

# Wingrove Motor Company Ltd

## Five Generations of Motoring



**T**he Wingrove Motor Co Ltd, is a family business founded on the main western artery leading into in the heart of Newcastle in August 1925, by John Myers Dalkin Snr, a local cattle auctioneer, and the major financial backer, along with other family members.

Those were the days of mudguards and running boards, semaphore indicators and real leather upholstery - and when colour and style meant a choice of black or black!

Cars and motor sport have long been in the family blood, and the founder's son, John Myers Dalkin, Jnr, known as 'Jack', was soon part of the company, which he had joined in 1927, as well as

part of the local motorcycle racing scene. Jack developed a love for motor sports, joining both the Newcastle and District Motor Club and the Northumbria Motor Club.

Then came WWII, with heavy bombing in the area due to Newcastle's industrial shipbuilding and ammunitions production.

Inevitably, war caused a halt to further progress by the company. Not least of the problems, for both

the firm and its customers, was petrol rationing. Post-war petrol rationing

provided its own problems. Nevertheless, the business

continued to weather such storms, and emerged in the

1950s ready to meet the challenges and opportunities

which the 1950s would bring.



For the Dalkin family the post-war years also brought two sons, Brian and Peter.



Motor bikes were swapped for cars and in 1954 and 1955 Jack, now the firm's Managing Director, took part in the famous Monte Carlo Rally, as well as refurbishing the West Road Garage.

**Top:** Wingrove's, West Road premises in the 1920s. **Above:** A bus from the 1970s carrying Wingrove advertising. **Left:** West Road in the 1960s.



By 1962, both sons had joined the company; Peter had by then completed his motor mechanic apprenticeship and had started tuning high performance cars, which was his main passion establishing the Perdal Performance Centre. Peter became responsible for an offshoot of the Wingrove Motor Company, Perdal Developments. Making cars go faster was grist to Peter's personal mill, and he found himself receiving letters and requests from all over the world which ranged from two-shilling components to fully-tuned engines which sold for around £620. By the late 1960s, Perdal's had an export turnover of £3,000 a month - and it was still growing



Peter and his wife Eunice's three children, Louise (1963), Lindsay (1965), and Elliott (1966), were all born hearing the noise and excitement of their father preparing engines and racing Clubmans around the UK, along with listening to stories from their grandfather about his racing exploits.

The business grew and grew from its beginning as a repair garage with petrol sales. In 1966, it became an agent for Standard Triumph, by which time space was becoming cramped at the West Road and a new larger workshop was acquired a mile away on Elswick Road. This provided new workshop space and plenty of room for Perdal to expand. With backing by Shell and BP for a self-service filling station it meant there was room to

further redevelop the West Road site. In 1969, Citroen Cars Limited appointed the Wingrove Motor Company as its distributor and service agent for Northumberland and Durham.

During the 1970s, Wingrove was a prominent part of the North East motoring scene, with local motor show events, sponsorship in the local press, and not forgetting the motorsport!

'Jack' Dalkin passed away in 1970 leaving sons Brian and Peter as directors to expand the business. There were new sites in Gateshead and Whitley Bay, both with car sales, workshop and petrol, resulting in increased sales and awareness of Citroen around the north east.

The site on Elswick Road expanded, with the construction of a fully equipped body repair centre, a growing parts department, and the base for Peter's rally team.

**Top:** Cars filling up at Wingrove in the 1970s. **Left:** Elswick Road Workshops, also home to Perdal Developments. Pictured are Keith Bowmaker, workshop foreman and racing driver, with Eunice Dalkin, wife of director Peter. **Below:** The NE Motor Show, The Links, Whitley Bay. Wingrove were a regular exhibitor with the whole garage being involved throughout the 1970s.





Peter, like his father before him, competed in several RAC rallies and other major UK rallies. Originally a Citroën DS would be seen thundering through the forests, later to be replaced by the more agile GS cars. There were also a very exciting few years of 2CV Cross in which Wingrove fielded a team of several staff member at various events around the UK and Europe in their team bus.



Staying on a competitive theme the 1980s started with Peter taking part in the 2nd Paris Dakar Rally. The decade also saw the resignation of Brian Dalkin, and subsequent share reallocation, with Peter's wife Eunice becoming a director. During the decade another expansion took place at Elswick, with a large purpose-built showroom and offices erected (designed by architect daughter Louise) whilst sons Lindsay and Elliott became part of the business. Lindsay worked at the newly acquired Hexham garage, and Elliott joining Perdal and the



tuning and motor sport element of the firm, as well as competing with his father and other members of staff in auto cross, rally cross and grass track in the competitive Visa, LN and Saxo, at both local and national events. By now Wingrove was also a major Webber Carburettor agent.

In the 1990s, along with Citroën's changing product range, came new challenges; corporate ID meant a new look for all the sites. A lot of hard work and commitment saw Wingrove regularly amongst the top three dealer in the UK, with sales topping 1,000 vehicles each year; the parts department had the largest dealer stock of Citroën parts in the UK. With that success within the dealer network Peter found himself as Chairman of the Citroën UK Dealer Council for several years.

By the end of the century the company's property portfolio had been consolidated. The original West Road garage was sold with the main base now at Elswick Road. The retail motor trade was changing, and Wingrove took up the opportunity at the beginning of the new millennium to become one of the first motor dealerships on Silverlink Motor Retail Park in Wallsend, Newcastle.

The company also acquired a garage on the West Road, nearer to the newly rerouted A1, which led to the subsequent in-house construction of a new showroom in 2002.



Elswick Road and Whitley Bay branches were now sold on, the bodyshop relocated into a new state-of-the-art facility in Cramlington, Northumberland, whilst the Silverlink site was refurbished in 2008 as the motor trade side of the development grew.

Sadly, Eunice passed away in 2002 and Peter took partial retirement. He then remarried in 2009 to his now wife Joselyn who is very supportive of all his ventures and the family business.

**Top left:** Gosforth Park Hotel and the launch of the GS in 1972. **Above circled:** Peter and Louise Dalkin at the launch party of the Citroën 2CV Charleston, mid-1970s. **Left:** Peter Dalkin and his trusty 2CV pictured outside Elswick Road after a successful season of national and international 2CV Cross, early 1980s. **Above:** Peter Dalkin with Citroën UK Rally team at new Elswick Rd showroom, 1990s.

Families being families, Lindsay left in 2011, and his sister Louise is now getting to grips with the ever-changing role of the business, as a director with her father Peter. Sales margins are getting tighter, but Wingrove is still averaging a £22million annual turnover; the long-standing loyal customer base benefiting from a professional, friendly and reliably after sales team that complements the sales team.



In an ever-changing retail market Wingrove, in partnership with The MetroCentre, Gateshead, Europe's largest shopping centre, has had a continuous nine-month promotion with vehicles and staff inside the main shopping mall, including two very different 'pop up shops', and also made an appearance on BBC3's reality show Shoplife.

Along with the staff from various departments the firm is pleased to be able to say that within the company there are over 800 years of Wingrove service and experience amongst the 75 strong staff, over 40% being at Wingrove for 10 years or more and over 10% in excess of 20 years.



Friendly and loyal staff help give customers confidence, and despite the economic recession Wingrove is still here in the North East, pleased to offer customers a total package: new and used sales, after sales, MOT, service contract, financial advice, courtesy vehicles, full accident damage repair, parts and accessories, and not forgetting care and attention to detail.

**Top:** Wingrove's sales team at the Metro Centre. **Left:** Wingrove West, West Road. The new showroom located just one mile down from the original site. **Below:** Three generations of family at Wingrove, l-r: Josh Parker (marketing & IT), Peter Dalkin (Director) and Louise Parker (Director).

After being Citroën Dealers for almost half a century Wingrove is looking to offer their customers a wider choice. With the formation of 'The Motor Company NE' in November 2012 the company has taken on Great Wall 4x4 pickups, launched at the Chinese New Year Celebrations in Newcastle's own China Town. A new franchise has meant the company is once again becoming a regular exhibitor at the local county and agricultural shows.

The firm has recently taken on Subaru and Isuzu, and is currently constructing a separate showroom at the West Road garage to accommodate non-Citroën franchise vehicles.

Wingrove remains unquestionably a family business. Peter is still at the helm, with son, daughter, son-in-law, and now a grandson representing the 5th generation of the family, all involved.

