

History



Don't try this today!

This delightful family photograph from the early 1920s was sent to us by members Hugh and Janet Bostock. Janet's father, John Thompson, is the boy on the right, and the family think that her grandfather Walter Thompson (on the left) had a garage in Fulham with his brother at the time of the photograph. It seems that you could park anywhere in the Park in those days.

"Scorchers" a century ago

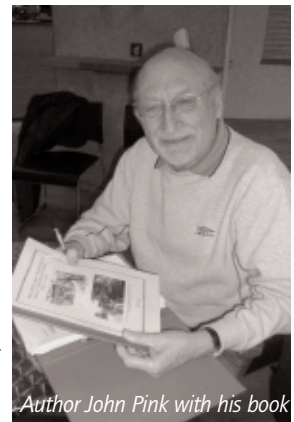
by Michael Davison

Speeding motorists and cyclists in Richmond Park, deplored by the Friends of today, are no new phenomenon. It was just the same a century ago, as we learn from a new book by Kingston historian John Pink about the early days of motoring in our part of London. In the early 1900s the speed limit in the Park was 10mph, and the park-keepers (not the police) hauled offenders before the County Magistrates in Kingston. In one year, 1907, three motorists were fined £3 each for driving at 19mph, 20mph and 21mph. Another motorist was prosecuted for towing a bicycle in the Park at 22mph: both motorist and cyclist were fined. When a young Chelsea cyclist was prosecuted for speeding, a letter from the defendant's father admitted that his son's speed had been 20 mph. He was fined £3, plus costs.

Speeding was not only the only ground for prosecution. One motorist was prosecuted for giving driving instruction "against a Park

by-law"; the Bench dismissed this as a first offence and imposed 8s 6d costs. A Richmond motorist was prosecuted for "allowing visible vapour to issue from a motor car": according to the park-keeper "the defendant puffed smoke for 300 yards and completely smothered the road". The offending driver paid his 5 shilling fine, said he had now adjusted the lubricator and added: "I thank the keeper for his observation".

John Pink's book, "Kingston-upon-Thames Police versus London Motorists 1903-1913", is available at Kingston Museum, price £5.95.



Author John Pink with his book