



THE INSTITUTE OF THE MOTOR TRADES INC. (BRIGHTON & MID-SUSSEX SECTION) 1926 TO THE IMI SUSSEX CENTRE MA 2016

The roaring twenties saw the General Strike, a decade of massive fluctuations in unemployment and the onset of the ripple effects of the Great Depression from the USA. During this period the class structure in Britain was slowly being eroded; simultaneously the motor car was becoming more available and affordable due to mass production techniques adopted by the indigenous vehicle manufacturers of that time.

The result was many more cars taking to the road. In turn this created a massive demand for an infrastructure to support these cars such as fuel outlets, repair shops showrooms, parts supplies and specialist activities, such as engine reconditioners and trimmers. To cater for this, separate repair facilities for radiators, fuel tanks, rubber vulcanising, white metalling, woodwork, trimming and much, much more sprung up all over the area. Many entrepreneurs saw the market opportunity that this situation presented them with, but so too did many unscrupulous individuals! It was clear that there was a need for a central coordinating and stabilising organisation to guide and police the fledgling industry so that an orderly and fair market place could be created.

The Institute of the Motor Trade (later to be renamed the Institute of the Motor Industry) had already been created in 1920 for this very purpose but was based in London. By 1926 the leaders of the various garages and related trades in Sussex formerly created their own local organisation. Named The Institute of the Motor Trade Inc. (Brighton and Mid-Sussex Section), its inaugural meeting was held at the Old Ship Hotel in Brighton chaired by P.T. Caffyn, whose family had already established the largest garage network in Sussex and Kent. Members of the local Motor Trade regularly met at the Old Ship Hotel to discuss, and regulate the regional affairs of the industry, as well as to update their members on technical and legal matters. The IMI Sussex Centre had been born, albeit at this stage, in a different guise!

The names of the ensuing Chairmen reads like a who's who of the local motor trade and it was their dedication and leadership that steered the IMI Sussex through the decades that followed. The organisation adapted to the fashions and fads as they came and went but the one common theme throughout all of this was the popularity of the Sussex Centre. Growing support by local Members over the years meant alternative venues were sought with each one being an improvement over the last. Members will probably recall more latterly Langridges Hotel, Third Avenue Hove and Princes Marine Hotel, Hove. Currently Northbrook College, Shoreham Airport is the Centre's base where the facilities could only be described as top class.

Today the networking is less formal, but because technical and legal demands are so much greater now the training aspect is more intense. Supported by IMI HQ, the Sussex Centre Member Association enjoy 10 quality lectures a year, the occasional factory visit by coach and a summer outing. Members attending The Sussex Centre find that within this welcoming and professional atmosphere they can easily achieve their training commitment (CPD).

Who knows what the future may hold, but because of its long history, surely the Sussex Centre has a strong foundation from which to launch itself as far into the future as it wishes?