

Essex Thameside News



Nº 225, January 2026

Contents

2. Chairman's message
3. For Your 2026 Diary
4. Guest Speaker: Ken McConomy, JLR's Global Head of PR
4. Porsche Club GB breakfast meet invitation
6. Lester's French Extravaganza
10. Christmas Dinner at Pontlands
13. It's all about the drive...



Chairman's message

Steve Rider

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Good day Essex Thameside Members,

With the Christmas break almost upon us we have taken the decision to issue our January newsletter a little earlier in the month than normal. In part, this is in order for me to advise you of a change to our web site, which is moving from www.jecessexthameside.co.uk to <https://jecessexthameside.uk>. But it has also given me the opportunity to send season's greetings and wish you all the best before the holiday period starts in earnest.

As many of us will be spending some time behind the wheel during the holiday period, it seems appropriate to pass on some recommendations recently issued by the AA. Whilst mainly common sense it's worth reiterating the following points:

Make sure you have plenty of fuel, that your tyres are properly inflated and your lights are working. Prepare for bad weather by carrying a charged phone, food, drinks and warm clothes. Top up your screen wash and de-icer supplies. Wear warm clothes and comfortable shoes. Pack a waterproof coat, hat, gloves, sturdy boots and a blanket to keep you warm in case you do get stuck or have to leave your car. You may also need sunglasses in bright weather.

Many BP and Shell petrol stations will be open as usual, but some garages may have shorter hours. All Tesco petrol stations will be closed on Christmas Day. On other days, opening hours could be different to those of the linked store.

The club stands poised for another year packed with a variety of events that we hope will satisfy the most discerning of members. Our new events sub-committee has now held its inaugural meeting and started work tabling the proposed shows and events for 2026. As previously reported, our first event of the year will be on Saturday 11th January—a breakfast meet in conjunction with the local Porsche club at the Summerhill Garden Centre on the A127 (see page 4).

As many of you will be aware, a proposed two-centre tour of East Anglia was 'unveiled' at our very successful December club night and received a very positive response from members. So far, at least twenty people have made relevant bookings with the suggested hotels and we are expecting that number to double in the next few weeks. Apart from this headline event we are also considering a long weekend break on the south coast in the autumn and a winter shopping trip to Bruges.

Closer to home, we look forward to welcoming Ken McConomy, JLR's Global Head of PR, as guest speaker to our next club night on Tuesday 27th January. With Jaguar featuring so much in the news recently, it could be a lively discussion and I'm sure that we will have plenty of questions for him. Please do make every effort to come and to give him a good reception. We are booking some other interesting guest speakers for our regular club nights, and we still have one or two places available for our emergency first aid course in February.

Once again, and on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for your support during the last year and in anticipation of it continuing during 2026. Finally I would like to wish you and your families all the best for Christmas and New Year.

Safe and happy motoring.

Steve

Committee Members

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	Beverly Warren Membership Secretary beverlyrwarren@gmail.com		Neil Shanley Committee member and Co-editor neilshanley360@gmail.com		Vaughn High Committee Member vaughn.high@sky.com

For Your 2026 Diary

Sunday 11 th January	Joint breakfast meet with Porsche Club GB at Summerhill Garden Centre, Pippas Hill Road North, Billericay CM11 2UJ. 09.00-11.00 a.m. <i>[Contact Steve Rider]</i>
Tuesday 27 th January	Club Night featuring as guest speaker Ken McConomy, Global Head of PR at Jaguar Landrover
Wednesday 12 th February	Emergency First Aid course - details t.b.a. <i>[Contact: Steve Rider]</i>
Tuesday 24 th February	Club Night
Tuesday 31 st March	AGM & Club Night
Saturday 5 th April	Transport Fest at the Museum of Power, Langford, Maldon CM9 6QA <i>[Contact: Lester Magness]</i>
Tuesday 28 th April	Club Night
Tuesday 26 th May	Club Night
Tuesday 30 th June	Club Night
Tuesday 28 th July	Club Night
Tuesday 25 th August	Club Night
Tuesday 29 th September	Club Night
Tuesday 27 th October	Club Night
Tuesday 24 th November	Club Night
Tuesday 22 nd December	Club Night
<i>Other events will be added when details are confirmed...</i>	

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Guest Speaker: Ken McConomy, JLR's Global Head of PR



Ken McConomy is Head of Global PR for Jaguar Land Rover and has worked for the Jaguar brand for over 30 years. We are delighted to announce that he has agreed to give a presentation on “The Vision and Future” of Jaguar at our club night on Tuesday 27th January.

Given the recent controversial launch of the proposed all-electric concept car and the recent departures of CEO Adrian Marshall and Chief Creative Officer Gerry McGovern, together with the advertisement company that came up with the “woke” launch advertisement, it couldn't be a better time to possibly find out what on earth will be happening to our favourite car company. What does parent company, Tata, have in mind for this most famous of brands that is now selling no new cars and apparently planning a one-model strategy based solely on premium-priced electric cars?

Maybe we'll receive some answers, maybe not. We certainly won't be receiving new Jags in the showrooms any time soon!

Look forward to seeing you there.

Neil Shanley

Porsche Club GB breakfast meet invitation



Following their visit to our Halloween-themed club night in October, the local Porsche Club region has invited us to one of their Sunday breakfast meets at the Summerhill Garden Centre on Sunday 11th January, 2026.

This establishment is home not just to plants and gardening tools but also to a fine butchers, an aquatic centre, conservatory and Jacuzzi suppliers, a pets corner and a restaurant. So, something for most people.

The address is: Summerhill Garden Centre, Pipp's Hill Road North, Billericay CM11 2UJ.

See you there.

Neil Shanley

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Lester's French Extravaganza

A group of 12 JEC Thameside members recently set sail 'sur le continent' for the Club's annual foreign excursion. It was on a cold, damp October evening that we drove down to Portsmouth to catch Brittany Ferries 'Mont St Michel', en route to Caen and our ultimate destination La Rochelle. A heavy sea mist promised some surprises to come.

A pleasant night's sleep was rocked by disembarking the ferry at an ungodly hour. The tides had turned, giving way to a dark and stormy Thursday morning. Driving blind in some instances, with atrocious weather conditions, the heavens finally opened. It was as if a tap had been turned on to maximum.



Wind on to the first stop for our intrepid travellers at the vessel's namesake, Mont St Michel, a fortified island commune, now a UNESCO heritage site in the region of Normandy some 120 miles west of the port. The Island features an 11th-century Benedictine abbey and is essentially a medieval village with a single main street with shops, restaurants and hotels spiralling around the island up to the abbey. Access is via a bridge only accessible to pedestrians and the local shuttle bus service.

Sean Landy had prepared well for the trip with his Jaguar jacket purchased from Neil Shanley modelling the secret concealed hood and the inclement weather necessitated broly skills beyond our club Secretary's grasp.



That rare yellow thing in the sky momentarily appeared, lifting all spirits and shining on the Essex group. This didn't last long, however, and the sea mist soon descended again on the coffee buyer.

Four hours later, and another 250 miles further west up the road, we located the group's HQ for the next three nights in La Rochelle. The Hotel Kyriad is a comfortable hostelry situated just a mere 15-minute canter from the city. After a speedy check-in and a quick drying up and dusting down process, we convened for a 'magnifique' French meal at Andre's. Lester, funnily enough, declined to pay for the whole group.



Following a hearty breakfast the next morning with ablutions, the team set off 'on the town' to explore the riches of the La Rochelle market and Le Bunker museum. Built in 1941, this was used by the Germans as a Command Centre for the occupying forces and, as a museum, now includes much memorabilia from the era.





Ian was still having umbrella issues navigating the 10 minute walk to the City Centre and refuge had to be taken within the covered market - by-passing a pig's head. Lessons were received in the art of oyster tasting, and we decided to adjourn for some liquid refreshment (beer) and decide upon our next step.

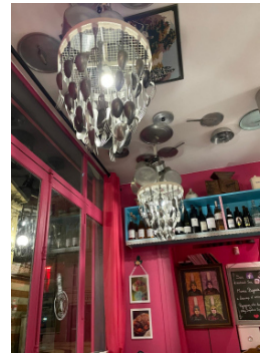
Three to four hours later, with les parapluies at the ready, the culture vultures amongst us proceeded to visit the oldest working town hall in the world.



A section of the group then partook in a cruise with a slight swell and tidal chop. The odour of children's seasickness tended to permeate in a westerly direction across the stern of the boat, leaving the cleaners a calling card. This did not mar the ambiance and pressures of the gale force wind. Only three small children were reported missing.

After a detour via the ramparts, the oysters were finally taking effect. From ramparts to rampant, there was a rush to the head as the heavens opened and all returned to the hotel for a well-earned rest before half of the group proceeded to a weird crêperie named Mamie Bigoude—thought to be a Mecca for vegans—complete with watering-can taps and

saucepans hanging from the ceiling.



The bill was discussed in minute detail and, to get good value for money, one member left a crap (*Editor: crêpe?*) floater for good measure.

The second party went to an authentic Italian pizzeria, where a bolognaise pizza arrived minus the pizza part. A good time was had by all, though.



Saturday morning at the Hotel Kyriad was marred by the theft of a piece of toast. An investigation was launched, followed by a swift confession, and further security was placed at its highest by the toaster.

With carbon footprint and sustainability in mind, twelve group members proceeded in just three cars for a short 35 km hop to visit the Corderie Royal at Rochefort. To those accustomed to 'tying the knot', this was a 374 metre rope factory originally built to make rope from reeds. It dates back to the 1600s and possesses truly stunning architecture. Who would have thought that rope could be so interesting? Fat, long and winding - we saw it all. Some confusion was ongoing and whilst Soap on a Rope is easy to source, one member is still looking for 'cheese on the rope'. Busily clock watching, the French adherence to strict lunchtime closures saw us chucked out promptly at 1.00pm, whereupon refuge was sought in a local bar.

On the upside, dans l'après-midi, the local market was found and normality resumed. Unfortunately there was no cheese, nor clothes or shoes, but an interesting carrot reminded certain members of the effects of oysters.



The group then proceeded to Brouage, founded in 1555 and built on swamp land originally under the water. Once voted the prettiest village in France, its economy was based on salt. The main sights included the church, dedicated to St Peter and the Samuel De Champlain Museum, named for a French explorer who founded New France, nowadays better known to us all as Quebec.



Moving onwards and upwards, artisan pop-ups abounded in the village and, as the sun came out, ice creams were the order of the day. Some slight discrepancy with the ordering resulted in shock and horror as the bill arrived.



Back to base camp in La Rochelle and on to the final sampling of local culinary delights; when in Rome... Some chose to have an Indian while others went native French. A wonderful selection of gastronomic pleasures greeted us in the city, complicating any decision-making process.

Sunday and drive home day. A leisurely 442km drive was planned but not executed; what Jaguar trip would be complete without any drama? True to form, with just 20km to go the port of Ouistreham, tragedy struck and Ian lost the undertray sump protector on his XK (painful), which necessitated a thorough search. Brandishing an umbrella, one member chose to take on a supervisory role but then wandered off, having lost interest. Not to be outdone, Micky Adams then lost his credit card; a trail of moths gave away its location.





With master mechanic Vaughn High suitably armed with cable ties, JEC Thameside's breakdown and recovery service excelled in pulling of a 'Get you Home' facility, with just minutes to go before the departure of our luxury liner to Old Blighty. Thank you, Vaughn.

Onto the ship and relax. Most settled for a quiz, a few slurps at the bar, a snooze in the cabin followed by a lively game of bingo. The ever competitive Darby and Joan club (Essex Thameside Region) had all the right numbers but in the wrong order.

Six hours later Portsmouth appeared, the Spinnaker tower beckoning and the A3 homeward bound completed our journey.

Not for the faint-hearted, a mere 800 miles was recorded on the odometer from start to finish, with an overall 29.8 MPG achieved from our XK.

Months in the planning, a massive shout-out must go to Lester Magness for his great organisational skills in making this trip happen and one for its camaraderie that will certainly make a lasting memory for all that took part.

Ian & Liz Croxson



The Christmas Dinner at Pontlands 6th December





The 2025 Christmas Dinner (and Dance) was again held at Pontlands Park Hotel in Great Baddow. It was the same venue as last year and was back due to popular demand. The food and service were probably better than any of our previous yuletide dinners. As you may see from the photos our members enjoyed a very pleasant evening and, if you didn't want to drive, there were some excellent rooms with a discounted price of around £150 per night including breakfast. We booked four tables of ten and quickly filled all forty places, so if you are thinking of next year's bash, I would recommend you express your interest when we publish the details. This year, we paid £69.50 per person, (same price as the previous year) including wine, three courses, a welcoming glass of Prosecco and tea and coffee afterwards. And, of course, there was always the Bar if you needed more. A big THANKYOU to all who came. **Neil Shanley**



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It's all about the drive...



Not that kind of drive...

Just over a year on from joining the club, here's a view about how the first year has gone. We joined in 2024, just in time to book places at the 2024 Christmas bash. It was great to enjoy the convivial food and company, so booking for 2025 was a definite (and so will 2026, if we get our names on the list in time!).

So what made us join the group? We just joined to meet like-minded people with a love of the brand. We arrived with a small amount of trepidation because we don't own a 'real' Jag; as regular readers may note from our 2025 Italy article, it's an all-electric I-Pace. Along with the late great Costas, in 2024 there were only two of us with all-electric Jags in the group and, if memory serves, he had at least one other 'real' Jag.



The last Jaguar designed by Ian Callum. End of an era (while a new one begins?)

Naturally, we were given a warm welcome anyway, with all disappointment in these EV weirdos well masked by existing members – and some others approaching us with curiosity as to what it was like to drive one of these new-fangled machines. Actually, it's quite old-fangled now; we ordered it in 2018 and took delivery in spring 2019, so we're now in our

seventh year of ownership.

What did we find? Well, apart from the social aspect, which is a given, I would first characterise the group into two broad types: those who love to tinker to keep the brand's history alive, and those who are happy to let others take the strain of caring for their beloved vehicles. But there's a third group that I believe encompasses both of the first two groups: owners in it for the love of the drive. I'm definitely in that third group. And it's good to hear the stories of all, from whichever group they're in.



Simplon Pass – no loss of power at high altitude

But doesn't an all-electric vehicle have no 'soul'? You're right in one sense. An electric vehicle has a more muted drive train with its own sound and there's no torque V6, burbling V8, or purring V12—nor even a turbo 2-litre. However, after more than six years' ownership, we've found that this electric vehicle has many other 'Jaguar' characteristics to fancy, including effortless and even explosive acceleration, awesome torque, refined cruising, enviable handling and a rather pleasurable interior, all in the modern Jaguar style so beloved of its most recent customers. No ridiculous 15" touchscreen with a total absence of tactile buttons here (yup Tesla, I'm talking about you).

When we were originally looking for an electric vehicle, we took a look at the Tesla Model 'X'. (At that time, only the 'S' and 'X' were available and, though it might seem hard to believe now, nor was there anything in the EV 'exec' vehicle category from Mercedes, Volvo, BMW, Audi or the Chinese). How times have changed, but the Jag remains a benchmark for agile handling. The 'X' retailed for nearly twice the price of the Jag. In its favour, the 'X' had world-beating technology but, at the time, its trim was flimsy, panel gaps were as wide as the Grand Canyon (I exaggerate for effect), the interior was cheap and the drive soulless. The Jag claimed to have driving appeal in shovel-loads, so we booked onto a Jaguar Goodwood trial day to see what a Jaguar electric vehicle had to offer on real roads and

compare it with an alternative.

We tried an i-Pace and followed it with an F-Type. At that time, the F-Type, although renewed for 2019, was approaching the end of its fantastic production run (a testament to its world-beating desirability) and so missed out on some of the tech in the then new i-Pace. But what impressed us most about the i-Pace was the instant torque that translated to jaw-dropping acceleration. A 4.5-second 0-60 time appeared to translate very well into the on-road driving experience with seemingly instant overtaking ability, at least up to the national limit. The even faster-accelerating Tesla 'X' didn't seem to offer anything better, other than a second on the dash to 60, in the real world of British roads.

Like Jags of old, the i-Pace stuck to corners like glue, delivered assured agility and handling, with minimal noise, vibration or harshness and retained a sense of occasion when entering and driving. It was a different world compared with the lumbering Mercedes we convinced ourselves to trade in to get it.



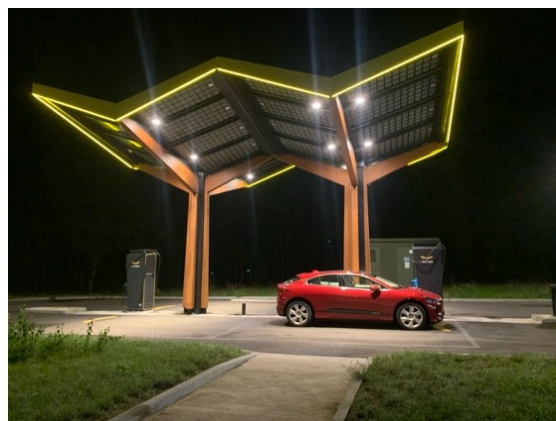
Home, home on the range...?

But isn't there an elephant in the room? Ah yes, "range anxiety" and finding a charging point. When, like us, you're used to a diesel that can deliver 400 miles of motorway driving without a fill-up, isn't it a dramatic step down to trade it in for a car that takes three quarters of an hour to top up after 150 miles of driving? Good point but, in the real world, it actually depends on your 'coffee to range' quotient. In our diesel we never drove 400 miles with just a five-minute break. It's not safe anyway.



Charging at home and abroad – tap to pay.

Apparently, according to the internet (which is always right, yeah?), there is an army of people who drive 500 miles every day and only want to stop for five minutes along the way. However, in the real world, most people seem signed up to a coffee break every 2 hours. So, if that's for you, a 45-minute break in an EV every couple of hours is no different to driving any other car, is it?



Drive through chargers are a thing in France; Gridserve does that here.

But with an increasing number of electric cars on the road (around a million now in the UK), surely all the sparse charging points are usually full? Answer: not quite and, in reality, there are phone apps that verify and tell you whether a charging station is full or out of order. So, in practice, we've never really had to queue up; we just stop at a different charging point with no queue. Yes, there are so many petrol stations that queuing up isn't even an issue for a petrol or diesel and EVs remain a bit compromised, but EV drivers retain a certain ability to work around the problem. In reality, the relatively modest number of very long journeys we do mean that most of our charging happens on the driveway at home anyway, using low-cost (or on a good day, free solar) electricity.

Imagine that. Never again having to stop off at a petrol station, fighting your way past curled up sandwiches, vapes, wilted petrol flowers, BBQ briquettes, curled-up sandwiches, junk food and screen wash. Just plug the thing in at night at home once or twice a week and wake up with it fully charged and even preconditioned to get rid of winter ice, all ready to go.

And that's the point. Neither technology (petrol/diesel or EV) is necessarily 'better,' they're just different. But what really counts: they're Jag different. And that's why we're staying in the club.

Keith Schofield

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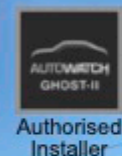
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