Wendels Bil & Motor - driving force on the Swedish sports car market

Jakob Dittmar

This text sketches the development of car trade in Malmö to then focus on *Wendels bil & motor*, a smaller but highly specialised car trader in Malmö and later Arlöv that sustained and established their specific kind of sports cars on the Swedish market while the majority of cars and the overall conversation on cars was focused differently.

Cars are a distinct part of our culture and are subject to change as all other cultural artefacts and their uses. Their establishment and integration into everyday life happened quick and has had fundamental consequences for how we live and work, for the way our environments are laid out and how our houses and towns are organised. Cars quickly became status symbols and topic of conversation and identification. Desire and growing ability to access forms of individual transport have been the driving force behind the car industry including of course the trade in vehicles. They became and remain a substantial part of gross domestic production, of wealth production and consumption -- even in countries that are not home to any car production. They became integral to our way of life and while details have been contested in regard to economic and environmental consequences, hardly anyone seriously imagines a future without comparable individual transport.

This text collects and interrelates some information on car trade and culture in the Malmö region. While the history of individual mass-mobility includes the establishment of bicycles and mopeds and motorcycles, these are not taken up in the following. There are many contexts to add but exceed the possibilities given here, consequences of increased motor traffic and individual car ownership for town planning and infrastructure are obvious, the cultural willingness to embrace new possibilities for individual travel were understood quickly in a country that is about 1600 km long, and ideas from other countries were adapted to some extent: in 1922 a first law defined how taxes raised on motorcars were to be distributed and used, and Lundavägen was concreted over to accommodate the growing car traffic. And while the Malmö-end of that road became one centre for car trade, the road to Lund became so heavily congested after World War Two that the first bit of Swedish "Autostrada" (the word "Autobahn" was not popular then) was planned to accommodate the traffic between Malmö and Lund and opened in 1953 by prince Bertil, the motor-enthusiast uncle of the Swedish king.
Another aspect to remember in the context of this paper is the production of motor cars and how that contributed to the distribution of wealth, to class relations and societal change. While it is not discussed here, it ought to be mentioned that Saab produced its sports car Sonett at *Arlövs Wagonfabriken* at the outskirts of Malmö from 1966 to 1974. Saab even experimented with non-conveyor belt assembly at their short lived factory in the Västra Hamn area of Malmö 1989-1991, which had been intended as a possible growth-industry

after the end of shipbuilding in Malmö but was closed down after GM had bought Saab in 1990 and started to cut costs massively.

From the beginnings of the car industry to car trade in Malmö

The motorcar became reality in 1886. First factories sprang up, mostly in France, then in more and more other countries, too. The first were catering for the wealthy who could play around with early motor cars. At the same time, bicycles became affordable and opened possibilities to cover longer distances when commuting to work or for leisure. A combination of trains and bicycles helped to establish patterns in mass tourism that were continued and expanded as the motor car became more generally available and finally a mass commodity.

The very first cars all were individually constructed and assembled by hand, but soon tooling and serialised montage set in to speed up production, lower prices and answer to the given demand. As generally known, the development of mass production and sales methods were pushed by Henry Ford and became established across the entire industry to varying degrees.

In the beginning, cars were ordered and bought directly from the producers or a select few urban dealers who exhibited a car in their showroom. After the very first cars that had looked like motorised horse-coaches minus the horses, cars started to look like cars as they became purpose-built to accommodate the given mechanical needs. Individual preferences of customers were catered for in the style and size of the bodywork soon and different types of cars became established.

As early cars broke down quite easily, blacksmiths and bicycle mechanics got into contact with these new constructions quickly. Drivers needed to be able to execute some repairs themselves, not at least changing wheels, as these did not last very long in the early days of motoring. Depending on interest and abilities, workshops developed for repairs and service. As cars became increasingly reliable and affordable, local dignitaries and wealthy people started to use them instead of coach and horses, and soon lorries and tractors appeared in the countryside with the Diesel-engine being already established in 1920. To cater for these markets and all related needs, regional car dealerships and workshops developed, soon differentiating to offer individual company's cars and lorries.

The development was not distinctly different in Sweden nor Skåne (Scania, the southernmost region of Sweden) from other countries in Europe, and while workshops and smaller dealerships became established in diverse places all over the region, it was in Malmö that a substantial variety was on offer. Import and sales-networks for car companies got established in most countries, always in response to legal and cultural frameworks as specific car-makes differed in what they catered for best.

Car dealerships started in some place, usually smaller, growing their businesses as prosperity increased and cars became affordable for more and more people with different needs and preferences. Some then built showrooms and workshops that became landmarks, later

moving their premises to industrial estates as they ran out of space when larger numbers of new deliveries had to be handled and housed, and when the producers of cars more and more demanded specific forms of presentation for their products and partly even dictated specific facade-designs in line with their corporate design.

Car dealerships were started by individual entrepreneurs or in partnership of two or more owners. Some dealerships set up but went out of business after a few years again, others lasted longer, developing together with the car market and its products, providing cars and services, balancing financial and technical abilities. As motor cars became established as mass produced consumer good and were fully integrated in everyday life for most, many smaller dealers established themselves dedicated to the used car market rather than to one car company or other. In parallel, independent workshops were established that catered for all kinds of cars or motor transport. Each of them was depending on luck and reputation, and most of all on the quality of the cars they sold. Developments on the international market, decisions of car companies to price their cars differently, to continue or discontinue some established model, could have massive consequences for their dealers. International trade regulations had massive implications as soon as motor cars were not only sold to the most affluent. In the early years and later again with each wave of consolidation of the car industry, segments of the market got bigger or smaller, entire marques appeared or vanished and their dealerships and workshops with them. Also, smaller car dealerships came and went throughout history - as they still do today - often because ownership is not continued into the next generation. For example, were the shifts in the car trade in Sweden during the 1960s and '70s considered so serious by Volvo, who depended on these dealerships, that the company bought up individual traders to safeguard sales, expanding the strategy into Danmark and Germany first, and other European countries later. After some changes to the trading company and its names they took on sales of other marques, too, and are now internationally established as *bilia*.

The fluid state of the car market was and remains remarkable and the ability of dealerships to adapt to changes decided then and decides now over their existence. It has to emphasized that several car dealers in Skåne exist for around one hundred years, which is very long - not only for this particular industry.

John Hedberg started selling motorcycles in 1912 and cars from 1916. After the first World War, they focused on American cars and *Hedbergs Bil* started to represent Ford in 1926, establishing themselves at Lundavägen in showrooms with a representative art-deco-facade and large workshops. The street was one of the centres for car trade in Malmö for many years and the distinct buildings of *Hedbergs Bil* remained a landmark up to their demolition in 2021 after they had contracted their activities to premises on Hornyxegatan, being part of the industrial area of Malmö that includes most car-dealerships. In 2022, after 96 years, they stopped representing Ford but kept service for these and switched to Peugeot and Citroën, later also Opel, who all belong to the Stellantis conglomerate.

MotorAMI (Amerikanska Motor Importen) was an importer of diverse American cars, during the 1950s predominantly General Motors, providing the large American cars but also Opel, which was around the middle of the 1950s the third strongest marque on the Swedish market. They were located on Östra Tullgatan since 1918, and the street developed into the centre of the car trade in Malmö during the 1920s. Like several other car dealerships there, they built new dedicated and stylistically distinctly modern premises during the 1950s. Their *Motorami*-huset was built in 1958 and remains one of the most distinct buildings in the inner city from that time. It housed showroom, workshops, offices, and a petrol station on the lower floor with rental flats above. *Motorami* was bought in 1964 by the Kinnevik concern and was integrated into Svenska Motor AB in 1980, they remained part of Kinnevik until 1999, while the car facilities in Östra Tullgatan only remained in use until the 1980s.

Frode Lund on Östra Promenaden sold some General Motors-marques, too, produced Puch-mopeds under licence during the 1950s, sold diverse makes of micro cars as well as Volkswagen before switching to the sale of Volvo and being bought by Volvo as they consolidated their dealership. *Autoropa* started in 1934, building airplanes and importing and assembling Hudson cars, soon dropping out of airplane production. They represented different smaller car companies before becoming established in the luxury and sports car segment (more on this further below).

Förenade bil started in 1921 offering luxurious Hupmobile-cars at Östra Tullgatan. They are quite unusual in that they not only survived and thrive even today but also remained in the possession of the same family all the time since the Second World War through diverse ups and downs of the car industry and the car market. *Förenade bil* had been the exclusive importer and distributor for Morris Motors in Sweden since 1932, and while Morris and other BMC cars were assembled from kits in Danmark, the Swedish market was supplied directly from Britain. Apart from sales of deSoto and other marques, they were for example official importers of BMW from 1951 to 1991, contributing to the transformation of that company from niche-producer to larger player on the international car market. They established a training-facility for mechanics from all over Sweden to safeguard high quality standards in service and repairs that was kept active by BMW after they took over import to Sweden, when Förenade bil almost went bancrupt in the economic crisis with plummeting sales during the early 1990s.

Even though BMW-cars were imported to Sweden by train, they went through Malmö's customs harbour, where *Förenenade bil* had established production (or rather finishing) lines for their imports. There, extras were installed on the cars that were mandatory in Sweden at some point or other, like, for example, devices for cleaning the front lights while driving. Later, they introduced KIA to Sweden and represent Mini, a small reminder of the British motor companies they once sold. In summary, and not different from most of the previously mentioned car dealers, they survived quite some car producers they had represented, adjusting and offering different marques over time, differentiating their businesses along the way. *Förenade bil* were the last car dealership to leave Östra Tullgatan in 2006, when they

moved to new premises not far from the current centre for car trade and Malmö's outer beltway, Yttre Ringvägen.

Wendels bil & motor

British cars, especially sports cars have been popular in Sweden in their heyday, but remained confined to a niche of the market, just like larger cars of exclusive marques. In Sweden, these cars were offered and catered for by the importers of these marques or they were not on offer if not on special request. But in 1962, *Wendels bil & motor* started to change that, offering quite a variety of exclusive cars that were and remained exotic to the Swedish market. Due to their specialisation and reputation, they delivered and serviced cars for customers from all over Sweden. The company was founded and run by Henning Wendel and his son, Lars Wendel, until they sold it in 2001, when Lars concentrated on the *Autoropa* car-dealership he had acquired years earlier.

While Henning Wendel's father had been a bicycle mechanic and then ran one of the early garages for lorries and later cars in Gärsnäs in the Limnhamn-area in the South of Sweden, Henning Wendel (1918-2008) started to learn first at his fathers from the age of ten years on, when he turned sixteen went to work at Ford in Simrishamn and in 1938 became a car mechanic at *Förenade bil* in Malmö. After doing his military service in Eksjö during the Second World War, he progressed to become one of the heads at the *Föreneade bil*-workshop, where he also was teaching at *Förenade bil*'s training centre. He then advanced to their customer service department, travelling nationally and internationally, even working as race mechanic. The company's focus was on Nuffield-cars (Morris, MG and Wolseley) at the time but they also offered BMW and others, with BMW being a quite small and specialised sports car producer on the exclusive side of the market.

Henning Wendel was good at what he did and was known to be: for example, he would be joining the owner of *Förenade Bil*, Allan Söderström, on an international veteran car-rally to the opening of a new Austin factory in Britain in 1955 - Söderström as driver, Wendel as the mechanic and co-driver of a Swedish build Brush from 1910. Also, he was deputised as race mechanic to support rally and racing drivers who raced on the large V8-BMWs of the time.

In 1962 he and his son Lars started *Wendels bil & motor* right after Lars Wendel had completed an apprenticeship as a mechanic (later he additionally qualified as airplane mechanic). After Lars had been at *Förenade bil* as a youth, he started his apprenticeship at BMW in Munich when he was 17 years old. He finished with distinction, but to the amusement of his colleagues never started to like the beer - a triviality considered so unusual at the time that it was reported to his father after his "Los-Sprechung" (the formal end of a successful apprenticeship).

Wendels' company was initially located in a garage that had been changed into a workshop in Musketörgatan 9 in Malmö-Kirseberga, in a working-class area not far from Lundavägen. They had no showrooms first but hardly needed those because of their service-orientation

and low sales numbers of rather exclusive cars. They started by representing Aston Martin, selling two of those right in their first year. Duly, both considered themselves mechanics rather than salesmen, a focus that remained crucial for their companies until the very end: clean and well-kept workshops, professional special tools for the distinct marques they sold and served, well-kept and never forced. Their personal toolboxes remained matter of myth and lore in racing and car-enthusiast circles long after they had grown into a large dealership. Due to Henning Wendel's experience and excellent reputation around British cars, they put their focus on these cars first, also rebuilding crashed sportscars during the winter and selling them the next season. Their main focus was service and repairs, offering for example extras like auxiliary heating in regional newspaper adverts.



IMAGE: Lars and Henning Wendel in their small showroom at Musketörgatan in 1974.
(Image: Göteborgsposten 20 April 1974)

Like all car dealers, Wendels also took in cars as part-payments on new sales, with some cars returning to them, or others adding new marques and models to their portfolio. Also, they would acquire and import cars on order even from producers they were not involved with otherwise. Due to this, they tended to have a solid variety of exclusive sports cars in stock, keeping some for themselves for some years or selling them on. In this way it happened that Henning Wendel for example became owner of an Aston Martin DB4 Zagato that he raced at MGCC's *Bornholm Runt* and other occasions. Lars Wendel got involved as a mechanic in motor-racing during the 1960s and 1970s, to then become general representative and

importer for some of these highly specialised producers. He owned and maintained some race cars, and together with his friend Hans Vängstre, a race driver himself, supported many FF and F3-drivers. They owned cars together, for example a *Modus* that was crashed on the Nürburgring and sent to the factory in Britain - where its parts were used to build the first *Argon* racing car. Lars Wendel pointed out later that he refrained from racing himself as he absolutely disliked the sound of a motor forced into extremes. And as *Wendels bil & motor* took more and more of his time, Lars Wendel dropped out of racing.

During those years, most orders for cars were placed during the main car exhibitions in Malmö, selling more cars to the Göteborg-area than to customers in Malmö itself. Duly, *Wendels bil & motor* were a driving force behind *Motormässan Malmö* from 1967 to 1990. As they always had quite some exclusive cars in stock, they usually helped out to fill the exhibition, for example when exhibition cars from Britain did not turn up.

Some people in the region do remember seeing unusual sports and luxury cars in and around Wendels' workshop when they were young: A window to a world far beyond everyday Sweden and its average cars there and then. *Wendels bil & motor* did represent some of the more exclusive marques, Jensen being one among several, with Jaguar being the "most ordinary" marque of the lot in a time when exclusive and sporty cars were frowned on by Swedish mainstream culture with its focus on safe, no-nonsense or "reasonable", and all in all rather low-powered transport. Their customers were a very diverse group with most diverse backgrounds, and while they have been on record for taking in the Swedish king's blue Ferrari 456 GT as part-payment on a new model, and despite the image of exclusivity, quite some of their regular customers held working class-occupations: for example their Lotus-top model had been bought by a locomotive driver.

To understand the scale of their operations, it helps to put their sales into proportion, even though definite numbers are only known for very few years. For example, in 1973, they sold 35 new cars, seemingly not much in number, but when considering that these were twenty Lotus and fifteen Morgan cars that were not even built in high numbers, these sales are a lot. Quite a different picture appears after a long stretch of lean years between 1975 and 1985: 1989 was - according to newspaper-reports at the time - their best year, selling several cars every day. How many of these were new and how many used remains unclear, but the difference in quantity is obvious.

Width was necessary to stay in business, and Wendels depended on a good complement of models and makes with quality being a central issue. As they depended on and promised to serve the cars they sold, they had to keep the more common spare parts in stock or had to ensure to get these quickly if needed - duly they carefully kept track of the improvements Jaguar made over the years until they finally were on par with the "highest West-German"-quality (quote Henning Wendel) in the second half of the 1980s.

Due to technical regulations in Sweden, they were only able to start offering Jensen cars with the development of the Interceptor. Obviously, before they sold Jensen, they sold and served Lotus and Morgan since 1971, offered Jaguar and Lamborghini, and later even Rover and MG.

For many years, they also sold BMW, as Henning Wendel had been introduced to them during his time at *Förenade Bil*. It helps to remember that BMW managed to break out of their high-quality sports car niche and establish themselves on the mass market just during the 1960s - when *Wendels bil & motor* were started trading in 1962, this up-market marque was perfectly positioned to help them establish their position while selling considerable numbers.

For the specialist manufacturers with much lower grades of automated production, prestige and prices remained much higher while production and sales numbers remained much lower. Jensen and Aston Martin were direct competitors on a very specialised niche market on which the introduction of new models of cars tended to come with teething problems as the low production numbers never yielded high profits for their producers. This resulted in partly incomplete development before the launch of new models that would then again lead to frustrated customers and extra work for their dealership handling guarantees to - hopefully - customer satisfaction. Newly introduced models sold on the balance of their desired newness against undesired technical issues with the new model. Customer satisfaction is decisive for the survival of these companies that produce low numbers on small profit margins and demands towards quality are the reason behind Aston Martin's continued building of older models long after the introduction of new ones. Or Morgan's continued building of the same model under several decennia. In the case of Jensen Motors, Wendels were lucky to come in a bit late and mostly sell the later versions of their respective models that had been improved from the early versions: All in all, 17 Jensen-Healeys Mk II and about twelve Interceptors were sold by Wendels, ten of the latter were Mk III´s.

One Jensen Interceptor, the first Jensen known to be imported to Sweden, is worth describing in detail as it showcases the mythmaking around exclusive cars as well as the differences in production-quality between British and European producers that already haunted the production of the first series of the Volvo P 1800 that had been contracted out to Pressed Steel and Jensen Motors between 1960 and 1962, with Jensen's paint-shop getting a lot of blame and irritating the Swedish understanding of quality in car production, but actually standing without a chance to build good cars from the low-quality shells they got delivered by Pressed Steel.

This Interceptor was repeatedly reported to have been ordered through Wendels by a member of the Bonnier-family and allegedly being collected in West Bromwich by the owner. But the factory files tell a different story: While it is the first Jensen imported to Sweden, it had been used as demonstrator car at the *Brussels Motor Show* in January 1970 and returned to Jensen Motors for repairs after that. At the end of April of the very same year, the car was bought by *Edan-Auto A/S* in Danmark from Jensen Motors as a used car and was registered on Thomas Söderberg from Kållered in the middle of May. By then, *Wendels bil &*

motor appear in the factory file, doing service and repairs on the car, even repainting the entire car as the original paint had been faulty, etc.

In 1984, the car was bought by *Automobil-Magazin* resulting in a number of articles about the car and the journalists' struggles with its mechanics before they sold it again a year later. At this stage, one journalist at the magazine wrote a detailed letter to the new owner about the car and its maintenance and where to get spare parts, complaining about the prices at Wendels. In the letter, the myth is repeated about a Bonnier as the first owner and how he had received leave of absence during his national service to collect the car in West Bromwich himself. It remains a good yarn...

The following annecdote illustrates how Wendels catered for their more regular customers, quintessentially not different from the ways in which car sales had been done in the very early days of the industry: Another Interceptor was sold twice by Wendels, first new in 1975, then again in 1978 to Ingvar Persson from Höganäs. He had been introduced to the car on a visit to Wendels when in search of a new car, aiming for an Aston Martin DBS but falling for another customer's Jensen that was parked next to that Aston Martin. But at that time, the Jensen was not for sale. When the very car became available later, Henning Wendel simply took it and visited, unannounced. And sold the car on the spot.

While import duties were not high during those years according to Lars Wendel, all import of course dependent on and was influenced by the regulations on legal exhaust limits etc. In 1971, the legal limit for carbon monoxide was set at 4,5 %. In 1975, exhaust certificates became obligatory, with Swedish regulations almost as strict as the Californian, surpassing the restrictions in all of the rest of Europe. Each car had to get certified individually to get it imported and registered in Sweden by the importer if the producer had not done these measurements and registrations for each specific model themselves. With most of the small producers they represented, the low numbers of production in general and export to Sweden in particular meant that the producers did not themselves have the resources to get their car-models tested, measured and import-approved for individual countries other than their primary markets. Lars Wendel, who had taken the lead in the company from his father more and more, was able to do this with the help of a friend who worked for Lotus. As the Swedish situation was very similar to the conditions for importing to Switzerland, Wendel synchronised these efforts and collaborated for example with the Swiss representative for Lotus, Jensen, and e.g. Abarth, Edgar Schwyn, as these producers were not providing the necessary data for import and registration themselves.

Open sports cars have been a status symbol during most of the existence of motor cars, becoming an expression of style as well as being fun rides for those who could and dared to afford them. But they fell victim to changing safety regulations and production runs with more and more producers. For Wendels in the early 1970s, the Jensen-Healey came at an important moment as it was the only open sports car (apart from Morgan cars) available after the end of production of the Lotus Elan. As with some of the small number producers, the motors for these cars were provided by another company and adjusted for use. The

Jensen Interceptors used large US block motors, while the Jensen-Healey was propelled by a Lotus engine. The car-magazine *Teknikens Värld* tested a Jensen-Healey Mk 2 in 1974. That car was provided by *Wendels bil & motor*, was sold in Sweden, and is now in Danmark. Accordingly, as many issues with the Lotus-engines of the Jensen-Healeys materialised, and especially as they were quite involved with Lotus during all those years, Wendels were massively disappointed and had to stand for many guarantee-issues. Despite that, they sold 17 Jensen-Healeys all in all.

According to the former Jensen Motors Sales Manager, Tony Marshall, relation between Jensen and Wendels were fine first but worsened over time. In that context, he remembers Lars Wendel as somebody who could be "difficult". While quite some understandable reasons were caused by Jensen he assumes that Lars Wendel as influenced by Jensen-critical voices from the Lotus factory after the debacle of the engines for the Jensen-Healey. Tony Marshall remember that Lars *would later talk critically of how Jensen Motors operated, and was particularly critical of our engineering."*

Another example might illustrate the pitfalls of catering for cars that are exclusive but quite desirable for enthusiasts: One Jensen GT was sold new to a dentist in Malmö in 1976. It was bought back and sold to its second owner in 1978 and wrecked in 1981. Wendels bought it back, most likely directly from the insurance company to rebuild and sell it again. It was shipped to Jensen Cars Ltd., stripped and the body rebuild. Wendels then re-imported it to Sweden but never put it back together as chances to sell it had imploded with the market. They sold it in 1991 to Lars Wendel's friend Hans Vängstre, who had planned to rebuild it as a present to his wife, but he did not finish the project, either. In 2017 it was exported to Danmark and remains a project car, even there, as getting hold of all parts remains a challenge. This fate is representative for many cars that were desirable when new and have become veteran cars since then.

Many of the marques and models that Wendels sold, were imported to Sweden individually by enthusiasts later on after the "grupp-undantaget" ended in the early 2000's - it had provided a kind of monopole position for general agents in Sweden but also helped to hinder import of cars with questionable history as long as general agents were guarding their markets. Today, Sweden is home to a lot of Maserati, Ferrari, and Jensen cars, but some of these come with a questionable provenience and without proper service. Quite some Jensen FFs were imported with manipulated documentation and VINs, causing challenges to their owners up to today. Some are in diverse stages of disassembly, assembly, restauration, but some in plain decay. These models and cars are talked about warmly by enthusiasts, garner a lot of attention of enthusiasts while individual models are central totems within veteran car culture. And in that spirit and context, restauration-project cars remain on the national register just like up-and-running vehicles, being considered potential rare cars and investments to be activated again in some future, also dreams of future projects for some, but actually are beyond revival and value in more and more cases. But that is a different story.

While Wendels always had individual cars to exhibit, they seem not to have had a "sale or return"-agreement with the producers of the marques they sold. Like today's car dealers, they were dependent on selling their stock of cars as they could not hand these back if they did not sell - but in the case of *Wendels bil & motor* the overall numbers of cars were lower and the models on offer were more exclusive and could be sold sooner or later without a discount. Rather, some were rare and sought after but pricey. Crucial for their survival and profitability was that they themselves provided quality service and stocked spare parts for the cars they sold, invoicing the producers where damages appeared under warranty conditions. Accordingly, Wendels remained the main provider of spare parts for Jensen cars in Sweden after the closure of Jensen Motors.

In 1986, they moved into bigger premises in Arlöv, right at the outskirts of Malmö. In 1988, they expanded the showrooms further as Swedish culture changed and became more permissive to exhibiting individual choices and an upswing in sales of unusual and higher-powered cars, especially sports cars set in. Lars Wendel bought another company, *Autoropa*, in the late 1980s and through them started to represent Ferrari in 1992 as well as Maserati in 1998, moderating between different car cultures in different countries by for example providing odometers for a Maserati whose factory-installed speed measurement only started at 40 km/h, seemingly acceptable in Italy but impossible to register in Sweden.



IMAGE: Lars and Henning Wendel photographed by Göran Svensson for Bilvärlden in 1989.

In 1989, while the car market was in full swing, Lars Wendel sold *Wendels bil & motor*. The company sold its BMW-trade to *Förenade Bil* in 1991 as the market had contracted massively in the economic crisis of the early 1990s, as there was no longer enough trade for two BMW-dealerships in Malmö. To safeguard continued operations, BMW themselves took over the import to Sweden from *Förenade Bil*, as these almost went bankrupt during the crisis.

The economic crisis pushed forward a general change of the car market while sales slumped, several major car-producers re-organised import and sales to varying degrees, partly in response to the exceptionally high demands, Swedish regulations set gerarding levels of carbonmonoxy etc. In due course, *Wendels bil & motor* went bancrupt in 1992. Lars Wendel had *Autoropa* to look after and bought the Arlöv-premises of his previous company in 1994 to run *Autoropa* from these. As Swedish regulations for motorcars relaxed as they became synchronised with those of the European Union from 1995 on, import and trading of vehicles became easier and new marques entered Sweden.

The re-structured *Wendels bil & motor* moved to Trelleborg in 2001, adding MG to its representations, later Subaru. That *Wendels Bil & Motor* was not the same after Lars Wendel sold it has been remarked repeatedly. It became most obvious when MG went into receivership in 2005, depriving them of this marque, and when they also lost the

representation of Lotus as very prestigious - and expensive - showroom-settings were demanded. But they continued to represent Morgan, thus focusing on marques that did not turn over all that many cars per year, demanding trade in a blend of used cars to stay afloat. Some years later, in 2009, the company was put into administration and taken over in quick succession by several owners, while the remaining spare parts store for Jensen-Healey was bought by the *Swedish Jensen Owners Club* that existed at the time, and later as the club closed down by Johan Örneberg, a dedicated Jensen-Healey enthusiast.

Lars Wendels was a very discrete person, but open, kind and interested - he was reluctant to talk about the time as a Jensen sales representative for Sweden. Not only was it long ago, it also did not matter to him much any more as he remained active in trading exclusive sports cars, preferably Aston Martin and Lotus while Jensen has slipped away and turned out to be not the most reliable, quality wise. While some classic or veteran cars were amongst the cars he dealt with, partly as downpayment on new sales, he was not a veteran cars-man as such.

He sold *Autoropa* in 2002 to the brothers Jens and Filip Larsson, who had been running *Autoselect* in Ystad at the time. Their company was smaller but dedicated to exclusive cars similar to *Autoropa*. The sale was partly due to the press for consolidation of the high-end car market and the demand for salesrooms dedicated to individual marques, and partly to him wanting to be able to retire. But he remained involved and active as long as time permitted. When he passed away in November 2022, the outlines of a classic Aston Martin decorated the death notice in the newspaper. Like the other surviving traders named in the introduction, *Förenade bil* and *Autoropa* have differentiated and adapted to the changing market, with *Förenade bil* providing different mass produced makes in dealerships not only in Malmö and Skåne, while *Autoropa* remains located in Arlöv with additional showrooms and service facilities in Stockholm, at both locations dedicated to exclusive sports cars. Service remains crucial and got its necessary space, while they gained smart and spacious showrooms that stage the marques according to the demands of their producers. In Arlöv, the premises were purpose-build by Rashid Bargi to be rented out to *Autoropa*. He runs several major Swedish carpet shops and is a property developer. That he also collects Ferraris must have helped as *Autoropa* might not have been able to finance the new built otherwise, for even in this segment of the car market, the margins are not big, just as they were not when Wendels traded in similar sports cars.

Sources:

While Henning Wendel's photoalbum is referred to in some publications, the archive of *Wendels bil och motor* has not survived. Lars Wendel did not keep an archive, pictures of him are rare and mostly to be found in features about the company in newspaper and magazine-reports. Their focus had been on cars, serving, selling - and driving them: According to Lars Wendel, he did not save any images from those years as he was not the type who would do so. In 2020, the author, Jakob Dittmar, conducted several telephone-conversations with Lars

Wendel and they had planned to meet for a more detailed interview. This never happened and Lars Wendel died in November 2022.

Books:

Calver, Richard: *A history of Jensen: All the models.* Canberra, 2007.

Calver, Richard: *The Jensen Genome.* Canberra, 2019.

Church, Roy: *The rise and decline of the British motor industry.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Collander, Kenneth and Mats Westerman: *Volvo P1800. Sportvagnhistorien.* Stockholm: Trafik-Nostalgiska Förlaget, 2021.

Duerr Carl: *Management Kinetics.* London: McGraw-Hill, 1971.

Ensor, James: *The Motor Industry.* London. Longman, 1971.

Ramestam, Rolf; Lars Törngren, Magnus Persson (red.): *Bilfamiljen*. Förenade Bil, 2021.

Newspapers (via Kungliga Biblioteket / Swedish Royal Library):

Aftonbladet: 28 Juni 2018.

Arbetet: 17 April 1968, 22 Aug 1968, 13 Jan 1974, 15 April 1989, 9 Juni 1992.
Arbetet västsvenska editionen: 2 Nov 1967.

Dagens Industri: 5 April 1991, 14 Aug 1999, 11 Nov 2005, 7 Mai 2011, 22 Juli 2011, 20 Sept 2023.

Göteborgs Posten: 20 April 1974.

GT: 24 Okt 1995.

Car Magazines:

Automobil, Nr 12/84. 2/85. 4/85; s. 51. 6/85; s. 48.

Bilvärlden, Nr 2/3 1989; s. 45-50.

Jensen Museum: https://www.jensenmuseum.org/ (diverse features)

Klassiker, (diverse), spec.: No 4 2023; s. 10-16.
Klassiker: Sammlarserie #31: *British Leyland*. 2023.
Klassiker: Sammlarserie #34: *BMC*. 2024.
Klassiker: Sammlarserie #35: *Bilen i Sverige 1950-89. Hela bilmarknaden under 40 år*. 2:a upplagan, 2024.

Saab Cars Magazine, (diverse), spec.: Dec. 2021; s. 72-75.

Archives:

BMW group archive, Munich.

Jensen Motors factory files on individual car's histories and the disbanded Swedish Jensen Drivers Club: obtained from the British Jensen Owners Club, from individual owners of cars, or from Martin Robey.

Landsarkivet i Lund: Cementa, Svenska Cementförsäljnings AB:s arkiv, F 1 B: 7.
Transportstyrelsen, Fordonsurval.

Personal conversations, party via eMail or telephone:

Lars Wendel, Ulric Woodhams (Jensen Museum), Tony Marshall, John Staddon (Jensen Owners Club, GB), Richard Calver, Niels-Erik Manniche (Danish Jensen Drivers Club), Jens Intorp (Bosch), Thord Hall, Jörgen Caesar, Carl-Einar Mellander, Paul Matell, Ulf Hellström, Johan Örneberg, Calle Carlquist (Automobil), Berthold Kleta, Peter Bauersfeld.

Also information collected in 2020 from answers on questionaires sent to all current owners of Jensen cars in Sweden.