pedestrians in inner-city traffic. A demonstration vehicle is currently being prepared with advanced cameras and radar, which, complemented by modified braking and steering systems, will allow an intervention in the control over the vehicle.

**NETWORKED TRAFFIC SYSTEM**

The team is also working on the next generation of traffic management systems to create smarter traffic lights. Information sent to the vehicle via Wi-Fi from the traffic management infrastructure and other vehicles can help to generate recommendations for driving at junctions. This could enable the driver to approach the intersection, safely and energy efficiently, and ideally cross without stopping.

**HUMAN FACTORS IN TRAFFIC**

The advantage gained by new technical systems can only improve safety when drivers also know how to deal with the additional information and how to react. The team is investigating how drivers interpret and react to information the car provides, so experts will test the influence of the assistance systems in various simulators and in real traffic, under controlled conditions.

The sub-project entitled Behaviour Prediction and Intention Recognition also aims to develop an algorithm to detect a driver’s intentions and predict their behaviour in difficult driving situations. Extensive testing shows that before manoeuvres begin, specific behaviour patterns and characteristics in the position of the vehicle show up with all drivers. The algorithm should predict avoidance manoeuvres or emergency braking situations and ascertain whether the driver can mitigate an emergency situation through steering or braking. If the system detects that the driver alone can mitigate a difficult situation, it can delay or suppress a driver warning.
here aren’t many people in sales who can claim to have worked through seven decades selling the same company’s products. Tony Lister is a rare exception, having sold Vauxhalls and Bedfords for most of his adult life in the West Midlands, and he’s still going at the incredible age of 80.

Tony is currently Dudley Motor Company’s Motability specialist, but there probably isn’t a Vauxhall model he hasn’t sold throughout his 65-year career. He started off at the Ryland Motor Company in 1949, where he began by selling Vauxhall cars and Bedford, Seddon and Atkinson trucks and vans, inspired by the freedom cars brought and a desire to get his own.

“My first company car was an F Model Victor in silvery blue,” he remembered. “I hate to say this but it was the one that got a bad name because of the American design and it had a tendency to deteriorate quite quickly! My favourite to sell was probably the FD Victor because it was well-priced and the specification was very high for its time. It had a lovely curvy design and was a great family car.”

Tony has sold literally thousands of cars in his time, and he puts his success down to personal service. “I think if you talk to people and they get to know you, you create something, a bond of trust. Even if it’s company business you’re still dealing with people. That’s my philosophy and it’s brought me a lot of repeat business over the years.”

It’s his personality and personal touch that has inspired such loyalty, and he has built up strong relationships with many of his customers. “I’ve got customers who have been with me since I joined Dudley Motor Co. in Stafford Street and they’ve had six or seven cars from me. If I turned up for Sunday lunch at a customer’s house they’d simply sit me down and put a plate in front of me! I’ve even seen their children grow up over the years.”

Tony started working on the Motability side of the business in 1982 at the request of a Vauxhall Area Manager, and in difficult times it has been a welcome revenue stream to the business. “Although overall the population of people with disabilities is relatively small, they are regular customers who change their cars every three years. I run a fleet of 400 cars and every year they all come in for a service, a third come in for MOT and a third are replaced. During the recession it really helped to maintain the profitability of the company.”

With 65 years’ experience under his belt, Tony has no intention of stopping now. “I still like serving people, and I hope they still like me! They’re all so different and they all have a personality of some sort or another, you’ve just got to tap into what you can. I think many salesmen don’t settle and move around too much. If you just sit in a corner for long enough you’ll develop a much larger clientele than you will from flying from one flower to the next.”

**Love for sales**

*Tony Lister may just be the most experienced Vauxhall sales person in the country*

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**“I THINK IF YOU TALK TO PEOPLE AND THEY GET TO KNOW YOU, YOU CREATE A BOND OF TRUST”**

Tony has spent most of his life selling the Griffin brand.
Vauxhall supports a number of local charities and concerns through the Employee Charity Fund. HR Manager and Committee Member Jackie Jones explains how your donations can make all the difference.

Those of you that use the restaurant at Griffin House will have possibly met an interesting character there during May - otherwise known as the Charity Chicken!

This appearance was to raise awareness for the Employee Charity Fund which allows employees (including contract staff) to donate a small sum from their salary each week or month - it can be any amount, in fact, most people give a sum that is not much more than a glass of their favourite tipple! Donation is very simple. There is one form to complete and the money is taken directly from salaries for GM employees, or via a standing order for contract staff.

Sounds great, but we do have a problem. As the number of people donating has shrunk, almost entirely through attrition, we have much less funding than we would like. And that is where you come in! Through raising awareness of this fund, we are hoping that many more employees will donate just a small amount and give us the money we need to be able to help more of the requests we see coming in.

There are also some long-serving employees that are donating the same amount to the fund as when they joined the company (there are a few donating five pence for instance)! If this is you, would you be able to give a little more?

So, who do we help? Our focus is on smaller, local causes such as scout groups, youth football teams, and concerns such as the SOS Bus which does such great work in our local community.

Where does your money go?

Helen Chadwick is the Brown Owl for the 22nd Luton Brownie Pack, and she explains how Vauxhall’s support through the Employee Charity Fund has been so important to them.

“We run a programme for 25 girls aged between seven and ten that teaches a number of important life skills, including team working, craft skills and outdoor techniques like camping. It really boosts their self-esteem, confidence and self-reliance and they thoroughly enjoy it!

“As a registered charity, support from Vauxhall is vital. For example, for the Brownies’ centenary we are celebrating with a sleepover at London Zoo, where the girls will stay in the bunkhouse and get a night tour of the zoo in June. It will be an amazing experience but is a significant amount of money for us to get together, parents do contribute but without help from the Employee Charity Fund trips like this wouldn’t be possible.”

“OUR FOCUS IS ON SMALLER, LOCAL CAUSES”

We do consider all requests, however, and have helped larger concerns such as the Luton & Dunstable Hospital.

It’s so easy to donate. Simply pick up the Miscellaneous Deductions Form from the HR Service Point on the first floor, fill out the amount you wish to give, and we do the rest for you. If you are a contractor, you will need to fill out a standing order form in the same way – again this is available from HR.

Thanks for reading and I hope you feel you can help!
there's no bigger stage in the commercial vehicle world, and for Vauxhall's Luton Plant, there's arguably no bigger product launch. The all-new Vivaro, codenamed X82, was revealed to the press and public at Birmingham’s NEC by Managing Director Tim Tozer. He gave a tour of the new features of the panel van and double cab examples on display and talked through the UK-centric nature of the manufacture.

For example, over £160 million has been invested in bringing the new model to production in Luton Plant, while over 40 per cent of content is sourced in the UK. The plant is also a major exporter with 52 per cent of production destined for European markets.

Journalists from all over Europe came to get a look at the striking and technically-advanced new van, while Opel/Vauxhall’s Vice President of Sales and Aftersales Peter Kuespert was there to see the unveiling for himself. The launch hit all of the major media outlets, making the news top spot in ITV Anglia and BBC Look East and was featured by The Sun as well as many other national and trade publications.

There were also a number of England football stars on display including Graham Taylor (former England and Aston Villa manager), Ray Clemence (former England and Liverpool goalkeeper) and Matt Le Tissier (former England and Southampton midfielder).

"The Vivaro is in a fiercely competitive market, and today’s customers require more from a light commercial vehicle than ever before," said Steve Bryant, Brand Manager, Vauxhall Commercial Vehicles. "It’s great to be back at the CV Show, and we are very proud to take the wraps of the new Vivaro for its world debut at its home motor show.”

The latest, greatest Vivaro made its world debut to huge acclaim at the 2014 Commercial Vehicle Show

The new British-built Vauxhall Vivaro is here – more practical, more efficient and more appealing than ever before

Renaissance VAN

The new Vivaro combines the functionality of a light commercial vehicle, the benefits of an office and the comfort and design appeal of a passenger car.

It is now longer with increased load capacity, and its cabin features IntelliLink infotainment technology with user-friendly navigation, as well as equipment details which quickly transform it into a mobile office. It is also extremely economical: all-new turbo diesel engines offer reduced fuel consumption as low as 49.5mpg.
OFF THE LINE
Mark Thomas has been the Pilot Supervisor for the latest X82 incarnation of Vauxhall’s Vivaro. He shares the process behind getting a new model ready for manufacture.

I’ve been working on this launch since September 2012, planning all of the work integration, managing forward planning and liaising between all the different departments in General Assembly (GA) to get the van ready for production. I’ve also been responsible for all the document control which includes all of our work standardisation books and station layout.

Once we had the basic build data from our partner Renault, we could sit down with our mechanical engineers to go through some of the basic manufacturing processes. Around 90 per cent of the new van is built in the same way, although we have moved the battery from under the vehicle to the engine bay, and the ABS unit has moved with it. The engines have also changed from the 1.9 litre units to 1.6 engines, one single turbo and one bi-turbo, and this has brought more complexity into the build.

We spent the first seven months of 2013 in Sandouville learning how to build the vehicle before we came back to set up a training programme for the 240 operators within GA. Each operator has been through a static training process, gaining between 12 and 22 hours experience. We initially use a vehicle that’s not on the move on the conveyor and then train them through a station book so we work out how much work they can do, and then they progress to a moving vehicle. Of course during this phase nobody is allowed to take any photos and no documentation is allowed to be released.

Throughout the process lessons are continually being learned. All the experience we gained on the X83 was passed on to help Renault devise the new build processes so that we could combine our expertise. We wanted to come to a common understanding of what we’d both seen in manufacturing over the last 13 years and what we didn’t want to see for a further 12 years!

The most satisfying milestone was seeing the first vehicle start as it came off the end of the conveyor. It was the fruition of all the training and everything else coming together; seeing the first one coming to life was amazing. X82 Number One is still in the plant and will be a test vehicle, although sadly it will eventually be crushed; because it’s part of an early pilot phase you can’t register it.

X83 will cease full production in July. It will be a sad day when the last one rolls off the line, but it’s all a part of moving forward. The new Vivaro will secure our future for the next 12 years and hopefully get us back to two shifts and make us even more profitable and viable.

It’s been exciting, slow at times, and often stressful, but you work through those things. I’ve been very fortunate to have such a great team around me who all worked together to achieve a successful launch.

PULLING POWER
Two new turbo diesels offer a choice of four outputs, including a 1.6 CDTi with 90PS and 115PS, as well as the sophisticated 1.6 BiTurbo CDTi with sequential turbocharging giving 120PS and 140PS. And if you want to improve the already impressive fuel economy, a special ‘eco’ driving mode can be activated for even greater fuel savings.

The new Vivaro also provides plenty of power. From just 1,500rpm, the 120PS BiTurbo generates impressive maximum torque of 320Nm.

SAFE AS HOUSES
In addition to ABS, including Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD), the driver is supported by Emergency Brake Assist (EBA), Hill Start Assistant (HSA) and Electronic Stability Program (ESP) with Traction Control (TC). A combined cruise control and speed limiter is available, as well as a rear-view camera which helps the driver manoeuvre into spaces. Additionally, a large convex mirror in the passenger sun visor can be tilted to show the driver the ‘blind spot’ area.

THE MOBILE OFFICE
The Vivaro now offers Vauxhall’s IntelliLink infotainment system, which includes a seven-inch colour touchscreen, Bluetooth telephone connectivity, audio streaming and advanced navigation functions with maps that can be simply updated by USB download. Automatic climate control and a Keyless Open & Start system increase cabin comfort and ease of use. Clever details include a centre front seat which can be transformed into a desk for a laptop.
It was a project that took almost four years from concept to completion, but the new Milton Keynes branch of Retailer Thurlow Nunn is a Brand Centre in every sense. Offering new and used car and van sales, MasterFit accredited servicing, Motability and Ampera Specialist knowledge, the huge site has space for around 95 new and 90 used cars on site. Network Development Manager Chris Hill explained: “The idea of a Brand Centre is that it fully represents the range of Vauxhall models and shows off our products in their best light, customers are able to see our whole range in one superb facility.”

The location for the new site has been driven by the changing geography of Milton Keynes. Over time, motor retailing within the town has shifted to the east with a concentration of manufacturers represented in the Kingston area. Chris started looking for a new location in 2010, and after exhausting most options, the decision to find a greenfield site and build a new facility was taken in conjunction with the local council: “It was clear that the Towergate location would be ideal providing that a satisfactory arrangement could be reached regarding the landscaping. We did a huge amount of work with the Milton Keynes Parks Trust to come up with a proposal that would work for both of us, there were a few minor challenges but they were great to work with and ultimately I think we’ve ended up with a fantastic location.”

Thurlow Nunn were then approached to run the site, and it was a huge decision for the group as they had traditionally only had a presence in East Anglia. However, their desire to grow and branch out of their heartland led to them taking on the new project, and construction was started mid-2013. Group Managing Director Simon Bottomley is understandably pleased with the result: “There are always regulatory challenges in this type of project but it went pretty smoothly all the way through. The Local Authority, the Parks Trust who own the land surrounding the site and the Homes and Communities Agency were all very cooperative, and we had some great project managers who did all the pre-construction planning work and got us through the process.

“Thurlow Nunn Nunn were a great partner and I’d have no hesitation in working with them in future.”

“I’m very proud of what has been achieved, it’s our largest site and our first Brand Centre. At the moment it’s ahead of the curve and performing even better than we thought, it’s a big investment for us but it is already exceeding expectations. I think customers are really pleased with it but just as importantly all the staff there love that it’s a brand new facility and a really nice place to work.”

Chris concluded: “In most towns and cities you don’t often have the flexibility to put up a building like this, it was a rare opportunity but one that was pleasing to work through to the finished result. It’s a stunning and highly visible site, Thurlow Nunn were a great partner and I’d have no hesitation in working with them in future.”
Four aircraft engineers showed what is possible with some paint, some imagination and a bargain Astra estate...

The premise of The Banger Run is simple. Take a knackered old car worth £250 or less and drive it from Ashford in Kent to Barcelona in Spain along five of Europe’s top roads. The theme for the 2013 rally was film icons, so when a team of aircraft engineers decided to take on the challenge they knew exactly what they wanted to drive - the Ecto-1 car from Ghostbusters!

There aren’t many 1959 Cadillacs that can be had for £250, so the group set their hearts on a dark blue R-registration Astra estate which they managed to get under the price limit with a bit of haggling. Team member Mark Wood remembered: “It was out of MOT and needed a bit of welding but other than that it was in pretty good shape. It was duly passed, thanks to the help of a local garage, so we then set about the transformation!”

The group all work at RAF Odiham in Hampshire, so they got the airforce painters to give her a coat of white paint before applying the essential Ghostbusters livery, all for free. “The event is mainly run by people in the forces and is all about raising money for Help for Heroes,” commented Mark. “Whenever we mentioned that people were very generous!”

The pièce de résistance was the addition of working police lights on the top which also had a unique feature: “They had a speaker built into them for the siren, but a friend modified it so we could play anything we liked through it from the stereo. It was great fun playing the Ghostbusters theme through it full blast whenever we pulled up to a campsite at night with the lights blazing!”

The intrepid squad set out from Ashford in Kent (in fully-themed overalls, of course) and made their way to the Nürburgring in Germany. Then it was on through Switzerland and to the base of the Alps, which is where the fun really started: “On the third day we took on the Furka Pass in Switzerland, and she was ok going up but had a tendency to overheat quite quickly on the way down, so you had to open up the windows and turn the heater on full blast to get all the heat out from the engine bay! The turbo was also blown so it wasn’t particularly quick, but we got through it in the end.”

From there they wound through Italy and then popped into Monaco (with another near overheating calamity) before making the finish line in sunny Barcelona.

Considering the distance, the old girl performed admirably: “There was a hole in the petrol tank which meant we could only fill it up halfway, and the windscreen wipers were a bit temperamental, but apart from that she worked fine and there were no real problems.”

Overall the team raised over £1,000 and the event altogether raised over £30,000 for Help for Heroes. The car even found a new owner according to Mark: “We sold it to a lady in Scotland for £270 who wanted it for her own charity event!”
8.00: Arrive at the dealership; whilst downloading my emails, I’m off on the first site-walk of the day with the Service Leader. I find out what work is booked for the day and then walk through all of the aftersales departments and greet the team.

8.30: A briefing with the Sales Manager to set up the day and find out what appointments and handovers we have due. I review the sales rate of the last few days and discuss any immediate issues.

9.00: Join a telephone conference call with Tim Tozer, Chris Roberts and Mike Hutchin. We discuss the current Franchise Board issues and agree a timetable for feedback. We have some great momentum on standards simplification, there’s still a lot of work to do through!

9.45: I review our DOC showing the position for the month and am pleased to see that a strong order take over the weekend has put us above budget. I then telephone my departmental managers to highlight a couple of areas requiring immediate focus.

11:00: Back to see the Sales Manager; walk the site and look at every used car, paying particular attention to the ones that are nearly over-aged. It’s time to review our new car stock and authorise funding of some pack cars to top up the stock levels on ADAM and Corsa.

12.00: Looking through our newest customer questionnaire returns, I’m pleased that all are 10 out of 10 other than the last one which scored low for valeting. I arrange to collect the customer’s car and carry out a fresh valet; discuss valet standards with the Sales Manager to make sure this is nipped in the bud!

13.30: Meet with Sales Manager and Marketing Manager to review internet performance and critique the website photographs. Listening to a number of incoming and outgoing sales calls from the previous week reveals some mixed performances, highlighting a number of training requirements.

14.30: Some service customers in the customer lounge are waiting for their car to be serviced and tell me that it’s their third car from us; they sing the praises of the Aftersales Team.

15.00: I review the latest numbers with the Vauxhall Sales District Manager along with the standards and our current position regarding the GM Academy, Lead It and MAX. We listen to a few mystery shops and review the latest CSI results. Following a review of the newest Si2 data, we highlight some postcodes that could be stronger; he informs me of a great sales initiative at another Retailer and we agree plans to try a similar marketing approach.

17.45: Check all of the vehicle sales numbers for the day and ring around all managers to review the day before heading for home.

20.30: The last job of the day is to check our performance in terms of the up-sell, hours sold, bookings and telephone calls. A final review of vehicle sales performance confirms the numbers and margins, and lastly, I’ll fill in the Franchise Board members and update the volume bonus table to make sure we are still on track.
Overdrive people

JUNE 2014

Overdrive people

MUD, SWEAT AND BEERS

With the endurance running season upon us, the daddy of them all rears its head – Tough Mudder.

A group of Vauxhall employees from Griffin House took on the infamous 12-mile assault course, getting electrocuted, drenched and of course, very, very muddy – all to raise money for Help for Heroes.

Materials Supply Specialist Matt Jones was one of the brave volunteers who completed the course with European Supply Chain Planner Alan Craigen, and it was a real no-brainer. The radio station covers a huge area and not only were we helping to raise money for such a valuable cause, but we were able to raise awareness of our brand and take the Mokkas out to local businesses and workplaces in the region at the same time. We received lots of namechecks on air, as did the cars and the Vauxhall brand so we are very pleased with how it went.”

Two white Mokkas were sign-written for the day and driven by the Hampshire group’s very own Supergirls Jane and Lucy. The ladies chauffeured the DJs from workplace to workplace around the region collecting cash and raising awareness for the charity.

Group CEO, Graham Jacobs said: “When they asked if we were able to help out, it turns out he doesn’t like diving into ice: “The worst obstacle was the ice bath, which was basically several big skips filled with 40 tonnes of ice that we had to immerse ourselves in - it was quite horrible.

“The race itself is quite a long way as well and it took about four-and-a-half hours to get round the whole thing. It was a really good experience though, and there’s such a great atmosphere down there as everyone is doing it for charity. It’s not really a race and everyone helps each other over obstacles. We raised over £230 and I enjoyed it in a really weird way, I would definitely do it again!”
A new Motability customer received the keys to her new Zafira from her MP at Motability’s The Big Event.

Kate Green OBE, Shadow Spokesperson for Disabled People, and MP for Stretford and Urmston, presented the keys to her constituent Anne Marie Brookes at EventCity in Manchester, host to Motability’s two-day show.

Anne Marie said: “Motability is an excellent Scheme. It means that my husband can take me to important medical appointments in a car that is both accessible and comfortable. Travelling was a painful experience before, but it will be so much better now.”

Kate Green OBE MP said: “I was delighted to meet Anne Marie, whose life has been transformed by the Motability Scheme. I have met many disabled people around the country who have told me how important the Motability Scheme is to them, so it is invaluable to see this first-hand in my constituency.”

Sir Bert Massie CBE, Governor of Motability, also attended the presentation. He commented: “We are pleased that Kate Green could join us for this special event. The Motability Scheme supports more than 630,000 people like Anne Marie with their mobility needs, helping them to lead an independent life.”

Keys to freedom

Whilst in Colwell Bay on the Isle of Wight last year, Martin Anderson saw the annual Samaritans Solent Swim and thought ‘I could do that’ - he signed up straight away for the following year’s event!

The Operations Team Leader at Toddington Warehouse will be swimming just over two kilometers from Hurst Castle to Colwell Bay on 20 July, in very strong tides. Setting off the mainland at around 5am, along with 60 volunteers, Martin should reach Colwell Bay just under an hour later.

Martin is now training in Box End Park Lake in Bedford (dodging the swans) to practice swimming in open water, using a special triathlete wetsuit. When not in the lake, he’s in a pool in Milton Keynes swimming up to seven kilometers a session before heading home and looking after the kids.

Martin said: “I did some outdoor swimming last year but never anything like this, it’s totally different to swimming in a pool. The taste, the smell and the visibility – you obviously can’t see the bottom, it’s just a green murk and you have to just relax into it. I’m up to over £600 in fundraising now though and looking forward to getting the day over with!”

You can donate to Martin’s JustGiving page at http://www.justgiving.com/Martin-Anderson2014 or text ‘NEDS72_£*amount*’ to 70070.
Colin Johnson, Manager for Aftersales Engineering, Joint Venture Vehicle Programmes UK survived cultural differences and economic collapse during his Thailand assignment to set up a GM Aftersales operation.

“At the time, GM Thailand was just a registered importer, and was basically a two-man team operating out of a rented office. I was asked to go out there for a couple of years to set up a proper aftersales operation in 1994; it ended up as a four-year assignment with GM taking over the whole distribution, sales, marketing and aftersales, which included parts warehousing and distribution!

I had never been there before, the nearest I’d got to Thailand was eating Chinese spring rolls! I just got on with it, a real hands-on approach was required, not to manage as a manager but to get involved with the people because initially I had to understand them culturally and then the vehicle and operational problems.

The idea was to firstly mop up years of unpaid warranty, because there were no processes or anyone trained up to do it. However, by the end of the second year I had gone from just one small office to having a customer call centre, technical assistance, field operations, a parts warehouse and training centre.

One of the biggest problems I remember was the local air conditioning conversions for Opel Corsa, which weren’t factory installed or approved. When you run AC, the control unit normally increases the engine revs to cope with the load at idle, but as they weren’t fitted with this they used to stall at junctions! We resolved this through a country wide rework of all vehicles with excellent support from the Opel Germany Aftersales team.

I was based in Bangkok and it was quite a culture shock. The very first time I saw where I was going to live we drove through a shanty town to these brand new apartments which really looked out of place and were still being built at the time.

Two months later, I went out again to start my assignment and the shanty town had all been knocked down and looked completely different. It was a time of huge change with rapid international business growth across Thailand and all of Asia.

I got a great deal out of the assignment including ending up marrying a Thai lady, in fact twice – once Thai-style and once British-style! I met her on the golf course, our Marketing Manager set me up on a blind date with his wife’s best friend, so I have strong ties to the country. We’ve been going back every year since 1994 to see family and friends, I used to keep in touch with the GM staff there but it’s all changed so much now.”
OVERDRIVE PEOPLE

PIN IT TO WIN IT

Luton Warehouse Team Member John Lowing has travelled the world and starred on TV as wrestling superstar...

Jonny Kidd

Big Daddy, Giant Haystacks, King Kong Kirk. The golden era of British wrestling was full of larger-than-life characters and John Lowing knows this first-hand, having fought – and befriended – all the big names as his wrestling alter ego Jonny Kidd.

John has been involved with the sport since the 70s, having been inspired by performances from the great Mick McManus on ITV’s World of Sport. “He was my idol, to me he was wrestling. I was lucky enough many years later to receive my Lifetime Achievement Award from him, it was one of the most memorable days of my life.”

The wrestling game was a closed shop when he started out, but through a bit of networking and persistence, John got a phone call from wrestler and promoter Ken Joyce. A successful audition wrestle in Salisbury the next day saw him picked up by the man who ran the weekly circuit, Max Crabtree, Big Daddy’s brother. The regular bouts began, and he discovered his new name on a poster at one of his early fights: “I was looking at all the big names on the poster and wondered where I was. Then I saw ‘Blackjack Mulligan vs promising newcomer Jonny Kidd’ and wondered if that was me!”

It was indeed, and that was the start of a career that saw him take on all of the top competitors in the sport. He wrestled in the Royal Albert Hall three times, and got his first of many TV appearances in 1981 against Johnny Saint and his idol Mick McManus, an experience which he describes as “the highlight of my career.”

By this time, the international scene was beckoning, and John wrestled in Germany, the Netherlands and Malta before making his US debut in 2011. He has had to fit all this around his work at Vauxhall, which hasn’t been easy: “I could be finishing work at 4.30, driving down to Portsmouth and getting the ferry to the Isle of Wight for a match – as long as I was on in the second half!”

John now focuses on passing on his knowledge to the next generation at training seminars, and says there is still interest in the classic form of the sport, although he admits to being lucky to have been a star when it was primetime: “One wrestler said to me to always remember that you were in it when it was good. To give you an idea of how big it was in those days, more people watched Mick McManus vs Jackie Pollow than watched the Cup Final on the same day!”

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Chocks away!

As Britain commemorates the centenary of the Great War, Vauxhall is playing a pivotal role in supporting a very special aircraft for the occasion.

The Biggles Biplane BE-2 is an authentic flying replica of the world’s first purpose-designed military aeroplane, and will cross the Channel to commemorate the first deployment of the Royal Flying Corps to France in August 1914. It will land at Amiens in France on 13 August 2014, exactly one hundred years to the day from the arrival of the first aeroplanes accompanying the British Expeditionary Force. The aircraft will then take a leading role in the ceremonies organised by the Western Front Association and the British and French governments, including flypasts over Great War trenches and over a special drumhead service at the Arras military war cemetery.

Now, as then, the aeroplane will naturally require ground support. A Vauxhall Zafira Tourer, carrying a special livery portraying the 1914 two-seat observation biplane, and a 1914 Vauxhall Type D Army staff car will accompany the aircraft at events across the UK and through 2014.

Between 1914 and 1918, Vauxhall Motors was at the forefront of such activities, with over 1,500 examples of the Vauxhall D-Type being built at the rate of about eight per week to the order of the War Office. This year the Zafira Tourer will provide a similar support role. 100 years on. "Vauxhall is proud to support this wonderful recreation of a very important, historic aeroplane," said Denis Chick, Vauxhall’s Director of Communications. "Our company’s vehicles have played a pivotal role in both wars. with the D-Type staff car in the Great War and the Churchill Tank in World War Two, so it’s fitting that we should bring these vehicles together for such an important commemoration."

The route through the loch seemed a good idea at the time

BORDERS PATROL

Vauxhall Heritage Centre’s Archivist Andrew Duerden recently went back in time when he competed in the vintage car event, The Flying Scotsman Rally.

The 600-mile event for pre-war cars featured a tough and challenging route of remote roads up the backbone of England’s Pennines into the Scottish borders, before finishing at Gleneagles Hotel. Andrew navigated for Australian Max Stephenson, who had brought his well-campaigned 1923 Vauxhall 23-60 OD tourer over from the other side of the world. The rally was a relative sprint for the car which has already competed on such events as the Peking-Paris and London- Cape Town rallies.

“We had a great time on the event,” said Andrew. “We were not the fastest car, but we were always in the top five performances on the navigation sections and we finished as top Vauxhall.”

The next foray for Max and his trusty Vauxhall will be when he drives overland from Bangkok to Helsinki!
CROSSWORD

Across
3. Savoury jelly (5)
9. Potassium carbonate (6)
10. Subtle difference (6)
11. Indications (5)
12. Golf club (4)
15. Guides (6)
17. Biblical giant (7)
19. Permit (3)
20. Desire earnestly (5)
22. Barrels (5)
24. Put off to a later time (5)
25. Volley of gunfire (5)
27. Use a spade (3)
29. Well-read (7)
32. Deserved (6)
34. Break suddenly (4)
35. Gatekeeper’s house (5)
37. System (6)
38. Catch fire (6)
39. Not old (5)

Down
1. Small twig (5)
2. Something to sit on (5)
3. Donkey (3)
4. Given to evasions, artful (6)
5. Taverns (4)
6. Sweet sauce (7)
7. Prepare to pray (5)
8. Minimum (5)
13. European country (7)
14. Small notches (5)
16. Meeting for boat races (7)
18. Lift with effort (5)
21. Requires (5)
23. Smoked sausage (7)
26. Primary source (6)
27. Considers (5)
28. Fireplace (5)
30. Instil, inculta (5)
31. Fencing swords (5)
33. Extinct bird (4)
36. Ovum (3)

SUDOKU

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains all the digits from one to nine.

Congratulations to David Taylor from Somerset who solved April’s Crossword and wins £25.

Send completed entries to Torque Crossword, UK1-103-340, Vauxhall Motors, Griffin House, Osborne Road, Luton LU1 3YT to reach us by 10 July 2014.

Solution to April crossword:

Congratulations to Robert Large from Luton who won April’s competition and £25.

Send your details below and send the completed grid to:
Torque Sudoku, UK1-103-340, Vauxhall Motors, Griffin House, Osborne Road, Luton LU1 3YT to reach us by 10 July 2014.

Solution to April:

Entries should reach us by 10 July 2014.

NAME ____________________________
LOCATION ____________________________
ADDRESS ____________________________
Vauxhall has marked World Environment Day – June 5 – by starting to plant and develop The Vauxhall Forest.

To launch this enterprise, Vauxhall has funded the first purchase of 300 trees, and we are giving you the chance to have one or more of them planted in your name – and a certificate to prove it.

As part of the initiative you also have privileged access to over 500 online stores offering bargains galore 24/7. Any purchase you make through the Shopping Mall will earn commissions which then go towards planting new trees.

You can make all of this happen, simply by doing your online shopping through the Mall as an alternative to searching through Google or going directly.

Make YOURS one of the first trees in this great new initiative, and remember – great oaks from little acorns grow!

For more information, please visit www.vauxhall-marketplace.co.uk and login using username: vx and password: offers

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PICKING WINNERS

The X Area Warehouse Team in Toddington keep the parts flowing for Retailers

It may be one of the smallest areas in the warehouse, but with over 15,000 parts in stock X Area accounts for around 55% of its overall volume. The team pick and pack anything from washers to airbags and motors, sending around 9,000 individual pieces a day to help Retailers get customers’ cars back on the road as quickly as possible.

The area has seen considerable improvement over the last 12 months through a concerted campaign of continuous improvement, as Supervisor Jim Allen explained: “Over the years, the area has improved dramatically thanks to the ideas and input of the team, and it’s still ongoing. We took aspects of the GM Warehouse template and developed them to our needs. The area has been modernised immensely and we have reduced Retailer claims by 75% through all the changes implemented. The quality of service we supply is significantly improved.

Looking after the Team Members is a priority for Jim: “We’ve implemented a lot of ergonomic measures like new trolleys and identifying fast moving parts which we pick at optimum height rather than bending down to floor level. It’s about avoiding excessive strain on a person which can cause injury.

“We pride ourselves on picking the right part at the right time and pick it like we’re picking it for ourselves. As a team supervisor, I believe we have a really strong team and you’re only as good as the people that you’re in charge of.”