

# Country Motor

## *Australia*



**Issue 22**

**Magazine produced  
for Pre-1960  
motor enthusiasts**

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Peter Donald's Morris Cowley

Back copies of Country Motor  
are available upon request

Country Motor is a E-magazine  
created for and by country motor  
enthusiasts who have passion for  
ancient motor vehicles,  
engines, in fact any motor that is  
curious and old

Please forward all editorial  
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David Vaughan

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# Country Motor Australia

Issue 22

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## Editor's Entries

*Welcome to the twenty second edition of Country Motor*

### Twenty Second Issue

Well you can thank the hot  
weather for this issue materialising so  
soon. Aside from watching movies  
and doing jig-saw puzzles, what else  
can you do on hot Wedderburn days?

I am very pleased to say I have  
been receiving many stories to include  
in the magazine. I have even more in  
the next issue with a Model T Ford  
sedan restoration and an enthusiast's  
purchase and story of a splendid Rolls  
Royce Silver Ghost.

In this issue Andrew McLintock  
continues to provide reports on events  
in Canberra.

John and Helen Blythe are keen  
owners of an Austin Atlantic. Many  
survive in Australia and they have a  
good following amongst Austin  
enthusiasts. John totally restored their  
example. Also he compiles the  
Vintage Austin Register of Australia's  
'Vintage Austin Magazine'

For over 40 years Peter Donald  
has owned his Morris Cowley, a  
reliable vintage tourer.

I have known Graeme Simpson  
since the 1960s, but it is only in recent

years I caught up with him when I met  
his son Iain parking a Ford Laser on  
red plates outside a chicken and chip  
shop in Sunbury. I thought he had to be  
an enthusiasts. It turned out Graeme  
was his father and lived in Sunbury as  
we did at the time. Graeme's story  
tells of his car ownership since the  
1950s.

From an American Ford V8 club  
magazine I borrowed a story of a 1938  
Thomas 'Rocket Car'. There have  
been many geniuses in the car  
industry over the years or crazy  
inventors that were not taken serious-  
ly. However often some of their ideas  
were adopted when the conservative  
industry leaders were prepared to  
accept them.

Want to buy a brand new Alvis,  
a continuation series of the pre-war  
4.3litre model? I would! However I'd  
need to rob a bank to buy one!

Archie Marshall's life saga  
continues to be of interest.

I began writing stories for my  
own interest from 1966, hence a report  
on the VDC Concours.

*Happy Motoring*      *David*



# Marques in the Park

Andrew McLintock

*Marques in the Park is held each year at John Knight Park in Belconnen in the ACT. Next to the Wheels event, it's the second largest event on the classic car calendar.*



The weather was perfect and the location worked as well. Considering how dry it has been, it wasn't too dusty, there was shade from the trees and a playground to keep the kids happy. Plenty of cars to keep the grown ups happy too, well mainly dad. The range of cars were very diverse, with most from the 50's to the 70's. A few older and a few newer cars as well. Too many to mention all of them so I'll focus on the ones that will probably appeal more.

A few familiar cars, which are always great to see. The 1957 Bentley Continental Fastback which I've mentioned before. It has been in the same family since the 70's and

there is something very special about that car. It will probably never be for sale and I could not afford it even if it was, but I can still dream.

Parked in the same group of cars was a Alvis three litre drop head coupe that really stood out. Another rare and gorgeous looking car that I don't recall seeing before. Discovering cars that you haven't seen before, or just didn't appreciate in the past is always a highlight of these kinds of events.

There was a good turnout of Armstrong Siddeley's, an early Packard with an Indian motor bike on the back, with a slightly newer Packard parked next to it. A

1929 Hudson Super Six and a 1929 Studebaker Commander were part of the Canberra Antique and Classic Car club display as well.

I'll be the first to admit that my knowledge of cars pre the start of the 50's is limited at best. There was a very original looking car that appeared to be from around the 1920s that was clearly a survivor. I didn't get the opportunity to talk to the owner, so I don't actually know what it was but certainly worth a mention. While I didn't recognise the badge on the radiator, I'm guessing Hupmobile. **Andrew**





# Austin Atlantic

John & Helen Blythe



*The Atlantic was one of the first post-war cars engineered from scratch by Austin and was said to be styled from a thumbnail sketch by Leonard Lord, then Chairman of Austin and later the British Motor Corporation (BMC)*

The car was almost certainly influenced by a 1946 Pininfarina-bodied Alfa Romeo cabriolet, which just happened to end up at the Longbridge factory in mid-1947, a few months before the light blue 16hp sports prototype made its first appearance in the experimental department and on nearby roads around the factory. A rare edition was a coach built estate car, regularly seen in the 1950s used by a convent in Leith, Scotland. The car had a lifting rear door, and sported then unusual curved Perspex roof panels.

With the then Government edict of "export or die" and steel allocated only to those who generated much needed dollar revenue, the Atlantic was designed specifically to appeal to North American tastes (certain aspects look like a 1949 Mercury and the bonnet (hood) brightwork looks similar to the Pontiac Chieftains of this era). The car featured up-to-the-minute detailing, with a wrap around windscreen, composed of a flat glass centre section with tiny curved end panels. The front wings sported twin 'Flying A' hood ornaments and swept down to a rounded tail, with spats enclosing the rear wheels. A centrally mounted fog light was built into the letter-box style air intake grille and the then unheard of luxury of hydraulically powered windows and hood, "flashing indica-

tors" rather than trafficators, (for the export market at least) and the option of HMV Autocrat radio. The range-topping Austin was offered in a variety of "jewelecent" colours with names like 'seafoam green' and 'desert gold' but few of these brave new metallics were sold in the UK market. Few people in the car's native Britain would have ever seen anything like the futuristically-styled Atlantic before, and certainly not from a conservative mainstream manufacturer like Austin.

Out of a total production run of 7,981, 3,597 were exported, 350 of which were to the US. This low level of sales in the US was despite a huge focus by Austin, including a successful attempt at breaking 63 stock car records at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in April 1949 by Alan Hess, Charles Goodacre and Dennis Buckley and a US\$1000 price reduction in 1949, the four-cylinder 2.7-litre couldn't compare in power output to native V8 engines,

although, for its time, performance was strong. A few were also used in civilian versions of the Austin Champ.

The car did see more success in former British Colonies, Europe, Scandinavia and Australasia.

## **Performance]**

The Atlantic was powered by an engine based on the proven Austin A70 OHV engine design, but increased to 2,660 cc (162 cu in). The large four-cylinder produced 88 bhp (66 kW) @ 4000rpm and later saw service in the Austin-Healey 100.

A convertible tested by the British magazine *The Motor* in 1948 had a top speed of 95 mph and could accelerate from 0-60 mph in 16.6 seconds. A fuel consumption of 21.7 miles per imperial gallon was recorded. The test car, which had the optional hydraulically powered top and window operation (£40 extra), cost £824, including taxes.

The handling was average, but adequate for the era, with coil





independent suspension at the front and leaf springs at the rear, employing lever arm shock absorbers or 'dampers' which, when worn, resulted in a characteristic 'wave motion' over undulating surfaces. The underpinnings were somewhat less exotic than the all-enveloping bodywork: the chassis and running gear were based

on that of the well-proven 1949 Austin A70 Hampshire saloon (not to be confused with the smaller entry level A40 Devon).

Brakes were initially a mix of hydraulic at the front and mechanical rear with 11 in (279 mm) drums, replaced by a fully hydraulic brake setup from 1951

onwards on the hardtop saloon which with large diameter finned drums and vented wheels. This made for efficient anti-fade braking for the time, necessary to bring 26cwt to rest.



Why would anyone in their right mind get up at 4.00am to catch a flight from Melbourne to Brisbane? Oh, of course.....to go and collect an Atlantic needing a new home!

Our friend, Stephen Gibson, had purchased John Farmer's cream Atlantic and the question was, how to get it to Melbourne? "Fly up and drive her back"

## New Custodian of an Atlantic

suggested by John, "I'll come with you". So they did!

They flew to Brisbane Airport, caught the train to the city and another train to Ipswich. Mr Farmer met them and drove them to Toogoolawah to see the car. The deal was finalised, their gear loaded and Steve and John set off for home. It just so happened that this particular day was the worst weather conditions Queensland had had this year with bushfires and 'catastrophic' warnings all around them.

The temperature was in the high 30's, the sky was obliterated by smoke, the winds were gale force and Atlantic's don't come with air-conditioning. Highway Through Hell???

All was going well (except for the uncomfortable conditions) until just before the NSW border. The car stopped, unfortunately on a sharp bend in a cutting with no shoulder to roll into. To make

matters worse, most of the heavy trucks that usually travel on the Pacific Highway, were using the Newell Highway, to avoid the coastal fires. Our intrepid travellers took this all in their stride, flicked open the bonnet and discovered the wire had come loose from the coil. This was reconnected and the journey resumed (I have actually questioned the accuracy of their description of this event!).

That was the only hiccup with the car for the remainder of the journey. Steve and John stayed in Moree that night and hit the road early the next morning. The car handled perfectly and the engine never missed a beat! They arrived home around 10.00pm, having driven 1750 kms in two days. Not a bad road-test!

Stephen and partner Carol are only 20 minutes from us so we will be able to take both our cars out together. There will now be two beautiful Atlantics roaring around the Yarra Valley.

*Helen*

# LOST & FOUND

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## Morris Cowley 180993 and Peter Donald: Forty Years On

In the last years of pounds, shillings and pence in this country I was often driven home from primary school by my class teacher, Miss Duffield. I was in awe of her with her mop of blonde hair and her red MG TC. Hurtling along Beach Road in Miss Duffield's MG, always with the hood down, I vowed that one day I too would have a red MG TC, which in those days could be bought for a few quid. Alas, a decade later when I had my learner's permit red MG TCs were beyond my adolescent budget. The classified advertisements of "The Age" were studied every Saturday as I looked further back and discovered vintage cars. In October 1976 I had a ride in the dicky seat of Stephen Hands' bullnose to the then recently opened former seminary Werribee Park and little did I realize at the time that it was also the first ride his then future wife, Gina, had in the bullnose too. A month later an affordable red flatnose Morris Cowley was found on the Mornington Peninsula and purchased.

"We've converted you to Morrises!" exclaimed Stephen when he answered the front door of 184 Poath Road when I rocked up to my first VDC "Morris Group" meeting shortly after. I was still on "L" plates and my exasperated, arthritic older parents (my father was a true Edwardian who remembered the sinking of the Titanic) had to accompany me, hood down, in the flatnose with its collapsing seat springs and its ineffective Smith's shock absorbers. At least they could teach me to drive in the same type of car in which they themselves had learned to drive and my Edwardian father approved wholeheartedly of magnetos. Their abused joints ensured that I had my licence as soon as possible so that they could retreat to the relative comfort of their sedans with heaters.

Morris Cowley Car Number 180993 was despatched from the works in chassis form on 9 February 1927 as "MC FWB", according to the works records. Upon arriving in Melbourne it was bodied locally

and sold to an orchardist on the Mornington Peninsula. By the late 1960s it was a sorry sight lying derelict on a farm until it was rescued by a member of the Vintage Drivers' Club who put it back on the road after a rebore and a coat of red

house paint. When I bought it from him forty years ago, in November 1976, I was 17. Six months later I passed my driving test the day after my eighteenth birthday, by which time I was in my last year of high school doing H.S.C. and to this day the remains of the Melbourne High School parking transfer are visible on the flatnose's windscreen as a reminder of when the car was driven in to school. During this period of early flatnose ownership I spotted an advertisement in "The Age" seeking persons interested in forming the Morris Register and flatnose and I became early members of the fledgling Morris Register when meetings were held at a kindergarten under the watchful gaze of our first president Neil Wakeman.

Since then flatnose and I have done a lot together. It saw me through university and it used to be parked behind Trinity College when I was an inmate there. In my student days it always had a few bottles of cheap student plonk in the back under the tonneau, also a change of clothes, a toothbrush, etc. as one never knew where one was going to end up or whether one would be in a fit state to take a car with a crash gearbox home through city traffic at the end of it all.

It has carried all manner of things from l-o-n-g pieces of wood taped to its sides to engines in the back. At the Bendigo Swap one year I bought a Cowley engine and gearbox with Ross Steel. Ross wanted the gearbox and I wanted the engine and he brought the whole assembly back to Melbourne on the back of his ute'. A few nights later I went over to Ross' home where we managed to use his block and tackle to put the recently-purchased Morris engine onto the floor in the back of my flatnose, but once home I couldn't get it out of my car and I had to drive around with it there for weeks until I had time to go over to the Hands to borrow their block and tackle to get the thing out of the back of my tourer.

I have moved abode with it. Towing

the ex-Stephen Hands Morris-wheeled trailer and with the car itself loaded to the gunwales with my worldly chattels. It has moved me into and out of more shared houses in Melbourne than I care to remember and it has moved me to and from multiple country hospital rotations as far afield as Shepparton and Ballarat.

By 1985 I was working in general practice in Sunshine (commuting daily from North Melbourne to Sunshine by flatnose) when one day an elderly patient made an appointment and came in with the express purpose of giving me a photograph taken the previous week of my flatnose in her driveway, the photograph having been taken when I had been making a house call to see her husband; he and I had thought she was in the kitchen making us all a cup of tea when in fact she had been outside inspecting the Morris.

During that period one of the times when the flatnose "failed to progress" occurred one night as I was taking off from a Bullnose-and-Crossley-owning mate's place in Brunswick, so with the car forlornly abandoned in a Brunswick back street I had to stay on his sofa for the night. The following day, somewhat hungover, I took the tram back to my place in North Melbourne and returned with a replacement half shaft whereupon we discovered that the flatnose's half shafts were both intact and the reason for the previous night's problem was that the offside rear hub had separated from its flange (fortunately the replacement half shaft had the hub attached..... and firmly rusted on it was too). No doubt this was the result of my taking regular short cuts along the track bed of the old Inner Circle Railway which is now a bicycle path, but in the 1980s it had recently been closed as a goods line feeding the North Fitzroy sidings. (It was also a useful short cut when I was living in Lygon Street, North Carlton and I had to commute to the Royal Children's Hospital, the narrow track of the Cowley fitting conveniently between the rails where they were then still present in a few places.)

Youthful exuberance on the clutch once led to a genuinely broken half shaft when I was doing a wedding in Bendigo for the Cowled family one hot January day. A sight to behold after the wedding itself was Jimmy Dyer's flatnose tourer towing my flatnose tourer around Bendigo back to the Cowled's place with both cars still



wearing white wedding ribbons. Graham Cowled and I excused ourselves from some of the social formalities which make up wedding days and we retreated into his tin shed with an intact half shaft which had been found under their house and, sweating in our wedding suits in 40 degree January heat, we fired up his oxy torch and did a transplant of the hub from my broken half shaft onto his intact half shaft. I think that half-shaft-hub combination is still the one on the near-side of my car some three decades later.

While I was working abroad for some years the flatnose resided in my mother's garage. When I returned to Melbourne with my Swiss girlfriend (whom I had met in a back street in Calcutta) the flatnose was returned to active service. We continued to use it as a daily driver until our first child (who is now twenty) grew to be too big for his first baby capsule, the problem being that we couldn't really work out how to fit effectively an upright baby seat in the back of a vintage tourer. The baby capsule had been easily fitted as with a few wood screws said baby capsule was fastened to the car's rear floorboards, but the upper mounting of a toddler's child restraint was more difficult. So the flatnose was, as is said in railway parlance, "Stored, Pending Instructions." But the toddler grew and a few years

later, by now accompanied by his younger sister, offspring had grown big enough to nag me to put the flatnose back into service but it was very tired and needed a rebuild.

During my ownership the flatnose has had two complete rebuilds, the first I did myself when I was a university student and the second as described in the previous paragraph was done around 2001. It has had countless amounts of fettling and I hate to think how many engine rebuilds it has had. On the VSCC Night Trial this year the universal joint disintegrated inside its housing and that led to a rebuild of virtually everything from the back of the gearbox to the rear tyres (which still need replacing, as does the hood which was last done around 1970, although it has probably only been erected for a total of some hours in its life since then and maybe by now it has shrunk so much as to be useless anyway).



The flatnose is now on "Club Permit" for the first time in my ownership. It shares space with our everyday 1963 24/80 Wolseley (a really high mileage car in which my wife (aforementioned Swiss girlfriend!) learned to drive. Then there is my 1949 30cwt Bedford, our 1930 Austin 7 (the motorised perambulator) and the bullnose -engined ex-Maurie Monk/Ted Hider-Smith 1922 GN Hillelimb Special.

So there we have it: flatnose and me, forty years on.....

*Peter* (November 2016)

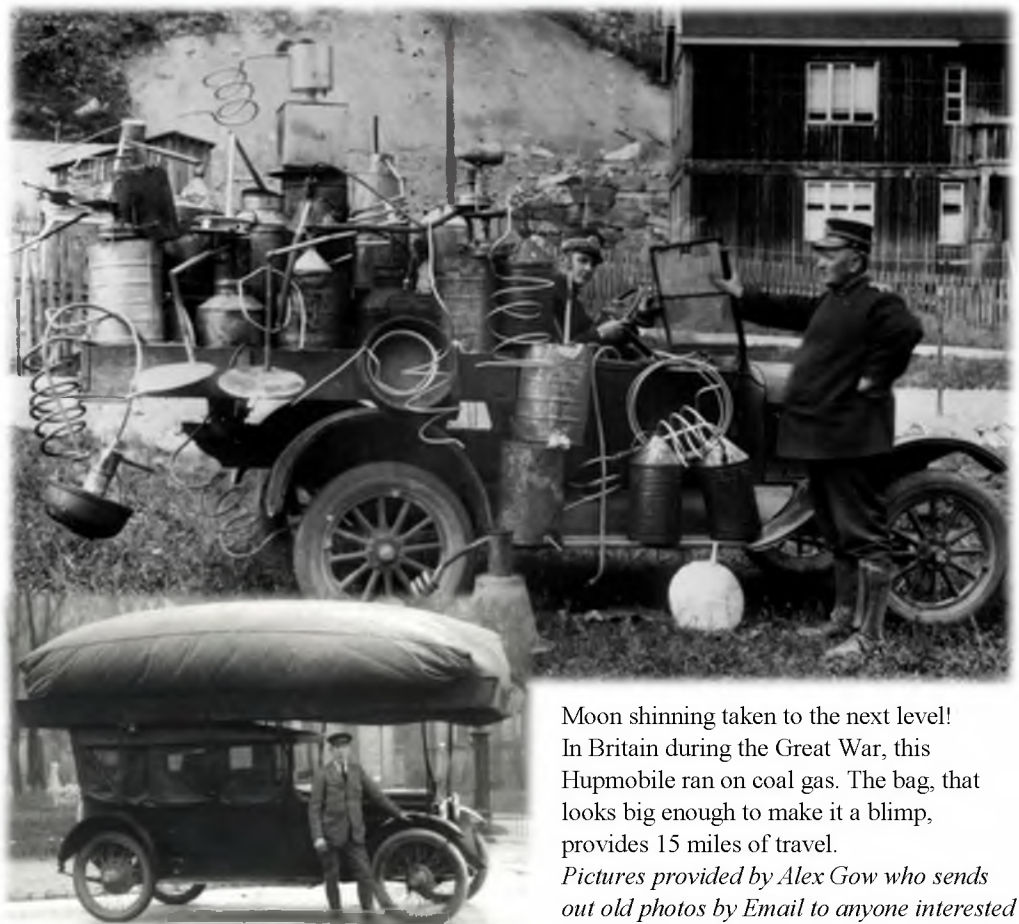


"... and when I snap my fingers, you will completely forget that I was doing 87 in a 45 mph zone ..."

If your man does any of these,



**He just ordered car parts**



Moon shinning taken to the next level! In Britain during the Great War, this Hupmobile ran on coal gas. The bag, that looks big enough to make it a blimp, provides 15 miles of travel. Pictures provided by Alex Gow who sends out old photos by Email to anyone interested — alexgow@westnet.com.au



# Some of the Cars in my Life

Graeme Simpson

I was born in pre-war Sydney, where my earliest car memories are of Dad's pre-war cars, first a Willys then a 1938 Chevrolet, fitted with a gas-producer at the start of the War. Dad was always interested to show me the engines, and explain how things worked. On one trip he started to clean out the gas producer on the roadside and it back-fired, singeing his hair and moustache. We three kids couldn't help but laugh – he was NOT amused.

Dad - John L. Simpson - had been chief of the Technical Department at Bean Cars Ltd in England. In 1924 he was sent to Australia with a prototype Bean 13.9 HP to prospect for export business. He and Francis Birtles drove the grossly-overloaded car from Sydney to Darwin and return, the first North-South double crossing of Australia. That's a story in itself.

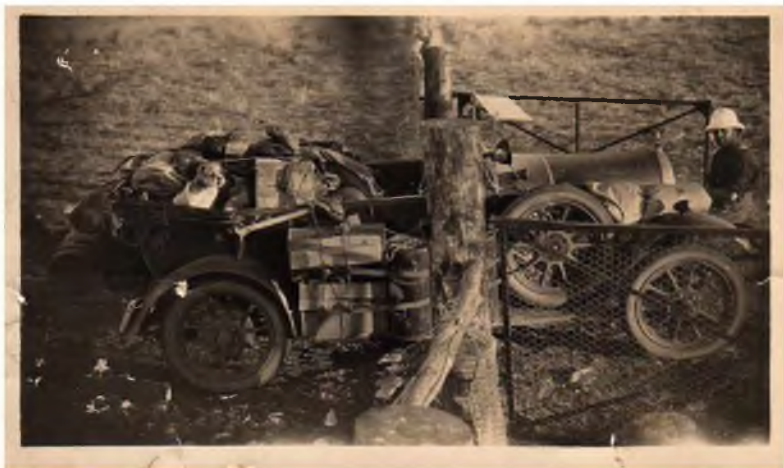
My maternal grandfather E C Steere had been quite prosperous through the 1920s, and at one time had an early Hudson Six; but he was negligent of maintenance. Dad recounted one time after ascending the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, E C complained that the car was sluggish. On lifting the bonnet Dad could 'see' the pistons moving up & down inside the red-hot block: Water? What water?

In 1941 during World War 2 we moved from Sydney to Melbourne: Dad had been appointed Works Manager of the Ordnance Factory, Maribyrnong and was issued with a little green 1939 Austin 10. When I was about 9 or 10 I used to steer it out on the then 'country' roads near Albion and Deer Park and enjoyed it hugely. Post-war, Dad joined General Motors- Holden's at Fisherman's Bend to establish Plant 5, set up to manufacture engines and

was the Shell agent in Stawell. He'd had his 1938 Chrysler Royal from new, but in 1949 bought a new Rover 75 to replace it: what a contrast between these 2 cars. He soon found that a Rover in country Stawell was not a sensible proposition, and it gave way for a Ford Customline.

I had a good camera and often found interesting cars parked on the roadsides. A Hispano-Suiza tourer in Kew; Rickenbacker & Flint in Richmond; Australian Six, Cisitalia and Cottin et Desgouttes in Carlton; Charron in Flemington; Pierce-Arrow & Vauxhall 20/60 Hurlingham in Ballarat; 1929 Mercedes-Benz coupé near Leongatha; Talbot 105 at Altona.

On Australia Day 1951 (I was aged 16) a friend of my sister Paddy took me to the Rob Roy hill climb in his V-8-engined Lancia Lambda. That was something else! What a day. My first encounter with cars for fun. Some interesting cars were spectating:



*The Bean 13.9 hp at Camooweal, June 1924. It had arrived in Australia in November 1923, brand new. Dad in the helmet, Birtles' dog Dinkum in the back.*

When young, I used to pore over Dad's photographs of that journey and listen to his stories about the roads, the people, the country. I was fascinated. He was in awe of Birtles' bush craft, but somewhat appalled by his rough treatment of the car. Dad later arranged for Birtles to be handed a specially prepared Bean which became famous as 'The Sundowner', now in the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.

In 1925 Dad was made Bean's Australian agent. Australia was a tough market, already well-supplied with Fords, Dodges & Chevrolets which coped better than the typical English & European cars with Australia's heat, unmade roads, hills, and bush mechanics. But Australia became Bean's most successful export market, up until 1930 when Bean Cars Ltd went into voluntary liquidation.

transmissions for the new Holden car. He bought a 1940 Chevrolet, a big comfortable car which took Dad, my sister and me on a flying visit to Sydney. In those pre-Motel days, we slept overnight in the car on the way. Then in 1949 our new Holden arrived, to the joy of this 14-year-old. Zippy performance, leather seats, synchro-mesh gearbox, which Dad used to demonstrate from time to time by pushing it into 2<sup>nd</sup> gear while travelling at 80 mph. Unsurprisingly, the synchro eventually failed and for the rest of its life it was essentially a crash gearbox.

Dad's father-in-law Percy Frencham



*RLSS Alfa Romeo at Rob Roy, 26/1/1951*

From that adventure I developed a longing to own a Lambda, but never quite got around to it, though 60 years



*The Austins near Apollo Bay,*



later my #3 son Iain bought his first Lambda. He & John Hickford have just finished building up his second Lambda.

My school-mate Adrian Rousseau had been driving his 1929 Austin 7 roadster for a year, so at 18 I found a dead 1928 Austin 7 fabric-bodied saloon, revived it with Dad's help and so my life-on-wheels started.

The Austins gave us both a brutal but thorough apprenticeship in repair, maintenance, restoration and defensive driving. The Austin 7 was my best possible teacher.

We drove them to Caloundra (Qld)



1953 Typical weekend scene

one year, staying with my aunt and uncle in Sydney on the way. My several aunts & uncles in Sydney had fairly uninteresting post-war cars: a Vauxhall Velox and Wyvern, and a Ford Zephyr, though Uncle Cec. drove a well-polished Nash 600. In visiting Kosciusko National Park I had to reverse up out of the Chalet: 1<sup>st</sup> gear wouldn't hack it. On the way down from the top I got too interested in the scenery and drove the Austin over the side of the road, where it rolled gently on its left side. A road gang nearby quickly righted it, and we carried on. The two Austins performed admirably: only a cracked front hub and a broken brake rod had to be sourced. The hub from a local wrecker, the brake rod from a friendly machine shop in Belmont near Newcastle, on a Saturday afternoon. Our worn-out tyres suffered several punctures. New tyres were an unaffordable luxury.

A mutual friend had owned a Dodge Brothers 4 since 1939, which his Dad had restored while Bruce was away with the A.I.F. during the War. In stark contrast to the Austins, the Dodge was fast, comfortable, quiet and DEPENDABLE. Rousseau meantime had bought a one-owner 1930 Chevrolet sedan and my A-7 had a hard time keeping up. I thought a Dodge was the way to go, and in 1954 I found one in Spencer St, North Melbourne, for \$170. It was tired, but ran well enough and we did a few trips, the longest to North of Caloundra (Qld) & others through the Strzlecki Range, and Walhalla.

**(right) Rousseau's Chev, our Dodge, Bruce's Dodge at Walhalla, 1955. The nearer tin shed survives and we saw it during a tour in October 2019.**

But after I'd covered about 6000 miles, a few things needed some work.

First was a fully rebuilt and balanced engine by Repco in Elizabeth Street: \$203.40. Then, a year later DB emerged from the shed as a brand new car, fully restored.

The following year we drove it to Perth across the Nullabor, retrieving a bottle of VB planted near Eucla the year before, when Bruce and his mate took his Dodge across, towing a caravan. We camped every night, often without putting up the tent. The tent had been loaned to us by Ken Hall, owner of Hall & McLeod, which had re-trimmed and re-hooded the Dodge and also fitted to it their Jaken side-curtains. Perth was one of many trips we made in the old cars. On the way to Perth - 1600 km of mud and/or bulldust and/or corrugations - nothing worried the new-old car, but the sealed roads were a great relief at each end of the trip. We were passed by a newish Chevrolet which was travelling way too fast. We found him at the next stop, the driver looking glumly at where the 4 posts of its roof-rack had been hammered into the roof panel by the corrugated track. A little Fiat 600 had some distributor trouble which we were able to set right.

**Dodge & Fiat 600 at Madura WA, January 1957. The Motometer read just above 'Normal Summer Temperature' with the day's temperature of 116°F (46.5°C) in the shade.**



Petrol at home was 36c/litre, at Madura WA 62.5c/litre. We averaged 11.96 litres/100 Km. (23.6 miles per gallon). At this time, Comprehensive insurance cost \$22, a head gasket \$2.19.

One day in Elizabeth St Melbourne, Frank Hands jumped on the Dodge running board and persuaded me to join the Vintage Drivers Club, which I did

and was very active until we left Melbourne. I used DB as my daily driver for about 3 years after its rebirth, often parking in town while I attended evening lectures at RMIT. Never a problem in those peaceful days.

About 1960 I decided to keep DB for best and bought a 1949 Rover 75 4-light saloon, more-or-less keeping company with Rousseau, who'd bought a 1950 Citroën 6 to rest his Chevrolet. We did many trips with DB & Chev, often with Bruce in his Dodge Brothers 4. The Rover was a mistake: it had been fitted with the notorious Cords piston rings, which had simply chewed out the soft iron cylinders below the original top 2" of chromium plating. I bored it out 1/8" oversize to fit Land-Rover pistons; fitted double valve springs in an unsuccessful attempt to cure valve bounce; rebuilt the diff twice. In 1963 it eventually failed to proceed on the Nepean Highway and had to be towed home to Strathmore. It was quickly disposed of. A pity: it was a very comfortable car and quite well-mannered.

I remember a few VDC cars and owners from those early Melbourne days. My apologies for any errors in my memories. Jim Kelso's 20 hp Rolls Royce, Lindsay Cobb's 20 hp Sunbeam, Tony Kent's Dodge (there were many Dodges, Fords, Buicks, Morrises), Keith Angus' Plymouth van, Frank Hands' bullnose Morris, Neil Cuthbert's early MG, Brian Bacon's Stoewer, Barry

Vinen's Metallurgique, Cliff Rees and Bob Craddock's Cadillacs, Ivan Saxton's Mercer, Max Kennedy's Stutz coupé, Jim Martin's Peerless, Ian Karlson's Austro-Daimler, Jim Flood's Hispano-Suiza, John Gardner's 18/50 Bean, John Day's 20 hp Rolls Royce, Russell Mearns' Deussenberg, George





Cox's T Ford, Don Bain's & Bert Lamshed's Fiats, an Excelsior, Peter Coleby's A Ford, Ian Cartwright's Gwynne, Milken's Invicta, Clive Beattie's Lancia Dilambda and Augusta, Noel Cox's Lancia Lambda. There are many more, but memory fades.

At the end of 1960 I'd met a vivacious young lady who captured my heart, and I, hers. We married in September 1961. Lynne brought with her a 1950 Ford Prefect, which we replaced in time with a 1947/51 Fiat 500 Topolino as her shopping car. Activity with the vintage cars slowed down over the next few years, as our children started to appear as if by magic.

However in 1962 I saw a German 1923 Elite hiding from Peter Rollason's Steyr under his house: I liked the look of it, though partly dismantled and very sad-looking. So in November 1963 I bought it for \$45, tempted because it had one tyre which would fit DB. RR towed it home by rope from Box Hill, as was legal in those days.

Just a couple of years ago, I met with Chris May, son of the previous owner of Elite and co-incidentally I met the grandson of the original importer. Restoration was spread over 54 years,

installments. It was daunting to drive this huge car through Melbourne's morning peak-hour traffic, with its unfamiliar right hand gear change. But the brakes were safely wonderful. This was a fun car, delightful to drive and quite fast, with its very light tourer body (ex Stuart's Minerva) and plenty of torque and power. I was sad to see it go in 2004, but it was time. After having my neck broken in a car accident in 1989, I no longer had the strength needed to change a tyre.

But back to the early 1960s. The Dodge was well run-in and I decided to have a go at Rob Roy, after a good run at a hill-climb at Mt Martha, where it performed better than most, including a couple of MGs. Rob Roy was a

ity was outstanding. Then in mid 1965 I bought a Mk III Fiat 1500, just because I could: an associate company was the Fiat importer.

In September 1965 there came my



1964 - pic by your editor



purchase for \$60 of a really derelict basket case - 1928 Le Zèbre coupé, just one week before a new job took us all from Strathmore to Sydney. Lynne was not amused! I must (and did) plead the best of intentions: I thought it would be a nice shopping car for Lynne. 50 years later in 2014 it

challenge, the time was disappointing. So for the following event I took the RR up the hill. It performed reasonably but its 2-1/4 ton weight was just too much. The next year I converted a spare Dodge cylinder head to approximate a Ricardo turbulent head design. This, with about 7.5:1 compression ratio, boosted performance remarkably, but at the expense of smoothness

was finished and on the road, but by that time not really a proposition as Lynne's daily driver and she is more comfortable in her Astra these days. I hope Lynne has forgiven me.

The cavalcade of cars along the Hume Highway that September 1965 was a sight to behold: I drove RR with Le Zèbre on a trailer, Rousseau in his Chevrolet towed Elite on a rigid tow-bar, Lynne drove DB, Rousseau's wife



As bought 1963 At Motorclassica 2017



including 4 years in The Philippines, where my job took us all.

But in December 1963, all too soon after Elite, Stuart Middlehurst's Rolls-Royce New Phantom tourer 'followed me home'. It couldn't help itself. \$300 was agreed as a fair price, and Stuart generously allowed me to pay by



Completed in 2014

and top gear flexibility. However, it screamed up the hill, achieving 45 mph in second gear, at which the starter-generator was spinning

at about 11,000 rpm. Enough! The original head was quickly back in service.

In 1963 now with our first two children, a new Fiat 1500 Mk I replaced the recalcitrant Rover. The Fiat was an excellent car, very comfortable, economical and quite quick. Roadabil-

Michelle drove the Fiat 1500. Topolino had departed on a truck with our furniture. A side-line on Le Zèbre: being a little-known marque, news of other cars was of great interest. The car had on its bulkhead a small plaque detailing the Ricardo patents utilized in the engine. In 2001 I emailed Ricardo Engineers Ltd in UK, had an immediate response with a picture of their own restored Z-10 car, and pictures of another in Adelaide. We quickly formed a friendship with Lorraine & Ian Loader, who also owned a 1920 Type 'D' Le





*Fiat 1500, Le Zèbre on trailer behind RR, Dodge, Elite towed by 1930 Chevrolet.*

Zèbre, since sold to Hobart. Adelaide houses another Type 'D', and Barry Perdieau's 1911 Type 'A' was bought by another recent friend Andrew Benoit in Sydney. So we have an informal 5-member 'Club Australienne Le Zèbre'. The remains of another Type 'A' are said to be up North somewhere. The 4<sup>th</sup> known Z-10 remains in France.

But back to Sydney in 1965. While in Sydney we joined the Vintage Motor Club, at that time with a restricted eligibility list. Being somewhat pig-headed and egalitarian, I insisted on joining with the Dodge, rather than with the acceptable Rolls Royce and eventually the Club kindly relented and opened the door to all Vintage cars. It's the people who make the club, the cars are the catalyst. Coming home from one Club outing I saw a very derelict early 1920s Ruston-Hornsby in the town of Kandos, covered by cement dust – Kandos Cement Co was the big local employer. I was tempted beyond endurance and bought it for \$40. However, sense and sensibility prevailed and I quickly sold it on to an enthusiastic buyer. I wonder where it is now?

Lynne and I drove DB & RR frequently on Vintage Motor Club rallies and events; Lynne drove both well, but preferred to drive DB. We generally had our 4 boys with us, and often also Lynne's dog Pepe, 'Here come the Simmos, with the blooming dog!' Club member John Steel used to remark. John had inherited from an uncle his one-owner Austin 20, sadly sold to England only in the last year or two. One event was a hill-climb at Amaroo in March 1967, where RR nearly scored a class win.

I remember seeing an OM hiding coyly in a Granville shed. Laurie Ogle had built a C4 Amilcar roadster, Terry Hannan had restored a lovely 16 hp Sunbeam roadster, (now owns a Stutz of intimidating proportions) Andy Douglas had a 20-hp Sunbeam tourer, John Lockeridge had a New Phantom saloon, Steve Freeman had a well-preserved La Salle sedan, Alan Roper a 6½ litre Bentley saloon, Bob Keeley had a Vauxhall 23/60, Eric Dunbar a 30/98, which was exhilarating to drive. Ray Neely ran an Alvis 12/50 ducksback and later he built a boat-tail roadster body on his RR New Phantom chassis, which I saw for sale at the 2017 Motoreclassica. I

look back on those days in Sydney with very fond memories.

During our Sydney time I came to know Paul Dawbney, who had built a 1921 Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8. I really liked driving that car and he liked RR. They were different to drive, but each very satisfying, probably among the better cars of their era. In the 1960s there were at least two visible I-Fs in Melbourne, one with a Dodge tourer body, owned by Ian F Parfitt, Another derelict I-F surfaced in Melbourne 3 or 4 years back, with bits of a Chrysler body on it. Ian later bought an early Lancia Lambda. Keith Devers also had a Lambda painted metallic blue, now owned by David Couper.

In 1970 I was given an Austin 1800 as a Works car and persuaded my boss to allow some enhancements: larger inlet valves and polished ports, educated camshaft and a Weber DCOE carburetor. That was quite an interesting conveyance, comfortable, spacious, economical, good for 110 m.p.h. and very useful acceleration. It ate Holdens & Falcons for breakfast.

When we returned to Melbourne in 1974, again for my job, it towed Le Zèbre easily, but the towbar fastenings to the body fatigued badly. I'd already driven the Topolino to Melbourne to buy a house, suffering a frozen carburetor during that winter's night. This was a useful little car and had often carried Lynne and our 4 boys to & from school.

In the meantime our 5<sup>th</sup> child, our daughter Beth had arrived. Another surprise, especially after our 4 boys.

Over several years my older sister Nonie had inherited Dad's Holden, my younger sister Paddy drove a Mini, then a Ford Laser, now a Nissan Micra. Her husband Bill had had a new Austin A-40, then a Wolseley 6/80, quite a refined car, but a bit of a slug.

After the Austin 1800 I briefly used a Holden Statesman, automatic and

comfortable, but dull, before being transferred to Manila in The Philippines for 4 years. My company car was a Toyota Crown, pleasant enough, but for our large family I bought a tired 1969 Chevrolet station wagon. A comfortable and dependable barge. Elite came with us to Manila, and much mechanical work was done with assistance from #3 son Iain and our local driver Ramon de Leon.

One of our difficulties was adjusting to having 5 servants, 3 living in. This level of domestic help was expected for expatriates, to help support the many poorly-paid local people. It was very tough for Lynne, who felt isolated from her own kitchen. We had Ramon our driver, a gardener, 2 maids and an armed security guard. Luxurious, you might think. Invasive, we thought, though we



*On RACV 'Fly the Flag' 2012*

became used to the situation, and treated them more like friends than servants. We saw no active vintage cars in The Philippines. There was no middle class.

Returning to Melbourne in 1980, I bought a 1970 Fiat 125S, then a 1969 125 for Lynne, which we converted to LPG. Both were simply wonderful cars. We still had the Fiat 500, as a spare car: we were living at Riddells Creek, without public transport. At 18, #3 son Iain also bought a Fiat 125, and soon after a short-lived Fiat 850 coupé, a rust-bucket. Then he found a Lancia Beta coupé, the first of 3; and so started his love affair with all matters Lancia. He now has several, 1928 Lambda, 1935 Augusta, 1937 Aprilia and 1974 Fulvia coupé: I'm the lucky custodian of this last, delightful little car, proof that excellent cars could still be built; at least before the number-crunchers at Fiat virtually killed off the Lancia brand.

Our other four children and several grand-children treat their cars as 'just



another appliance': very sensible! But what a lot of fun they miss out on.

After the Fiats, my daily drivers were a couple of company Magnas, then a company Holden Commodore on LPG. After leaving the corporate world in 1992, I bought a 1988 Toyota Corolla, which I also put on LPG. Back in 1989 I'd had my neck broken in a car accident, and being unable to maintain the Fiat 125 while I was in hospital, Lynne bought a new Ford Laser, also on LPG. These three - Fiat 125, Corolla, and Laser each covered more than 300,000 kilometers with us. Eventually

#4 son Chris inherited the Fiat 125 on LPG. Sale of the RR in 2004 enabled work to progress on Le Zèbre & Elite and the purchase of a newish Holden Astra, which we converted to LPG. So 'proper' cars now are DB, Elite and Le Zèbre, more than enough to keep one busy and interested. And for just fun driving, I have Iain's Fulvia.

As I write (January 2020) DB is having an engine transplant after my unsuccessful scraping-in of main bearings 15 years ago, Le Zèbre is awaiting the casting of a new re-designed engine block after fatal

cracking of both the original and a spare block; and Elite, having won an award at Motorclassica 2017 has a list of fettling jobs to be done at leisure.

Life has been kind to me in many ways: the cars are fun on the way through, but life's greatest kindnesses have been in allowing a 58-year marriage to my Lynne, with our five wonderful loving children and eight grand-children.

*Graeme*



*From my albums: Graeme's Dodge Four at Kalorama 1962, he was treasurer of the VDC at that time. Graeme's Rolls Royce at Rob Roy Hill Climb 1964 In Sydney Road, a Brunswick car repair yard resided a rare French Le Zebra coupe with a Martin & King body. The rear Willys Knight wheels were not original, the correct ones on the front are Driot wire wheels (14/10/64) Ed.*



## More of Graeme Simpson's Memories

I've known a few Austin 12/4s, all tourers. Steve Gill, a senior manager at the Government Ordnance Factory in Maribyrnong during the 2nd World War used to drive one to work every day. It was a common sight in those days to see 20-year-old cars in everyday use and even up to the 1950s, when I put the restored Dodge back on the road. Another OFM Manager, Mick O'Connell, occasionally drove his 1925 Buick Master 6 from Windsor to Maribyrnong. He'd owned it since new, and later traded it in on a new Vauxhall Victor. The Buick was totally original,

mouth-wateringly so.

In the mid-1950s another 12/4 was the daily driver of a bloke who worked in the shipping agency Williamsons, in William Street, corner of Little Collins Street, same place where my mate Bruce Johnstone who worked at John Sanderson & Co on the corner of William Street and Little Collins and commuted in his Dodge 4 from Caulfield. Both cars found easy parking near the side door, as did I when visiting in my Austin 7.

Two or three years ago I drove a 1-family-owned 12/4 near Castlemaine. It

was delightfully original, though fitted with twin SU carburetors. I remember both performance and brakes as modest, but the ride was comfortable.

In time, I'll dig out some of the early pics and send to you.





# A MAN AND HIS AUTOMOBILE

## THE 1938 THOMAS

# "ROCKET CAR"

by Gary W. Alt, Sr. and Mark C. Schleicher



***This is the story of Mr. Charles D. Thomas and his unique "Rocket Car." Only a few people in the antique automobile world may be aware of this remarkable man. This story is being told to reflect upon his achievements and to rightfully record his place in the annals of automotive history.***

Born in Batavia, New York, in 1910, Thomas attended the General Motors Institute of Technology in Flint, Michigan, and graduated in 1932. It was during this training that the idea of the Thomas Rocket Car began to take shape. Details of his ideas were finally set forth in his postgraduate thesis in 1935. Following a period of employment with General Motors, he returned to his hometown to build his dream car in a rented space at a Batavia auto repair shop. It was here that he met Norman Richardson, a young man just out of high school who was a talented welder and body man.

Mr. Thomas hired Richardson to do all the welding and to build the body. Their friendship would be a major influence on Thomas' future career. The goal was to build an automobile that could be mass produced inexpensively and combine the new ideas and

technologies of Mr. Thomas' own design. It was his keen insight and assessment of the needs of the automobile industry that led him to develop and build the 1938 Thomas Rocket Car, a hand-built, 6-passenger, two-door sedan. Only one was ever produced, and it bears serial number one (1).

The most unique and innovative feature of the car is the patented "Ventriscopes," a periscope-type assembly mounted on the roof that served as a rear-view mirror, air vent and radio antenna. The primary reason for this design was to solve the problem of poor vision through the small rear windows of cars from that era. Also unique about the Rocket Car was the "slab sided" streamlined body design without separate fenders or running boards and all four wheel wells completely enclosed by skirts. Many now standard automotive features were considered in which the car has no frame and incorporates

the body and suspension all in one; step-down floor panels; four-wheel independent suspension accomplished by a series of short drive shafts, trailing arms, and eight universal joints; and extensive interior padding and a dual hydraulic master cylinder for safety. Clutch and brake pedals are suspended from above instead of coming through the floorboard. Other features include concealed hinges, shatterproof drive, and "Dunlopillow" seat cushions custom designed by the Dunlop Tire and Rubber Company. The Rocket Car is powered by a flathead Ford V-8 motor.

The rolling chassis of the Rocket Car was completed and registered in New York State in 1938. Late in 1939, the entire car was completed. The following year, the Thomas Rocket Car toured western New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, appearing in dealers' showrooms and at auto shows.

Mr. Thomas took the car to the Detroit area to meet with automotive executives of that era. After test runs on three of the leading proving grounds, the Thomas passed with flying colors. People of the industry were all in agreement







Rear Axle

followed up with an update in the following issue (Nov. 2015): A local automobile collectors group is seeking to restore what is being called a "Rocket Car" developed and built in Batavia almost 80 years ago. In 1938, Charles Thomas of Batavia built an egg-shaped vehicle that many car enthusiasts consider to be very advanced for its time.

that Mr. Thomas and his car were at least 10 years ahead of their time.

Although the Thomas Rocket Car could indeed have been mass-produced inexpensively, the industry could not afford to retool for such an extensive design change. The 1938 Thomas, after being driven until the mid-fifties, was destined to fall into obscurity.

In 1940, The Amphibian Car Company was organized in nearby Buffalo, in anticipation of the war, to design and build amphibious vehicles.

Charles Thomas was hired to design a combination tugboat/tractor that would tow ships in and out of water. He brought his friend Norman Richardson along as production superintendent. When The Amphibian Car Company went out of business, Mr. Thomas went to work for American Machine and Foundry.

Norman Richardson opened a collision shop, where he built a midget car. One of his customers, Lou Horwitz, a former Packard executive and used car magnate, was impressed with the little car and discussed producing an inexpensive but sporty second car that would appeal to returning soldiers and their families. They needed a visionary automotive engineer. It was only natural that Richardson called his friend Charles Thomas to join a magnificent 4-year adventure known as the Playboy Motorcar Corporation. It was here that Mr. Thomas would use many of his ideas from the Rocket Car in producing 97 Playboys between 1947 and 1949. The Playboy proved to be a good little car and far ahead of its time. It probably would have been successful except for investor panic caused by the unrelated collapse of the Tucker. After Playboy, Mr. Thomas continued his career in automotive engineering, becoming a consultant in his later years.

One day while searching for a 1936 Chevrolet parts car, Lake Erie Region member Gary W. Alt, Sr., was fortunate to happen upon the long since forgotten Thomas Rocket Car and save it from possible destruction. It is complete but in need of total restoration. He was also

fortunate to finally locate and reunite Mr. Thomas and his wife with their dream car, which they had not seen for 20 years.

Mr. Charles D. Thomas passed away in 1984 leaving behind a fine family and a piece of automotive history for all of us to enjoy. (Note that one of the authors of this article is former WNYRG member, Mark Schleicher) Story is from 'The Greyhound Express' Newsletter of the Western New York Region Group. Copied with permission..

Bob Snyder reports in a later edition Here are some photos I took this morning. The car is far from being finished. A great deal of sheet metal work was done by someone that offered to do it. That work was very good. Mark S saw the car in Gary Alt's garage after it came out of the salvage yard. He said it was rough and that much of the lower body was gone. Also one of the front fenders was partially shredded by the yard owners.

Dick McClurg is the fellow who has the car now. He said he was going to paint it maroon very soon and then get it up to Oakfield to have a headliner put in. When he gets it back he said he will be able to do more of the cosmetic work, windows, moldings, hardware.

Dick's shop is not the neatest. He has cars in various states of disrepair all over in the building. Twelve at least. A replacement flathead was in another room, wrong vintage, later '30s. Dick said he wants to get the car cosmetically together. He did not seem to care if it would be made drivable.

In the Oct. 2015 Greyhound Express, we ran a story on this unusual car. It was



David Howe is among the group looking to restore the car. During the national tours, Ford liked the car, but since it was so radically different, the company did not think they could re-tool and make the vehicle. The group restoring the car knows what needs to be done and plans to put it back together exactly as it was built.

Upon completion, the group seeks to present the car to the City of Batavia as a gift.





# ALVIS

2019 Alvis Graber 3 litre available as a Coupe/Cabriolet

Thomas George John established T.G. John and Company in 1919 and produced stationary engines, carburettors and motor scooters. In 1921 the company changed its name to The Alvis Car and Engineering Company Ltd. The company earned a reputation for quality, advanced engineering and superior performance. Engineer Geoffrey de Freville's 1st engine is a good example, a 4-cylinder engine which featured aluminium pistons and pressure lubrication. It was first installed in the 1920 Alvis 10/30 which was an instant success. Later models featured Front Wheel Drive, in-board brakes, and overhead camshafts. Alvis, like many upmarket engineering firms, did not build their own coachwork. In 1936 the company's name was shortened to Alvis Ltd and aircraft and armoured vehicles were added to the company's product lines. Due to WW11 production initially ceased but recommenced until the factory was badly damaged in a bombing raid late in 1940. The factory's armaments manufacturing suffered little damage and continued through until the end of the war. Car production recommenced in 1946 but many of their coachbuilders did not survive the war and the quest for reliable, reasonably priced coachwork dominated the following years.

From 1952 to 1955 Alec Issigonis worked for Alvis designing a new v8 model which proved too expensive to manufacturer. In 1965 Rover took a controlling interest in Alvis, then rover was purchased by Leyland Motors. In 1968 a management buyout succeeded in taking control of Alvis car designs, customer records and a large stock of parts. In 2009 the Alvis name was also transferred. And in 2012 5 variations of Alvis cars were announced. An additional model was announced in 2019.

Bruce Cunningham forwarded this story. Attached is a very brief history on Alvis. In this article and the Red Triangle web site, there is no mention of the first Alvis car in 1920. The Red Triangle version states that in "1919 T.G.John begins manufacturing Alvis cars in Coventry" but I was told that 1920 was in fact the true date for the first car as 1919 was the set up of the company of T. G. John Engineering Co with a later name change to "The Alvis Car and Engineering Company Ltd" in 1921. So a bit of confusion surrounds the origin .



Continuation series: Available brand new pre-war 4.3 litre Alvises built to exacting standards, the Lancefield, Vanden Plas and Bertelli saloon.

# A Post-War II Entrepreneur

## Life Story of Archie Marshall

### FIRST DAY IN AFRICA

Government surplus dealers in the 50's tended to become fairly specialized in the type of goods they handled. Some of us kept to heavy goods vehicles, some carried American vehicles, others kept to light ute's and cars.

This made life much easier when trying to find stock and maximized the value of advertising. A particular friend of mine only dealt in tyres, new ones, usable old ones, scrap tyres, whatever. Sometimes he would sell to local retail customers who just wanted a set for their car or truck, but the vast bulk of his tyres were exported to Africa.

Mac was his name and he had a little horse property not far from my farm in Cheshire. We often went to horse shows and car auctions together and I got to know him pretty well over the years. In his yard he had men working cutting new tread into smooth truck tyre casings using a hot wire. When I enquired about the safety of the tyres Mac assured me that provided the wire cut did not go through to the canvas, it was quite acceptable and was used even on buses!

In the yard were large numbers of loose tyres with the mark KW Accra painted roughly on the sides. Some of these had huge splits in the sidewall and others were simply worn out old tyres. This was long before the days of having steel in the construction of the tyre.

When I enquired from Mac he explained to me that the tyres with splits in the sides were exported to Africa and the customer had patches fixed inside, either with adhesive or often with galv gutter bolts, after which they went on the road again!

The tyres which were even beyond that stage were cut into soles and strapped onto peoples feet as sandals! Lunch with Mac became one of my regular habits and little by little I came to learn all about his operation. A surprising thing was the scale and regularity of the business.

This was long before the days of containerisation of shipping and every tyre was simply thrown on the back of a truck and carried to Liverpool docks for shipment to Accra, Ghana and always to the same KW customer.

Mac did not spend money on advertising and seemed to be able to sell every tyre he could lay hands on without difficulty.

I envied Mac with his wonderful market which had supported him and his family, to say nothing about half a dozen

riding horses and a couple of girlfriends, for years. One day I was in my office in Manchester when two men walked in, one of which was an African and the other a white business type complete with bowler hat and briefcase.

They introduced themselves and gave me their cards. The African was Chief T.A. Oni of Ibadan Nigeria and the other was his Liverpool buying agent. They explained that Oni was a

contractor and road builder of some repute in Nigeria and they were looking for a supplier of ex-army trucks who could be relied on to provide reliable quality vehicles on a regular basis. I quickly told them how lucky they were that they had come to right place first time and no need to look any further!

I showed them round the yard and they settled on a dozen Austin 3 ton LWB trucks which I had serviced and driven to Liverpool for loading.

The Liverpool buying agent paid me for all the trucks which was all I was concerned with and off I went home to Manchester with my drivers.

Some weeks later a letter arrived in the mail from Oni in Nigeria to say that he was very pleased with the trucks and would I like to visit Nigeria as his guest to explore the market possibilities.

I had never been overseas in my life and had not the faintest idea of what to expect, but I was thrilled at the chance. Next day at lunch with Mac I showed him the letter. He was guarded and cautious but eventually offered to go with me as far as Accra Ghana, where his old customer, KW was in business.

After getting myself a passport and numerous injections against just about everything we were ready to go. Mac arranged the flight which turned out to be a small charter type operation at Gatwick. The aircraft was a DC 3 with pretty hard seats and lots of noise and vibration.



The route taken was via Portugal and Spain, then Las Palmas in the Canary Islands where we stayed overnight.

My first sight of Africa was Freetown, Sierra Leone where we landed on a Marsden Mat steel strip wartime runway. The runway rattled like hell when we touched down and I was relieved when the plane came to a halt!

First stop was the gents, which turned out to be a corrugated iron shed with open type hole in the ground, to do everything in! Huge black and orange lizards were running up the walls and standing guard by the hole to catch anything edible! The smell in the heat of the day in West Africa was something impossible to ever forget!

On leaving Freetown the next destination was Accra where we were met

at the airport by Mac's customer accompanied by several wives and various sons. This was the first time Mac had ever been to Ghana or met his customer. I was totally bewildered by the great excitement and colour of the occasion.

We were driven to the customers "compound" which consisted of a number of corrugated iron and mud wall houses surrounded by a high wall. Hundreds of old tyres were piled high in the compound and it was a scene of high activity. Loud music blared right through and never seemed to cease. Youngsters with huge eyes and wide grins were everywhere, looking at us with a mixture of admiration and suspicion. Skinny dogs and cats were in abundance. As were chickens, pigs and goats of various sizes.

Smelly open drains ran through the compound providing a place for the kids to play endless games! It was pandemonium but everybody seemed happy!

Within minutes of our arrival we were placed in two huge wooden chairs and offered food of every possible description, most of which we tried to politely decline, only sticking to things we recognized such as bananas, ground nuts and chicken legs. Whilst many of the dishes appeared attractive, they were so loaded with red pepper that they burned our lips severely and impossible to eat.

Soon an endless stream of visitors arrived, all dressed in their colorful native robes and dripping in heavy gold jewelry. One by one they came to where we sat and introduced themselves, little of which we understood even a word!

After what seemed an eternity, Mac and I thanked our hosts and everybody else in attendance and explained that we were only intending to stay a few days and that we wanted to learn everything we could about their business and perhaps to add the supply of various trucks and spare parts to their existing tyre trade. There was a load cheers at this and beer was provided in great abundance!

Eventually we made them understand that we had been flying all day from Sierra Leone and needed to rest. Beds were shown to us, African style, mats on the floor with cushions and large swinging fan operated by a boy outside who pulled and released a string. The music outside was as loud as ever and Mac and I knew that this was just not a possible arrangement. As so often the case in Africa, great diplomacy was needed in order to get good nights sleep for us without offending our hosts.

Fortunately, one of the visitors recognized our plight and asked, perhaps you would be better in a European Hotel? We both agreed and he explained to Kwame, our host who provided a car to take us.

What a relief when we were shown into an acceptable standard room, with a normal bed and a shower. We both settled down and tried to sleep but about 9pm decided to go out to see what the night life was all about. That, is another story for another day? **Archie**



# Bits & Pieces

## Gynaecologist turned Mechanic

A gynaecologist who had become fed up with malpractice insurance and Government paperwork decided to give up practicing medicine.

Hoping to try another career where skilful hands would be beneficial, he decided to become a mechanic.

He went to the local technical college, signed up for evening classes, attended diligently, and learned all he could.

When the time for the practical exam approached, the former gynaecologist prepared carefully for weeks and completed the exam with tremendous skill.



## Riley Photo

I am going through the Country Motor Magazines you sent yesterday. Enjoying the articles. (Going to take a while!)

When I came across the Riley articles I remembered that I have some photos from the National Library's (FAIRFAX GLASS - PLATE Negatives) Link : - <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-157483350>

The papers of the time would have carried articles relating to the images. I will see if I can find anything.

Above motorist Miss Kathleen Howell and Miss Joan Robertson beside a car, NSW 7th August 1931

*John Page*

When the results came back, he was surprised to find that he had obtained a score of 150%. Fearing an error, he called the instructor, saying, "I don't want to appear ungrateful for such an outstanding result, but I wonder if there is an error in the grade."

The instructor said, "During the exam, you took the engine apart perfectly which was worth 50% of the total mark."

"You put the engine back together again perfectly, which is also worth 50% of the mark."

After a pause, the instructor added, "I gave you an extra 50% because you did it all through the exhaust pipe!"

*Sent by Graeme Simpson*

## Austin on Rails

Do you know anything about the attached photograph? asks **Jim Stringer** (UK)

I did send an email to the Sydney Morning Herald, but never received a reply. As I understand it (it was featured in the last VAR (Aus)) it was used to convey the wages along the line. Any help would be gratefully appreciated.

On another matter, my third 'Anthology' is due to be published in July, then I start on putting together the history of the Austin (Heavy) Twelve to coincide with its centenary in 2022. I would appreciate owners of this remarkable car to get in touch if they have a vehicle with a colonial body, who was the coach builder and any information on that.

The book will contain about 15 chapters and will be as comprehensive as possible.

## Australian Chrysler Register

**From: John Schuurman**

[mailto:plymouthpalace@gmail.com]

Some time ago, I started with a data base for all early Chrysler Cars, that at some time touched Australian soil.

The rule was, collect, record and share, the data base was the media to store and record, the sharing of the information was to be done via the **Chrysler Narrator**, all well and good, but the Data base now has close on 600 entries (and growing).

Each 50 entries together with the information require 4 pages that works out to some 480 (240 double sided) that is without names and address which may happen at a later date)

So part (approx.100) of the Register is scheduled to be sent out on about 14th of each month. *For those interested please contact John on the above Email address.*

## Austin 7 Club's 70th

**Bill Sheehan** advised that the Austin 7 Club (Vic) celebrated at their Clubrooms the Club's 70th Anniversary. It included a lot of Sevens on display, professional vocal entertainers, a local FM station broadcast from there all day (including live interviews with Club notables), speeches, tribute to all there Life Members (including himself!), continual food and drinks all day, a huge iced Cake in the form of a Chummy, individual Austin Seven cupcakes, gifts including A7 keyrings with miniature torch, but more importantly catching up with a lot of faces from the past.

1924 Model T Ford sedan. Issue 23 will feature the restoration of a similar car



## Bits & Pieces cont:

Our daughter Karen from Canberra passed this photo on. Those people put a lot of faith in the charabancs brakes! I can't imagine it going much faster than 25mph with all that weight! How many passengers can you count?



**Friday 29, Sat 30 & Sun 31 May 2020**  
**Winton Motor Raceway, near Benalla,**  
**Victoria, Australia**  
**Conducted by the Austin 7 Club Inc**  
**A0003290N with the**  
**assistance of the HMRAV**

More than 400 historic cars, motorbikes and sidecars will compete at Historic Winton on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 at Winton Motor Raceway.

The Historic Winton week-end commences on Friday

29<sup>th</sup> May with the Benalla Historic Vehicle Tour and practice at the raceway. The Saturday program starts with practice laps then car, motorcycle and sidecar races commencing at lunchtime. Sunday is a full day of racing.

Historic displays of about 2,000 vehicles up to the 1980s will surround the track and for the first time, spectators will have entry to the competition paddock included in their gate ticket. A rare feature of this event is that everyone can see the competing race cars, motorbikes and sidecars up close and meet the race teams involved. **Each year at Historic Winton, curated displays of anniversary and featured vehicles**



120 Years	Auburn, Dodge Brothers, Peerless, Pierce Arrow, Swift, Tarrant
110 Years	Alfa Romeo, Morgan
100 Years	Mazda, Salmson, Indian Scout Motorcycle
90 Years	Austin 7 Ulster
95 Years	Invicta
80 Years	Ferrari
75 Years	Bristol, Jaguar, Jeep, Saab
65 Years	Citroen DS
60 Years	Amphicar, Peugeot 404, Vanden Plas
55 Years	Jensen Interceptor
50 Year	Range Rover, Datsun 240z
45 Years	Jaguar XJS
Special Feature	<b><i>Event producer, the Austin 7 Club Inc turns 70 on 19 January 2020 and will celebrate throughout the year.</i></b>

**are on display.** Anniversary cars invited to be on display in 2020 include makes and models shown on the left table

**Advance tickets will be on sale through Ticketebo shortly or link through the [Historic Winton website](#).** Please email [historicwinton@gmail.com](mailto:historicwinton@gmail.com) to be placed on our eNews list or follow [@HistoricWinton](#) on Facebook for news of online ticket release dates.

Camping and ticket packages will also be available online.

### CLASSIC CARS & MOTORBIKES AUCTION

Sunday 23rd February, 2020 (10AM Start) Location : Illawara Highway ,Roberston NSW (inspection Saturday 22nd Feb)  
 INSPECTION: Saturday 22nd Feb. 1pm to 4pm and Morning of Auction 8:30am. Enquiries : Mark 0420 669 672 or Robert 0419 80 20 30 The majority of units are good for restoration and parts . IT IS THE BUYERS RESPONSIBILITY TO INSPECT ALL GOODS No Liability will be accepted for Errors or Mis-Descriptions [CATALOGUE](#) available of over 100 classic cars <http://advanceauctions.com.au/GeneralAuctions.aspx>

**Chrysler products include—Dodge circa 1974 extra cab Pickup Chrysler circa 1926 Imperial Tourer Chrysler 300 Convertible Valiant circa 1972 Town & Country Ute Valiant Ute Chrysler Imperial Airflow Dodge Fargo Van Dodge Fargo Van Humber Sedan Dodge Truck Valiant Sedan Valiant Ute Valiant circa 1978 CL Ute Valiant circa 1975 VK Ute Valiant CL V8 Chrysler circa 1973**



## 1966 VDC Concours Rowville Drive-in Theatre



*'Molti annifa'* i.e.: Many years ago just to be original! There were many vintage cars, just like flowers they flourished and then vanished. I am seated on the damp grass at the Rowville Drive-In Theatre where a gathering of surviving flowers have assembled. The weather is perfect. It is sunny and peaceful if you disregard several noisy excitable comments expelled from occupants of passing vehicles on the adjacent Stud Road. The event is almost over and the depths of the afternoon shadows lie silently creeping away from the sun struck objects. A few of the antique cars, to use an appropriate phrase, are making tracks homeward bound. The remaining majority, though thoroughly inspected and adored remain still while they attract more crowds of spectators.

### I Was a Spectator

Being a spectator at a concours d'elegance one is apt to compare one's own vintage vehicle to the conspicuous selection of meticulously restored cars of the vintage movement. Upon this comparison much to my consternation a realisation came to light – my Austin looked shabby! The Dulux Super Enamel paint work appeared dull, the nickel plating-come-brass looked unimpressive and a dowdy hood hung over the body with the affection of a tea cozy over a teapot. Without any hesitation I abandoned the old grey mare at some distance spot and attached my eyes to more delectable sights.

The judging had two aspects in mind, for two worthwhile trophies. One worthwhile was trophy was awarded to the best restoration, including professionally renovated machines. The second was the Geoffrey Warriner Memorial

Trophy for the most praiseworthy amateur restoration. Although we were honoured by the presence of James Flood's impeccable 1921 Hispano Suiza which won the last concours, it merely acted as an attraction to the event. A penalty had been imposed upon this car to prevent an inevitable repetition of last year's achievement.

The judging was carried out by a team of competent judges, who awarded first prize to Norm McCubbin for achieving

such a high standard on his very fine 1924 Model T Ford tourer. By a narrow margin David Jones's Rolls Royce Silver Ghost of Nareeb fame was runner up.

The Warriner Trophy for the most commendable restoration with the most amount of effort by an individual was taken out of circulation by John Parbery with his delightful, to light car fans, 1923 8/18hp Humber single seater.

While a layer of fine vintage machinery shone on the green grass carefully inspected and chosen words of admiration spoke of their magnificence an unattended array of equally noteworthy shapes were sprinkled on the drab tarmac amongst the speaker boxes of the drive-in.

As I wandered over the undulating surface around the younger generation of automobiles I begrudged the organizers for not permitting these vehicles to park on the mead; to be coloured by the reflections of nature and not opaqued by the dullness of the asphalt.

The denial of this privilege may have been instituted by the promoters, but nevertheless it may have been denoted by the lack of initiative of club members who came along to glance rather than be involved. Perhaps a trophy ought to be awarded to the best vintage car in the spectators sector?

### An account of the VDC Concours I wrote in 1966

"The winner of the fictitious spectator's mug is Mr. Dick Beechy", clap, clap, clap. "Congratulations Dick for maintaining your Standard Six Buick in such beautiful order". As he leaves the stage displaying a wooden mug VDC President George Cox continues. "In second place of merit is Doug Wilson's excellent 4½ litre Bentley and finally Dick McRae's nicely presented Essex Super Six" Applause.

Before I conclude my views of the VDC Concours I must comment on the



number of vintages that appeared on this glorious day to either speculate or spectate. I would estimate that 35 to 40 cars of interest appeared from Barry Gomm's 1909 Aires to a very clean 1934 Hillman Minx 9hp saloon. Very satisfied my sister Sandra and I (*above*) left looking a little weary but impressed that not all the flowers have vanished. We trundled home to the other side of Melbourne to Glenroy in our shabby 12/4. **David**



Nareeb Rolls Royce





*Diatto tourer, 1923 Willys Knight of J Colvin, Noel Cox's 1927 Lancia Lambda 7th Series, Dick McRae's very original Holden bodied 1928 Essex Super Six, below Dick fastening his bonnet, 30/98 Vauxhall of Peter Latreille, a little enthusiast cranking a Model T Ford, beaten by a narrow margin the Nareeb Mansion fame Rolls Royce of David Jones took second place. Morris Oxford tourer just completed only requires a hood, Austin 7 Chummy, Doug Wilson's 4½ Lire Bentley with fabric body*