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Issue 18: July to September 2016

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The B.M.C. Experience



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Photo by Richard McKellar

DRIVER'S SEAT

Watto ready to take the 1928 Morris Minor for a spin.

I hope you like history, because this issue is choc-a-block full of it. With the final instalment on the closure of the Waterloo factory I wanted to introduce a bit of background about Leyland's other Sydney factory at Enfield.

This led to a detailed investigation into the history of Larke Hoskins and, to a lesser extent, Larke, Neave & Carter (which essentially began as an arm of Larke Hoskins, anyway).

That in turn led me right back to the dawn of the Australian motor industry.

When I decided to feature the pre-War Morris Minor (that's me seated in the car, above) that brought up an equally important side of the Morris story: that of SA Cheney in Melbourne.

But I am my own worst enemy sometimes, particularly when it comes to researching these stories. Because so little is already known I try and dig up as many of the facts as I can and this sometimes means chasing around in ever decreasing circles trying to find one elusive but important piece of the puzzle.

I hope that you think it has all been worth it when you read the stories and see some of the little gems I was able to discover, which help flesh out the overall story of what became BMC-Leyland in this country.

Let's face it, that's what this magazine is built up on - a great deal of historical research to flesh out the background of the cars we all love.

I am equally pleased when I get sent stories from other people that clearly have the same interest in historical detail.

This issue has three such stories - about the Midget-based Arkley sports car; the Victor Harbor Land Rover train; and the Wolseley 18/85 converted to run on railway lines in Tasmania, that brought new meaning to the term "Peppercorn Rent".

We've also got a great story on the MG Z-series Magnette and, for something really quirky, Australia's only Austin A35 Pick-up.

Of course I wouldn't be able to bring you any of these stories if not for the support of our advertisers - many of whom have been with us since the beginning. I hope you will support them, as they have supported us.

Producing a magazine is not a cheap affair and getting the advertising dollar is becoming more and more difficult. All the more reason why I appreciate the support of those businesses.

Sadly, we are seeing magazines fall by the wayside quite regularly because of a lack of advertising support (and we could always do with more). Most recently was the withdrawal of the iconic motorsport magazine *Auto Action* from the market at the beginning of May.

Certainly, the economy is not everything we're told and many businesses are struggling. We understand this, but it doesn't make it easy when I sometimes have to chase one or two advertisers for payment - but on the whole they are very good and pay on time.

But just occasionally we get one that simply doesn't pay at all. Someone who thinks, for whatever reason, that the space in the magazine is not worth them paying for. This is only the second time in twelve years of publishing that I have felt it necessary to name such a person - and it is not a decision arrived at lightly, nor without plenty of warning to the person concerned.

So, be warned if you are dealing with Stuart Brown of Ausclassics Restorations from Ballan in Victoria. You may not get what you are entitled to.

That being said, please support all our existing advertisers, so they will continue to support us and I can continue to dig up more great motoring history.

Watto.



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Romsey Quints Bows Out



Bill Tuckey, a motoring journalist of extreme talent passed away on 7 May; aged 80.

Starting out as a crime reporter in the very early 1960s, he was soon in the chair as editor of *Wheels* magazine and changed the face of the automotive industry by introducing the world's first Car Of The Year award in 1963 – an honour that went to the Renault R8.

As his alter-ego, Romsey Quints, he entertained and educated in his humorous yet thought provoking way. In 1982 he predicted that the Toyota Corolla would one day be Australia's biggest selling car – which came true in 2014.



He was the author of 32 books and, with Ray Berghouse and Tom Floyd formed the Chevron publishing company.

A comment from *Wheels* magazine on its Facebook page reads; "It's a travesty that so few words have been written about a bloke who has written millions about what he has seen and done in a jam-packed life of towering adventure. There is not even a Wikipedia entry for William P. Tuckey."

Austin 7's 95th

The 95th anniversary of the Austin 7 is to be celebrated in a national gathering of the model at Toowoomba on 8-13 April next year.

The rally is being organised by the Austin Seven Register of Queensland Inc.

It will conclude on the day before the start of the annual Austins Over Australia rally, which will be held in Ipswich over Easter. However, the two are separate events.

Entries received before 30 September this year will be at a discounted rate. Entries close on 30 November.

For full details or to enter the event, contact John Que on home 07 3396 0882, mobile 0409 893 305, or email to: jque@bigpond.net.au



MG Oz in Disarray

MG's re-launch in Australia has been postponed again, and the company is in disarray.

Following the debacle with the previous attempt to re-enter the market in 2014, with only 6 cars sold, SAIC in China took over the distributorship directly.

However, information from its Australian arm has not been forthcoming and the re-launch, which was planned for March this year, is on hold - though a new date does not appear to have been set.

Although this magazine was told over a year ago that the 2014 models in storage would not be dumped onto the market, they are now being sold through various used car dealerships in Sydney.



2014 MGs in storage in 2015.

World's Most Expensive Moke - Sold!

There is no doubt values of the humble Mini Moke have been increasing out of all proportion lately, but one sold at auction recently in Europe has set a new record.

An as-new Cagiva Moke, built in Portugal in 1993 and one of the last made, with only 1,833km on the clock, sold at the Sotheby's Monaco sale on 14 May - for a staggering €50,400 (about AU\$76,900).

Mybe it's time I took another look at my Moke's insurance valuation.



P76 Off To Defend P2P Title

Photo by Gerard Brown (www.gerardbrown.co.uk)



At the time of writing, it is only a few days before the 2016 Peking To Paris Motor Challenge kicks off and we will eagerly be following the progress of Matt Bryson and Gerry Crown in their Leyland P76.

This crew, with the same car, won the event outright in 2013, which we covered in detail in Issue 7.

We will be cheering them on from a distance, but we will also be barracking for the English crew of Paul and Chris Hartfield, in their 1275cc 1972 Austin Mini. Realistically, the Mini doesn't have a chance for victory, but to just complete this tortuous event will be an achievement.

The rally will start in Beijing on 12 June and finish in Paris on 17 July, travelling through China, Mongolia, Russia, Belorussia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland and France.

The P76 has been completely refurbished mechanically,

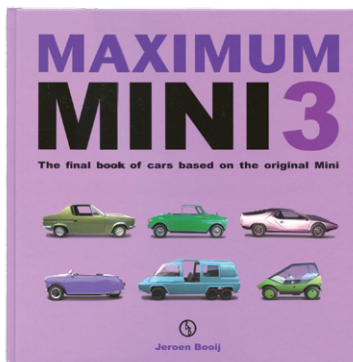
shedding about 100kg and gaining some important engine upgrades. Under new rules, the fuel injection system that the car ran in 2013 has had to be replaced with carburetors, but power output is much the same as before.

It is often said that if it wasn't for the last minute, nothing would get done. In the true spirit of the event, Matt was still working on the P76 up to a few hours before it was shipped from Sydney.

You can keep up with Gerry and Matt's progress via their Facebook group **World Rally P76** or via their blog at worldrallyp76.blogspot.com.au

The event's official website is: www.endurorally.com





Jeroen Booij from the Netherlands has recently released the third and final book in his Maximum Mini Trilogy.

The first two books each featured about 50 or 60 Mini-based oddballs and sports cars, giving each a double-page spread and detailed history.

This final volume follows a different, though no less entertaining, process featuring all the cars Jeroen has since discovered but was unable to get the full history, or simply couldn't fit in the previous volumes.

This means a total of 397 more Mini derivatives, from the

truly creative to the downright absurd, get a mention.

Each gets one photo and one or two paragraphs, meaning up to six cars per double-page.

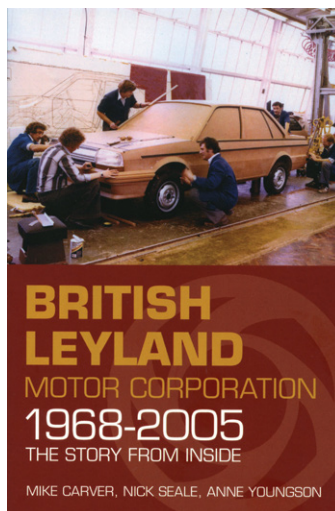
But the book is just as informative, as it introduces some really interesting cars that otherwise might never see the light of day.

The beauty of the book is that you can either read it right through, or flick through and stop at random cars. Presented in alphabetical order, it is easy to find specific cars, but for me the joy was being surprised by what was on each page.

Although Jeroen's first volume was published through a major company, and is now out of print, the second and third volumes were self-published.

Therefore, they can only be bought through his website: www.jeroenbooij.com

Maximum Mini 3 is €50 (AU\$76 at time of writing) plus postage, or you can get both volumes 2 and 3 together for €85 (\$130) pp.



This is the first book written by people behind the scenes in management of British Leyland, with their perspective on the events in the downfall of the company.

Interestingly, one of the key factors that they blame for Leyland's demise and inability to recover was senior management.

But, take their comments in the proper context as each was involved at middle management levels and each, particularly the major

contributor to the book, Mike Carver, was heavily involved in the Honda deal of the early 1980s.

The section on the Honda partnership is probably the most detailed and interesting in the book, for that very reason.

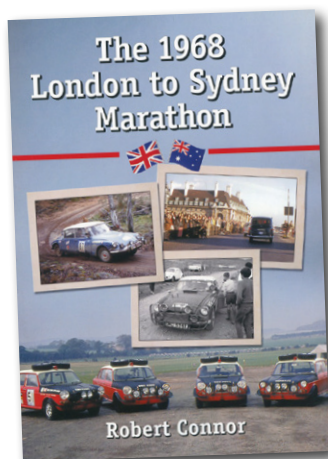
It is also enlightening to read about the back-room negotiations with Honda and just how much input Rover had in the project.

Personally, I think more emphasis could have been put on other aspects of the company in the period of the book, particularly the industrial strife of the 1970s.

But the book is certainly a significant contribution to the history of the motor industry in the UK, and BL-Rover in particular.

It is certainly a must-read for anyone interested in that history and in getting at least part of the management perspective of what went on, and what went wrong.

The book is available through our shop ([Click here](#)) at \$39 plus postage.



This is a book I have been eagerly anticipating for quite some time, and it is certainly not a disappointment.

Robert Connor has spent years researching what for him started out as a passing interest but became, by his own admission, an all-consuming passion.

Robert tracked down and interviewed many competitors from the Marathon, from across the globe, including making a

number of trips to Australia.

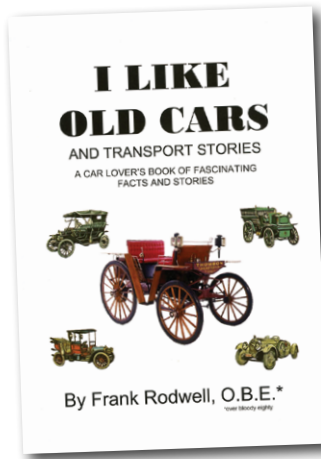
At first I thought the way the book was put together was a bit awkward, as it has a chapter on each section of the rally, followed by the complete story of one entrant through the whole rally, then comes back to the next section, and so-on.

However, by the time I was half-way through the book I realised this was the only way it should have been approached, and it was all the more lively as a result.

This is no sterile history, full of facts and figures - though all the relevant numbers are there - but is as much a detailed account of the individual efforts that went into completing this most gruelling event.

It is a gripping account, that I found difficult to put down, marred only by the low quality of the cover and some of the photos. A true must-read experience.

Available for \$69 plus postage through our shop ([Click here](#))



What an eye-opener is this privately-published little gem from former Snowy Mountains worker Frank Rodwell.

If you think you know everything about the motor industry, overseas or in Australia, then you'd better grab a copy and get enlightened.

The book is full of interesting facts and personal anecdotes that Frank has collected over his more than 80 years. It is presented in a thoroughly

enjoyable and entertaining way and very well written.

As Frank says; "The book is made up in no particular order, as it is not a continuous story. You can start where you please."

You may have heard of the Shearer, the first car built in South Australia, but did you know the first car imported to Australia was a Pender?

Do you know about the Gilgen? How about the McIntosh? - both Australian cars reportedly built in the early 1880s.

Frank lists around 170 makes of car built here before the first Holden of 1948.

Every enthusiast with an interest in the Australian motor industry should grab a copy of this book. It is available only from Frank, for \$30 plus \$15 postage. Clubs can buy 24 at a time for \$20 each plus postage.

Contact Frank via email at: frankrodwell@gmail.com for details or to order your copy.

Peter Manton's Mini

By Greg Coates.



Inset: colours on the door frame are like rings on a tree.



Photo by Autopics

Richard emulating a famous photo of Manton from 1970.

Brent intermittently between 1972 and 1974. It was given a freshen up in 1976, with a rebuild of the original Manton engine and conversion to dry suspension. Thankfully Brent had the foresight to keep all of the original parts used by Peter during his ownership.



In 2012, I managed to track down Brent, who was residing in America. A dialogue began and a mutual appreciation for Minis and engineering led to a friendship and understanding. Meanwhile, Brent had been following the restoration I undertook on the ex Hopkirk/Foley car which was covered in *BMCE* (Issues 1 to 16).



In February 2016 Brent returned to Australia to inspect the car, trailer and all the parts, which had been stored since 1978. Shortly thereafter, he contacted me and offered me the purchase of them all, which was both a surprise and delight.



Although not general knowledge, there were a few people who knew about the Mini and where it was, so I wasted no time in getting down to Melbourne with my dad, Richard, and bringing it home.

The car is in amazingly original and complete condition. Comparisons with photos from a road test in *Sports Car World* in December

1970, and others from the day, show the car to be genuine and unmolested.

I am currently restoring the John Lungren Minisprint, after which I will be undertaking a sympathetic restoration of the Manton Mini. That should begin in about twelve months or so and will be followed through the pages of this magazine.

Peter Manton's last Improved Production racing Mini appeared in January 1969, with aluminium doors, bootlid and bonnet and wide wheel arch flares. It was fitted with a 1293cc engine, with all Manton's usual tricks – he would carry many fabricated parts over from his previous race cars to the new car, to save development time.

The car was also fitted with 10" x 6" Minilite magnesium alloy wheels, a straight-cut gearbox, and ZF limited-slip differential.

Jim McKeown, Norm Beechey and Peter Manton made up the Neptune Racing Team, which in 1968 became the Shell Racing Team (Shell owned the Neptune brand).

In 1968-9 the team colours were light blue with red and yellow stripes over the centre of the cars. In 1970 the colours changed to all yellow with two red stripes. It is in these colours that the team is best remembered, with Beechey winning the Australian Touring Car Championship in his Holden Monaro.

Manton had sold Manton Motors to James Smith at the end of 1969 and for the 1970 and '71 seasons was sponsored by Lane's Motors. Manton's last race in the Mini was at Warwick Farm on 20 November 1971.

The Mini was sold to Brent Benzie, then an employee of Manton Motors, along with a host of spare parts, a spare racing engine and the original trailer, along with some of Peter's original engineering drawings and an experimental five-port injection system that Lucas had been working on.

Reportedly only two of these injection systems were made, the first going to the BMC works department in Abingdon and the second going to Peter for testing.

As with many of the parts on the cars, the trailer was passed from vehicle to vehicle and the layers of paint on the trailer read like rings on a tree: Neptune blue, then Trident Racing Black, then Shell Blue then Shell Yellow.

The Mini was painted British Racing Green with a white roof and was campaigned by



Two great shots of the Mini at Warwick Farm in 1969 (left) and 1970. Photos courtesy Autopics.

STAR LETTER - Snowy Memories

Frank Rodwell – Cooma, NSW



Thanks so much for your BMC magazine. You are a real professional. I can appreciate the depth of research you have done and it is plain that you love your job.

On the Land Rovers engaged on the Snowy project; you certainly spoke to the right people. I knew and worked with all the folk mentioned although, regrettably, most are no longer with us.

Until his death last year I had known Bert Knowles for more than 65 years. Noel Gough was for a time my next door neighbour. Bill Shaw, who must have died 40 years ago, was a bit of a leg puller and I knew Peter Brewis before he was old enough to have a driving licence. Lofty Les White received the first Toyota because he complained about being cramped in the Rover.

I was employed by the SMA as a Special Commonwealth Police Officer, until I accepted early retirement in 1990, so I got to know the people and what they were doing.

I assisted with the Snowy Museum and recovered the three Rovers and transported

them to the complex. I also restored the Utah Holden ute that is on display, from a complete and utter wreck over a period of more than four years.

David Hewitt's Firefly is mentioned as completely original, but did you know that the safety fire-shield which was designed to fit over the user's head is lined with asbestos?

I remember a photograph of a Land Rover fitted with Ferguson tractor wheels, at Cabramurra, not unlike the one featured on page 59. It was not a success. The ones fitted with DC generators were used by the PR section to screen movies once a week to workers in outlying camps.

The hot-wiring mentioned was used officially by Percy Watson of the Light Transport Pool in Cooma, who was instructed to recover any vehicle he found parked in the shopping centre without authority. He was not popular.

The 850s, 1100s and VWs were used by all and sundry, and I drove them all from time to time.

P76 Memories



Reading my new BMCE and recalled three things about P76s.

First the taxi. I worked for the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the mid-70s and I needed to visit two companies to put them on the mailing list to supply figures to the Bureau. Sometimes this can be done on the phone but sometimes you have to show your face and explain it all.

I went up to Adderley St in West Melbourne to the garage where the cars that belonged to the government lived. To do this job I was given a white P76, brown bench seats, auto and six-cylinder. I was told it was a taxi-spec car.

In the article in *BMCE* it talks about 313 P76's bought by the government as Leyland closed. I presume this was one of them. I took it out to Preston and then out to Sunshine and gave it back about 5.00pm. I wonder if any cars survive in that spec. I think it had rubber mats, not carpets.

20 years later I worked with a gentleman in Dandenong who had two P76V8s. I think his son had another two as well. We went from Dandenong to Warragul in one on the freeway, about 80 km. It was a top of the line car, nice trim, carpets and it was an auto. Lovely to ride in, but I didn't get a chance to drive it.

I was in Sydney when Leyland closed and a mate and I went down there to visit a factory nearby. We got stuck in a traffic jam and as I looked out I could see between the buildings at Leyland's and saw some two-door bodyshells on trolleys. No front mudguards or glass. I think they were Force 7 bodies. What a shame.

George King - Wheelers Hill, Vic.

Short and Sweet

Still a great read. I now know more about BMC/Leyland Australia than when I worked there.

Peter Mohacsi - Bowral, NSW

Stupid Mistake

I stand terribly embarrassed, having made a simple mistake in the news story last issue about the final Land Rover Defender.

On the very first line I called it a Discovery. Further down I called it a Defender, which is of course correct.

I have been duly chastened by one of my friends who is a Land Rover tragic, and now thinks I am a complete dunderhead.

A silly mistake - no excuses.

From One Ed To Another

I finally got around to seeing your Issue 17. It's a really great issue!

Love the Mini LS and the restored Moke - those press test pics with the wheelies are awesome! The Morris Cowley is pretty cool too!

Such a shame about the postage increases! Hope you manage to make it work okay for you.

Karen Drury - Editor, Mini World magazine (UK).

LS Minis & Aus Post

Really enjoyed the article on the Green LS. I remember seeing a few green 998 LSs years ago but they were all in pretty average condition and probably aren't alive anymore.

Feel your pain re: Australia Post. Our car club uses Print Post to send out 200+ A4 size magazines every two months - it's a pretty meaty expense for a not-for-profit club.

David Knight - via Facebook

A Kindred Spirit



Well done Watto, re your editorial regarding postage rate increases!

At lunchtime today (Thurs 2 June) a friend passed to me Issue 17. He had a smug knowing smile on his face. He said that I would not really be interested!

Eventually he passed me the mag, open at pages 20 - 21; Pete's Pride (Your article about Peter Brown of Daylesford, Vic.)

Fab photo coverage, thanks.

This is just to let him know there's a kindred spirit here in Mataberland, Zimbabwe.

If he says his Cowley is 'rough around the edges', mine is rough almost to the middle! - but not quite.

Martin Sanderson - Zimbabwe

REDeX Cars Identified



Many thanks for the articles that appeared in issue 17, Very much appreciated.

On p31 is a photo from the 1954 REDeX Trial that is of interest.

The Austin A30 car 146 was entered by the Austin 7 Car Club of South Australia and crewed by Lloyd Thorpe, Ivan Ayres and Brian Cooper. The A30 was retired in Darwin with engine trouble.

Opposite the A30 is Don Roberts and Bill Edmonds' Vanguard car 22 which finished equal 7th outright. Don Roberts was from Ipswich in Qld and Bill Edmonds owned Hastings Motors in Wauchope NSW, which was a Standard dealer.

The car behind the Vanguard is one of the seven LT15 Citroens that were entered.

Hal Moloney - Beresfield, NSW

Austin A50 Ute Info?

I own a seemingly very rare Austin A50 Coupe Utility. This car has been passed from pillar to post for some time now before I bought it.

To be honest, progress is slow, but this is because I have to make each and every repair panel from scratch and there are a lot of panels to make. Additionally, although many repairs were commenced prior to my ownership, the quality of the majority of these is dubious at best and I have had to cut them out, try to work out what should be there and reconstruct.

I am getting there but it is a challenge. I have to rebuild almost everything from about 6" above the floor down, including some of the chassis members.

I am hoping to find more information about these rare beasts, I have seen only one other example and am aware of another near-restored A50 Ute, one roadworthy and a couple of similar A55 Utes.

I know they were built by PMC at Enfield and I believe they originated as CKD Kits from UK, which were then assembled and converted to Utes here. As far as I know, there were no A50 Utilities built for UK and although there were certainly A55 Utes (more correctly, Pick Ups) built in UK, these were substantially different to the Aussie version, as were the Argenta Pick Ups built in Argentina by Siam di Tella.

If anyone could shed some light on this fascinating car, it would encourage me in the darkest hours of a difficult restoration job!

It is my intention to finish the car and take it to as many shows as I can to share the rarity, together with the history.

If any owners of A50 or A55 Utes are reading, whether your car is complete or just a shell, then I am interested in talking to you and seeing photos of your car. If you have one rotting away in your shed or yard, too far gone to save, then I might be interested in spares.

One thing I am interested in is a PMC badge from the front wing - I may be some way off fitting it, but I would still like to have one!

Simon Stanton-Yeomans Melbourne

vee12eman@yahoo.co.uk

The Under-Rated MO Morris Oxford



I purchased Issue 15 to read about the XJS of Mike Roddy (I'm a Jaguar tragic) and continued to read the rest of the issue when I came across your article about the "MO" Series Morris Oxford.

This brought back memories as it was the first car that my parents had ever owned, and this was March 1952. It was the same colour as shown, purchased from Lanes Motors in Exhibition St, Melbourne and was registered as XK 826.

My father had originally ordered the Austin A40 but the delivery kept on being put back so he bought the Morris with virtually immediate (one week) delivery.

All delivery times for any vehicle were very long, but as my father was a WW1 Veteran who had been made "TPI" in 1939 he was entitled to purchase without Sales Tax and also being placed on the top of the order list. He was required to keep the vehicle for a minimum of two years before he could dispose of it in any way.

The Oxford was definitely a vastly under-rated and under appreciated vehicle. It was much bigger than the A40, had a much bigger boot, rode better, better braked with full hydraulic system and at just under 1500cc had a bigger engine.

XK 826 had a colour coded grille (chromium was in extremely short supply) and we continued with that for about three months before I managed to swap it with a chrome one from a batch of older Morris Oxfords that had been traded.

This batch, about 20 - 30 from memory, were ex-Yellow Cabs. The Oxford was a very popular vehicle with the taxi industry as they had proven to be very reliable and popular with the public.

Typical problems were short tyre life, due to poor quality, and carbon build-up on the cylinder head and valves with the very poor quality of the then Pool Petrol.

However, our car performed faultlessly over the two years that it was owned. During that time it was driven virtually all over Victoria, across to Adelaide and countless trips to Sale, Bendigo, Ballarat, Mildura and Geelong, all on the existing roads of the day. Never once did the vehicle fail to start or break down (apart from my motor sport folly) on the road, not even a puncture; albeit with the then poor quality of tyres.

I had my first competition in motor sport resulting with a holed sump during a rally (I could still drive it home after a canvas and paint patch) and broken axle during a Motorkhana event. On apprenticeship wages I realised that it was a little too expensive to continue.

It was subsequently traded at the end of two years for an FJ Holden which was, apart from the bigger engine, no better than the Oxford and did actually get returned to the dealer twice on a tow truck, due to mechanical break downs.

The Oxford was very much ahead of its time, despite the side valve engine. However, a simple remedy to give a little more performance was to replace the exhaust system with a low pressure system from Len Lukey; including replacing the 7/8" inch tailpipe from the muffler to the rear of the vehicle.

Steel was in very short supply in the UK and any measures that could be taken to reduce the amount of steel used in the production of vehicles was taken; hence the very small tailpipe, resulting in the typical choking of the exhaust systems of the day.

It should also be remembered that the "MO" Series Oxford was to a large degree the basis of the automotive industry in India and in actual fact the latter Series 2 Oxford, albeit with updates, is still in use in India; not only as taxis but also with the various Government Departments.

Bob Showers - Watsonia, Vic.

THE SPECIALISTS

Carwood - Cheltenham, Vic.

Words & photos by Craig Watson



Rob Brewer is a jaguar enthusiast with a love of timber, and his dual personality business provides the best of both worlds.

There is something to be said for sitting behind the wheel of a car with loads of timber all around you. It speaks class and sophistication, and few have done at as well as the British. Rolls Royce, Jaguar, Bentley, Rover, just wouldn't feel the same without the appearance that a tree has been sacrificed for your edification. Even the humble Mini takes a step into the upper classes with a timber dashboard.

But, like a decaying manor house surrounded by an overgrown garden of weeds, a formerly exquisite automobile



shows signs of faded glory when the timber is faded or cracked and the lacquer or veneer begins to flake off.

If you are happy with this "patina" and think it adds "character" to your car, that's all very well, but if you want to restore your car to its former glory, to reignite those feelings of pride sitting behind the wheel, then you need to turn to a true craftsman to ensure a proper restoration.

In these days of mass-production, plastic and disposability, such craftsmen are becoming few and far between. Rob Brewer from Carwood in the Melbourne suburb of Cheltenham is one such craftsman with a passion for cars, especially Jaguars.

A qualifieed master carpenter and

builder, specialising in exhibition displays, Rob bought his business in 1990, for a change of pace, which came about when he bought his first Jaguar. "I was after an XJ and I ended up buying a Mark X off the bloke who owned the business, Phil Carter. It wasn't really what I wanted, but a mate of mine talked me into it. It was a lovely colour of purple with navy blue interior. I wondered what I was doing, but I got it repainted and redid the interior."

"That's how I ended up buying the business. It turned out that Phil was selling up and I figured it combined my love of cars with my love of timber. I was a builder, building banks, and I wanted something a little bit easier", Rob explains. "It's not as easy as I thought it was, but there aren't the frustrations of being a builder, either."

"Phil stayed on with me for a while and showed me what he knew. He was a baker by trade and he couldn't use a hammer. He'd send it out to be veneered, and just spray it. Whereas, with my carpentry background I said, no, we don't pay





Final step is buffing and polishing.

anybody else, we do it all ourselves."

Over the past 26 years, Rob has built up an enviable reputation by not compromising on quality. "That's how my boss taught me when I was an apprentice, that when I was building to do it as if I was doing it for myself. I use the same approach with the cars. I don't like anything to go out the door unless I'm happy with it and that it's something I would put on my own car."

Rob is just as happy doing a Mini, a Jaguar or a Rolls Royce. "I think because I put so much into each car, on the woodwork side I treat them all as equal. We get people say they don't want concours standard, and I say I only do one standard. My name's attached to it."

While Rob does a lot of Jaguars, the biggest job he has done was a Mercedes Grosser limousine. "That will take me three months solid, just working on the Grosser. The last one I did was about \$12,000, but that would be about \$15,000 now. There's not a lot of call for it, but that is a high-end item. Every little curtain track; everything is veneered. So there is double the amount that's in a Mark X or a Mark IX Jaguar."

Rob accepts that the work he does seems quite expensive, but when you see what is involved, the quality of the finished product, and take into account that it is all hand-done, then it balances out.

"People say it's too expensive, but what do you want? It usually takes about six to eight weeks to do a car from start to finish", he says. "When you're looking at veneer, even with holes in it, is about \$120 a square metre, and you'll probably use about four square metres in a car. Every veneer batch



Photo courtesy Rob Brewer



Photo courtesy Rob Brewer

is different, because it's a different tree. You can't just keep it and match it to the next job, so most of it gets thrown away. Then there's the glue, the lacquers and everything else. If people are going to go on price, that's what they're going to get, something made to a price."

"There's very little money in it these days. Everything's a challenge, because it's all hand-done. Sometimes mistakes happen; a piece can get caught in the buffer in the blink of an eye and there's three weeks' work gone. Because everything is a matching set, you've got to throw the other half away; scrape it all off; start again. Phil said I would never make any money out of it, because I'm too fussy."

Wedding Hire Cars

Perhaps it's just as well there was a second side of the business, with Jaguar wedding cars for hire which is ably run by Rob's wife Debbie. "There's always been two sides of the business, so the wedding car hire service came with it", Rob explains. "I bought another and then another, then I started wrecking some and keeping the best out of what I was wrecking and built my fleet up."

"I've got seven Jaguars now. There are a '63, '64 and '65 Mark X; 1974 XJ6 Series II, '76 Series II – they're both black. I had them painted black for the weddings. And we've got two DS 420 Daimlers, which were made by Jaguar – one white, one black. The black one was actually the President of Nauru's car. That took me three years to restore and it was used in the film about Kerry Packer."

"There's no preference to black or white cars for weddings; it's 50/50. That's why we've got half our fleet in white and half in black. Some people will order one white, one black: especially if they're Collingwood supporters. We've done weddings where they want the two limos and it doesn't matter they are different colours. Usually the bride will take the white one and the groom will take the black one."

"The black ones are booked because the white of the dress will stand out against it, but the groom tends to get lost. Whereas

the white ones are Old English White, slightly cream, so a stark white dress will still stand out against them."

Rob also has another car that he was using for weddings, but it is now for sale. "That's pretty special. It's the only one in the world that we know of. It is reported to be Sir William Lyons' limousine, but the Jaguar Trust disputes it. I know that it's one of four that were made from the Mark X. It's quite a story as to how that car came about, but I'm the fifth owner of it here. It used to be maroon, but I didn't know and painted it white for the wedding business. Les Hughes (editor of *Jaguar magazine*) has researched it for me and he said there is a good possibility it was William Lyons' limo."

As an aside, Rob recently had 40,000 counter-sunk raised-head stainless steel slotted screws made up. Why? "A lot of early cars of all makes and models have them and the 'c' cup washers but they are very hard to find, so I had them made."

If you would like to know more about restoring your car's interior timber, or find more about the Mark X for sale, call Rob on (03) 9553 0483 or visit the website at www.jagsrus.com.au

To find out more about the wedding cars for hire, call the same number or see www.weddingcarhire.com.au



Photo courtesy Rob Brewer



Photo courtesy Rob Brewer

Possibly William Lyons' car: now for sale.



Eye Witness to History

Compiled by Col Gardner

The National Archives of Australia holds a huge number of images that document Australia's history and development.

Some of these photographs can place BMC/Leyland vehicles and their antecedents at work and leisure in contemporary historical urban and rural settings.



On display at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 1960 were EX 219, an experimental Austin-Healey Sprite (actually a re-engined and rebadged EX179), and the experimental MG EX 181. They were both fresh from record-breaking stints at Bonneville salt flats in Utah in late 1959. Among other class records, EX 219 completed 12 hours at an average speed of 138.75 mph (223.30 km/h) while EX 181 set a new 1501-2000cc class world land speed record of 254.91 mph (410.23 km/h). NAA C500_S3981 Barcode 8446152.



Brisbane, corner of Adelaide & Albert Sts., 1959 and two of BMC's range are in view: a Morris Oxford Series II, and an Austin A50/55 utility. The Austin ute was built by the Pressed Metal Corporation in Sydney using bodies of their own design (see story on p60). NAA A1200_L32418 Barcode 11711279.

BIRTHRIGHT



Words and photos by Chris Martin.

Chris Martin has a unique connection with his car, that goes back to the day he was born, even though he's only owned it for a couple of years.

The address on my UK birth certificate is "Caravan, Arkley Garage, Arkley, Barnet". I tell people I am officially a Gypsy under British law (which is probably true anyway) but the real reason for living in a caravan was that my parents were having a new house built nearby.

There was still a shortage of housing in Britain after WW2 and, as they knew the Morris family who owned the garage and the paddock behind, they bought a caravan and paid a weekly rent. They even had running water connected. Luckily, it was summer and the weather not too cold.

The garage back then was the usual two petrol pumps and one mechanic, offering general service, until John Britten bought it in the mid-1960s.

I grew up in Arkley, near Barnet just north of London, and while still a teenager at school I had a Saturday job at the garage while it was owned by Britten, a well-known sports car racer of the time. He expanded the garage, selling all kinds of sports cars: MGs, Morgans, TVRs and others. I got to clean cars all day, except when I was chosen for other dirty jobs.

Britten dominated his class in the ModSports category, in initially a yellow Lenham-bodied Austin-Healey Sprite, and later a much modified orange MG Midget. His team also ran a second orange Midget for an Irish lady named Gabriel Konig and even had a pair of custom-built MG Midget pickups as tow cars for the racers – painted orange, of course.

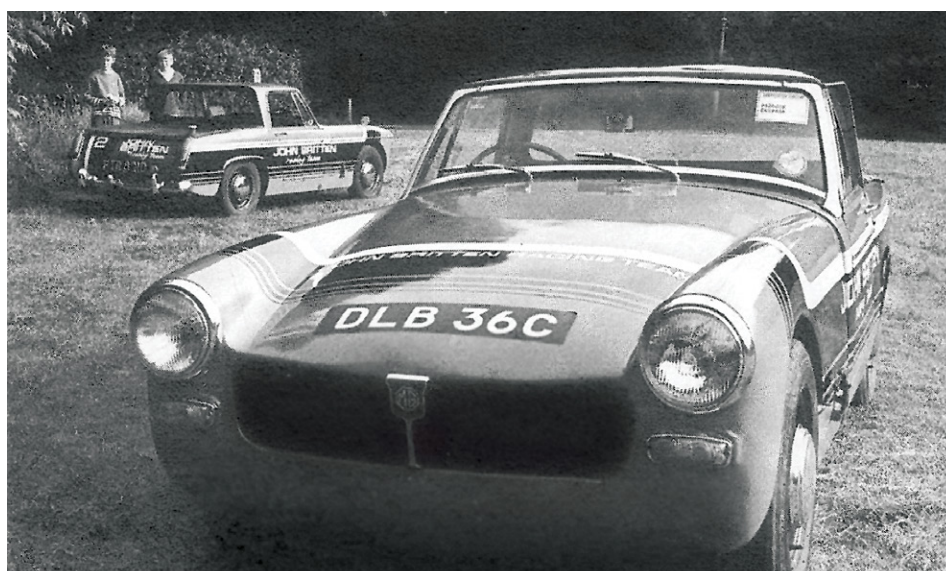
In late 1969 Britten designed a special conversion based on the Austin-Healey Sprite / MG Midget, which he called the Arkley SS.

I had a hand in mixing fibreglass and

resin to mould the first few made, but then John decided they would probably sell okay, so the moulds were sent out to Lenham; a sub-contractor already known for various fibreglass mouldings and his racing MGs and Healeys.

From those messy beginnings did my stellar race car building career begin! Through the years I later worked on all types of race cars including Formula Fords, F3, F3000 and IndyCars, then twelve years in Formula One, until I relocated to Australia in 2003.

Britten sold complete Arkley cars, or kits



John Britten's Midget pick-ups. 14 y.o. Chris Martin is the left of the two boys.



John Britten switched from racing Midgets to a specially-built Arkley in the 1970s.

of parts for customers to make their own. It is thought they sold about 1,000 before he sold the business in the mid-1980s. He went on to build up the very successful Tecno chain of camera shops and then even owned the Brands Hatch circuit in partnership with Jonathan Palmer, before he died in 2009.

The original moulds are now owned by Peter May, who used to work for Britten, and I believe the parts are still available from him.

I always promised myself one day I should try to find an Arkley, but when I put the word about in Australia I was told that there was only one known in the country. I contacted the owner in Sydney, but the car is in parts in his shed awaiting restoration and he does not plan to sell.

Then, a couple of years ago my mate Paul Unicomb, who is a local member of the Sprite Club, told me there was another one advertised for sale in *Sprite Torque*, the club magazine. I called the number and spoke to the owner; a retired mechanic.

The car was based on a 1971 MG Midget, with 1275cc engine, and I was told everything had been rebuilt and it seemed to be okay. It was located at Tweed Heads on the Queensland border; some 950km north of my home at Shellharbour, south of Wollongong.

After asking a lot of questions, during a couple of lengthy phone calls, we reached a deal. I flew to the Gold Coast, bought the car and drove it home. That wasn't as easy as it sounds, though. I got caught in a heavy downpour just north of Grafton; with the top down!

I stopped overnight in Coffs Harbour and made an early start the next day, which luckily was sunny again. Then there were the racing bucket seats the previous owner had fitted; they look good and suit the car, but are not too comfortable for driving such a distance. The result was a sore and bruised bum!

Even less fun was the evening rush hour through Sydney, which slowed me down for a couple of hours. My little Arkley started overheating and I also discovered a faulty earth in the headlight wiring, which caused a few problems, but I eventually made it home. Job done!

After getting it home, with only a few weeks registration left on it, I checked online and found the registration ARKLEY was available, so I coughed up a few hundred dollars for that finishing touch.

Even with its name boldly shown front and back many folks still ask; "what is it?"

I joined the Sprite Club, and have been on a few local runs with no problems, but generating many questions from the curious. Kids point and usually laugh when I drive by, and I have had a few calls like "nice car mate" from passing drivers.

Mechanically, the car seems to have been well restored and maintained, but I have had to do a few minor jobs on it. I have had the radiator re-cored, because it did run hot in traffic. A modern core is apparently a lot more efficient and now, even thrashing up around the Southern Highlands on a hot day could not get the gauge above the 'Normal' mark.

I also tidied up a few minor details. I replaced a busted door check strap and fixed the intermittent earthing that was causing the headlights and direction indicators to do their own thing.

I have no intention of preparing the car



Britten's racer with a line-up of Arkleys and other cars for sale at the garage.



The Arkley as found in the UK in 2006.



Alex Robertson prepared it to race.





Chris and wife Karen enjoying the car.



Chris with the Arkley as he bought it, with its original NSW plates.

to show standards; I am happy with the appearance just as it is.

I may treat it to a new set of carpets, and Paul gave me a cover for the soft-top (thanks, mate) for which I needed to replace the screwed-down chrome strip at the back of the hood with a row of Tenax fasteners. However, there would be no point in fitting a stereo!

A couple of slim 'pancake' air filters stopped the rattling of the original two green, saucepan types hitting the tight curves of the lower bonnet. A cartridge-type oil filter mod' and a new choke cable have been cheap and easy additions for convenience. One of those fishtail exhaust pipe extensions was also added, to prevent sucking the fumes in the back of the car and making us feel a bit odd after ten minutes' driving.

There has been one hiccup. When I got stuck in slow moving traffic entering the 'All British Day' at the King's School near Parramatta in 2015, the car stalled a few times. I put it down to running hot in the traffic, but to be safe I left early to avoid the congestion getting out of the school.

All was good for the next hour's driving, until I started the descent down the Mount Ousley road to the south coast, when the little 1275 started to accelerate even with my foot off the pedal. A quick dive into the left 'Slow Trucks Lane', then cut the ignition to pull off to the side and I found one of the two throttle return springs had broken off the locating hooks on the exhaust

manifold. Could this have been the cause of the earlier stalling, allowing the SUs to be opening too rich under vacuum but not showing as a real problem until the first real downhill run?

Anyway, I happened to have a pair of pliers under the seat (prepared to fight with those Tenax fasteners in the event of rain) and managed to form a new hook on the end of what remained of the broken spring; after which I drove home running smoother than ever, albeit with a burnt thumb.

I got a call the next day from Paul saying I had done the right thing leaving early; "the traffic was worse getting out, but I have a trophy for you". Eh? A trophy? Yes, apparently I was voted Best Modified or Rebodyed Sprite/ Midget.

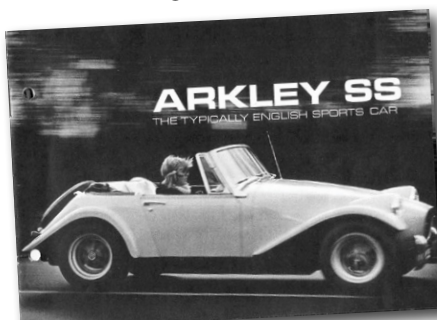
Okay, big deal you may say, but the Sprite Club had really excelled in displaying over 100 cars on the day, and many were 'modified', so I was pretty chuffed.

Since buying it, I have found out a little of how it came to Australia, but nothing of the earlier history in Britain or who originally did the conversion.

It was bought in London, having sat for many years, and imported in a container, with a few other sports cars, in 2006 by Alex Robertson. A keen MG racer, he planned to race the Arkley. After deciding to stick with his already competitive Midget, he sold it on to the next owner, who sold it to me in 2014.

I have also made contact with the owners of two more in Australia: one in Canberra and one in Adelaide. There have also been rumours of another in the Melbourne area, apparently based on a late 'rubber bumper' 1500 Midget. I wonder if any of the readers know more about that one, or even others?

Over 12,000 miles from home, and 45 years since its birth, in the same garage where I was born (a little earlier), this little red rarity, my wife Karen and I are happily having fun together.



The brochure.

Seven Year

Words and photos by Craig Watson.

A 1950s saloon car might not be everybody's idea of the ultimate MG, but the style and grace of the ZB Magnette proved very alluring to Rod Smith, who spent seven years restoring his; with a six-year hiatus getting in the way.



Rod Smith is a classic car enthusiast, who has a broad range of tastes in makes and models, eras and styles.

"It probably goes back to the first few cars I owned", he revealed. "The first one was a 2½ lt Riley, followed by four Peugeot 203s, followed by another Riley, then things like a Cortina GT and Triumph

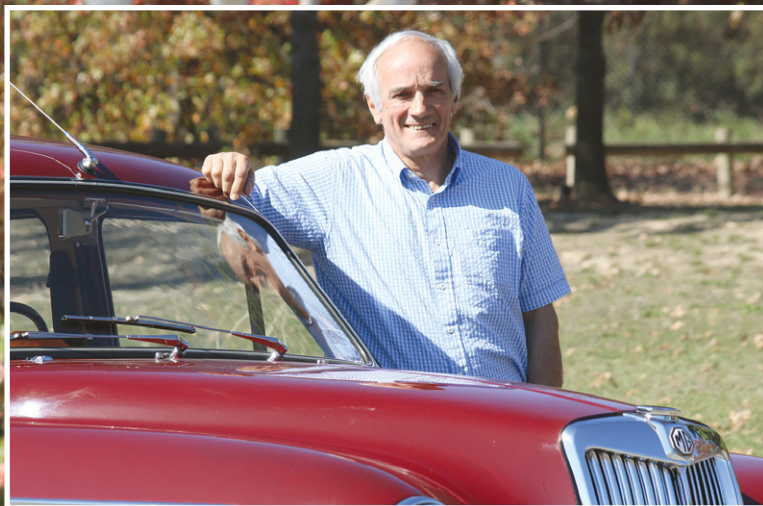
TR3A. I just like a whole variety of cars. I've probably had around 70 cars since I've been driving."

Then came a string of French cars, particularly Renault and Peugeot, and he is currently restoring a 1950s Citroen. "One day I was talking with a friend of mine who had an MG TC and he said, 'oh you should

get yourself a Magnette'. I started reading about them, then went down and saw one that was advertised, and that was it."

Rod was immediately taken by the styling and bought the first one he looked at, a 1958 ZB model. "Yes, it really was. Because it was a total wreck, it was about a thousand dollars, I think. It ran; I drove it

Hitch

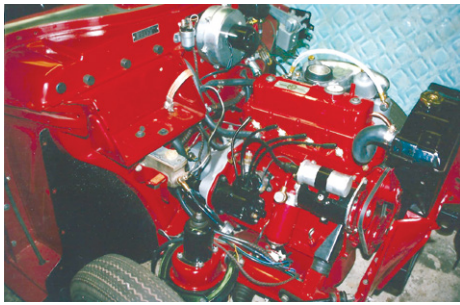


up and down the fellow's driveway, but the interior was totally stuffed and the exterior, too. There was a lot of rust."

"But I thought it was a good restoration project and should only take me twelve months", he laughed. "It took me seven years, and about three times my estimate of price. But it's always like that."

In fact, Rod is only counting the time he actually worked on the car, and not the six-year break in the process, as he explained. "I actually started all enthusiastically, as you do, ripping bits off. It's quite easy taking a car apart, as you know, and in the first twelve months I was really enthusiastic. I did a lot of work on the woodwork inside and put all those parts aside."

"Then for some reason I left it for a few weeks and that turned into a few months, which turned into six years. So, it was sitting in the garage there, just gathering dust, and in the end you could hardly see the car, because I used to just chuck stuff in it and on top of it, just as storage. And after six years I thought I've got to either sell it as is, which it was a basket case, or I've got to get stuck into it again."



The Midgette coming together during the second phase of the restoration.

"My wife, Nicky, was going overseas to see her parents, for about five weeks over summer, and I thought this is a good opportunity, so I decided to get stuck into it. I stripped it all and spent eight to ten hours virtually every day and by the time Nicky came back she didn't recognise the car. There was still a long way to go, but all the body was cleaned, stripped, and the engine bay painted."

"Then it was another six years. I bought it in 1989. It was one year, then a big gap, then six years to finish it. So about thirteen years I'd owned it by the time it was finished."

Rod knows little of the early history of his Midgette, but believes it was originally sold new in Queensland, without any factory options, then spent some time in NSW, before being brought to Victoria.

Although Rod had restored a number of cars previously, this remains his only MG and he considers it easier than many of the others in some respects. "In some ways it was simpler, because there are more bolt-on panels, and things like that. But otherwise, it was fairly similar, I suppose."

"I had no trouble finding all the mechanical parts, because it's basically MGA, most of it, but body parts are difficult to find. Luckily, this was probably 90-95% complete; apart from the rust."

"There was a fair amount of rust in the usual places: in the front floor, driver's side, over all the doors and the bottom of the rear guards, and a bit on the front guards as well. All the usual places. Oh, and it needed new sills welded in. That took a lot of work. I happened to get the sills when I was in England, and got those sent over. All the other panels were repaired."

Although not a trained panel beater – Rod was a primary school teacher before his retirement in 2008 – he has a lot of experience with panel work from his earlier restorations, but painting a car completely was fairly new to him, as he continued.

"I'd done a few bits and pieces of cars when doing them up, and I did one little Renault completely, which was okay, but I just learnt as I went along, really. As you know, it's all in the preparation. That's where a lot of time is spent, getting it right, getting it smooth."

Rod also did all the repair work to the timber dashboard and door caps, but had the interior trim taken care of by a professional; Peter Boscoe from Donvale in Melbourne's north-east. "I can't do upholstery," Rod admitted, "but I'd like to learn one day."

The other job that Rod farmed out was the engine, though not for lack of ability. "I actually priced all the bits to do a complete rebuild and then I went down to MG Workshops and said, 'well how much would you charge to do the whole thing, if I brought the engine to you?' And it really wasn't that much different, with the price they could get the parts for and the price I had to pay, and in the end I said, 'oh, you just do the whole lot'."

"I thought I'd let the experts do it. I mean, it's a simple engine to rebuild. But, in a way I'm glad that's happened, because we've driven it all over Australia and its never let us down. It's been fantastic."

"The best thing about the car was probably the completion of it", Rod laughed. "No, the best thing really is the style. I like the look of it. All the leather and the walnut on the dashboard and so on."

But driving it would have to come a close second, as he enthused. "To drive, it's really nice. It really handles well and rides well. But it's noisy, especially on the highway doing 110km/h. I'm looking for a higher ratio diff, just to lower the revs a bit."

"I've tried to keep the car as standard as possible, because I like originality, and the only things different, for safety, are retractable seatbelts, flashing indicators and radial tyres. That's about all, really. All the rest is pretty standard."

"Everything is reliable. It just goes and



ZA/ZB Midgette RHD Exports

Model	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958*	Totals
ZA	734	1,726	940			3,400
ZB			187	633	319	1,139
Varitone			13	226	255	494
Total RHD Exports						5,033

From these: 6 were ZB with Manumatic clutch
15 were Varitone with Manumatic clutch.

* Production ceased in December 1958,
but some sales continued into 1959

Information from MG Saloon Cars:
from the 1920s to the 1970s by Anders Ditlev Clausager



Heater was standard on the Magnette.



Born in 1911, Gerald Palmer was in his late 30s when he designed the ZA Magnette.

By The Numbers

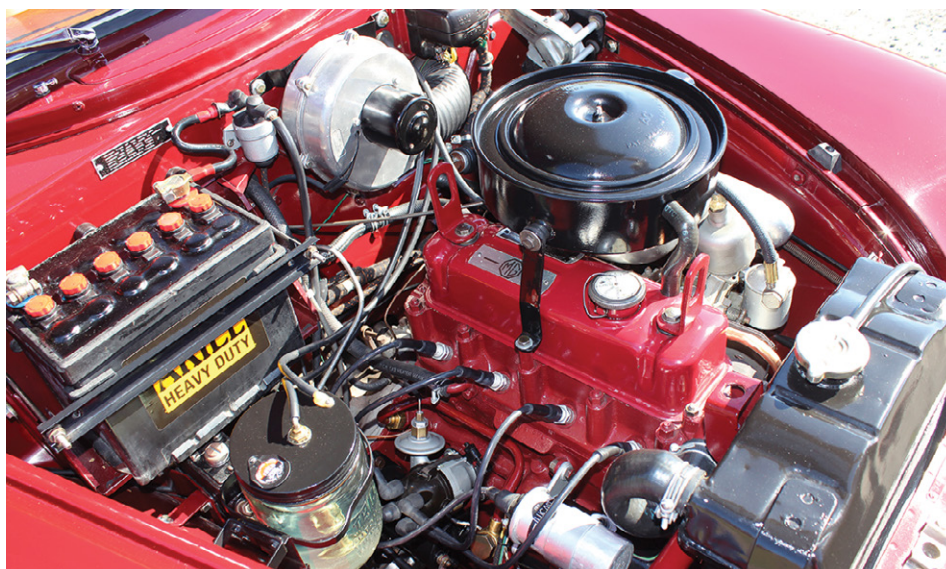
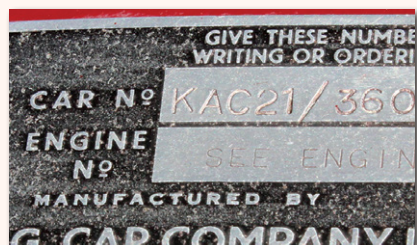
Although released after the formation of BMC, the MG Magnette uses the earlier Nuffield coding system of identification. The car type, or chassis prefix, is listed as KA, for both ZA and ZB types, where K is for MG Magnette and A is for four-door saloon.

The third letter refers to the original colour. Our feature car is C, for Dark Red. On the Varitone model, this letter refers to the upper colour, while a fourth letter refers to the lower colour.

The first number refers to the build specification, where 2 is for RHD Export.

The second number refers to the paint type, where 1 is for Synthetic.

Our feature car is therefore KAC21, followed by the car number. Note, car numbers started at 501, so the last car, number 37100, was the 36,600th produced. Numbers did not revert to 501 with the launch of the ZB Magnette, or the Varitone, so the first ZB was car number 18577, while the first Varitone was number 18708.



goes and goes. I don't drive it that many times, it's on club plates, obviously, but when I do go it's usually interstate once a year."

To that end, Rod and Nicky have driven the car to MG Nationals rallies in Queensland, NSW twice, Tasmania twice and Adelaide, but felt Perth this year was a bit far in the car.

Despite being eagerly driven, the car has won a multitude of trophies, as Rod admitted with some modesty. "It's won quite a few, yes. I think it's won the Nationals about five times, in my class, and the local MG day, which we've just had at Flemington, and I've won that about eight times. Sometimes there are not many cars in our division, though, usually only two or three or four."

But what the class lacks in numbers it usually makes up for in quality and everyone agrees Rod's Magnette is a worthy winner.

Reviving a Name

Generally speaking, the numbers are low in the class because, frankly, the Z-series Magnette is not a particularly popular model. Most people today, as in the past, consider MG to be a sports car company, even though throughout its history it almost always made saloons.

This feeling was apparent, particularly in the motoring press, when the car was first shown at the 1953 London Motor Show, alongside the MG TF Midget (see last issue).

"M.G. fans could scarcely decide which aspect of this situation offended them most", wrote F Wilson McComb in *M.G. by McComb*; "the fact that an obvious Wolseley was being presented as an M.G.; that the sacred name of Magnette should be revived for a saloon (quite forgetting that the first Magnettes of all had been saloons); that a closed M.G. should be given a 1½ litre engine when the sports

car, which so urgently needed one, still had to make do with its 1¼ litre. The correspondence columns of the motor magazines were filled for quite a few weeks after the doors closed at Earls Court."

By point of explanation, the Magnette, in its new guise designated ZA, was essentially a re-badged Wolseley 4/44, but there is far more to it than that, as is often the case.

An all-new design

Gerald Palmer had worked at MG before the war, but moved to the small Jowett company in 1942, where he designed the popular Javelin, released in 1946.

Palmer was coerced back to the Nuffield Group in 1949, with a brief to design a new range of saloon cars for MG, Riley and Wolseley. MG was considered the most needy, as its Y-type saloon was a pre-War design, though not actually released until 1947, and was already considered out of date.

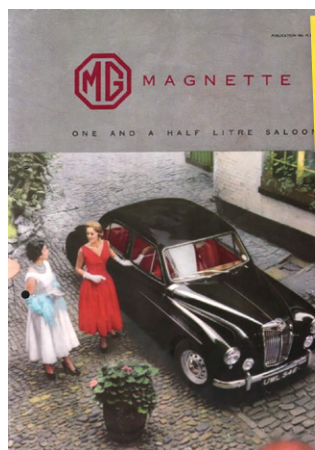
To save time and development costs, the cars would share a basic design, with some minor changes on outer panels, and as many common components as practical. The MG and Wolseley versions were to use MG's XPAG engine from the YB and TC/TD series, while the slightly larger Riley version, the RMH, used the Riley "Big Four" 2½ litre engine.

However, in a late change of policy following the BMC merger in 1952, it was decided that the Wolseley and MG should use the new Austin-designed 1489cc





Publicity photo of the ZA Magette.



B-series engine. As they were nearly ready for release, this would require considerable redesign in the engine bay, which would in turn postpone the release by another year.

As Malcolm Green explained in *MG: Britain's Favourite Sports Car*, "The rational course of action at the time was to go ahead with the programme to build the Wolseley 4/44, with the engine redesignated XPAW, while delaying the release of the MG version until it was ready to accept the bigger engine."

So it was that the Wolseley 4/44 was released at the 1952 Motor Show, while the MG ZA appeared the following year alongside the TF – the reasons for that car's appearance being explained in detail last issue.

While outwardly the MG looked very similar to the Wolseley, the engines and interior appointments were sufficient to differentiate the cars.

The MG also sat slightly lower than the Wolseley and, in deference to its sporting heritage, had a floor-mounted gear selector; while the Wolseley made do with a column shift.

The MG also featured twin 1¼" SU carburettors, as befitted a sports saloon, with the 1489cc B-series engine producing a reasonably energetic 60bhp, which for the day was quite respectable. The Wolseley's single-carburettor 1250cc XPAW engine produced a leisurely 46bhp.

The Wolseley had effectively a split bench front seat, while the MG came with contoured bucket seats, with all leather trim. Both featured timber dashboards and door cappings, but where the Wolseley had a central speedo, the MG's was directly in front of the driver.

While many of the outer body panels differed, the two cars shared a similar unitary understructure. The ZA was the first unitary, or monocoque, car – that is, without a separate chassis – produced by MG.

While many MG enthusiasts were disappointed with the company's 1953 offerings, as amply quoted by McComb, the general public took to the new Magette, priced at £914 17s 6d, including tax (some £74 cheaper than the MG YB it replaced), and by early 1955 it was outselling the TF by a ratio of six to one.



Anti-dazzle dipping mirror in all Z-series.

Two Minor Facelifts

Introduced at the 1956 Motor Show in October, were two new model Magnettes – the ZB and the Varitone.

Although the B-series engine had been constantly revised and improved while in production, with better oil circulation, double valve springs and improved manifolds, with the release of the ZB Magette also came 1½" carburettors, an improved cylinder head and higher compression ratio, which produced an extra 8bhp, but also greatly improved the torque. Combined with a higher ratio final drive, the ZB was an altogether better touring car.

Appearance wise, there was very little to differentiate the ZB from its predecessor; the most notable being a change in the chrome side strip over the front wheels. On the ZA, this followed the curvature of the



ZB's 1½" carbs helped lift engine to 68bhp.

Magnettes in Motorsport

With the formation of the BMC Competitions Department, often referred to as the Works team, in 1955 there was much trial and error to get the team competitive and to find the right range of cars to enter into various events.

Part of the reasoning behind the Comps Dept was the marketing value that could be gained from victories or good placings, and classes were considered equally important as an outright win.

The very first event for the Works was the 1955 Monte Carlo, and three Magnettes were entered – following

the pre-War MG tradition of naming the team the Three Musketeers, with the cars named Aramis, Athos and Porthos.

However, the Magnettes were underpowered for their weight, and not adequately prepared, and proved to be uncompetitive, although all three finished the event.

But limited success did come fairly quickly, with Holt/Brookes being first in class in the 1955 RAC Rally, while Pat Moss/Ann Wisdom were second Ladies in the 1956 Dieppe Rally, but in that year's Tulip Rally Nancy Mitchell/Doreen Reece were excluded from the results, due to

running with illegal aluminium panels, though no fault of the drivers.

The Magette's best sporting achievements came in touring car racing. Dick Jacobs was first in class, leading a Magette class 1-2-3, in the BRDC International Production Car race at Silverstone in 1955. In the inaugural year of the British Saloon Car Championship in 1958, Alan Foster drove Jacobs' Magette to first in class and fifth outright.

Magnettes continued to compete regularly, with many class successes, and today a small number can still be seen competing at historic race meetings.



Slightly dished steering wheel and under-dash parcel shelf were features of the ZB.

front of the wheel arch to match up with the front bumper.

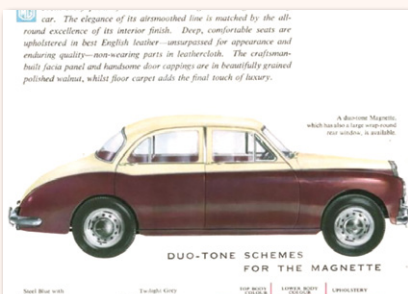
However, on the ZB, the strip was straight along its length, starting just ahead of the top of the front wheel arch and extending further along the door than on the ZA. Otherwise, the bodies were virtually identical.

Internally, there was a full-length under-dash parcel shelf, revised dashboard, a slightly dished steering wheel, courtesy light, and the previous map pocket was deleted.

The Varitone introduced two-tone paintwork, with the upper part of the body, bonnet and bootlid painted a contrasting colour from the lower part of the body.

Duo-tone or Varitone

With the release of the ZB at the 1956 London Motor Show, a new brochure showed a two-tone variant – described as “duo-tone”. However, this was very soon replaced, possibly even by the time of the motor show, by a second brochure that renamed the two-tone version as Varitone. While both terms could be used, Varitone is recognised as the correct designation.



The two colours were separated by a chrome trim strip from front to back, and the simple chrome side flash of the regular ZB was removed.

The only practical difference with the Varitone was a larger, wrap-around rear windscreen. The bodies were all built at Pressed Metal in Cowley, before being shuttled across the road to the Morris factory for painting, then trucked to Abingdon for final assembly. All the bodies arriving at Abingdon were the same specification, but those to become Varitone models had the larger opening for the rear windscreen cut out at the Abingdon factory.

In an ironic twist, some Varitone models were sold with a single paint colour, but retained the chrome trim line.

For an additional £50, buyers could opt for the new Manumatic clutch - a unique system that still used a gearstick to change gears, which also activated an automatic clutch.

The Manumatic system had early problems and was never popular, particularly due to its complexity and the difficulty of dealerships being able to identify problems when they occurred.

Only 494 ZB Magnettes are recorded, with most going to North America.

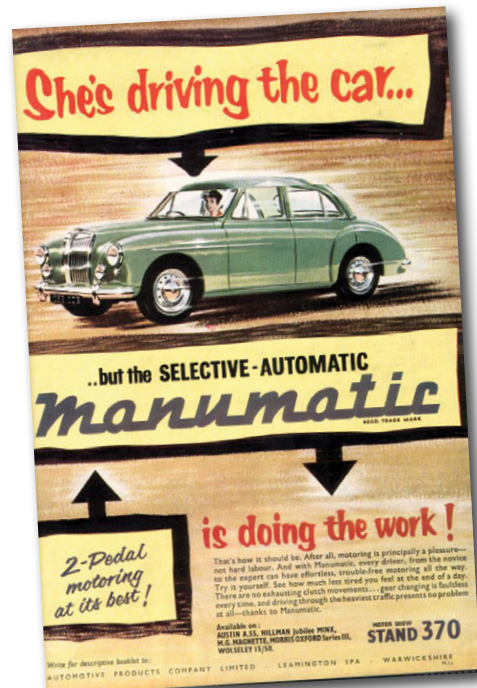
Buyers who had bought the Manumatic, but were dissatisfied, could have a standard clutch retro-fitted by their local dealership, but at an additional cost of £75.

Production

The majority of Z-series Magnettes were assembled at Abingdon, but 1,519 were assembled from Completely Knocked Down (CKD) kits: in Eire (336 ZA, 259 ZB); Netherlands (174 ZB); South Africa (750 ZB).

All Z-series Magnettes sold in Australia, priced at £1,285 on its release, were imported Completely Built Up.

The first Sydney Motor Show was held in September 1954. According to Barry Lake in *Spotlight on MG Downunder*, the Magnette saloon was released at the same



time; “which BMC rushed to Australia to star in the show.” While there is no doubt the ZA Magnette, new to Australia, was a star of this first Sydney Motor Show, it was some eleven months after the London Motor Show where the car had made its debut and seven months after full production had got under way, so delivery of the first cars would have been well timed for the Sydney show, and not “rushed out”.

Modern Motor said; “apart from the traditional (though curved) MG radiator, the body is like that of the current Wolseley 4/44 – but in everything else, it’s a vastly different car. The magazine also stated that the first small shipment of cars, due in September, was already “covered by orders”.

Unfortunately, it is not known how many Z-series Magnettes were sold in Australia. The table on p22 shows sales for all right-hand-drive markets, of which Australia was part. It is believed that very few ZBs were sold new here, though.

In total, 36,600 Z-series Magnettes were built, being 12,754 ZA and 23,846 ZB, over its five-year run, while only 9,600 TFs were built in two and a half years.

While the TF kept the MG sports car flame flickering until the arrival of the MGA in mid-1955, it was the Magnette that really kept MG alive, with respectable sales, during this period; and continued with strong sales until being replaced by the less than inspiring Farina-bodied Magnette MkIII in February 1959.



The Museum Trail

The Australian Motorlife Museum

Words by Chris Martin. Photos by Craig Watson & Chris Martin



Tucked away in a rural setting near Wollongong, less than 2km from the freeway to Sydney, is a neat grey building; home to one of the best car and automobilia collections in Australia.

The Australian Motorlife Museum came about because of the efforts of a dedicated few volunteers, who had managed to erect a small brick building to house what was then a collection of signs, petrol pumps, tools and other artefacts, later augmented by a dozen or so cars and motorcycles. Named the Illawarra Motoring Museum, it pretty soon outgrew these premises.

Meanwhile, Paul Butler, a keen collector from Sydney, was planning to open a museum, but passed away suddenly, leaving his premises in some disarray.

Following a drawn-out process, the IMM eventually became the custodian of the collection.

The all-new 3,200 sqm Motorlife Museum, which includes a storage and conservation area, opened to the public in August 2008; with the Butler collection being included from March 2009.

In June 2010 Sir Jack Brabham, along with Lady Brabham and

Ron Tauranac, attended the opening of the function room named in his honour.

Exhibits relating to the earliest Australian pioneers include parts of the 1902 McIntosh – William McIntosh is believed to have built his first car in 1893. Alfred Swinnerton built at least two cars of monocoque construction, long before the Lancia Lambda, in 1907 and 1915 and these are celebrated in a small display.

The oldest running car on show is a 1904 Innes, while the oldest running motorcycle is a 1905 Triumph "motor bicycle". The Innes was an entrant and finisher in the 1905 Dunlop Reliability Trial, between Sydney and Melbourne. This car was purchased with the assistance of the National Cultural Heritage Account, and goes out on the road from time to time.

The bicycle collection includes a c1900 Massey Harris, a Moulton, a three-seater from the 1950's, a tandem and several Penny Farthings, among others.

A 1919 Republic truck was restored by our volunteers. This vehicle is also registered and takes to the road from time to time. A 1929 Sunbeam Salmons





Sunshine saloon is nearing completion, as is a 1925 Citroen 5cv roadster. Many other smaller items such as petrol pumps, typewriters, gramophones (back to 1880's), mechanical scales and more are exhibited at Motorlife.

The philosophy here is that these items developed in a technological sense in much the same timeframe as the motor vehicle, and all had an impact on the way we live our lives. These displays do much to provide perspective.

Enamel signs are a feature, with hundreds on display, alongside other automobilia, but the majority of space is occupied by the motor vehicles.

Vehicles with a BMC-Leyland connection are well represented, with the likes of an extremely rare Austin 7 Meteor, Morris and Leyland trucks, an Australian-bodied 1926 Rover 9/20, as well as the usual array of Austin 7s, low-light Minor convertible, NRMA Morris J van, and many others.

There is even an Austin J40 kid's ride in the entrance foyer.

The catering facilities and surrounding parkland make this site a popular destination for

organised runs and rallies; recent visiting groups included Mini, Rolls-Royce, Armstrong Siddeley and Datsun Z car clubs, among many others.

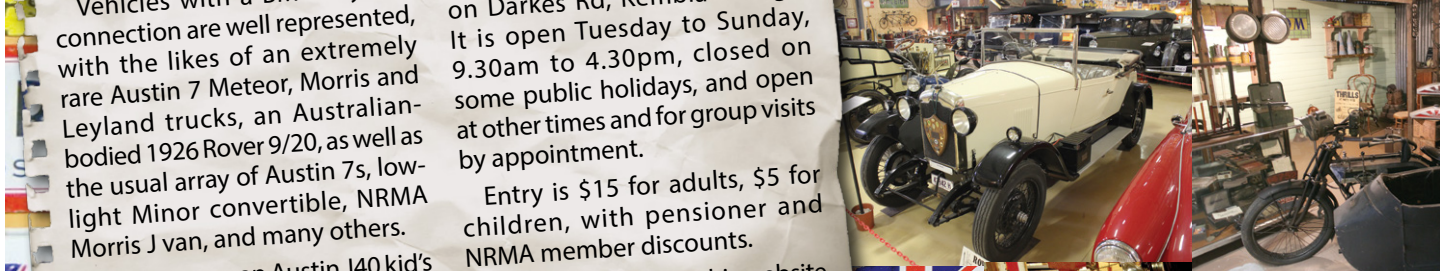
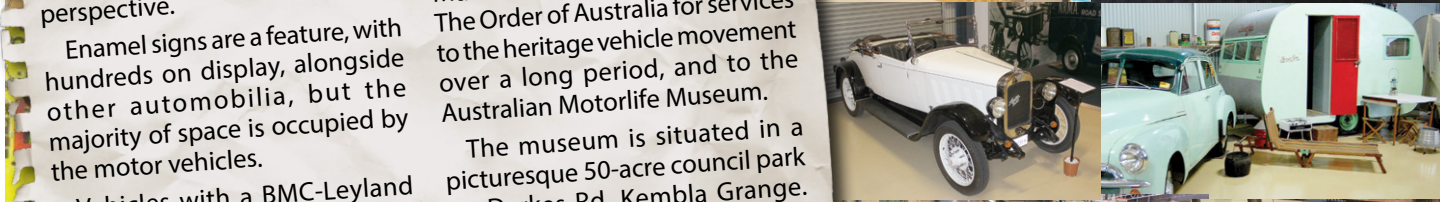
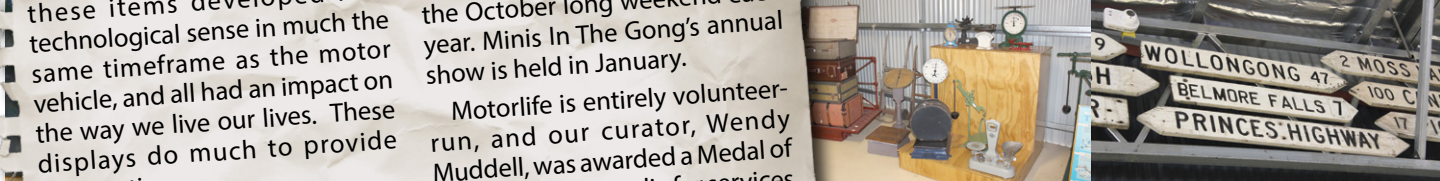
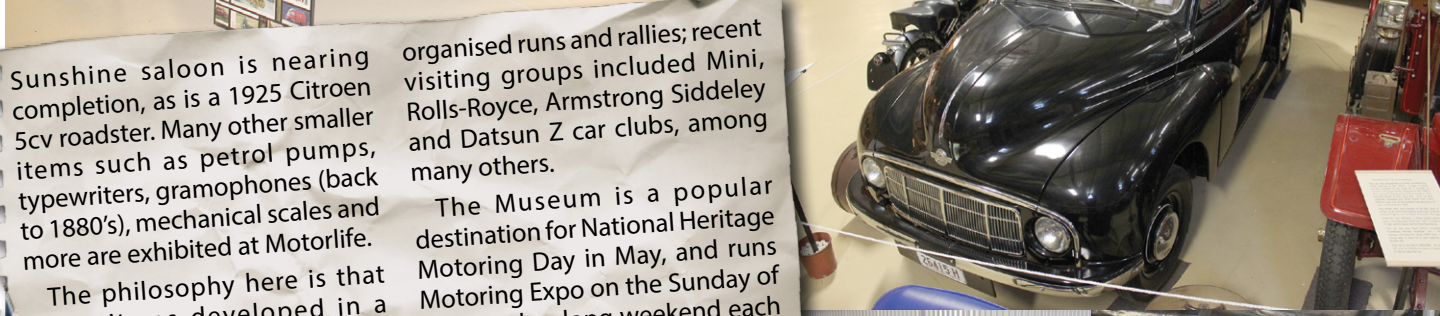
The Museum is a popular destination for National Heritage Motoring Day in May, and runs Motoring Expo on the Sunday of the October long weekend each year. Minis In The Gong's annual show is held in January.

Motorlife is entirely volunteer-run, and our curator, Wendy Muddell, was awarded a Medal of The Order of Australia for services to the heritage vehicle movement over a long period, and to the Australian Motorlife Museum.

The museum is situated in a picturesque 50-acre council park on Darkes Rd, Kembla Grange. It is open Tuesday to Sunday, 9.30am to 4.30pm, closed on some public holidays, and open at other times and for group visits by appointment.

Entry is \$15 for adults, \$5 for children, with pensioner and NRMA member discounts.

For more details, see this website - <https://motorlifemuseum.com>, phone (02) 4261 4100 or email to motorlife1@bigpond.com.





Phillip Island Classic



Phillip Island, Vic

11-13 March 2016

Non-report by Watto

Photos by Neil Hammond



I must confess to not being at this year's Phillip Island Classic and, although I have received some terrific photos of the event from Neil Hammond, have not had a race report supplied.

That's not usually a problem, as a lot of information can usually be gleaned from the results. You can usually get a picture of how close were the battles and how cars did in their classes and outright, from reading the overall and lap times.

But the results at Phillip Island are, for the most part, only supplied in classes, without overall listings. Without the time to analyse the results in detail, it doesn't give much of a picture of what was really going on.

So, while I can tell you that South Aussie Justin Elvin was by far the quickest of the seven Minis on the day, by a good four seconds a lap, I can't really tell you how he went outright - although his times suggest he was up the pointy end of the field and he must have been having some pretty tight racing.

The Regularities and the Groups A & C Touring Cars (for the first three races) were the exception. Group A only had one car of real interest to us - Mike Roddy's ex-TWR Jaguar XJS - and he drove consistently to take a couple of fourth places in class and was just outside the top ten.

Beyond that, if you would like the full results go to the official timing website: <http://racing.natsoft.com.au/results>

To get a picture of the whole event and how the racing transpires, get yourself to next year's Classic.

Meanwhile, enjoy this compilation of photos from Neil Hammond.



HRCCQ Sprint



Morgan Park - Warwick, Qld

20-21 February 2016

Words and photos by Ian Welsh



Adam Duce menacing the big Trans-am Mustang, before taking the lead.

The Historic Racing Car Club of Qld kicked off the 2016 year at Morgan Park Raceway, at Warwick, 160km west of Brisbane, with its annual event of one day for Try, Test and Training (TTT) followed by Super Sprints the following day.

TTT Day

Historic cars generally take part, but it is open to people who would like to try motorsport for the first time and also gives existing racers an opportunity for some tuition or to test and tune their car in preparation for the coming racing season.

Entry was open to historic as well as modern vehicles and the range of cars entered was broad. A 1936 Austin 7 represented the older end, while at the other end was a very rare 2003 MG SV-S; of which only four were built, with this being the only one known in Australia.

Of the 120 cars taking part, there were six Morris Cooper S as well as a 1972 Clubman GT sports sedan.

A very hot day, but it ran well despite there being a couple of lengthy delays due to oil on the track. At day's end there was a social gathering and it was good to see the organisers, officials and participants all mingling and sharing stories from the day, as well as talking about race plans for the coming year.

Super Sprints

Many of those who took part in the TTT stayed on for the sprints. While not intended to be full-on racing, there were some spirited drives in the two-by-two start at five-second intervals for three timed laps.

There were nine Cooper S taking part, with one car shared by well known Mini racers Jill and Mandy Nelson.

Unfortunately, one of the Minis was involved in a spectacular crash. Pete Gillam tried to pass Mandy Nelson on the inside into a right hand turn, but clipped the kerb, which caused his Cooper S to roll onto it's side then end for end, with a pirouette. The car landed back on it's wheels, with Gillam winded and needing a trip to hospital for a thorough check, but released later in the day with a rib injury.

The most entertaining drive for the day was that of Adam Duce in his Clubman GT sports sedan, who was grouped with various V8-powered cars. Dicing with a Trans-am Mustang and getting in front to lead the Mustang home, Adam also did well to secure the 11th fastest time of the day out of the 110-car entry.

It was a good weekend of grass roots motorsport and a good lead up to HRCCQ's Autumn Historics race meeting. 



Justin McCarthy in his Austin 7.



Neal O'Reilly - Group U Sports Sedan.



Nathan West leads Craig Carlson.



Mandy Nelson keeps ahead of Pete Gillam.



Pete Gillam takes a wild ride in his Mini, after getting a passing move wrong. Thankfully, he was not badly injured.



Qld Autumn Historic



Morgan Park - Warwick, Qld

30 April - 1 May 2016

Words and photos by Ian Welsh



Adam Duce raced hard to keep his Clubman GT in front of the bigger cars.

Touring cars were the theme for the Historic Racing Car Club's "Autumn Historics" meeting. Heritage Touring Cars, the Bathurst legends, headlined the event with some quite recognisable cars in the 26-strong entry.

The meeting was also well supported by Group N Touring Cars, a small but enthusiastic number of Group U Historic Sports Sedans, and Group S Production Sports cars. Two large fields of Regularity and races for the traditional sports and racing cars rounded out the race schedule. The BMC family was well represented and with 161 entrants overall, attracting good spectator numbers, it ran like clockwork with good racing in warm dry weather.

There was a newly rebuilt 1964 Cooper S on the under 2lt Group N grid. Peter Walsh had been looking for a Mini to race for some time and found one in NSW, originally log booked in the 70's. Once he got it into his garage it was a full strip down job in preparation for it's Queensland racing life. After eight months of rebuild work, he qualified it in fifth place, which translated to a best result of third in racing; where he managed to lower his lap times by a second over the weekend.

Group U is a category that HRCC was supporting with four races for these purpose-built rockets at this meeting. Three Leyland Clubman GT's were on the

grid, of which the quickest was Adam Duce in the car that has been recently restored to immaculate shape.

Another Clubman from the Duce garage was being driven this weekend by the vastly experienced Ken Nelson. The third was the car of Fred Sayers, who has been a Mini stalwart since forever. Hard-charging Adam Duce was the quickest of the three cars and placed second to the ex-John McCormack V12 Jag XJS. It was very entertaining to watch these little cars harassing the larger V8- and V12-powered cars around the track.

Regularity saw a number of BMC models including a very neat 1957 MG ZB Magnette Sedan, driven by George Diggles. Not the fastest car, but great to look at on the track. There were also a couple of Cooper Ss, a 1963 MGB and a 1960 Mk1 "Bugeye" Sprite driven by Debra Jones.

Geoffrey King was very competitive in his 1962 Sprite in Group S racing, with a credible third place in the overall Group Sb results. Also making the trip from NSW was Don Bartley, in his 1966 Sprite, who was very competitive in qualifying and the first two races, but struck trouble and had DNF's in the last two races.

The next HRCCQ race meeting will be its annual national Historic Queensland event, held on the weekend of 2 and 3 July, also at Morgan Park Raceway. 



George Diggles' 1957 MG ZB Magnette.



Debra Jones in her "Bugeye" Sprite Mk1.



Don Bartley's competitive 1966 Sprite.



David Godwin having a run in regularity.





40th Historic Winton



Winton, Vic.

28-29 May 2016

Words by Craig Watson

Photos by Neil Hammond



The Historic Winton race meeting in late Autumn is usually cold and often a bit wet, but always provides good racing with some interesting and historically significant cars and bikes.

This year, though, for the 40th running of this iconic event, the weather was at its absolute best. A little chilly in the mornings, but bright blue skies and warming sunshine throughout the weekend. And that brought the crowds.

Apart from being the 40th Historic Winton, the event celebrated a host of anniversaries. Those of interest to this magazine were: 110 years of Austin cars; 90 years of the Flatnose Morris; 80 years of the SS Jaguar 100 and the MG TA; 70 years of the Triumph Roadster; and 60 years of the Austin A35 and the Morris Minor 1000. All these were ably celebrated in the various displays and the Shannons Cavalcade parade laps at lunch time on the Sunday.

But this is a race meeting, so the racing is primary importance. There were certainly plenty of cars to excite our readers, with BMC brands being very well represented in both Regularity groups and Groups J&K, Lb, S and N in the racing.

Stand-out performances included Christopher Capes-Baldwin's incredibly consistent run in the third event for Regularity 2 in his MGTC special "Buttercup" – his second run was equally consistent, but his nominated time was too slow.

A surprise entry in the Reg 2 was Philip Soderstrom in his 1380cc engined Mini Moke. Unfortunately, he broke a set of wheel studs during practice and was unable to compete over the weekend.

Stuart Krug took the honours in Event 2 of Regularity 1 in his Austin 7 special. In Event 3 of the Reg 1 Christopher Lamrock was just nudged out of first place in his MG J2/4.

Mark O'Neill was consistently the fastest BMC in Group S, in his MG B GT, and finished with a sixth and seventh place outright, being fifth and sixth in class.

The V8s had it their own way in Groups J&K, but John Lackey (MG TA), Stirling Mackay (Riley 9/14) and Rees Mackay (Riley 9/14) finished third, fourth and fifth in the Col. Arthur Waite Trophy handicap race.

Group N always brings plenty of action, with the veritable swarm of Minis snapping at the heels of the Mustangs, Camaro's, etc. Jason Armstrong was his usual impressive self, being fastest of the Minis and taking a third and two fifth places outright, but consistently fastest Nb car. Henry Draper and Justin Elvin made sure it wasn't a cruising run for Jason, though, but Jason was consistently one second a lap quicker.

Full results and times can be found at <http://racing.natsoft.com.au/results>





Mini Kingdom On-line Show

27 February 2016: Mulgrave, NSW

Words by Rob Weir.

Photos by Broderick Spears.



Saturday 27 February couldn't come soon enough for some people, as this was the day of the inaugural "Mini Kingdom Online", Open Day and Show and Shine, and what a day it turned out to be.

Special guest of honour was none other than, Bob Holden, winner in conjunction with Finnish driver Rano Aaltonen of the 1966 Bathurst.

Scheduled to start at 9:00am, cars started arriving as early as 6:30am and kept coming, by 10:00am there were over 85 cars on display.

There was a great variety of Minis, from the one that started it all, the Morris 850, all the way through to the last production Mini in Australia, the 1275 LS. There was also a great turn out of Mokes as well to celebrate 50 years in Australia.

Grahame Russell, the Sharp brothers, and Rocky Canto put on a magnificent display of race Minis, and as it is 55 years since the launch of the Morris 850 in Australia, it was fitting to have a couple of fine examples of these cars proudly on display by their owners.

Minis arrived from all areas of NSW – the Carter boys had made the trip from Cowra in a Moke – and there was a large group from Bathurst, as

well as contingents from the South Coast, and the North and Central Coast of NSW; and even a few from over the borders.

There was a coffee van in attendance and the BBQ was running hot. The weather was warm and Mini owners mingled, chatted and compared machines, and generally appeared to be having a great time.

Mini Car Club of NSW ran the Show 'n' Shine competition, which was very difficult to judge with so many fine examples in attendance. Congratulations to all the winners and runners up, and thank you to all that entered their cars to be judged.

A big thank you to all those Mini owners that turned up on the day and made it so special and memorable. Without the tireless effort of Mini owners like yourselves, who take pride in your truly fabulous cars, we would not be able to have such great events to attend.

Thank you must also go to John Smidt and his tireless team of volunteers, cooking the sausage sizzle, and supplying cold drinks on the day, along with sales of other memorabilia, total proceeds of \$710 were donated to Windsor Special Care Hospital. 



Photo by Michael Benton



BMC-Leyland Show 'n' Shine

20 March 2016 Caribbean gardens, Vic. Words and photos by Craig Watson.



Beautiful sunny weather brought out a great number of BMC-Leyland and related cars, as well as a few guests from other brands.

104 cars turned up in total, of which 85 entered the judging for the Show 'n' Shine.

Organised by the BMC-Leyland Car Club, it was pleasing to see other clubs make this an official event, with good turn outs from the Wolseley, Mini and Morris Minor Car Clubs.

Apart from the organising club, the biggest club contingent was from the Wolseley Car Club - which parked together in a commanding position along the back fence line, on a slight ridge. What a great sight they made.

There were a good number of cars that have been featured in this magazine, and some more that will no doubt be featured in the future.

The quality of cars was very high and there was a great variety. The oldest car on show was a 1927 Austin 7 van, owned by Jo Pocklington and the Car Of The Show award went to Peter Luxmoore's light blue Morris Minor.

Other winners were Alan Turner, Gary Davies, Bob Anderson, Robert Quinn, Paul Buck, Sue Wilson, Steve Schmidt and Ray Dole.

The location, at Melbourne's iconic Caribbean Gardens market, together with the perfect weather, meant there was a huge number of general public coming through to look at the cars, with most being complimentary of the display.

This was the BMCLCC's first major show event and we hope it will become an annual feature. Judging by the success of this year, and the enthusiasm of the participants, it has a bright future. 



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3rd National Moke Muster

Easter: 24-28 March 2016

Shepparton, Vic.

Words by Watto. Photos by Eilish Watson.



Two years of planning finally came together for the third National Moke Muster, which celebrated 50 years of the Moke in Australia.

Highlight of the weekend was always going to be the Show 'n' Shine on the shores of Victoria Lake, and it didn't disappoint.

147 registered Mokes, plus a few that only came for the day. An entire field full of Mokes, and no two exactly the same. Just magic.

After the show we managed to get all of the Mokes down to the local football reserve for a massive photo shoot - a logistical nightmare that all worked out well in the end.

Sunday was spent with a number of local tours, with people choosing their preferred list of activities, including wineries, a draught horse event, motor museum, strawberry farm, a visit to Echuca, Tocumwal market and more.

The kids and I decided on the Tocumwal-motor museum-Ulupna Island trip. The private museum was an eye opener and featured a good number of BMC-related cars, including an early Nash Metropolitan and a Triumph Mayflower.

We left the rest of the group early and headed over to Ulupna Island with one other Moke and spent a good couple of hours reacquainting ourselves with this wonderful part of the Aussie bush on the banks of the Murray River.

There were plenty of opportunities to socialise, with a huge BBQ on Friday night, dinner and trivia night on Saturday and the main presentation dinner on Sunday.

Weather for the whole weekend was just perfect and the event went off without a hitch. We look forward to the fourth National Moke Muster, hopefully in 2021. 



Photo by Tony Watson



RACV Classic Showcase

10 April 2016

Flemington, Vic

Photos by George King.



This year saw the return of the RACV Classic Showcase to the members carpark of Flemington racecourse. This was very welcome, as Flemington is ideally located in the inner central suburbs, making it accessible to far more people.

The day celebrated 50 years of the Jaguar 420/Daimler Sovereign, as well as 40 years of the Association of Motoring Clubs (AOMC) - the organising body of the event.

Held about a month later than usual, the weather was mostly cloudy but warm, with the sun making regular appearances.

The event was once again the annual concourse for the MG Car Club of Vic, and there was the usual turn out of some of the best MGs in the country. There were even a few for sale, for those keen to enter the MG marque, or increase their collection.

This year also saw an increase in the number of Japanese cars and more modern vehicles, which were not of particular interest to a lot of the classic car fraternity.

Only one car from the BMC-Leyland stable won an award this year, with Angela Stevenson taking home the trophy for Best Post-War British Vehicle with her very original 1961 Morris 850.

The judges said they were attracted to the "preserved rather than restored" condition of her Chartreuse (light green) Mini, which still has its original engine, seats and rubber floor mats.





Inaugural Coast To Coast



Adelaide - 22 May 2016

Words and photos by Bill Watson.



For some time there have been thoughts of arranging an alternative to the Bay to Birdwood Run, which is becoming more difficult for older drivers and veteran/vintage vehicles to travel the hilly 70km course; let alone getting out of bed to arrive at the start point at the crack of dawn.

Gary Johanson, Mayor of Port Adelaide Enfield, is keen to establish a total museum complex in the Port Adelaide precinct. It already houses the Maritime, Railway and Aviation Museums so a Motor Museum would be a logical addition.

Discussion with motoring club members and the Federation of Historic Motoring Clubs SA Inc led to the Morris Register of SA proposing a feature event to be included in SA's annual History Month programme in May each year. The leading proponent was Morris Register's past president, John Chapman.

The concept, to be aimed at those who felt that the Bay to Birdwood Run no longer suited their view of a relaxing day's outing with historic vehicles, suggested about a 20km drive along the Adelaide coast from Glenelg to Port Adelaide, finishing with a display at the Aviation Museum. Start time would be 10.00am, with arrival in Port Adelaide before 12.00 noon.

With the co-operation of the

City of Holdfast Bay's Mayor Steve Patterson, the SA Police Historical Society, History SA, the Royal Automobile Association of SA Historical Society, the SA Aviation Museum, the City of Adelaide Clipper Ship Restoration Society and, of course, Gary Johanson, the event became a reality on Sunday 22 May 2016.

John Chapman put in a lot of hard work to bring it about, assisted by a core of helpers from the Morris Register of SA.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't as co-operative. Although the day began well with bright sunshine, by lunchtime wind and rain set in - just in time for Mayor Johanson's official opening. The rain made consuming the provided sausage sizzle a little awkward.

Some 70 vehicles attended the day, which is quite reasonable for an inaugural event, but they started to depart soon after lunch instead of staying until 3.00pm as expected.

The closing ceremony was abandoned, but it is anticipated that a second Coast to Coast will be conducted about the same time next year, hopefully with a larger number of entrants including some veteran vehicles and a few more vintage ones. It will be run in the opposite direction - from Port Adelaide to Glenelg.





Austin-Healey National Rally

8-10 April 2016 Victor Harbor, SA Words by Anne Manfield Photos by Gordon Lindner



It was South Australia's turn to host this year's National Austin-Healey Rally and a contingent of 130 cars and 230 national and international Healey enthusiasts gathered in the beautiful environs of McCracken Country Club in Victor Harbor, an hour south of Adelaide on the pristine Fleurieu Peninsula.

It was an extended weekend celebrating all things Healey.

There was some excitement late Friday afternoon as welcome drinks teed off on the Country Club's Putting Green. Old and new friends gathered to meet for a cleansing ale or two and a glass of sparkling, while admiring a cache of cars glistening in a late sun-shower.

Saturday dawned brightly (which couldn't be said of all participants) auguring well for the much-anticipated static car display on Warland Reserve, on the Victor Harbor beachfront. An enviable array of Austin-Healeys was assembled, worth an estimated \$10 million.

Among them was Tony Parkinson's Sebring BJ7, as well as his remarkable 100S Austin Healey 100S (featured in last issue of BMCE). This is the Stan Jones, Ron Phillips, David Harvey, Jim Goldfinch car that raced in more than 70 events during 1956-60 at Fishermen's Bend, Albert Park, Port Wakefield, Wangaratta, Philip Island, Collingrove, Broken Hill, Templestowe, Hepburn Springs and Rob Roy.

Also of note was Mark Scott's newly acquired Austin Healey Rocket, which needs major restoration but has a fascinating local history. It is understood that it was an Adelaide-delivered 100/4, which was heavily modified and fitted with

an Oldsmobile V8 then raced at various South Australian circuits.

Evening events in the beautifully appointed McCracken Convention Centre included a sit-down dinner on the Friday night, which was appreciated by all. At the very 'Glam' Saturday night dinner everyone was kept on their toes as ever-popular Chunky Custard belted out the beats until the wee small hours. On Sunday night, world-class cabaret entertainer Aurora Kurth won the crowd over with her wit and warmth.

The Alan Jones Trophy was awarded to Ralph Boord from SA for his enduring enthusiasm and strong participation as a club member. The People's Choice Award went to Peter and Candice Anderson from NSW.

No National Rally is complete without a good car run. Two fabulous routes on Saturday and Sunday afternoons offered motoring through the unspoilt Hindmarsh and Inman Valleys, taking in romantic roads, quaint townships and stunning coastal views, with plenty of opportunity to change down a gear and linger a while to sample the best of local produce.

On Sunday morning the participants also enjoyed a ride on the famous Cockle Train between Victor Harbor and Goolwa.

Monday brunch came around all too soon and farewells were exchanged, with friendships to be re-ignited again as the baton is passed to Queensland for the next Austin-Healey National Rally on the Gold Coast in 2017.

As one veteran club member put it "It's about the cars, but it's also about the people."





Words by Kay Drury. Photos by Kay & Alan Drury

We've had a good start to the outdoor show season here in the UK. Although the weather has been a bit erratic it hasn't meant cancellation of any events. This year Easter was earlier in the year, which meant that other show days held on dates linked to the religious calendar were also earlier, which confuses our events calendar a little.

Brooklands Austin Morris Day: 6 March 2016

The annual Austin-Morris Day at the historic Brooklands track is traditionally held on the first Sunday in March, which coincides with Mother's Day - Mother's Day being in May in Australia.

While we were greeted with a bright sunny Spring day, the attendances for the show seemed very much down on previous years, as most people seemed to have opted to go to see their Mums rather than take their classic cars for an outing.

Fortunately, a lot of people had compromised by taking Mum with them and There was still plenty to see. The cars also had the opportunity to try a run up Test Hill, and take part in a cavalcade on the nearby Mercedes Benz test track.

After looking at most of the cars I spent some time looking around the historic aircraft, including Concorde, and the aircraft hangars at the museum; something I usually don't get time to do!



Surrey Hills Mini Run: 28 March 2016

The night before the annual Surrey Hills Mini Run saw raging winds and lashing rain, so we were unsure right up to the last minute if the run would go ahead or not.

Amazingly, the winds dropped and the sun came out before the start, by which time 45 Minis and 91 people had arrived, unfazed by the road conditions.

This run always takes in narrow, twisty, tree-lined roads, and the gales had left the roads littered with twigs, broken branches, leaves and plenty of mud and puddles.

It didn't take long to find the first downed tree, but it was moved out of the way with a great show of strength by the Mini owners. The rest of the route was the same: more downed trees and a flooded

river, but we all had lots of practice in Mini-manoeuving, reversing and doing three-point turns in next to no space, so that we could drive back down the single track road we'd just come down.

By lunchtime the organisers took the decision that we should stick to the main roads and make our own way back to the final destination for a celebratory BBQ. Everybody agreed that they'd had a great time, the mishaps and diversions just made it all the more fun!



Brooklands Mini Day: 3 April 2016

We were back to Brooklands for the annual Mini Day on 3 April, a week later than normal due to Easter Sunday falling on the usual show date of the last Sunday in March.

4,600 visitors turned out to see just under 1,000 Minis on the historic site. The Minis also had a chance to take on the famous Test Hill during the course of the day.

There are lots of ground works ongoing at Brooklands, which has cut down the amount of space for parking, but there was still plenty to see. The museum has obtained grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund to reinstate the 'Finishing Straight'

and move the enormous aircraft hangar, plus they have now received an additional grant from the Arts Council England's Museum Resilience Fund. We look forward to seeing the finished result at what was the world's first purpose-built motor racing circuit.



Downton Classic Show: 30 April 2016

The village of Downton in Wiltshire was the home of the Downton Engineering Works, probably the most important Mini tuning company in the car's history.

The 40th anniversary of the closure of this famous company was marked at this year's Downton Classic Car Show, on 30 April. The annual show and reunion is organised by former employees and friends.

A great display of Downton-tuned cars and memorabilia was on display, along with many other Minis and classic cars from local clubs. Perhaps the most unusual of all the cars on display was the unrestored Sphinx – a unique tilting car, with trapezoidal wheel layout (1-2-1 in train-speak), powered by a Downton-tuned BMC 1800 transverse engine sitting in the middle of this strange vehicle.

This event has grown enormously since the first "Come Home to Downton" show back in 2008, and has now become a general classic car show, with many other marques of cars on display.

It's a great opportunity to talk to some of the people involved in the glory days of Mini tuning. The event runs alongside the traditional Downton "Cuckoo Fair", which brings crowds of visitors to the area each year.



International Mini Meeting - Belgium: 12-16 May 2016



The annual International Mini Meeting was held over the long weekend in May, in Lommel, Belgium. IMMs have been taking place all over Europe since starting in 1978 in Germany, but 2016 was the first ever to be held in Belgium, hosted by the Mini Fun Club Belgium.

For those of us travelling from the UK, Lommel is less than 300km from the port of Calais; so much closer than other recent IMMs we've been to on mainland Europe. This year I took my 1968 Mk2 Mini, which was going well until we got caught up in heavy traffic near Antwerp, decided to leave the motorway and mistakenly found ourselves in the city centre.

My Mini stalled and then refused to start, on a cobbled street in the middle of the rush hour. The solenoid had failed. We had to push start it along the pavement to get it started. The clutch release bearing also started to groan during the journey, but we made it safely to Lommel, where our first task was to buy parts to repair it the next day.

Fortunately, lots of traders from the UK and Europe had decided to attend this year's meet, due to its central location, so there were plenty of Mini parts to be had.

The event location was an enormous field, usually empty other than many huge wind turbines, taking us back to basics for an IMM, with the organisers having to bring in everything from the party tent to all facilities and catering.

The weather was unseasonably hot on the Thursday and Friday, turning colder at night and at the weekend, with some wind as was to be expected by the wind farm location.

With live bands playing each evening keeping people dancing, the entertainment was great, as was the Belgian beer and chocolate, of which there were plentiful supplies.

2,600 Minis were on site for the full weekend, with 3,165 weekend guests, representing around 380 different clubs. There were an additional 2,100 day visitors at the weekend, with around 500 Minis in the day visitor parking area. Visitors came from as far afield as Australia, Mexico, Canada, USA, and Malaysia. The furthest travelled in a Mini was from Ukraine-Moldavia.

As with most IMMs, most of the time was spent chilling on the campsite, chatting with old friends and admiring the Minis, but there were also plenty of daytime activities to keep everyone amused; including rocker cover racing, radio controlled car racing, glow show, show 'n' shine and inter-club games.

At the Presidents' Meeting the venues for 2018 and 2019 were decided, with uncontested bids from Portugal for May 2018, and for Bristol, South West England, for the Mini's 60th birthday IMM in August 2019.

At the closing ceremony, The Irish Mini Owners Club received the IMM key as they prepare to host the 2017 IMM in Piltown, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland, over the weekend of 25-29 May 2017. We can't wait!

If you're thinking of taking a trip to Europe you can buy tickets for IMM Ireland at www.imm2017.ie You can find out more about Portugal and Bristol on Facebook, search for "Portugal IMM 2018" and "IMM 2019 Bristol".



Club Profile

BMC-Leyland Car Club, Inc.
by Gary Turner



The BMC-Leyland Car Club Inc. was born out of the desire to join a club to cater for all BMC and Leyland vehicles.

Many of the founding members already belonged to other one-make clubs, but owned cars from a variety of makes within the BMC-Leyland "family" and wanted a club that would cater for all their many and varied vehicles.

We love the appearance and style of these vehicles, which are a blast from the past, and many people born in the 1950s, '60s and '70s have always had a special place in their hearts for them. The idea of having a broader range of cars in a club, giving a greater variety of cars on club runs, is more interesting to us, and gives a greater scope for different articles for the club's newsletter.

After the obligatory Google search, which failed to find any broader BMC car clubs, we initially started up a Facebook page: the BMC Car Club Australia, to gauge if there was any interest out there.

We soon had about 100 page members, which was no doubt helped by the snippet that was printed in the news section of

Issue 8 of *The BMC Experience* in October 2013. Now, this Facebook page boasts a membership of over 1,200 and is growing day by day. Amongst the people to join we had a number of Leyland P76 owners, so it was decided to add Leyland to the page name, and so the BMC-Leyland Car Club Australia Facebook group came to be.

Sometime after getting the Facebook page up and running, Francis Borg got together with Gary Turner and Sue Wilson, who had been friends for a number of years, as we were all members of the Morris Minor Car Club of Victoria. We were waiting for this opportunity.

With the assistance of Martin and Cindy French, Peter and Rae Luxmoore, also from the MMCCV, and with the inclusion of Norma May, we had a committee and the club was born in July of 2014. It was only a matter of weeks until we were incorporated in Victoria, and then accepted by VicRoads to participate in the Club Permit Scheme.

The club's ethos is simple: no fuss, affordable yearly subscriptions, with the minimum amount of ceremony.

The club accepts all vehicles that were built by BMC and Leyland, including

commercial vehicles. The club also accepts all vehicles built by the individual marques prior to their amalgamation into BMC and Leyland.

These include, but are not limited to, Morris, Austin, Mini, MG, Wolseley, Austin-Healey, Rover, Land Rover, Jaguar, Vanden Plas, Riley – basically the whole range covered by this magazine – and then some. We would be happy to have Alvis, Standard and others as well. I'm sure it would be interesting for someone with a Mighty Antar or a Scorpion tank to turn up to one of the meetings.

We hold runs monthly, and conduct our general business on one of the runs. The club distributes an electronic monthly newsletter called *The Wobble Knocker*, which Gary puts together.

In case you are wondering where the magazine's name comes from, the Wobble Knocker was a machine devised and built in the Experimental Department at BMC Australia's Zetland factory, which tested suspension components for durability.

Having the magazine as a digital-only publication enables us to keep our yearly subscription low, as we are not afflicted by the cost of postage.

We also have a comprehensive website (www.bmcleylandcc.org) that is specifically configured for easy access on mobile phones and tablets.

So, while our cars are definitely from





simpler times, the club has embraced modern technology and is looking to the future.

We realise that the success and longevity of the club is dependant on getting younger members to join and to appreciate the older cars – something all car clubs have to face as their memberships are ageing.

At the time of writing, our membership stands at over 80 with more than 50 cars on the Victorian Club Permit Scheme. We have some members from interstate and even a handful from overseas.

We have a high rate of participation from members on our runs and this is put down to the no-nonsense and relaxed atmosphere with everyone enjoying a great social day out.

In March this year we ran our first big event, the BMC-Leyland Show 'n' Shine, at Caribbean Gardens (see p33 for a full report), which was another great success. We had 104 cars turn up, of which 85 were entered in the Show'n' Shine, ranging from a 1927 Austin 7 to 1990s Minis, and a whole variety in between.

Club members have also eagerly attended numerous shows by other clubs and larger bodies, including the RACV Classic Showcase, Great Australia Rally, National Motoring Heritage Day and many more. If you see any of our cars at an event – and they are easy to spot wearing their fabulous windscreen banners while on display – please feel free to come over and have a chat.

We would love to talk to you about any car, and if you have something from any of the BMC-Leyland stables we would love to have you as a member of the club.

For more details about membership, and any other enquiries about the club, contact Sue Wilson on 0359775686 or by email bmcleylandcc@iinet.net.au or check out our website – www.bmcleylandcc.org

Interstate and International members can also apply, as we do have membership packages for members unable to take advantage of the club runs and social aspects of the club.



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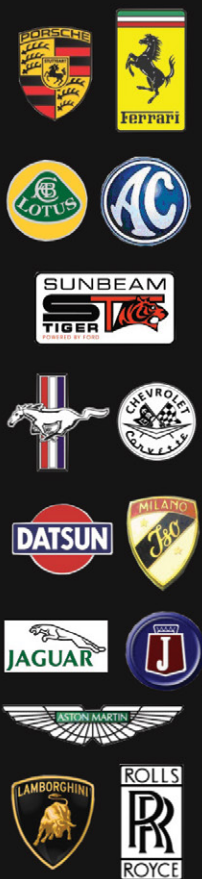
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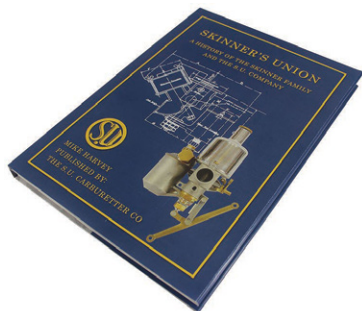
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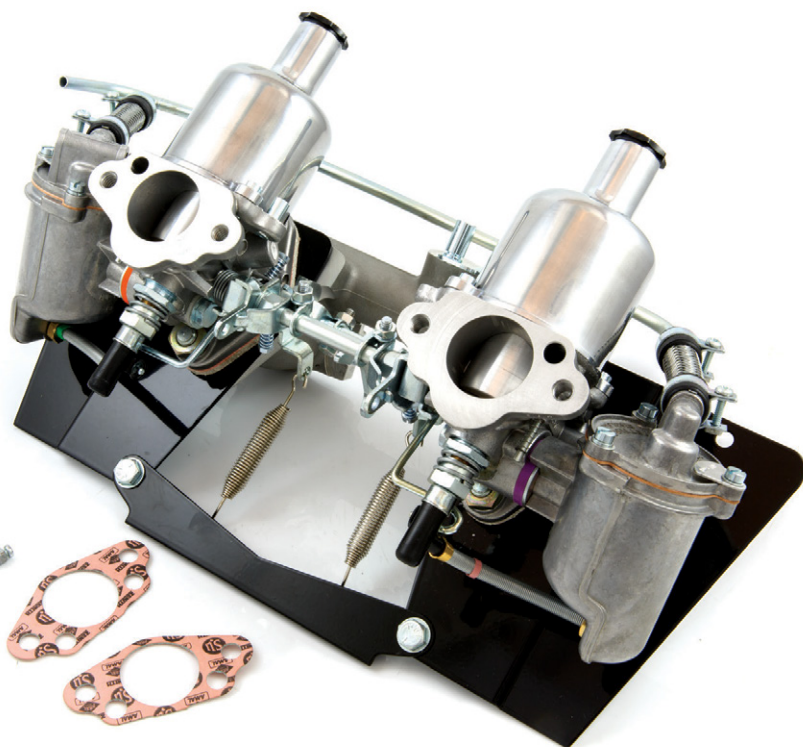
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Needle in a Haystack

Words and photos by Craig Watson.

When Austin failed to obtain tax-free status for the A35 Pick-up, it sealed the car's fate as a non-seller. Fewer than 500 were made, with less than 100 that survive today, so finding one to buy is like the proverbial needle in a haystack.







Ted and Mary Jones from northern Victoria have a passion for things that are a bit different. For many years Ted has collected and restored Austin A40s and A30s, Jaguars and Mercedes. Since retiring a few years ago he also started restoring classic trucks, and is currently working on one of the rarest Mercedes diesel-powered trucks from the early 1950s. In 2004 he also acquired a rare Austin A95 Countryman that he intends restoring in the near future.

Some time ago the A30/A35 Austins grabbed Ted and Mary's attention. They've bought and sold many and currently still have an A30 Countryman, two two-door saloons and one four-door, as well as our feature car, an incredibly rare A35 Pick-up.

When they first saw some information on the Pick-up they decided they just had to have one, but with only 475 made, none ever sold new in Australia and none known to have come here over the years, that was not going to be an easy task.

Production

The A35 Pick-up is a very rare beast indeed. Released at the end of 1956, just a couple of months after the A35 saloon went on sale, the Pick-up was virtually doomed from the start, due to mistakes in its concept.

Originally planned as a two-seater coupe, and designed by Austin stylist Dick Burzi, who was responsible for the entire A30/A35 range, the idea was to leave the boot section as an open cargo area to take advantage of the tax-free status of commercial vehicles.

However, with no tailgate and a load area barely big enough for a couple of well-behaved piglets, arguing that it was a commercial vehicle seemed ludicrous. It



didn't help the cause that the load bay floor folded up to form a crude, if unpadded, seat and that publicity photos used in the brochure showed two boys sitting in the back. Austin thought that promoting the car as "Everyman's Utility Vehicle" would be enough for it to receive special consideration.

Barney Sharratt explains in his tome on the A30/A35/A40 Farina, *Post-War Baby Austins*; "As it turned out, the Customs & Excise folk were not interested in such debates. They simply pointed to the 'Vehicle Construction and Use' regulations, which stipulated that the rear platform of a pick-up had to be at least two-thirds of the vehicle's overall length. Tax would have to be paid."

The little Pick-up was dead in the water. With £180 tax added to the base price of £360, it was only 20 quid less than the Countryman version, at £560, which was a full four-seater with the convenience of reasonable cargo space with the rear seats folded down.

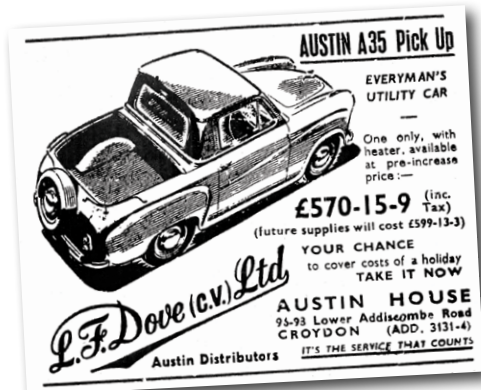
A true commercial variant already existed in the A35 Van, which cost only £400 with £51 purchase tax. A number of companies also offered rear seat conversions for the van, but woe betide if you added side windows, as Customs & Excise would immediately stick its hand out for more tax.



Timber strips sewn into tonneau.



Handrail for rear passengers.



to a number of other countries, including South Africa, Denmark, Gibraltar, Malawi, Fiji and Kuwait.

While all Pick-ups sold in the UK were painted Tweed Grey with Cherry Red trim, exports were also available in County Cream with Cherry trim, Spruce Green with green trim and Island Blue, Streamline Blue or Speedwell Blue with blue trim.



Footwell over fuel tank.



Occasional rear seat not built for comfort.



Front compartment is a toolbox.



The step on the right-rear bumperette.

The A35 Van was so successful that it outlasted the saloon by nearly a decade, with later versions receiving the 1098cc engine, and the last being built in 1968.

It seems that neither Austin nor potential customers really knew what to make of the Pick-up or where it sat in the range, and sales were snail-paced. "A short production run was inevitable", Sharratt continues. "It was going to be very difficult to sell a two-seater vehicle of limited carrying capacity, which had lost the advantage of tax avoidance. Many dealers had the vehicles on their hands for so long that they threw in the towel and used them as garage runabouts. The production records show that the date of production and registration of a large number of pick-ups were many months apart."

Consequently, the last A35 Pick-up was built in November 1957, twelve months after the first, giving an average production of only 40 per month.

Even England's obsession with exports didn't help. Of the 475 Pick-ups built, only 234 were exported, some in left-hand-drive. According to an article in *New Zealand Classic Car* magazine, 48 went to Chile, 23 to Asia and the Pacific Isles, 27 to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), 17 to New Zealand, 11 to the West Indies, nine to the Sudan, five to Canada, and fewer than five each

The rear tonneau, which in each case matches the interior trim, is strengthened with strips of timber, to cope with the weight of snow in northern UK and European climates.

The metal sun visor, usually painted body colour, was a popular accessory, while the vinyl spare wheel covering, also in matching colours, was standard. As the spare tyre was in the open, it was fitted with a lock on one of the wheel nuts, to prevent theft.

The Search

Today, few A35 Pick-ups have survived. According to the Austin A30/A35 Owners Club in England, only about 86 have been recorded worldwide.

So, in about 1997, thanks to the still relatively new Internet, Ted and Mary began looking for one on a global scale. It took them seven years and an ever-widening search before they finally found some for sale.

"We found one in Chile", Ted explains, "in a wrecker's yard and it was pretty ordinary. They put a Buy Now price of US\$500 on it and it only lasted a couple of minutes. The other one that went was in Miami, but that had come from Jamaica and was right-hand-drive. That sold for about the same price. It sold straight away, but it





was completely bugged, and they took it back to England, and it's since been rebuilt."

But the one Ted and Mary bought came about purely by chance, as Ted continues. "We had been looking for about seven years without much luck. We decided to join the Austin A30/A35 Club in England and sent off our paperwork, and also mentioned we were looking for a Pick-up. John Graham happened to be there when our stuff came through and he had just recently decided to sell his. He sent us a photo of it and we rang him up and got first right of refusal. Then he sent us comprehensive photos via email. We purchased the Pick-up, body number PU301, on 15 July 2004."

John lived on the small island of Jersey in the Channel Isles, between England and France. "He had been involved in a car crash, in another vehicle, and broken his leg, so found it difficult getting into the Pick-up", Ted explains, "so he'd decided to sell it. We were just lucky with the timing."

John organised for the little car to be ferried to England and loaded into a 20' shipping container for its month-long sea voyage to Melbourne from Tilbury on the CS Borealis.

A Star Car

"It arrived in Melbourne on 22 September and was available to pick up on the 28th. Mary drove it out of the container...and we trailered it down and got it steam cleaned and everything for quarantine. On Thursday 30 September it passed roadworthy and was put on club permit plates. Friday we pulled the seats and carpet out of it to dry it off after the steam

cleaning, then on Saturday we took it over to Euroa for the Show and Shine."

"It had come straight out of the container and it had a lot of different colours on it, rust around the turret; it had holes in the fuel tank (we could only put half a tank of fuel in it); and Mary won the Marg Stribling Trophy, which is one of the main trophies there."

Ted and Mary stripped the car and had it repainted, which was without any major dramas. "It had a couple of bits of rust, down around the A-pillars and under the lights, and some surface rust around the turret, but basically it was pretty good."

The car has proved very popular at shows and is often the stand out attraction; as much because of its uniqueness and cuteness. Mary has claimed the car as her own, and is often out-doing Ted's cars, as Ted reveals. "I don't know; I've got better cars in the shed, but Mary knocks me off every time. So, it's been an incredible vehicle. It's been quite sensational when we go around the shows."

At Austins Over Australia in Canberra a few years ago, they were asked to lead the parade of all the A30s. That was a breeze, compared with driving the car to Canberra. "We did just over 1,000 miles. The back still hurts and the eyes water when I think about it", Ted laughs. "But it gets along alright, because it's got the A35 948cc motor in it. The others we've got are all 803cc."

"In 2010 at the Deni Ute Muster it was a featured ute in the museum", Ted continues. "They have probably about 25 cars in a big marquee, and they wanted it

back in 2011. They wanted it back last year (2015) but we didn't go. We've got an AP6 Valiant ute that's only done 79,000 miles, and that went in 2013."

"We went to Winton (historic racing), in 2012 and we did the two laps on the track at lunchtime. The A30 club asked us to bring it over and it was on display with them in the Shannons car park. We put all the stuff on the car and then walked away, because if we don't you just can't get away from it. As soon as we come in the gate we have people running along beside us to get a look at it. It's unbelievable. Anyway, we came back and there was a parcel on the front seat and we opened it and it was this big trophy for the Most Outstanding Spectator Vehicle."

But not everyone is enamoured with the little ute and the couple have had a few occasions where people have accused them of mocking up the car, saying the model never existed. "When we go to shows we put all the information on the windows, because we get in a lot of arguments."

Since buying the car, Ted and Mary have become good friends with John Graham, after whom they named their little Pick-up "Jersey John", and phone him up regularly. "He reckons he sold it to us too cheap and he wants it back. I said, in your dreams", Ted laughs. 



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Photo by Craig Watson

George Caller

Historically speaking

Words by Craig Watson.

Photos courtesy George Caller.

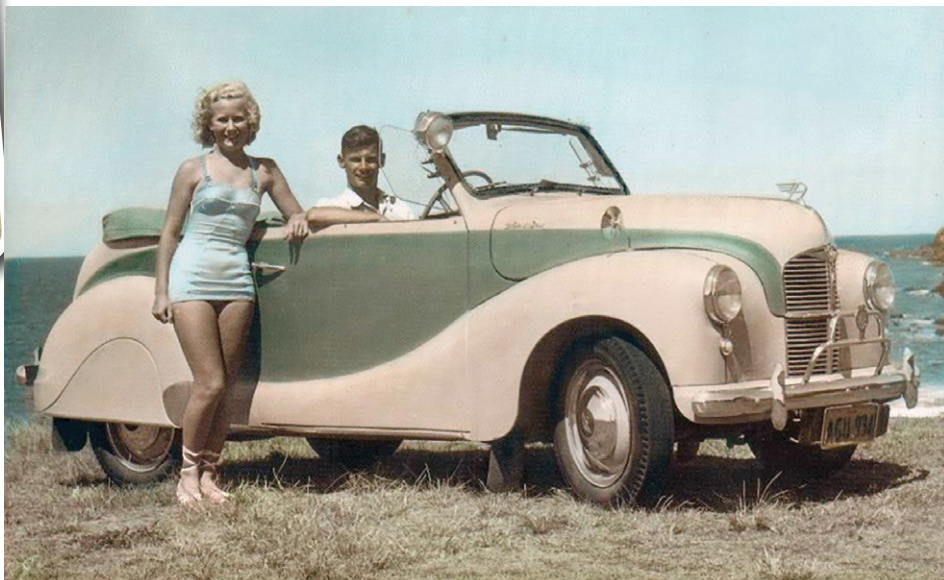
George Caller reckons Larke Hoskins was the best company you could hope to work for. So, it's not surprising that he still has such fond memories of the company and the 40 or so Austins he has owned over the years.

George's father was a bus driver, who worked on his own cars, and his uncle Les worked as a mechanic at the bus depot. George spent many hours as a youngster watching Les and asking lots of questions. This served him well when George began his apprenticeship with Larke Hoskins in January 1949, as a bright and aspiring 15-year-old.

"I was very fortunate", George recalls. "I was sent straight to the reconditioning shop, where the foreman, Bill Goggins, kind of took me under his wing. He wanted to know what I knew about it and I said, 'what I know I've learnt from my father, helping him in the garage and my uncle Les', so I said, 'let's say I know nothing and you tell me'; and he did."

"Bill was one of the best mechanics I've ever come across – he could walk up to a motor and listen to it, then say 'bent pushrod', or 'faulty cam follower', 'gudgeon pin', 'piston clearance', etc, and be right every time."

George spent the first three weeks helping remove and clean engines, before



George with his A40 Devon Tourer, circa 1953, and girlfriend, now wife, Fay.

being allowed to help work on them. "By the time I'd been there a couple of months I was pulling engines out, putting them back in and helping to put them together."

"While a lot of the boys never got into the reconditioning department, I never got out of it until I was almost into the end of my third year. It gave me a good grounding. It wasn't only motors we would do. We were doing gearboxes, diffs, and everything like that. In those days you had to rebuild your own clutches. You didn't just toss it away and put a new clutch in."

"This was at a time when the A40s were having a lot of bearing troubles. The original ones only had a single bracket holding the oil filter onto the motor, with copper pipes, and they used to vibrate, break the pipes and pump the oil out. So, we had to rip the motors out, do the shafts and what have you, put them all back together and get them going."

"I really had the opportunity to learn it properly, which I was very grateful

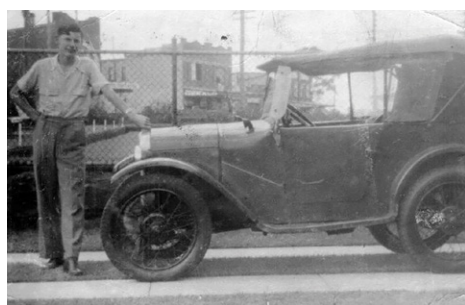
for. Then I went across into the normal workshop but because of the experience that I'd gained I got a lot of good jobs. I didn't get the basic services. I'd do valve grinds and clutch overhauls and things like that. In fact, in my whole apprenticeship, I spent only a few days in the lubes (general service bays). Some guys spent a year in the lubes."

"I used to like the problem ones. I liked something that had problems and trying to sort them out."

Competition Mechanic

The first REDEX Trial was announced in 1953 and George soon found himself at the forefront of the Austin effort. "Charlie Sutton had been promoted to Service Manager; and he called me into his office and told me what was going on and said I want you to be very, very thorough with these cars."

"On Monday, there's a black A40 Somerset parked in my work bay and I



15y.o. George with his first car; Austin 7.



George's mum's Austin 8.



"This A55 was written-off on its way up from Tassie, but I put it back on the road."



The A40 team after the 1953 REDEX Trial, with survey car at back.
(Left to right: David McKay, Barry Gurdon and "Curley" Bryant.)

basically had to pull it apart and put it back together and make sure everything was OK. Then David McKay and "Curley" Bryant used it as a reconnaissance car; they did the full circuit in it. They had no troubles with it, but while they were away I was given another three cars, the three in the photo, to start doing."

"When they were all done we decided we would take them all out on the Liverpool-Heathcote Rd. That's the place that all the hot-shots used – if you wanted to go for a thrash, Heathcote Rd was well known for it."

At the time, John Martin, who later went on to be Managing Director at Leyland Australia, was Assistant Managing Director of Larke Hoskins and it was his decision to enter the A40s in the REDEX Trial.

"So, on this day on Heathcote Rd was Charlie Sutton, Johnny Martin, David McKay and myself and all we did all day was flog these cars up and down the Heathcote Rd."

Toward the end of the rally, David McKay was in a strong position and a chance of winning the event. Martin and Sutton decided to send George down to Albury to chaperone McKay's car home and make sure nothing went wrong.

"My instructions were to follow him as closely as possible and if anything happened to him be prepared to fix it",

George explained. "By that time, because everything was so close, they put in a horror stretch at Goulburn, which went off into the bush on this horrible road, through a creek and then up this road that these days you'd balk at taking a four-wheel-drive up. And the creek was quite deep. But the officials wouldn't let me go through. So, as soon as David was ready to go, I had to zip round and meet him coming up the other end. I just made it, but Ken Tubman had come through and the Peugeot was a bit better through that rough stuff than the A40 was."

"The police had closed the highway. There were people lined up all the way down the side, watching the cars, and we were flat-out down the wrong side of the road from Goulburn to Sydney on the old road, all the way through Liverpool, through Sydney, down to the showground. Traffic lights were stopped for everything – there weren't a lot of lights in those days – but they'd closed the road off to give everyone a clear run, and here's yours truly in another A40 sitting right up David's bum."

In the end it was to no avail, with Tubman winning the event and McKay in eighth outright and second in class, only nine points from McKay, but all the A40s completed the gruelling event. "Barry Gurdon had a rear hub problem, which

they were able to fix on the road; Curley Bryant hit a post and damaged the left-hand corner of the car; and David brought his back unmarked", George reported.

Learning Days

A few months later, towards the end of his apprenticeship, George was offered to move to the new Pressed Metal factory at Enfield, which was another of the Larke Hoskins companies. George spent six months in each department at the factory, learning what went into the process of building the cars. "Again, I met a lot of good people; a lot of very clever people."

George ended up working in the Development Department and was involved in a couple of interesting projects. "I did the prototype testing on the first A50 ute. In fact, further than that, they did their own jig in the development shop and I was involved in helping the boys when they used to make the big wooden blocks with the plaster moulds and all that sort of thing, and they'd shape it and what have you."

"I nearly lost a finger doing prototype testing on the A50 ute. It was a case of take it out, belt hell out of it and see what it could do. Out on the old Heathcote Rd there was a gravel pit where the Main Roads Board used to get all of their fill for the roads. I took it in there this day to give it the treatment and I gave it heaps. I came out off the pit onto the main road and a back wheel fell off. I thought this is no problem, we'll jack it up and put the wheel back on, but I found they'd put no wheel brace or tool kit in it. I got it up in the air and I set about trying to get the wheel on it, when it slipped. Well, it made a mess of my finger, but as luck would have it, a guy with an A50 sedan drove along and I flagged him down and borrowed his jack and wheel brace; finished up taking a nut off each wheel, put it back on and drove the thing home."

"By the time I got back to Pressed Metal I was a mess, I tell you. I didn't go back to work the next day. In fact, when I drove back into Pressed Metal I was just about ready to collapse."

"I also had the privilege of taking the first Australian-built Rover 90 out on the road and testing it. It was the only one assembled in Australia, that I know of but



The written-off A55 after George's repairs.



Morris 8-40 was an early break from the Austin brand, but didn't stay for long.



Maybe the only Australian-assembled Rover 90, on the Putty Rd, near Mt Thorley.



The A40 with hot 1500 B-series, at Foley's Hillclimb.

I have heard they may have built another one. I know we looked at an imported one as well and they decided not to assemble them here."

"I took it up the back from Windsor to Singleton, what they call the Putty Rd. It was a notorious road in those days, and I used to hammer it up and down there. I had it through creeks and all over the place. It was like a monstrous vacuum cleaner at the start, just sucking in the dust, but we eventually got that right."

"Afterwards, they cleaned it up. Claydon Neave left the company through ill health, and he took the car with him and his wife used it as her personal car for about ten years. I don't know what became of it after that."

It was around this time that BMC bought into Pressed Metal Corporation, and George felt that the atmosphere in the company began to change. "By 1957 I was no longer happy there. I finished up running the vehicle maintenance workshop, where we did all the company cars, forklifts and trucks. But by mid-'57 I'd had it. I wanted to go back to Service; Pressed Metal didn't want me to go back to Service. So, I said I'm going, and left. I went to work for a friend of mine, who owned a service station, for about three months, but I didn't cop that, so I went back to Larke Hoskins in Palmer St: back to where I started off."

In 1959 Larke Hoskins bought the NSW

FIAT dealership, McLaughlin Motors, renaming it Turin Distributors. George moved across to Turin Distributors in the engine testing area.

In 1966, when the company bought the Victorian FIAT franchise, Willcastle Motors, and the Service Manager from Turin moved to Melbourne, George took over as Acting Service Manager for Turin Distributors.

But the timing of the move couldn't have been worse, as George explained. "Unfortunately, in August of that same year the FIAT contract expired and they didn't renew it. That basically ended my time with Larke Hoskins."

George went through a number of other jobs, including with Ford and Holden dealerships, and the new FIAT dealership of Morrison Motors for five years; before ending up at Bill Buckle Toyota, where he stayed in the sales department until his retirement in 1995.

Wheeler Dealer

Throughout his time at Larke Hoskins, George had a string of Austin cars, which he always regarded very highly. His first was an Austin 7, which he bought during the first year of his apprenticeship, at 15-years-old.

"I've had 28 Austin A40s; about six Austin 7s – I had an Austin 7 with an A30 motor in it. It was lethal! It had that much power it would lift the front wheels, and if you kept accelerating you couldn't steer it; you



The same A40 with caravan - an effortless tow car.

had to back off. And of course, mechanical brakes."

"I also had an A40 Somerset convertible with a 1500 B-series engine – to my mind it was the first one with a 1500 motor in it. I found it was very simple to put a 1500 in. That made a big difference. I ended up doing around 170,000 miles in it (in six years). I did one big trip with it in 1958, all up the east coast towing a caravan and it never had any trouble. Then somebody offered me a stupid price for it, so I sold it."

"I went from that to a Somerset sedan; from that I went to an A55. It was badly damaged, but I pulled it apart, fixed it and had it for many years. I had a set of 1620 pistons so we bored it out and fitted those to it and it made a hell of a difference."

George ordered the registration plate AUS040 for one of his early A40s, and kept the plate, moving it from car to car over the years. In fact, that registration is still on his grand-daughter's car. George now lives in Queensland and also has the same registration number on his own car.

"I went from the A55 to the Freeway. I put an Elite box in it; did the clutch; lightened the flywheel; did a head conversion on it; I had three downdraught Webers on it; and put a set of disc brakes on the front of it. It went very well. Believe it or not, that car still got 30mpg. Everyone in the family had a Freeway wagon at one stage."

George began dealing in used A40s,



George's second Tourer with his mum's Austin 8.



George's wife Fay with one of the A40 Devons.



George's second A40 Devon Tourer, with A40 Somerset and A95 Westminster.

buying cheap trade-ins, fixing them up and on-selling them, and quickly developed a good reputation.

"(The cars) used to come from everywhere; people knew I had them. I had a dealer at Balmain who got onto me, and he used to get someone trade in an A40 and he'd call me and I'd say, 'yeah, I'll buy it off you'. Or he'd get someone come in wanting an A40 and he'd call me up to see if I had one. Sometimes I'd sell the same one back to him; but I'd go right through them and fix them up, repaint them, whatever they needed and make good cars out of them."

George also dabbled a little in club level motorsport, competing in hillclimbs at the old Foley's hillclimb track at Mona Vale in a couple of his A40s.

But of all his cars, George most fondly remembers his uniquely Australian A40 Devon Tourer. "They were an Australian-only thing and they assembled some of them at Larke Hoskins. They also did a lot of them in Melbourne. Some of them, I think, had Ruskin bodies on them. The very first ones had a little badge down on the front corner. Different places in Melbourne assembled them and sent them up."

"They went through this period toward the end of 1951 that the Tourers weren't selling, so Larke Hoskins decided to tart them up. As soon as they did they looked like different cars. They did them in a variety of two-tone paint jobs and they came through with all these accessories. A nudge bar was standard on them – the

first batch didn't have the nudge bar, but the second batch did. They had little flipper windows, which were inside the car when they were folded in, with the sidescreens on. They had mudflaps; trim rims on the wheels; a tonneau cover."

"When they put the nudge bar on, they put a badge, a few inches across, which was gold like a Falcon and they started calling them the A40 Falcon. That was years before the Ford Falcon."

"I bought one new in June of 1952, from Larke Hoskins. I got about 100 quid discount, which was a lot of money in the Fifties. My dad picked me up, took me into the city, we signed up for the car (because I bought it on finance at the time, he took me down to AGC); then back to delivery, which was at Palmer St in those days, and then I picked the car up and took it home."

George got hold of a Warranty written-off A40 Sports big-valve cylinder head, increased the compression and fitted a set of Manton twin carburettors, and had what he believes was the fastest A40 Devon around at the time.

He also had a set of Holden-inspired rear wheel spats made up for the car. "I had a guy at Larke Hoskins made up a set for me. They were pretty common on the Holdens at that time. I just liked the idea of it. Believe it or not, it actually allowed the car to go faster; it stopped the wind catching under the back guards. I had six sets made up and it finished up that all my mates had them."



Austin Freeway wagon with AUS plates.

George sold his Tourer in 1954, but missed it greatly, so bought another, though without all the special extras. "It used to belong to a local newsagent. He'd taken all the trim out of it, used it as a paper wagon, then decided he was going to get something else. I bought it cheap and painted it the same colours as the first one I had."

When he moved to Turin Distributors George already owned a FIAT 600, as by that time Pressed Metal was assembling a small number of FIATs, and he remains a FIAT enthusiast today.

George no longer owns an Austin, but still considers them very good cars for their day. He does have a collection of Austin memorabilia, and has some unique memories of his time with the company. "I've met some lovely people and I've met some people you wouldn't feed, a couple of people you wouldn't want to know, but overall, I very much enjoyed it."



George with one of his many A40 Devons.



His original "hot" Somerset convertible.



George still has fond memories of his days with Larke Hoskins, and has retained some memorabilia from the time.



Twists & Turns

The Larke Hoskins and Pressed Metal story

Words by Craig Watson.

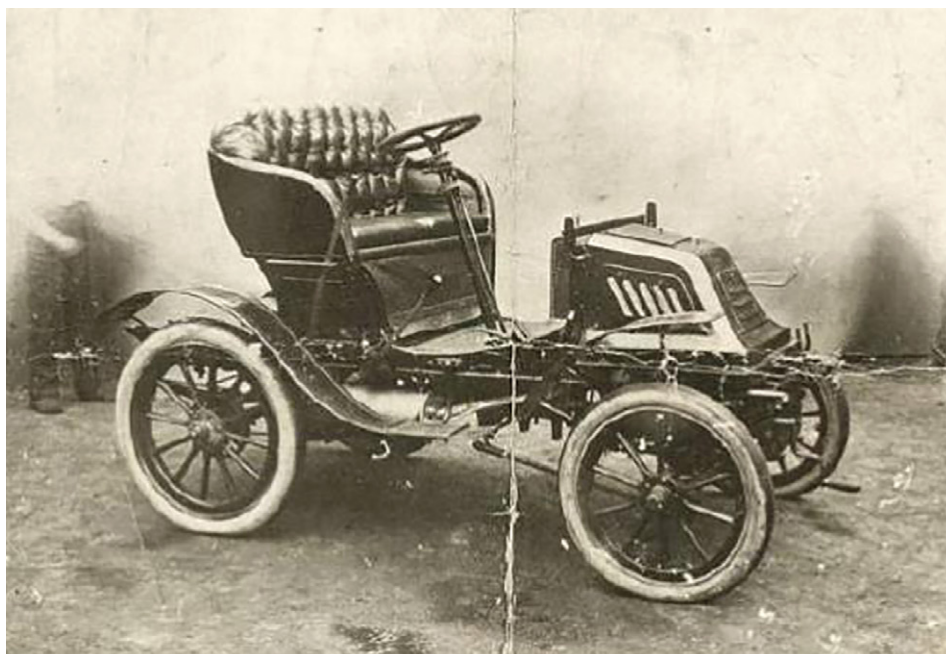
Larke Hoskins was one of the earliest car importers in NSW, went on to become the largest Austin franchisee outside of Longbridge, and was the force behind the establishment of the Pressed Metal Corporation.

Prior to the First World War, the Australian motor industry was a fairly haphazard affair. Some enterprising people tried to begin local manufacture, but all failed to attract investors and customers. Most believed Australia's population was too small to support such an industry and looked to overseas manufacturers.

Cars were first imported to Australia in small numbers, by a few individuals who set up motor garages, and businesses that felt the motor car complimented their other activities – such as farming equipment suppliers. In most cases there was little specialisation to one brand, with many garages selling up to six or seven brands. In some cases, though few, a number of competing businesses sold the same brand.

As sales increased, some businesses established a network of dealerships themselves, some sold cars to other businesses on a wholesale basis while also retailing the same vehicles themselves, and yet others stopped selling retail to concentrate on wholesale.

One of the largest suppliers of farming equipment at the turn of the century, and



One of two De Dion cars bought by Mark Foy in France in about 1901. This, or the other of the pair, is believed to be the car bought by William Bain Larke.

one of the world's largest wool broking firms, was Dalgety & Co – originally started in Melbourne by a Scotsman, but later based in London – with offices in every Australian state.

Dalgety's secured the franchise for Austin Motors across Australia in 1909, only three years after the first Austin car rolled off the production line.

During the First World War British industry was turned over almost entirely to military purposes, and many exports ceased completely. The German U-boat campaign to prevent shipping between the UK and her allies, and the neutral USA, hampered trade to the point that space for freight to Australia became very limited.

In 1917, the Hughes Federal Government proposed, under the provisions of the War Precautions Act, to prohibit the import of motor cars. This was met with strong protest by the motor retail traders in all states because, despite the war, sales of motor cars were strong; particularly American models, as UK cars were not available (the US didn't enter the war until late 1917).

A compromise was reached, whereby motor distributors could import one complete car for every two chassis, in order to economise on shipping space. For their part, distributors had to invest in plant to provide for the manufacture of bodies for the bare imported chassis.

The Government offered to protect the industry for all time, through the introduction of import tariffs and quotas; "provided there was no exploitation, and the traders indicated that they were quite prepared to accept the situation in view of the help extended to them in protecting their businesses at that time."

However, the size of the country, combined with the poor quality of roads and the lack of fuel and services between main population centres, non-standard railways between states, difficulties in moving completed vehicles between major cities, and lingering colonial rivalries, ensured little coherence between states and the need for car manufacturers to have assembly plants in each state.

Some companies, such as Tarrant's in Melbourne, were already building car bodies, and were able to take advantage of the new rules to expand their business.

Other body builders sprang up almost overnight, some from the horse-drawn coach trade, such as Holden's in Adelaide; others from motor distributors eager to keep the profits in-house.

Dalgety & Co was a supply and brokering company and was not interested in becoming a manufacturer. Through 1918 and 1919 it divested itself of all its motor trading operations.

It is not clear who took over the Austin



The Australian Six was one of a number of early Sydney-built cars. Around 500 are believed to have been made between 1919 and 1925. The company's slogan was; "Made in Australia, by Australian's for Australia." An unknown number were also exported to New Zealand.



Larke Hoskins' main premises at 177-185 William St Darlinghurst in 1925.
Photo from the collection of the State Library of NSW.

agency in Melbourne at that time, but by 1923 it was being handled by Bob Wallace and in 1926 was bought by SA Cheney. Winterbottom Motor Company took over the Austin franchise in Western Australia in 1919, while the previous year the NSW agency was taken over by Larke Hoskins.

Enter the Larke Brothers

Brothers William Bain Larke and Frederick W. Larke were the eldest sons of John Larke, the first Canadian Trade Commissioner appointed to Australia. They formed a bicycle business in King St, Sydney in 1901, as the Australasian agents for the Goult Bicycle Company of Canada. Their success was mostly due to their biggest-selling model, the Red Bird, and Larke had agents across Australia and in New Zealand.

William saw the motor car as the future of transport and began looking for an opportunity to get involved. He bought a De Dion from Sydney draper, department store owner and boating identity Mark Foy and began learning all he could about its operation. His youngest brother Percy John was also smitten with the vehicle, learned to drive it and went on to become a competent motor mechanic.

In January 1906 a Star motor car was imported and sold to Charles Hoskins. The Larke brothers saw the car and immediately recognised its potential. Together with William Hoskins, a cousin of Charles, they arranged the importing rights from the Star Engineering Co Ltd, England and set up a new firm Larke, Hoskins & Co. Ltd in a small shop front in Clarence St, Sydney.

Their first order was for six cars, which arrived in 1907. In that first year they sold 30 cars, but the Clarence St premises was found to be inadequate, so the business moved to a larger building in Kent St, with space for service and spare parts departments.

Within the year they were also importing the De Dion from France, and the Bean and (Humber) Humberette from Britain.

Of interest, the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney owns a 1908 Holsman Auto Buggy that bears a plate indicating Larke, Hoskins & Co Ltd as the agents. The buggy was donated to the museum in 1936 by then owner W. B. Larke, but it is not clear whether this was a one-off or whether others were imported by Larke Hoskins.

In those days salesmen had a lot more to do than simply sell the cars – they also had to teach buyers how to drive them and the basics of how to maintain them.

In 1909 the company sold 94 cars and made its first dividend payment to its owners.

Unfortunately, the supply of Star and Humber cars came to an abrupt halt in late 1914 with the advent of the First World War and the turning over of the factories to War work.

Larke Hoskins began importing REO cars from the US, but when the USA entered the War in 1917 and American supplies of cars dried up, Larke Hoskins survived by selling used cars and servicing all makes and models.

Percy Larke joined the AIF in September 1916 as an engineer and served in France



The 1908 Holsman Auto Buggy High-Wheeler once owned by WB Larke (L) and the distributor's nameplate from it. Photos courtesy Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

through to the end of the War, reaching the rank of Company Quartermaster Sergeant with the 5th Motorised Transport Company.

Toward the end of 1918, with victory in the war looking ever likely, many British companies again began to turn their attention to making cars for peacetime. Herbert Austin felt that the best way forward for his company was with a single model, the large and stately Austin 20. This decision was to prove disastrous, but in 1918 Austin was full of confidence in his decision.

With the advent of the Australian import restrictions on chassis and the impending growth of the local body building industry, together with Dalgety's desire to be rid of the Austin franchise, Mr A. Dupuis was dispatched from the Longbridge works to negotiate new agencies across Australia.

In Sydney, he met the Larke brothers, who had again moved the Larke Hoskins business to premises in Castlereagh St. A deal was reached and Percy Larke, still in Britain following the end of hostilities, went to Longbridge to formalize the agreement.

Only a handful of Austin cars was imported in 1919, but numbers quickly began to grow. However, Austin's one-model policy, particularly based on a large and expensive chassis, coupled with the post-war recession, saw the Austin Motor Company fall into receivership in 1921.

Herbert Austin rallied and designed the diminutive Austin 7, with a lone draughtsman, Stanley Edge (see *BMCE* Issue 2). The car was an instant success and, combined with the mid-sized Austin 12, saved the company.

Larke Hoskins again outgrew its premises and bought a new building at 177-185 William St, Darlinghurst.

By 1925 the Austin 7 was proving so popular that it occupied its own showroom in another building in William St. That same year shares in Larke Hoskins were offered to its employees as a way of thanks for their support through the lean years.

In 1926 another company was formed, Larke, Neave & Carter, to act as NSW agents





The staff of Larke, Neave & Carter at Australia St, Camperdown, in 1938.

for Chrysler cars. While the two companies were separate entities, they shared some facilities and had some common directors on both management boards.

This was a boom time for the companies and on 5 May 1928 they jointly bought a modern assembly premises and service garage in Camperdown, which was co-occupied by Messrs Garrett Ltd and Leyland Motors Ltd.

Camperdown

Garrett Ltd was established in 1907, with a four-story building that stretched between Castlereagh and Elizabeth Streets in the city to assemble, sell and service FIAT and Overland cars and commercials.

Following the 1917 Government policy on car imports, Garrett's business grew rapidly and by the early 1920s they had built a large assembly plant at Camperdown: taking up the full block bounded by Parramatta Rd, Australia St., Derby Pl and Denison St.

The building cost £100,000 to erect and in 1924 the company turned out 646 FIAT cars, of which reportedly 75% were assembled and fitted with Australian-made bodies.

However, in 1922 an agreement was made with Leyland Motors Ltd for Leyland to take over around half of the facility for the assembly of Leyland trucks and the service of all brands in its large service garage. Rather than work through local importing companies, Leyland established local agents that were owned

and controlled by the parent company in the UK, which helped to keep the cost of its products down.

By this time the Overland franchise had been established into a separate company, Overland (Sydney) Ltd, which was still owned by Garratt's.

In the year ending January 1925 Messrs Garrett Ltd posted a profit of £33,506, which increased to £36,014 the following year. However, in 1926 they relinquished the FIAT franchise in order to concentrate on British cars, taking on Standard, Clyno and Hillman cars. This resulted in a drop in profit to £7,674 but the directors were confident that the change would reap greater rewards in the following year.

This didn't occur and a loss of £23,683 was incurred for the 1927 year. Garratt's found itself in an untenable situation and quickly negotiated the sale of the Camperdown property to Larke Hoskins and Larke, Neave & Carter for £115,000.

Then the world was rocked by the Wall St collapse in November 1929, which brought on the Great Depression. The car market virtually ceased overnight and Larke Hoskins found itself with a massive over-supply of cars and more flowing in from the UK. According to one report, unsold cars were stacked to the ceilings.

With assistance from its banks, Larke Hoskins reduced the price of its cars, reduced staff numbers to the bare minimum – with some working part-time and some working full-time for part-time wages – and got its overstock situation under control.

By 1932 stock levels were back to normal, although sales had fallen well below 1928 levels, but the company had weathered the storm and remained in business. By the end of 1933 sales were again on an upward trend.

1938 saw the release of the immediately popular Austin Eight, but with war again looming in Europe, supplies from UK soon dried up. Larke Hoskins sales staff was reduced to two men and an office

girl, but the Camperdown factory swung over to war work – producing ammunition boxes, engine nacelles and other sheet metal parts for aircraft, while the trim shop produced thousands of linings for tin helmets, webbing and gaiters.

In 1938, Larke Hoskins also secured the franchise for John Deer tractors from the USA.

Riley St

In 1937 a new indoor cycling velodrome was built on the corner of Riley and Goodlet Streets in Surry Hills and named the Sydney Sports Arena. Most of the timber for the banked board track came from the Camperdown velodrome (now O'Dea Reserve), the first of its kind in NSW, which had been built in 1927 and demolished ten years later after falling on financial hard times.

However, the Sports Arena only operated for a couple of years, being closed in 1940 and the board track was again moved; this time to Canterbury for a new velodrome beside Canterbury racecourse. The Australian Army apparently took over the old Sports Arena building as a short-term staging post or transit depot.

Following the Second World War the building was unoccupied for a short time, before being bought in 1947 by Larke Hoskins, which now had its main sales and service outlet in Palmer St, Woolloomooloo.

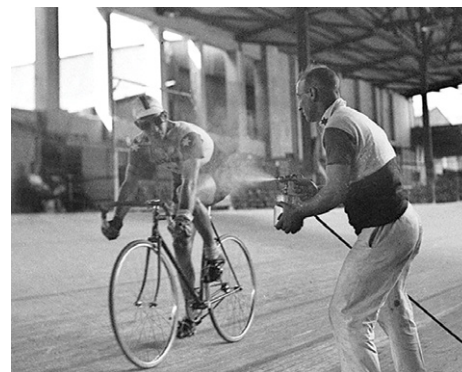
Larke Hoskins moved the production equipment from Camperdown to Surry Hills, and moved its service and spare parts operations from Woolloomooloo to Camperdown.

After removing the cycling boards, a new roof had to be erected over the central area of the old velodrome. Production commenced at Riley St even before the building renovations were completed, and 2,457 Austins were sold that year.

George Caller remembers the old velodrome well. "It was a big space, as you can probably imagine. While they (Larke Hoskins) had it, the seats were still



Austin Eight was launched in 1938, but supplies soon dried up with the war.



In 1940 Hubert Opperman set a 24-hour un-paced world record at Sydney Sports Arena. The photos clearly show the cycling boards, the seating and the roof that only covered the track. The building became Larke Hoskins' main assembly plant in 1947.

around the perimeter. There was plenty of space, so they never worried about pulling them down, they just left them there. In the panel shop it came in handy, because the guys used to store stuff up on the seats."

Post-war Boom and Bust

Sadly, William Bain Larke died on 15 May 1945, just one week after the surrender of Germany and three months before victory in the Pacific. The main directors of Larke Hoskins were then Gordon Allman and Claydon Neave, with Percy Larke as Chairman of the board.

Immediately after the War there was a mad scramble to obtain any cars that were available. Demand soon outstripped supply and many almost new cars were being sold at fantastic profits as people tried to jump the queue.

For its part, Larke Hoskins was turning out Austins as quickly as it could from the Camperdown and then Riley St assembly plants. In 1950 the Austin A40 was the most popular car in Australia, with Larke Hoskins supplying 13,522 for the year and making a record profit of £1 million.

Despite growing competition from the new Holden car, released in November 1948, demand for the A40 continued to grow. In order to meet this demand an all-new building was commenced in Cosgrove Rd, Enfield.

The following year Larke Hoskins became a publically listed company but, with Enfield still under construction, the Menzies-Fadden federal government introduced an anti-inflation budget, which curtailed bank overdrafts, and

brought in severe credit restrictions and increases to sales tax. Sales of new cars fell 80% and Larke Hoskins again found itself in dire economic straits. But the company's reputation of always meeting its obligations and its continued positive outlook for the future, saw its banks and creditors help it through this period.

Enfield

The Enfield factory was completed in late 1952 and production moved over from Surry Hills.

A new joint company, Pressed Metal Corporation, of which 70% was owned by Larke Hoskins and 30% by Larke, Neave & Carter, with Claydon Neave as Managing Director, was formed at the site.

Camperdown became the main service and spare parts distribution centre, while Surry Hills became the store for imported vehicles and pre-delivery centre. Dealerships always collected their vehicles from Surry Hills, rather than from Enfield.

George Caller recalls his first visit to Enfield, before it was completed. "Larke Hoskins always wanted their people to know what went on in the company. At the time there was a flu epidemic, or something like that, going on; anyway, they arranged for everybody in Service to go out to Enfield and they gave us a guided tour around the place, then we all got a jab (needle) and that was my first introduction to Pressed Metal. They had their own wood mill; their own blacksmith's shop. It was a very self-sufficient factory."

Austin A40 and A50/55 production continued at Enfield, the factory even

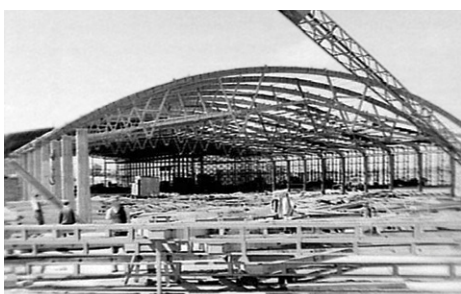
designing and building its own utility versions of the cars. In 1956, Pressed Metal Corp was sub-contracted to build the MGA (see Issue 8) by BMC Australia, which had been formed in 1954 following the 1951 merger of Austin and Nuffield in the UK.

It was around the same time that PMC also got the contract to build the local version of the Morris J2 commercial van. In November the same year Rover announced that PMC would, from 1957, be assembling all Land Rovers for the Australian market. This came about after concerns of inconsistencies in Land Rovers being assembled by various state distributors.

Since 1949 Land Rover's biggest single customer in Australia was the Snowy Mountains Authority (see last issue), but Rover wanted to get its versatile 4x4 into the Australian Army and needed to ensure consistency in build for the whole country. In March 1959 the first Land Rover Series II was supplied to the Australian Army from Pressed Metal, which was to become by far Land Rover's biggest customer here – culminating in the Project Perentie in 1982 (Issue 12). Between 1959 and 1981 some 1,841 Series II, 4,776 Series IIA and 2,303 Series III Land Rovers were supplied to the Army.

However, a minor blow came in 1958 when BMC Australia announced that it would be taking over the assembly of all Austin vehicles, with the exception of the commercial variants, at its Zetland factory.

The disappointment of that decision, though, was softened by BMC Australia buying a 30% stake in Pressed Metal Corp,



Pressed Metal Corporation's new factory at Enfield under construction in 1950.

Photo from the State Library of NSW.



Austin A40 Coupe Utility was designed and built at PMC Enfield.



Austin A50/A55 utility was a successful car for PMC, designed and built at Enfield.

and the assembly of Austin-Healey Sprites from July 1958. Pressed Metal also began assembling Bus bodies for Leyland truck chassis around this time.

A Growing Group

In 1953, Larke Hoskins Ltd had become Larke Hoskins Consolidated Industries and was the parent of 18 companies, employing 1,750 people, with widely diversified interests. These were: A. B. Denning and Co Pty Ltd (busses); Ausfield Ltd; Baur Allman Ltd; Bingham Bros Plastics Pty Ltd; Laneal Services Pty Ltd; Larke Hoskins Pty Ltd; Larke Wholesale Pty Ltd; Lewis Prince Ltd; Lyte Metal Industries Pty Ltd (aluminium ladders); Mastercraft Printing Co Pty Ltd; McIntosh Pty Ltd; Neal Investments Ltd; Pressed Metal Corporation Ltd (70%); Rogers Chain Holdings Pty Ltd; Rydal Steel Ltd; Turin Distributors Pty Ltd (FIAT, Sydney); Willcastle Pty Ltd (FIAT, Melbourne); and William Hiles Ltd.

In the twelve months to April 1955, Larke Hoskins delivered 7,906 vehicles and posted a profit of £169,348. The following year the company realigned its financial year to 30 June and in the fourteen months sold 7,391 cars, for a profit of £230,140. A dividend of 15% per annum was paid to shareholders.

Meanwhile, Larke, Neave & Carter, having sold its share of Pressed Metal Corp to BMCA, still retained a wide-ranging portfolio, including interests in Chrysler and Volkswagen distribution.

Throughout its history, Larke Hoskins and Pressed Metal had promoted from within, rather than employ management from outside. This ensured that senior management was always in tune with the company, its history and its future goals.

The most noted of these was John Martin, who had started as an apprentice with the company in the 1930s and rose to become Managing Director in 1956, on Claydon Neave's retirement.

George Caller said many staff had been with the company for more than 20 years and staff loyalty to the company was always strong. "Larke Hoskins was the best company you could imagine. They looked after their staff in every way. I remember days, when the A40 was in its prime, getting two-weeks pay as a bonus; and if you didn't take your sick leave, you got paid your sick leave as a Christmas bonus, plus other ones in the course of the year, if you achieved target. Sometimes they put on parties in the middle of the year. They'd close the workshop for half a day, put on these massive parties, all your drink, all you could eat, and it wasn't just the staff—the directors would come and mingle. At Christmas time the directors would walk around the workshop and wish everyone a merry Christmas."

"Staff were totally loyal in return. It could get to 4 o'clock and they might say, 'we've got too much work, can you work back late?' and I would have said no worries, and I'd just ring home and say I'd be late."

A Decade of Ups and Downs

In 1961 BMC restructured its distribution network, taking over state distribution in all states from the various outside companies. This had the combined effect of reducing the retail prices of the cars, while increasing the profits for BMCA. Production was also rationalised, so that all cars were only available under one brand and all were sold through combined BMC dealerships—instead of having competing Austin and Morris dealerships.

Larke Hoskins lost its distribution rights for NSW, but retained them for the Sydney metro area and Canberra, and retained distribution for spare parts across the state. From this point on, while still assembling cars for BMC at Pressed Metal, the Larke Hoskins side of the business would be



Inside the main assembly building at Enfield, c1959.
(L to R) Morris J2 van, MG A and Austin A55 utilities. Paintshop is at far right of photo.



John Martin began his working life as an apprentice with Larke Hoskins in the 1930s and became Managing Director. He took over as MD of BLMCA in 1969.

reduced to that of dealerships – though the largest in the state and the major supplier to government contracts, such as NSW Police.

Over the next decade, PMC was kept busy enough but, when capacity allowed, it also took on piecework for outside contractors – not always to do with the motor industry. One of the more unusual contracts was from a Sydney funeral director, Hickey & Co, which in 1962 launched a range of locally-made American Style Metal Caskets, manufactured by Pressed Metal. These caskets were trimmed with custom-made drapery manufactured by Hickey & Co at its Petersham premises and met with great success by funeral homes across the country, until PMC ceased their manufacture in the mid-1970s.

With the introduction of the Mini in 1961, production of Morris Minor commercials, pick-up and van, moved to Pressed Metal; though that ceased after only a couple of years.

1963 saw the MGB being assembled at Enfield (Issue 4), while the Austin-Healey Sprite MkII had begun assembly there the previous year.

Lawrence Hartnett, often described as the father of the Holden car, obtained the importing license for Nissan (Datsun) cars in 1960. In 1966 he negotiated for the Datsun Bluebird model to be assembled



Enfield admin block - c1959.

at Pressed Metal, to service the growing Australian market.

BMC/Leyland Takes Over

1968 was a momentous year for Pressed Metal Corp, with BMC Australia buying the remaining shares from Larke Hoskins. Leyland Motors and British Motor Holdings (BMC + Jaguar) had merged in the UK in January 1968 and the change in management began to take effect in Australia later in the year.

Production of the MGB moved to BMC-Leyland's main factory at Waterloo (Zetland), along with the MG Midget – which replaced the Austin-Healey Sprite for marketing reasons – in the former Spare Parts building, while Spare Parts moved out to a new building at Moorebank.

Later, Jack Plane from Leyland was asked about the purchase of Pressed Metal, which was handling half of Datsun sales in Australia: "What was more natural than that British Leyland should buy the remaining 70 per cent of PMC...and that's what we did. Now we let Japanese sales work for us". Nissan Motor Co was never going to be satisfied with such an arrangement, though, and in the same year Volkswagen in Clayton, Victoria, began assembling Datsuns as well. In 1972 Nissan took over the Volkswagen plant and moved all Datsun production from Pressed Metal there as well.

Larke Hoskins posted a half-year profit to December 1968 of \$315,102; against \$287,788 for the same period in 1967. A big part of this was due to the sale of Pressed Metal to BMC/Leyland

In 1969 Pressed Metal won a contract for NSW Government Transport Department to supply 400 busses, half each of single- and double-decker, worth \$4.5million.

John Martin became Managing Director of British Leyland Motor Corporation (Australia). In 1971 Peter North was



Austin A40, A50 and Morris J2 ready for dealer delivery - c1958.



PMC won a State contract for 400 busses.



Datsun Bluebird was assembled at PMC from 1966 to 1972.

appointed as Finance Director of BLMCA and two years' later took over from Martin as Managing Director. The downfall of the company has been documented in BMCE over the past two years.

This then was basically the situation at Pressed Metal at the time that Leyland's Waterloo factory was permanently closed in December 1974.

The next phase for the Enfield factory was about to begin. 🔍



Enfield, c1975 after closure of Waterloo and transfer of Mini & Moke.



Crisis

The closure of Waterloo

Part 7 - The Fallout (Conclusion)

By Craig Watson

As we detailed in Issue 16, David Abell used the recommendations in the IAC report into the car industry as a scapegoat for the fall in sales of the Leyland P76, and the subsequent parlous state of the company, despite the fact that the downward trend had begun months earlier, since the Government-imposed credit squeeze in May 1974.

We also showed that sales had begun to recover in the months following the release of the report, with the launch of the Targa Florio and the devaluation of the Aussie dollar in August.

But there is even more evidence to support the Government's manipulation of the IAC report to facilitate its objective of removing Leyland as a manufacturer in Australia.

The Japanese Threat

The Whitlam-led Labor Party came into power on 2 December 1972.

Ten days later Nissan Motor Corp of Japan, which had bought a 50% stake in the Motor Producers Ltd plant at Clayton in Melbourne earlier in the year, announced it would spend \$35 million to upgrade the factory. Nissan planned to increase local content of its 180B model to 85%, in order to qualify as a local manufacturer.

On 22 December, Toyota Motor Company, which owned 50% of Australian Motor Industries, announced it would spend \$28 million on expanding its factory at Fisherman's Bend, Melbourne, with the same local content target for the Toyota Corona.

In both cases, this was because of the previous Government's plans to do away with the low-volume assembly provisions, to initiate import quotas and to increase duties by the end of 1974.

However, Jim Cairns, Minister for Secondary Industry, said in an interview that he had "some doubts" about the relatively small Australian market being able to support six carmakers, because of the prevailing stagnation in the industry with the four existing ones.

On 22 February 1973, Cairns confirmed the timeframe for the phasing out of the low-volume scheme, but said there was no guarantee that Nissan or Toyota would be successful in their applications for expanding their Australian operations.

On 19 July the Government announced an immediate reduction in all tariffs by 25%, in an effort to curb inflation.

The Government argued that the reduction in tariffs would drive prices down across the board, including locally made and imported goods.

Local industry leaders slammed the decision, saying it would put Australian industry under even greater pressure, as it tried to compete with cheaper imports.

On 29 August 1973, Whitlam announced that both Toyota and Nissan would be permitted to expand to become local manufacturers.

Interestingly, he also mooted the possibility of the Government-owned Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation to build an "Australian car", but did not supply any details.

In response, representatives from GM-H, Ford, Chrysler and Leyland were unanimous in their opposition to the Japanese companies, saying they could all be in trouble if the Japanese companies took a large share of the small-car market, and they would "be obliged" to seek a reduction in local content requirement.

Tariff Board and IAC

These questions and concerns were put to an inquiry of the Tariff Board in September, to see what should be done with the motor industry.

In December, in response to suggestions from Holden that there was no room for the Japanese makers and that the market was already not profitable enough for the four existing manufacturers, Nissan Australia told the inquiry the entry of additional manufacturers would create no added difficulties, provided local content requirements were not set too high.

On the other side of the debate, Renault Australia, which assembled cars with little local content, told the inquiry that the local content rules should be scrapped altogether and replaced with a series of tariffs, ranging from 5% to 25% for fully-imported cars.

The Department of Supply revealed to the inquiry that it had informed Cabinet that the cost to build a "people's car" at CAC would be around \$250 million and would be an "extremely risky" venture.

Peter North, from Leyland, told the inquiry that tariffs alone were not enough to protect the Australian industry and should be supplemented by quotas on the numbers of imported cars. He also said that Leyland supported high local content, but not as high as the then current 85% and 95% rules.

Eric Clark from Holden, on the other hand, said that import duties could be reduced significantly, depending on the size of imported cars, provided high local content of at least 90% was maintained for Australian made cars.

In the midst of the inquiry, by an act of parliament in January 1974, the Tariff

Board was superseded by and absorbed into the Industries Assistance Commission (IAC), with a broadening of its scope and responsibilities.

According to the official history of the IAC, where the Tariff Board had solely been responsible for advising Government on taxes and duties to best protect local industry, the IAC was; "to account for the Government's desire to 'facilitate adjustment to structural change', while minimising the consequent social and economic hardship."

In other words, the Tariff Board had been established when Government policy was to protect local industry, while the IAC was to facilitate the new Government policy of ending such protection.

It was under this new mandate that the IAC's first report to Government recommended a restructuring of the motor industry, not to influence Government policy, but to implement it.

It was therefore already established Government policy that Leyland Australia was to cease full manufacturing, on the presumption that the country could not sustain four manufacturers, while at the same time encouraging two assemblers, Toyota and Nissan, to expand their operations to become full manufacturers.

So, using the IAC's report, which ignored Nissan and Toyota's expansion plans, and stating the industry could not sustain four manufacturers as its justification, the Government bought Leyland's Waterloo factory and facilitated its move to an assembler and importer.

Meanwhile, in a rare show of solidarity, and no doubt also due to Leyland's urgent need for cash, on 2 October 1974, it was revealed that the company was helping out GMH by stamping six body panels for the new HJ series Holden at the Waterloo factory. "The deal... will keep the 840 press shop workers busy until February next year", the *Canberra Times* reported.

Eight days later came the shock announcement that Leyland's main factory would close by the end of the year.

Wavering Government Policy

Leyland's workers at Waterloo began receiving redundancy payments on 1 November 1974. The same day Joseph Lucas Ltd, the supplier of electrical components to Leyland, announced it would be retrenching 54 workers because of the closure of Waterloo.

Incredibly, on the very same day, the Federal Government invited Nissan and Toyota to visit South Australia, to investigate the feasibility of manufacturing cars there.

"This initiative, far more than any controversy within the Government and pressure from the local motor-vehicle industry, indicates that the Industries



With the Waterloo closure all admin departments moved to Bondi Junction.

Assistance Commission's recommendations on the passenger motor-vehicle industry are defeated", the *Canberra Times* claimed.

On 20 November, in another blow to Leyland, the Government withdrew the preferential duty rates for imported British cars; increasing the import duty on all imported cars from Leyland from 24.75% to 45%.

However, David Abell was able to negotiate "special consideration" for Leyland and although neither he nor the Government would reveal the details, they were believed to be "very generous". *Canberra Times* said that Leyland would be able to import 5,000 cars per annum, instead of the initially imposed figure of 200, but this is not confirmed.

Yet, the contracts for the Government to purchase the Waterloo factory and 782 cars had not actually been signed. In fact, the contracts were not signed until, ironically, Friday 13 December, when the factory officially closed.

Four days later, Holden announced it would be sacking 5,000 workers across Australia in January due to the dramatic fall in car sales over the past few months. The decision was immediately labelled "cruel,



While Design, Engineering and Service departments moved to Moorebank.

insensitive and arrogant" by the Minister for Manufacturing Industry, Kep Enderby – the same person who had just delivered over 3,000 sackings at Leyland.

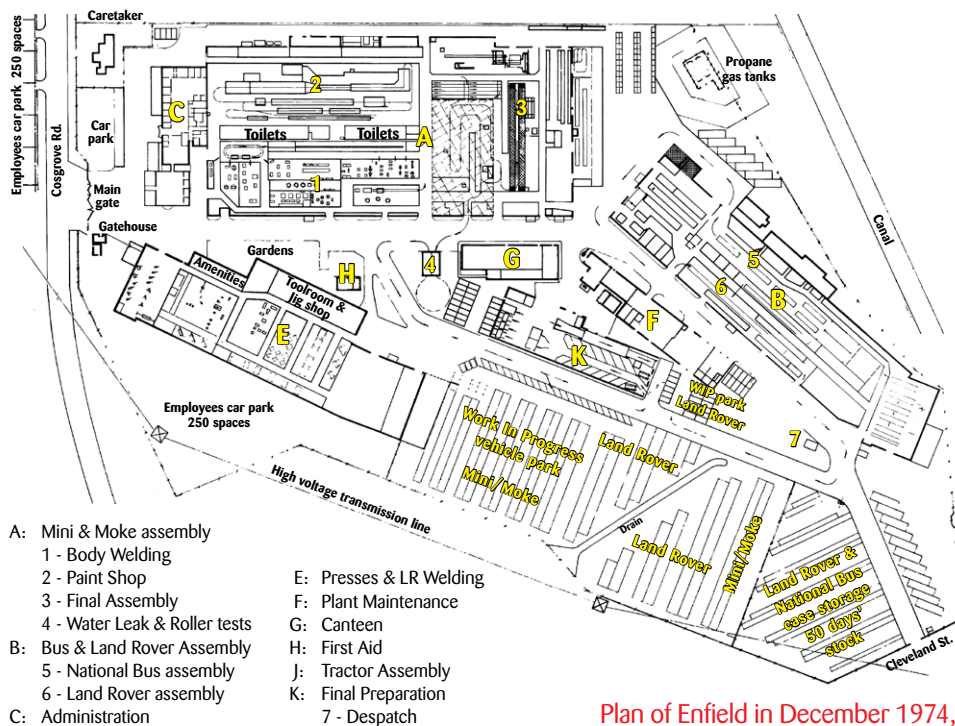
In the second half of 1974, the entire motor industry had suffered a slump in sales, due mostly to the Government imposed credit squeeze. In November, coinciding with the closure of Waterloo and despite having just removed the UK preferential duty rate, sales tax on cars was slashed from 27% to 15%, and severe import restrictions were imposed. The credit squeeze was also lifted. Clearly the Whitlam government was incapable of maintaining a stable policy in terms of the motor industry.

As the *Canberra Times* explained, the net result "proved a temporary bonanza for importers, most of whom had brought in large numbers of cars in anticipation of quota restrictions." The reduction in sales tax also lifted sales of locally made cars to an unexpected level, resulting in record new vehicle registrations for February, March and April.

"Now comes the moment of truth", the paper continued. "Most of the Japanese stocks have been sold and the Government



The computer department at Bondi Junction. Leyland was one of Australia's first companies with a fully-computerised payroll.



Plan of Enfield in December 1974,

is to reimpose sales tax at the rate of an additional 2 per cent per month until the original tax of 27 per cent is reached (September). As stocks fall and the quota system bites, the Japanese share of the market has fallen progressively from an all-time high of 40.1 per cent in January to 34.4 per cent in March."

The Move to Enfield

Prior to the closure of Waterloo, stocks of body panels, suspension, engines, etc to build 1,000 Minis and Mokes were built up and transferred to Leyland's assembly plant, the former Pressed Metal Corporation factory at Cosgrove Rd, Enfield.

To facilitate this move, Land Rover production was moved from the front, or Westerly, building into the rear building, with bus production taking up the other side of the same building. At the rear of the plant was a small production area for Leyland tractors.

Mini and Moke production, which began on 12 March 1975, then took over the entire West building.

Meanwhile, Leyland's design, engineering and service departments were moved out to Moorebank, alongside the spare parts building, while the administration departments moved to rented offices at 332-342 Oxford St, Bondi

Junction, which was renamed Leyland House.

Here were the upper management of the company, the payroll office, computers, sales, advertising and PR departments. These departments would remain in Bondi Junction until 1984 and the restructuring of Jaguar Rover Australia, under a management buy-out, when they were all moved out to Moorebank.

In June 1975, after only a year in the country overseeing Leyland Australia's transition, David Abell returned to the UK to take up a position on the UK board, as director of the new Special Products Division, and George King was appointed Managing Director of Leyland Australia.

That year, Leyland put out a one-off magazine, in conjunction with *Modern Motor* magazine, titled *Leyland & The Future*. In it they spelled out the then current situation at Enfield and plans for future production.

"At that stage by far the plant's largest production was confined to aluminium pressings and assemblies for Land Rover variants", the magazine reported in one article.

"Provision had to be made to instal [sic] a lot of the existing production line equipment from Waterloo, and to introduce new machinery. Not just small

items, but five stamping presses so large that one factory building roof had to be raised twelve feet to accommodate them."

Later in the story, the magazine describes the workforce doing, "everything from pressing the panels to bolting on the last nut".

Although most panels for the Mini were stamped on-site, the larger panels, including roof and floor pressings, were produced under contract by Chrysler in Adelaide. The key exception was the Mini van, which even up to the last run, in late 1978, was getting its unique panels supplied in CKD packs from the UK.

With the transfer of Mini and Moke production, Enfield's workforce grew from 430 to over 900, and was described in Leyland & the Future as being; "a polygot [sic] of nations with people from Lithuania and Latvia to Latin America, the United States to Uruguay [sic] – practically every nationality in the world is represented in the Enfield staff."

British Leyland appointee David Stringfellow was the new Plant Manager charged with bringing the workforce together into a coherent group, and in getting production running smoothly.

"...the Mini move introduced a significant number of the Waterloo people", the magazine reported. "Obviously this introduced some integration problems with two already-developed groups, each of high morale and regard for their expertise compared to the others... In essence the Enfield team seems to be trying to incorporate a multitude of men and women...into a homogenous group which will be proud of what is accomplished."

In June 1975 the five main motor assemblers, which now included Leyland, along with Motor Producers (VW and Nissan), AML (Toyota), Renault and Volvo, banded together to lobby the Government, concerned that the assembly industry could collapse because of Government's emphasis on the manufacturing industry.

In November 1975 came the sacking of the Whitlam government, with the landslide election of the Fraser government in December.

By the end of the following year, both Nissan and Toyota had finalised their factory expansions and joined the ranks of full manufacturers.

Despite all the warnings from the IAC and the industry that Australia couldn't support four manufacturers, we now had five.

Time has shown that without protection the local industry couldn't survive and as from the end of 1977 Australia will have no major manufacturers. However, the



1,000 sets of Mini parts were made before the move over to Enfield.



A new beginning - the first Enfield Mini was completed on 12 March 1975.

country does still have a number of small niche-market manufacturers, particularly in the off-road and military sectors.

Return to Profit

David Abell promised that Leyland Australia would return to profit by the end of 1975.

On 15 July 1975 the *Canberra Times* revealed that Leyland was again making money. "Leyland Australia, which last financial-year lost about \$26 million, is now operating profitably. The Sydney-based company, has been making money since February. Leyland's acting managing director, Mr John Kay, said in Sydney yesterday, "The present financial position represents one of the most dramatic commercial turnarounds in the history of Australian private enterprise".

Sales of the Mini and Moke had been steadily improving, but the greatest impact was reported to be from sales of imported cars, particularly Jaguar which, though in a higher price bracket and selling in much smaller numbers, was bringing greater profit margins.

The company's bottom line received a major boost on 4 August, when it signed a deal with the Australian Army to supply 3,000 Land Rovers over the next six years. This was reported at the time to be "One of the largest peace-time vehicle contracts ever considered in Australia."

The following year showed more improvement. In March the Coalition government announced that although import duties on cars, either built-up or for assembly, would remain unchanged until the end of 1977, import quota restrictions would be lifted by the end of 1976.

In May, Leyland opened a new bus assembly plant in South Australia to meet a \$10 million contract with the South Australian Transport Authority, and a smaller contract with the Education Department.

However, in some areas sales slipped, so Leyland reportedly slashed up to \$715 off the price of some of its imported cars and offered truck operators and farmers cash rebates of up to \$300 to try to stimulate sales.

According to Pedr Davis in December; "There may be a lesson here for other manufacturers. By reducing the price on the Triumph Dolomite range (released in October 1975 at \$6,400 and \$7,700 for the Sprint) Leyland Australia has almost doubled sales. It now makes much less profit per car, but is doing nicely overall, and making a profit for the first time in years. It has taken the Dolomite just one year to become the company's best-selling import. The timeless Mini, locally assembled at Enfield, NSW continues to provide the bread and butter, but the



One-off magazine was designed to restore confidence in the company.

Dolomite range, followed by the Triumph 2500TC, Jaguar and Daimler, adds the honey."

On 20 November, the Managing Director of British Leyland in the UK, Alex Park, was quoted as saying that the performance of Leyland Australia for the past financial year was "like Phoenix rising from the ashes." Leyland's market share was only around 3% of the overall car market, but again a high proportion of that came from higher-margin imported vehicles.

Leyland was also expanding its export operations, particularly with Moke into numerous Pacific countries, and buses which were proving popular in India.

On 18 March 1977, the *Canberra Times* reported that Leyland Australia had recorded a profit in the 15 months to December 1976 of \$2.85 million. This was "in sharp contrast to the loss of \$1.19 million incurred in the previous 12 months ended September 30, 1975, and the net deficit of \$23.54 million suffered in the year before that", the paper said. "Despite the improvement, the company has a long way to go to offset the accumulated losses which stood at \$59.6 million at the September 1975, balance date."

"The return to profit, which was achieved on sales that jumped by 43.67 per cent from \$119.4 million to \$171.5 million, was managed despite a hefty increase



National Bus was another success story.



The target of 10,000 Minis per year at Enfield was met for the first two years.

in interest payments from \$1.9 million to \$4.2 million."

"The latest result excludes abnormal profits of \$4.77 million from the settlement of transactions with other companies in the British Leyland group relating to earlier years."

"It also excludes an extraordinary profit of \$738,000 (previously a loss of \$8.4 million) resulting from the closure of its Waterloo plant...The costs associated with the closure and losses on the sale of plant, equipment and inventories were responsible for huge extraordinary losses in the previous two years."

"The managing director of Leyland, Mr Frank Andrew (who was appointed in Feb 1976), said that the latest results were very encouraging and reflected the outcome of a general improvement in almost every area of the business.

"Our policy is to concentrate on those areas of the vehicle industry in which we believe we have particular expertise – that is, the assembly of the Mini range and Land-Rover, the production of tractors and trucks and the importing of luxury and specialist vehicles."

Unfortunately, the full impact of the Japanese car makers, particularly those now manufacturing in Australia, was yet to be felt.



Enfield supplied 3,000 Army Land Rovers.

Minor Response

Words and photos by Craig Watson.

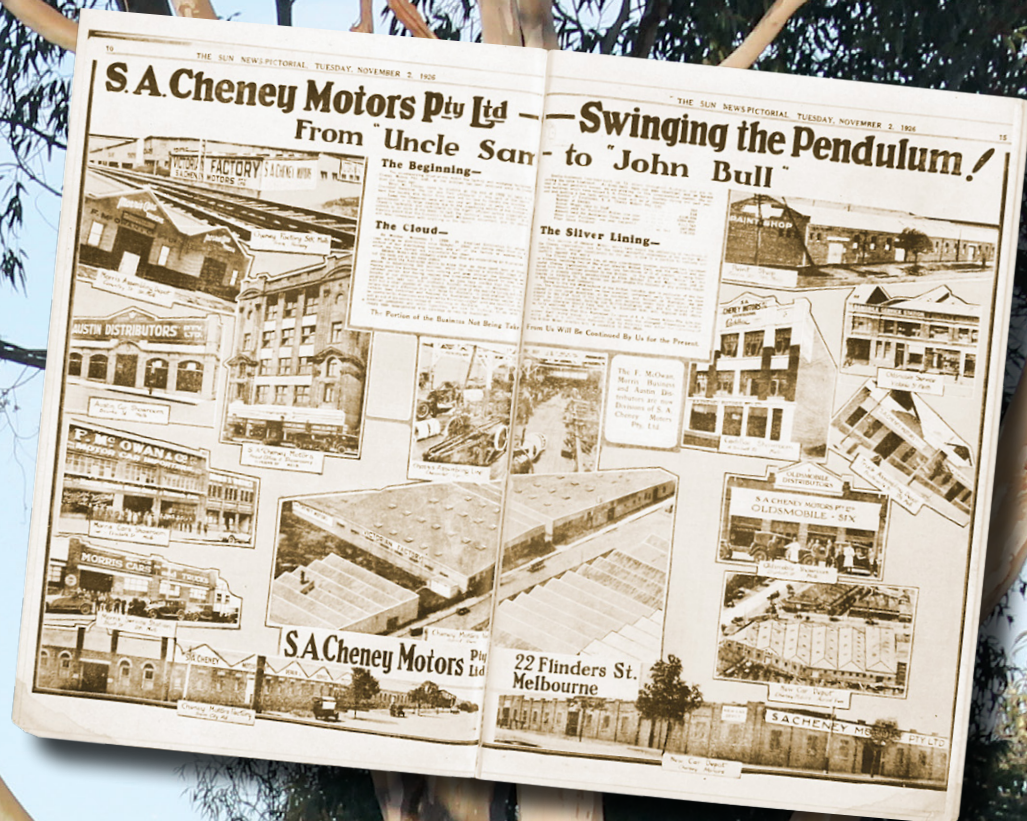


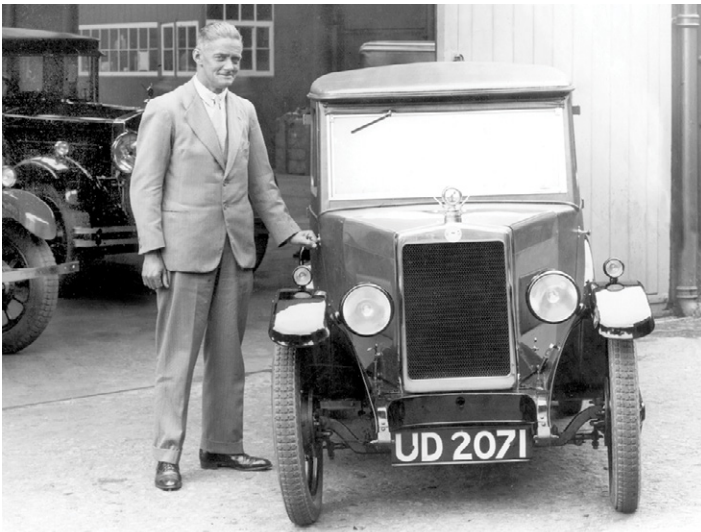
The Morris Minor of 1928 was Morris Motors' response to the very successful Austin 7.

In Australia, it helped to boost S. A. Cheney's response to losing a lucrative business to General Motors.

For both, though, much would change in November 1929.







William Morris with prototype Morris Minor.



SA Cheney (right) welcomes Morris to Melbourne in 1928.

By 1926 Sydney Albert (SA) Cheney was running a very profitable business in Melbourne as the agent for Chevrolet, Oldsmobile and Cadillac across Victoria and the Riverina. To cater for the increasing sales volume he had built a large assembly plant in City Rd, Sth Melbourne and was turning out 600 cars per month.

Chevrolet was the largest selling brand in Victoria, but when General Motors bought Cheney's assembly plant later that year, Cheney was advised that his distributorship would be restricted to the Melbourne metropolitan area, which meant sacrificing a very lucrative country dealer network.

Cheney was furious. He travelled to England and had talks with both William Morris and Herbert Austin. Both were already represented in Victoria – Morris through F. McOwan & Co; Austin through Austin Distributors – but both accepted Cheney's proposals.

Cheney returned to Melbourne and bought both distributorships, as well as William Brothers in Sydney (Morris dealers). He also set up a new company in South Australia to distribute Morris cars, SA Cheney Motors South Australia.

On 2 November, Cheney ran a double-page advertisement in Melbourne newspapers, stating his company was "Swinging the pendulum from Uncle Sam to John Bull" and explaining his decision.

Two days later, he announced through

the press the floatation of S A Cheney Motors Pty Ltd, with a capital of £500,000, which would become a holding company for three subsidiaries: Morris Cars & Trucks Ltd; Austin Distributors Ltd; and a third to handle the selling of Chevrolet cars in the Melbourne area.

On 6 November a news report quoted Cheney's response to the Australian Prime Minister's statement at the Olympia Motor Show in London, that British companies "had not a vestige of an idea of what Australia desired".

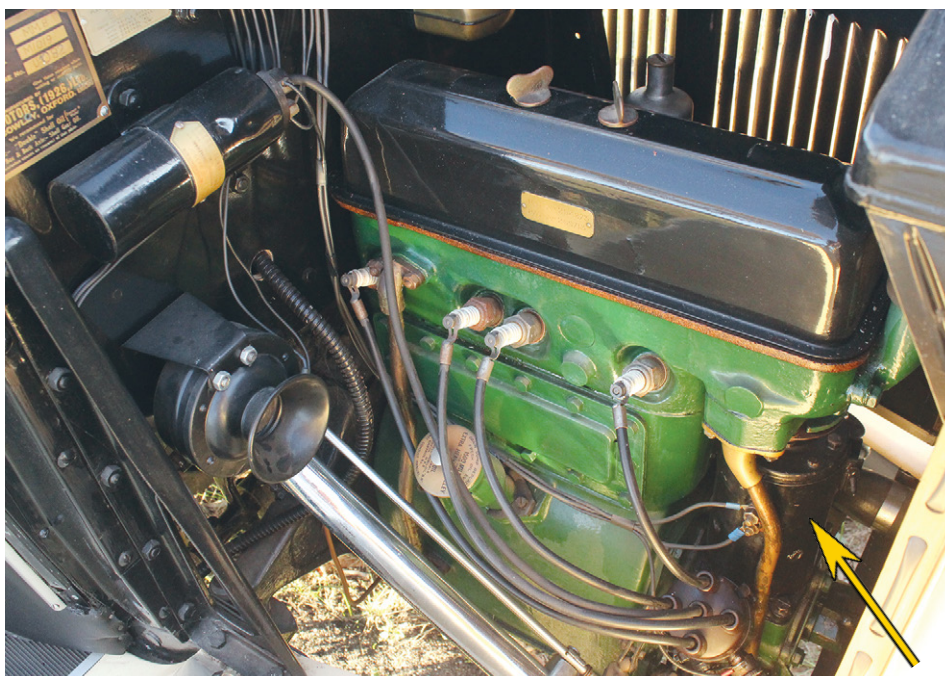
"We have made a complete change over from American to British cars, transferring our assembling works and shops, covering 232,000 square feet of floor space", Cheney said. "We have agreed with General Motors to forfeit £30,000 over-riding commission in order to make a clean break. We have ordered 1,000 Morris cars and trucks for shipment in January, and at great cost have acquired two of the largest British distributing businesses in Victoria, thus evidencing our complete confidence in British products."

Cheney's newspaper advertising was so successful that 971 cars were sold in the first month alone.

Better Products

But Cheney knew that the cars from Morris weren't robust enough to stand up to rural Australian conditions in the same way as the American products. The response from Morris engineers to his



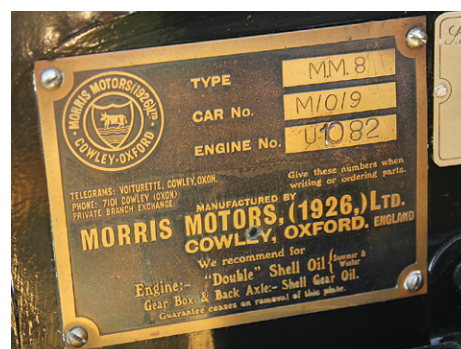


criticisms was simply that the cars were perfectly suited to English roads and that they should be just as suited to colonial roads. In fact, 248 Empire Oxford chassis, ostensibly designed for the colonial markets but never tested in the actual countries they were intended for, had already arrived in Melbourne, but Cheney refused to accept them, saying they were completely unsuited to Australian conditions.

In comparison, Cheney didn't seem to have such concerns with the Austin products; even the diminutive Austin 7, which was selling in large numbers.

Cheney invited William Morris to Melbourne in 1928 to open his new head office, christened Morris House, and to see the difficulties with local road conditions for himself.

After the building opening Cheney organised a tour to outer lying areas of Melbourne in three Morris cars, two Empire Oxfords and probably a flat-nose Cowley, for William Morris, two of his engineers from England, including chief body designer Mr H Seaward, and members of Cheney's staff. The two Empire Oxfords suffered broken axles from the rough roads and Morris vowed to rectify the problem at the factory. The 248 Empire Oxford



Morris Minor production line, UK, c1929.

chassis were sent back to England and were scrapped.

The result was the “World Model” Morris Isis Six, which was far more suited, but also considerably more expensive (see Issue 14) than its predecessor.

The Morris Minor

At the other end of the scale, William Morris was under increased pressure from his management team to combat the Austin 7 which, since its launch in 1922, had dominated the 7-8hp car market and literally caused a shift in the market toward smaller cars.

While Morris's larger cars were still selling in increasing numbers, they were rapidly losing overall market share – according to former Managing Director of Morris Motors, Sir Miles Thomas, declining from a peak of 41% in 1925 to below 30% in 1928.

Eventually, Morris acted and put the project in the hands of the Wolseley company, which he had acquired for £730,000 of his own money in 1927, after it had slid into receivership. William Morris reportedly felt that the engineers at Morris Motors were not up to the task of creating an all-new small car.

The result, announced in May 1928 and officially released at the Olympia Motor Show in October, was the Morris Minor; “a large car in miniature”. Built on a basic but sturdy channel-section ladder chassis, it featured conventional leaf springs front and rear, as well as dampers on all four wheels. As a result, the Minor drove and handled in a conventional manner, rather than the somewhat “eccentric” cornering that could be experienced in the baby Austin.





Initially only available in fabric-bodied four-seater tourer or saloon versions, at £125 and £135 respectively (undercutting the Austin 7 by around 10%), they were available only in blue or brown.

A Troublesome Engine

At the heart of the Minor was an all-new, single overhead camshaft engine of 847cc, designed by Oliver Boden at Wolseley. As Jon Pressnell explains in *Morris: The Cars and the Company*; "Looked at in general terms, this was hardly a sensible choice for a low-cost car, such an engine inevitably costing more to produce than a simple side-valve design."

"But there was a more specific failing", Pressnell continues. "The overhead camshaft was driven by shaft and bevel with a shaft that went through the centre of a vertically-mounted dynamo, serving at the same time as the armature of the generator. This was conceptually neat, but left the dynamo prey to being drowned in oil."

In his autobiography, *Out on a Wing*, Miles Thomas stated; "The first Morris Minor was a troublesome baby." Leonard Lord, then a production engineer with Wolseley, quickly designed a side-valve version of the engine, which was much cheaper to produce and proved more reliable in service.

This was first presented in a stripped-out two-seater version of the Minor, with no bumpers or separate sidelights,

the radiator surround painted instead of nickel-plated, and narrower wheels – and selling for only £100 on its release in December 1930.

Cost cutting is generally the accepted reason for the side-valve engine, but the oil problem with the vertical dynamo and the timing of the Great Depression played important parts as well. It is important to note that the economic effects of the Depression in the UK were generally not as severe as in the US, Canada or Australia, particularly in the Midlands, and the motor industry actually grew in this period. The motor industry in Britain was dominated by Austin, Morris and Ford, all of which put much emphasis on their cheap "people's cars". The number of cars on British roads actually doubled in the decade before the Second World War.

Thanks to the cost savings, particularly with the engine, Morris was making more from the £100 Minor than from the standard versions.

By April 1931, all short wheelbase versions of the Minor were using the side-valve engine, with the final long-wheelbase models losing the ohc engine at the end of 1932.

The Minor continued in production, with numerous changes, until being replaced by the Morris Eight (Morris 8/40 in Australia – see Issue 6) in late 1934.

A total of 86,310 Minors had been made over six years, giving an average of around

14,000 per year; of which 39,083 were overhead-cam models and 47,227 were side-valves.

Heading Down Under

Also revealed at Olympia, alongside the Minor, was the sporty MG 8/33 version, that would later become known as the M-type Midget, priced at £175. However, while customers had to wait until March 1929 for the MG, the Minor was available from its release at the show.

Morris ensured that all dealerships in the UK had stocks of the car in time for its October release, and by the end of the year over 2,000 chassis had been completed. This meant that chassis were arriving in Australia by the end of the year, and completed cars were available from early February.

The first appearance of a Minor in Australia was in the last days of the Sydney Motor Show in January. KC Krane, motoring correspondent for the *Sydney Evening News*, claimed to have been the first newspaperman to have ridden in and driven a Minor on 16 January – the assembly of which he said had only been completed on that day, before the car was taken to the Motor Show. But according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* the following day, two completed cars had been rushed out for the show and were driven straight from the docks.

The Minor four-seater tourer was priced at £199 (about GB£170 at the time), as was the van version, while the saloon was £240.

According to records quoted by the Vintage Minor Register (VMR) in the UK (www.vintageminor.co.uk) 1,845 Minor





Current owner Richard McKellar.

chassis, from a total of 2,039 chassis, were exported to Australia – 1,135 in 1929; 700 in 1930; 10 in 1931. There is no record of complete cars exported to Australia.

Metal-bodied coachbuilt versions of the Minor were available in the UK from September 1929, so it is reasonable to assume they were available in Australia from shortly afterwards. Of course, with most or all bodies being supplied locally, the timing may have been very different.

Certainly, like most models, Minors were available in a wider range of colours than in the UK, where production costs had been further reduced by only providing one colour.

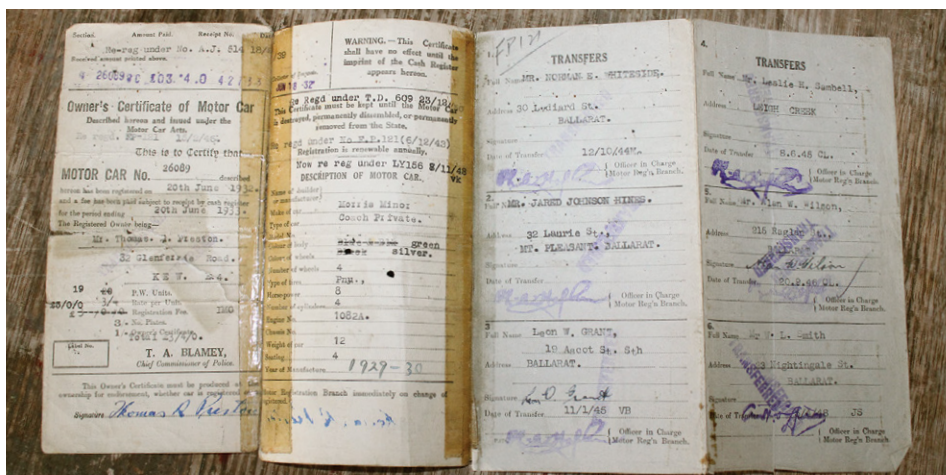
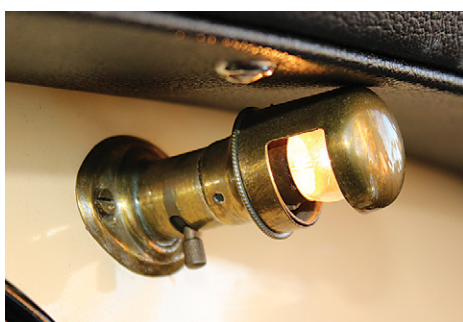
Things appeared to be going well for Cheney and for the Morris Minor in Australia, but then came the Wall St crash on "Black Tuesday", 29 October 1929.

The bottom fell out of the Australian car market overnight and SA Cheney found himself asset rich, but owing hundreds of thousands of pounds and with sales down by over 80%.

SA Cheney Motors went into voluntary liquidation. According to Harold H. Paynting and Malcolm Grant in *Wheels In Victoria*; "Mr Cheney in 1930 had a stock liability in excess of two million pounds tied up in Morris and Austin chassis. He employed an extra fifty salesmen to help reduce the stock and then sold the Morris Franchise and all stock to Lanes Motors."

Mann's Motors bought the Morris franchise in Adelaide, while William Brothers reacquired the franchise in Sydney. Austin Distributors was taken over by the Austin Motor Company in England.

So, the Morris Minor was only sold through Cheney's between February 1929 and early 1930, making one a rare beast.



Feature Car

Our featured Minor is one of these early Cheney-supplied cars and is the oldest known to exist in the southern hemisphere, and the fifth-oldest known in the world.

Chassis number MM8 M1019, with engine number U1082 A, was completed on 3 December 1928, but it is not known if the car was bodied in England or Australia. Odds are in favour of the latter, because of the Australian Government's requirement of three imported chassis for every complete car.

It is currently owned by Richard and Bill McKellar, who regular readers would be familiar with as the owners of the Morris Minor Garage in Harcourt, Vic.

Richard said that when they bought the car, in 2008, it was because they wanted a pre-War Minor, but they were not aware of the car's significance until after they got it.

"We joined the VMR, which is the Vintage Minor Register in the UK", Richard explained. "We told them it was a 1928 Morris Minor and provided the details, and they came back and told us it was the oldest in the southern hemisphere, and they were quite excited by it."

Richard and Bill bought the car from Clive Carmichael in Castlemaine, who had owned it since 1965 when he lived in

Ballarat, and had completely restored it not long before selling it. Clive had written to BMC in the UK when he first bought the car to get any information. A reply from R J Hazel (Service Technical Department – Export) was unable to shed any more light, other than it was in fact built in 1928.

A somewhat dishevelled logbook (above) came with the car, which shows 21 owners between 1932 and 1965. In May 1932 it was owned by a Mr Thomas Preston from the Melbourne suburb of Kew. By June 1944 it had been through a further eleven owners in Melbourne, at least two of which were probably dealers, judging by the short periods they owned it.

In October 1944 the car was owned by a Mr Norman Whiteside in Ballarat, and it remained in Ballarat, through another eight owners, until it was bought by Clive Carmichael.

Photos supplied with the car (below) show an unusual saloon body, probably home-built judging by its crudity. This is how Clive received the car and apparently how it remained until he removed it for the restoration.

Beyond that, nothing is known of the history of this car. But as Richard said, "We weren't at all interested in how old the car was, we just thought it would be good to have a vintage Minor for the collection. Its history is just a bonus."



Refined Therapy



Words and photos by Patrick Quinn

With wind-up windows and a proper convertible hood, the BJ7 was more refined and comfortable than earlier models. This one proved to be perfect therapy for its owner.

Released in March 1959, the Austin-Healey 3000 won instant praise with its improved acceleration and front disc brakes. However, externally it was virtually indistinguishable from its predecessor, the 100/6. Fitted with twin HD6 SU carburettors, the engine in the 3000 produced 124bhp, against its forbear's 117bhp, which was enough to propel it to 115mph (185kph).

From the introduction of the six-cylinder Austin-Healey the marque was earning a reputation in the most unlikely of

sporting arenas, the international rallying stage. Prepared by the BMC Competitions Department the 3000's frequent class successes were eagerly publicised by the marketing people and especially two outstanding outright victories – the 1960 Liege-Rome-Liege rally by Pat Moss/Ann Wisdom and the 1961 Alpine Rally by the Morley brothers.

At the time, rallying's homologation rules allowed manufacturers to change the type of carburettors fitted to the cars, but not the number of carburettors. March 1961 saw the release of the Austin-Healey 3000 Mk2, fitted with triple HS4 SU carburettors, along with a number of minor mechanical changes.

Externally, save for a new vertical-slatted grille, it was indistinguishable from the

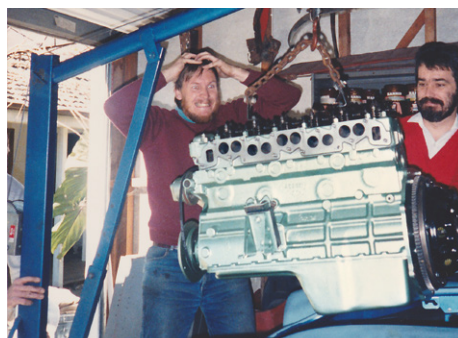
earlier model. While it provided for only an additional 8bhp in the standard car, it did allow for the competition cars to be fitted with triple Weber carburettors.

While under the bonnet of the Mk2 looked impressive, there was a perception that the triple SUs were difficult to keep in tune. This was especially prevalent in the US, the Austin-Healey's biggest market.

Globally, the sports car market was changing, too, with buyers looking for a little extra comfort. Cars such as the Alfa Romeo Giulietta Spider, Sunbeam Alpine and Triumph TR4 all had wind-up windows. By the end of 1961 the Austin-Healey was probably the only car of its type (apart from BMC's big-seller, the MGA) that was not fitted with wind-up windows or an easy to erect convertible soft-top.



When bought from Melbourne in 1985.



Don't Drop The Engine!



The car taking shape nicely.



Additionally the demand for the two-seater Austin-Healey was on the wane. So much, that during the whole production period of the Mk2 roadster only 355 were produced, against 5,096 of the BT7 2+2. As happens, the 3000 Mk2 BN7 is today one of the most sought after of the roadster models.

A True Convertible

January 1962 saw the first small batches of the new Austin-Healey 3000 Mk2 BJ7 Sports Convertible (to give it its full title) but, interestingly, the roadster version continued in production through to June of the same year.

Surprisingly, the car was still called the Mk2, despite some significant changes. The differences were obvious. Gone were the erecta-kit soft-top and sidescreens – the big difference was the convertible soft-top that could be raised and lowered without the driver or passenger having to leave their seats. There were also a new wraparound windscreen, wind-up door windows and quarter vents. The BJ7 was also only available as a 2+2.

Apart from the obvious changes to the doors and the loss of the handy pockets, inside the cockpit of the BJ7 was little changed from the earlier model. Continued was the sculptured metal dash and parcel shelf underneath, both of which could be traced back to the very first of the four-cylinder Austin-Healeys.

Under the bonnet the triple carbs were replaced by twin HS6 1¾" SUs, but a new camshaft profile resulted in a negligible loss in top-end power.

Today, many buyers prefer the BJ7 over the following BJ8, because it provides similar waterproof comfort from the convertible top and wind-up windows, but has the traditional-look Austin-Healey dash from the earlier models.

The BJ7 stayed in production through to September 1963, with 6,113 made (just over 8% of the total 73,004 Big Healeys), and the following month brought the release of the 3000 Mk3 BJ8. This gave the occupants a timber dash to look at and even a lockable glovebox to play with. However, the story of the BJ8 is best left for another time.

Good Therapy

Allan Whitehouse is an enthusiastic BJ7 owner, having bought the car in late 1985. Back then he was experiencing one of life's difficulties, when an Austin-Healey owning good friend suggested that he needed something to take his mind off things, and even located the perfect project for Allan to spend his hours and his money on.

Allan is quite mechanically minded and it certainly seemed like the perfect solution to see him through his troubled days. "It was in Victoria, so I went to have a look at it", he recalled.

"It was just full of rust and in fact I can't recall when I had seen so many holes where metal had once been. So I took a whole stack of photos and came back to Sydney. Needless to say my friend said that it was a fantastic car and exactly what I needed. I remember thinking quite the opposite, but eventually did a deal and had the car shipped to Sydney."

"The car was in such a state that it needed a full restoration, as not only was it red, but rusty and left-hand-drive. It really required some effort, which was exactly what I needed at the time."

"I bought it from Steve Pike at Marsh Classic Restorations," Allan continued. "Steve had brought it in from the US, which was quite the go at the time and since. I tried to find out its history in the US, but I couldn't get anywhere. It looked as if it had been left out in the open for quite some time, with the trim damaged and the body terrible. However, it was complete, well at least as far as I could tell. I had Steve do a little bit of the repair work, including some to the panels, while I did the rest when it got to my home."

"Looking back it was interesting, as I recall showing it off to a very good friend who I worked with. He said that if it was his he would take it straight to the tip. It certainly didn't look pretty, but to me I could see the potential and it didn't daunt me. I knew mechanically I could do most of the work myself, but also knew that I couldn't do the trim and especially not the bodywork, as I'm not a panel beater or spray painter."

"Some time later, when it was going, painted and trimmed, I took the car passed his place and he just couldn't believe how something could be transformed from when he first saw it."

Chassis

Today, Austin-Healey restorers are well catered for, from the smallest part through to a complete chassis. But, it's what's under





Electric washer looks "factory".

the bodywork with an Austin-Healey that really counts, so I asked Allan what was needed for his BJ7.

"Not a complete chassis!" Came the response. "It needed chassis outriggers, floors, boot floor and sills. Now we see it all as the normal things for a project car that's come from the US. Basically the restoration took four and a half years as pressures at work and time available meant that it took longer than I would have liked. Even when I first registered the car the paint hadn't been done and the trim still wasn't finished."

"Mechanically it needed quite a bit of work. The engine, while it ran, wasn't the best and amazingly the gearbox and overdrive were in good condition. So all that was rebuilt, as was the suspension throughout, plus new steering and idler boxes during the conversion to right-hand-drive."

Allan said he didn't deliberately set out to buy a BJ7, as back then he really didn't know the difference between the models. "My first car was a Sprite Mk1 and I did a lot of mechanical work on that. So I knew that basically they were agricultural cars, but I was being guided by people who said that it was a suitable car for me. Looking back, it was absolutely ideal. As to whether it had a convertible hood and wind-up windows I actually didn't know until after I bought it, but then after talking to people I came to realise the significance of the model. The whole process of restoring the car I found incredibly satisfying and, as I said, it came at the right time. Being that sort of person, I really enjoyed the step by step process of blasting the chassis, sourcing the parts, painting etc. It wasn't a professional restoration, but I did the best I could."



Allan Whitehouse loves his BJ7.

On buying the car, Allan joined the Austin-Healey Owners Club of New South Wales and soon became deeply involved in the club. "Not long after I joined I took on a couple of positions on the committee, such as secretary for a few years and later as editor. Occasionally I would organise day trips of interest for members. All this I also found to be most enjoyable and a wonderful diversion from other things that were happening in my life. Along the way I also got to know a fantastic group of friends."

Built to Drive

"During the restoration I certainly didn't want to make it into a competition car," Allan added. "I had done some rallying in other cars some years back. I have a fairly competitive nature and knew that if I tried to race the car, I would be overenthusiastic and cause some damage. Now I enjoy touring and decided that whatever I did to the car would be with touring in mind and making it more enjoyable to drive. These things included a Denis Welch alloy cylinder head, telescopic shock absorbers, electronic ignition and a 3.5:1 differential to give it longer legs."

"Originally, when I had the engine rebuilt I had it taken out to 3.3lt with larger 2" SUs along with a bigger camshaft. However, the difficulty I found was that with the siamesed cylinders it blew a number of head gaskets. Being fully balanced it certainly ran well, but during one run a gudgeon pin came loose and scored one

of the cylinders. I wasn't able to repair that cylinder so decided to have the engine overhauled with it re-sleeved back to three-litres. Since then it's been running perfectly and I must say that it has enough power for what I want to use it for. It's comfortable on the road with plenty of torque and it handles well."

"Being an older car it does need occasional work," Allan admitted. "Just recently I had the overdrive rebuilt after it started making funny noises. I took the gearbox out, separated the overdrive and once I emptied all the bits of metal decided that it needed overhauling. Now it works perfectly and in doing so it stopped all the oil leaks coming from the gearbox."

"I don't do a huge amount of maintenance on the car, because it's not driven all that much. Of course every time I use the car the oil is checked and it's all changed every six-months or so. To be truthful, Austin-Healeys are not a very sophisticated motor car and don't require a great deal. Mechanically they are easy to look after, but having said that I have lost a bit of interest in jacking the car up and crawling around underneath. Now I get someone else to do it for me so I can enjoy the car when I want to."

"I have done a couple of unusual things to the car, like fitting LED lights to the instruments because the originals were just hopeless. The original windscreen washer was much the same so I installed an electronic windscreen washer. There are





BJ7 was first Austin-Healey with wind-up windows and a truly easy to erect hood.

also LEDs in the side and indicator lights, because they are much brighter and draw less power."

Not satisfied with having his BJ7 to enjoy and tinker with Allan decided that he would add another Austin-Healey to his garage, an early BJ8, with the intention of a similar rebuild. "I had a bit of work done on the car, but then my attention was drawn elsewhere and I ended up selling it. I decided that one car was enough for me."

Social Touring

"Since its restoration I have been to a number of interstate rallies, more so earlier than lately, all over the eastern seaboard including South Australia, plus lots of trips all round NSW. Sometimes it's just as nice just to take a run to the beach for lunch. Being fully registered, some days it's just a matter of hopping into it and going for a drive."

Allan is a regular entrant in the annual Charlie's Run, which was started by a previous president of the NSW club, who is sadly no longer with us, and this year celebrated its 21st run

"It's a great event." Allan enthused. "It's really good to catch up with friends that you may not have seen since the last event twelve months previously. As everyone isn't driving too far each day, it's a very relaxing time and great to get together

each afternoon and evening for the social part of it all."

Allan intends to continue enjoying the car, but recently had trouble with both hips, finding it very difficult to get in and out of the Healey. One solution would have been to sell the car, but that wasn't on the agenda, as Allan revealed. "Fortunately, I made the right decision to have both hips replaced and keep the car. I have no intentions of parting with it anytime soon, but no doubt the day will come when physically, emotionally and mentally I will reach the point that I want to see it go to someone who will appreciate it. However I can't see that happening just yet."

"I still enjoy driving with the top down and we travel to wherever we can. About the only time the top goes up is when it's very, very hot, or pouring with rain. It comes down to the joy of driving and it's an attractive car, gets lots of comment; such as the bloke wanting to swap me his Kombi van, along with his kids and wife, for the car."

"I would love to do it all again, if I was younger and knew then what I know now. Every time I see a car that's going back together with the chassis lovely and clean, parts are all clean I think that I would love to be doing that again. That's a wonderful and very satisfying thing to do and see."



Austin-Healey by the Numbers

It can get a bit confusing trying to differentiate between the various Austin-Healey models, which to the casual observer are as clear as mud.

The early four-cylinder cars had the nomenclature of BN1 and BN2. In Austin-speak, B was engine size 2000cc to 2999cc (all Big Healeys fall in this category); N is for two-seater; and the number simply means the first or second model. Easy.

The 100/6 was introduced in 1956 and titled BN4, but it was a 2+2. This was remedied a little, two years later, with the introduction of the BN6; a true two-seater. However, these were still sold alongside the 2+2 BN4.

March 1959 saw a little clarity with the introduction of the 3000. If you wanted a 2+2 you bought a BT7 (T = 4-seater tourer), but if all you needed was enough room for you and a close friend the BN7 two-seater would suit.

It all remained quite straightforward for about two years, until the next model, the 3000 Mk2, was introduced. The earlier car was then retrospectively known as the 3000 Mk1 and the new Mk2 continued to be available in either BT or BN configurations. Simple enough, but the cars were still known as BT7 and BN7 despite being a different model.

This continued through to January 1962 when the next model was introduced. Did the brainiacs at Longbridge and Abingdon think it through when they continued to use the term 3000 Mk2 or, to give its full title, Austin-Healey 3000 Mk2 BJ7 Sports Convertible?

The letter 'J' makes it perfectly clear: meaning that it's an occasional four-seat convertible (that is, a 2+2).

October 1963 saw the release of the final Austin-Healey model, the BJ8, which stayed in production through to the end of 1967, when one would hope everyone understood what the numbers all meant - and yes, it's a 2+2.

The 100S model (detailed last issue) never saw the inside of the Austin factory and its number prefix reflects this, being AHS. But the 100M model (Issue 9) was essentially a modified BN2 and there is nothing in its designation to give the game away.

I hope you've got all that - you will be tested later.



Nothing to show this BN2 is a 100M.

Faded & Forgotten

Words and modern photos by Alistair Ferguson



Curiosity over a childhood memory led to two years of amateur detective work to uncover a derelict Land Rover with an auspicious past, and a quest to see it restored.

I was in my Rover 75, on a bumpy farm track, but nothing would stop me now. At the second gate I decided to walk, and it was only a short distance before I could make out a distinctive and familiar shape near the crest of the rise.

There it was, with one of the trailers standing faithfully behind it, in the shadow of a large gum tree, in the company of a dozen Hereford cattle grazing on the hill.

As I walked across the paddock towards the black and green bodies my first feeling was relief that although they appeared very sad and unloved, they are still intact. The flat tyres were causing the body to list, and the rims were sinking into the ground. The bright paintwork had faded and was peeling, while the black had turned to a matt finish, making it look drab. The red and yellow paint that highlighted the features is all but gone.

But that didn't lessen my excitement about what I had found; after nearly two years of hunting, chasing a trail of crumbs discovered through hours of painstaking

research, questioning locals and following up on possible leads.

Before taking a closer look, I stood for a moment and thought about the significance, in my eyes at least, of the dilapidated little train in front of me.

Early History

Australia's first railway, a horse-drawn tramway, was built between Goolwa, near the mouth of the Murray River, and Port Elliot in 1854. It was built to link the wool and wheat trade from the river to the port, to avoid the treacherous river mouth.

In the mid-1860s, the line was extended to Port Victor, a former whaling centre later

renamed Victor Harbor, on the Fleurieu Peninsular, south of Adelaide, in the sheltered lee of Granite Island.

A few years later the tramway was extended across the causeway to the island, to service larger trading ships. However, with the expansion of the much faster overland rail services between Melbourne and Adelaide and the major river ports, the trade via Goolwa and Victor Harbour dried up by the early 1890s.

By this time, though, Victor Harbor had become a popular tourist destination for the people of Adelaide, and tourism became a major industry of the town.



Photo courtesy National Trust Museum Victor Harbor

The original Granite Island tourist train, pulled by a Massey-Ferguson tractor, in 1956.



Short-wheelbase Series II Land Rover replaced the tractor in 1966.

A horse-drawn passenger tramway across the Granite Island causeway was established on 27 December 1894, using a double-ended double-decker tramcar built in England by Brown Marshall of Birmingham.

A second car was used between 1910 and 1925, while two more from the closed Moonta Tramway on the York Peninsular arrived in 1931.

The Victor Harbor tramway continued to be operated until the mid-1950s by the Honeyman brothers, George and younger brother Frank, under a contract with South Australian Railways.

Following a dispute with the city mayor over £3,000 worth of essential repairs to the Causeway, and disillusioned at the lack of support for the service from the council, Frank decided to retire in 1954 and the council put the service up for tender. It failed to attract a bid.

The owner of the Granite Island kiosk operated the tramway during the summer of 1955-56 before the trams were laid up and the tracks removed from the causeway.

There was very little interest in the rolling stock. One tram was vandalised and eventually pushed into the sea near the Screwpile Jetty. Another was later sold to a museum in the USA, where it was restored and remains today.

A New Opportunity

In December 1956 Keith Roney took the opportunity to re-establish the tourist run, drawing up designs for an enclosed cab for a petrol-powered Massey Ferguson T21 tractor that he had purchased. He also designed and supervised the construction of two four-wheeled trailers, each capable of seating ten passengers.

Keith operated the "Tractor Train" for ten years, until 1966, ably assisted by Ernie Lovell, who worked as the ticket collector: two shillings and sixpence from each adult for the return journey.

Council refused to renew Keith's contract in 1966 and he was disappointed that he was not able to continue the service. He was succeeded for a short time by Jack Edwards and then Arnold Stringer.

The tractor was not really an ideal vehicle for the job and during the busy season more passenger places were needed. In late 1966 Arnold replaced the tractor with a short-wheelbase diesel Land Rover, with a "cow-catcher", buffers and fake funnel and boiler sticking out through the bonnet. The tractor was retained and used occasionally when the Land Rover required service.

An extra couple of carriages appeared at this time, the originals were refurbished and all were painted in new bright green and gold colours. Large signs showing tourist locations around the area adorned the sides of each carriage.

Some time in 1967 the original Series II Land Rover was replaced with a Series I 107" chassis with a steel-framed body, made up to look more like a steam train, painted in the new colour scheme, and able to carry ten passengers in the back. The body was constructed by Dekker Motor Bodies in Adelaide and fitted in Victor Harbor.

The train and the contract changed hands again in 1968, being sold to Richard Freiman who ran the business for another ten years.

In 1978 the service was purchased by Tividar (Tibi) and Eva Fekete, who also operated the doughnut van and trampolines near the township end of the causeway.

The Train

The Land Rover train, powered by a four-cylinder Rover diesel engine was registered RWM 206, but a search has revealed this plate is no longer in use.

With all five carriages attached, and the rear of the Rover full, the train would frequently transport 60 people: over 3.5 tonnes, relying only on the Land Rover's drum brakes. The journey is 1.5 km each way and the train completed a return trip every 20 minutes from the Victor Harbor end of the Causeway to the kiosk on Granite Island.

In the late '70s adult passengers paid 60c, children 40c; and the council took a flat fee of \$7,000 a year. The service ran every day for the six months of the summer and holiday season, and weekends in the winter months.

Tibi would often start the Land Rover before 10am, when it was driven from its shed, and not switch the engine off until after 5.00pm. It was fitted with a hand throttle and completed the journeys at a fast walking pace, about 10km/h in high-range second gear and, even through the hottest weather, never overheated.

A conservative calculation reveals that the little Landy covered almost 450,000km in this way, over a period of 20 years!

The environment by the ocean is very



Dekker Motor Bodies built the replacement body on a 107" Landie chassis.



Eva with her grandson in 1978. Land Rover bonnet & guards are identifiable.



Tibi & grandson. The hand-throttle and some Land Rover parts can be seen.



Tibi, Eva and tourists on Granite Island in 1978, with the train in its new colours.

harsh on metal and machinery. Tibi was very conscious of maintaining the vehicle, as often sea spray would wash over the causeway. The train was carefully washed down each night to remove any salt spray, and even at the end of its working life was not affected by rust.

Tibi and Eva speak fondly of their days transporting, entertaining and feeding the tourists at Victor Harbor.

However, on one occasion, not long after Tibi started driving the train, two lads climbed down during a journey and removed the pin from the tow hitch of one of the carriages. The two rear carriages careered across the roadway on the island near the causeway and plunged over the side into the water below. Fortunately no passengers were on board and no-one was hurt.

The trailers had to be recovered by the council backhoe and Tibi locked the trailer hitches together from then on.

The trailers went through a number of different configurations and colour schemes over the years: at one point having striped canvas glued to the roofs of the closed trailers, but this didn't last very long in the weather conditions. However, it has been confirmed that there were only five trailers in total.

Back to Horsepower

Following a large amount of lobbying from local residents, businesses and tourism operators, in 1986 railway lines were re-laid on the Granite Island Causeway, new trams were built and Clydesdales trained in harness. The Victor Harbor horse-drawn tramway was re-established to great fanfare and ceremony. It continues today and is a great tourist attraction for the town.



When discovered on the farm, the Land Rover and one remaining complete trailer were in a sorry state, but restorable.

After almost 20 years of faithful service the Land Rover train and its string of carriages was driven to its shed for the last time. Almost overnight, the train and all of the souvenirs that carried its image, disappeared virtually without trace, and have been all but forgotten.

The Hunt Begins

I was a resident of Victor Harbor for a number of years. As a youngster I took my VACswim classes for a fortnight in January each year, by the end of the Granite Island causeway. As an occasional treat the sessions would be followed by an ice cream and, more rarely, the opportunity to ride the Land Rover train back across the causeway.

As a Land Rover fan from a very early age, travelling in this little train and seeing it plying back and forth on its regular runs to the island made an impression on me and became a fond childhood memory.

On a holiday to Victor Harbor with my own family in 2014 I recalled the story of the Granite Island Land Rover train to my daughters and decided, out of curiosity, to find out what became of it?

To my surprise, a number of local historians had no recollection of it at all!

The Victor Harbor library provided a comprehensive archive of Granite Island, from its very early history as a harbour through to construction and establishment of the current tramway and future proposals – but not a single mention of the Land Rover train.

I was even having difficulty convincing some historians that the Landy actually existed. There was, however, one line in one book: "...Arnold Stringer.... mocked up a Land Rover to look like a steam engine."



My search was vindicated, but my quest had only just begun.

The National Trust Museum also had virtually nothing, but a large folder of old postcards revealed one wonderful photo of the Land Rover as it was in the late 1960s.

Over the following twelve months I sent numerous e-mails, made phone calls, trawled the Internet and followed every possible lead to trace the final whereabouts of the Land Rover train. I spoke to relatives of previous owners and operators, long-time residents of Victor Harbor, and local historians. Many remembered the 'tractor train' but my trail ran cold on what became of the Land Rover after it was sold by the Feketes.

What started out as a curiosity for me was becoming an obsession. To find photographs I purchased a number of very early souvenir postcards featuring the train, with most being sourced on eBay from the UK and America!

I had heard that the Land Rover was used in the annual Victor Harbor Christmas parade. On our next annual holiday to 'Victor' I armed myself with a folder of photos, names and numbers, determined to find out whether the Landy was safely stored or had been lost to the scrap man.

Calls on local business people and residents led to more contacts and eventually I began to piece together what became of the Land Rover train.

The Story Continues

When Tibi and Eva Fekete took the train out of service in 1986, they drove it to their property at Hayborough, between Victor Harbor and Port Elliot. The vehicles were laid up with the doughnut caravans until 1990, when they were offered for sale.





Interior was in a sorry state, but mostly complete. (Hand throttle)



Engine was exposed to weather, has seized and is being replaced.

The complete train was purchased by Chris Clarke, who lived close by and was the operator of the Goolwa rubbish tip. He recalls towing the Land Rover and the five trailers to Goolwa behind his vehicle in one run: a genuine road train.

His main interest was in the carriages, so the Land Rover was left to sit idle. Chris cut the tops off two of the trailers, to create flatbeds that were used to cart heavy items around the tip. He sold one of the carriages to a local resident to be used as a play area for his children, and the other two were sold to Greenhills Adventure Park, to haul happy kids on holiday towed, ironically, by a tractor.

While it was lying at the tip a number of people expressed interest in purchasing the Land Rover, with the intention of removing the diesel engine and cutting up the body for scrap.

Fortunately in a chance meeting in 1990, Chris offered the vehicle complete to Colin Lovell, who was working at the Ampol garage in Goolwa at the time. Colin immediately recognised the historical significance of the Land Rover and agreed to buy it, effectively saving it from being destroyed.

When Chris finished working at the tip he offered Colin the two cut-down trailers, and when the children had tired of their playhouse Colin was also able to retrieve the unit that was still in an unmolested condition.

Colin maintained and stored the Land Rover under cover at his home and used it for a variety of events throughout his term of ownership. It appeared in the Victor Harbor Christmas parade on a number of occasions: one year for the local yacht club, towing one carriage and a yacht!

In September 1997 the Land Rover was decked out with white ribbons and became the bridal transport for a wedding in Goolwa.

Colin had a number of other vehicles and projects and needed space, so in December 2002 decided to sell the train. I spoke with him recently and his passion is still evident as he talked about saving and maintaining the Land Rover, and the collection of souvenirs and memorabilia that he has sourced and kept.

The Landy and three trailers were bought by Rudy Van Den Broek, who still owns them. Rudy kept them at his home on the coast before space again became an issue and he moved them to a property at Inman Valley, where they remained.

Rudy gave me permission to view the train on his friend's farm, which is what had finally brought me to this point.

The Rescue

The day was hot and my time limited, so this visit was just to establish that the train still existed, and ultimately raised many more questions. I took a series of photographs, but did not crawl

underneath or climb aboard for a detailed inspection. The Dekker Motor Bodies plaque is still in place.

Looking beyond the paintwork, the metal frame is quite sound. The sheet metal is in surprisingly good condition and largely rust-free on the upper body. However, around the wheel arches and some of the sill areas corrosion was evident. The original number plate was still in place.

Unfortunately the engine has seized, due to removal of the bonnet and water ingress down the exhaust pipe. None of these problems are insurmountable in the preservation of early Landies, and the train was ripe for restoration.

I considered offering to buy the train myself, but a second phone call to Rudy resulted in great news. He had contacted the Southern Fleurieu Historical Museum, which would rescue the train and take on the challenge of restoring it to its former glory!

In June 2015, museum coordinator Deane Perry and a team of enthusiastic volunteers moved the Land Rover and carriages to the museum workshop at Port Elliot.

A Bright Future

Almost all parts for Series Land Rovers are available and individually are not prohibitively expensive, but there are lots of them and ultimately it can add up



Museum coordinator Deane Perry loading the Land Rover.



The ex-rubbish tip trailers are loaded up to go to the museum.



Restoration of the Land Rover is progressing well.



Trailers from Greenhills Adventure Park were donated in 2016.

to be a costly exercise. The restoration of the train would need some vital financial support and the Alexandrina Council responded with a gift of \$3,000 to assist the restoration, which was later matched by the Victor Harbor council.

The project needed a reliable supplier of the correct quality parts, and a specialist to guide the volunteers through the idiosyncrasies of working on the early Rovers.

The Adelaide Land Rover dealer was not able to assist, so I called Geoff Mockford, from Sovereign – Brit Parts in the city: now one of South Australia's largest independent Land Rover specialists, with whom I have been dealing for a number of years.

Geoff told me that his family had emigrated to Adelaide from England when he was about ten, and he remembered family trips to Victor Harbor and travelling across the causeway on the train. However, he was never aware that lurking under that big square body was a Land Rover. Geoff's generous response was positive and immediate. He would gladly offer his support to the project!

The team at the museum set itself a tight deadline, aiming to have two of the carriages completed to give rides at the Port Elliot Show on 10-11 October 2015. Working tirelessly they made their target, and the freshly refurbished carriages provided rides for children towed behind a restored Ferguson TE20 tractor.

Under the guidance of museum volunteer Lindsay McCrorie, the engine

has been removed from the Landie and much of the rusty sheet metal stripped from the lower sections inside the body. As a testament to Tibi Fekete's insistence on washing the salt spray from the vehicle at the end of each workday, the components that most concerned me were in surprisingly good condition.

The Land Rover chassis rails and outriggers are sound and free of rust. Likewise, the metal firewall that is an important structural component in these vehicles. Also better than expected are the foot wells, that are often attacked by the dreaded tin worm. Evidence of some diesel and oil coating the firewall would also have contributed to the preservation.

Most of the angle iron and tubular frame that was built onto the Land Rover chassis by Dekker Motor Bodies is reusable and the sheet metal above the waistline can remain. Unfortunately, The front cross-member was badly rusted and needed to be replaced.

At the time of writing, the brakes are sorted, with new lines and new clutch and brake master cylinders. Some new metal has been let in, a donor Land Rover diesel engine is being prepared for rebuilding, and another Series vehicle has been sourced for some parts. The gearbox is back in, while a new wiring loom is ordered and will be fitted before the replacement diesel engine is installed. The radiator was still full of water so will be cleaned, tested and refitted.

Meanwhile, the Greenhills Adventure Park was sold to property developers in

2009, and the Park closed on 1 May 2016. Meg Whibley, manager of the park and daughter of its founders, is very supportive of the preservation project and asked the developers to remove the trailers from the auction of assets. This they did and promptly donated them to the museum.

The restoration task is a big one, but after meeting the keen, enthusiastic and diversely skilled group of volunteers at the Southern Fleurieu Historical Museum, and with the guidance and expertise of a specialist such as Geoff Mockford, I believe that the project is in the best of care.

The Mayor of Victor Harbor, Graham Philp, is very keen to see the project completed and has said he would like to see the train 'do a run' across the causeway when it is complete. We will bring you the story of that run and the completed train in a later issue of this magazine. 

Acknowledgements

This story was only made possible thanks to the help of many people, who gave of their time to provide recollections of the Victor Harbor Land Rover train, and supplied photos or leads to other people.

In particular, special thanks go to:

Richard Freiman (owner 1968 – 1978)
Tibi and Eva Fekete (owners 1978 – '90)
Colin Lovell (owner 1990-2002)
Rudy Van Den Broek (owner 2002-2015)
Gary Fishlock (Conductor 1980-86)
Sandra Brown (daughter of Keith Roney)
Joyce Stringer
Andrew 'Sid' James
Alan Kluske (VH Traders Group)
Colleen Fox and Val Brown (National Trust Museum – Victor Harbor)
Peter Thurnam (Greenhills Park)
Meg Whibley (Greenhills Park)
Lindsay McCrorie and Deane Perry (Southern Fleurieu Historical Museum)
Geoff Mockford (Sovereign-Britparts)

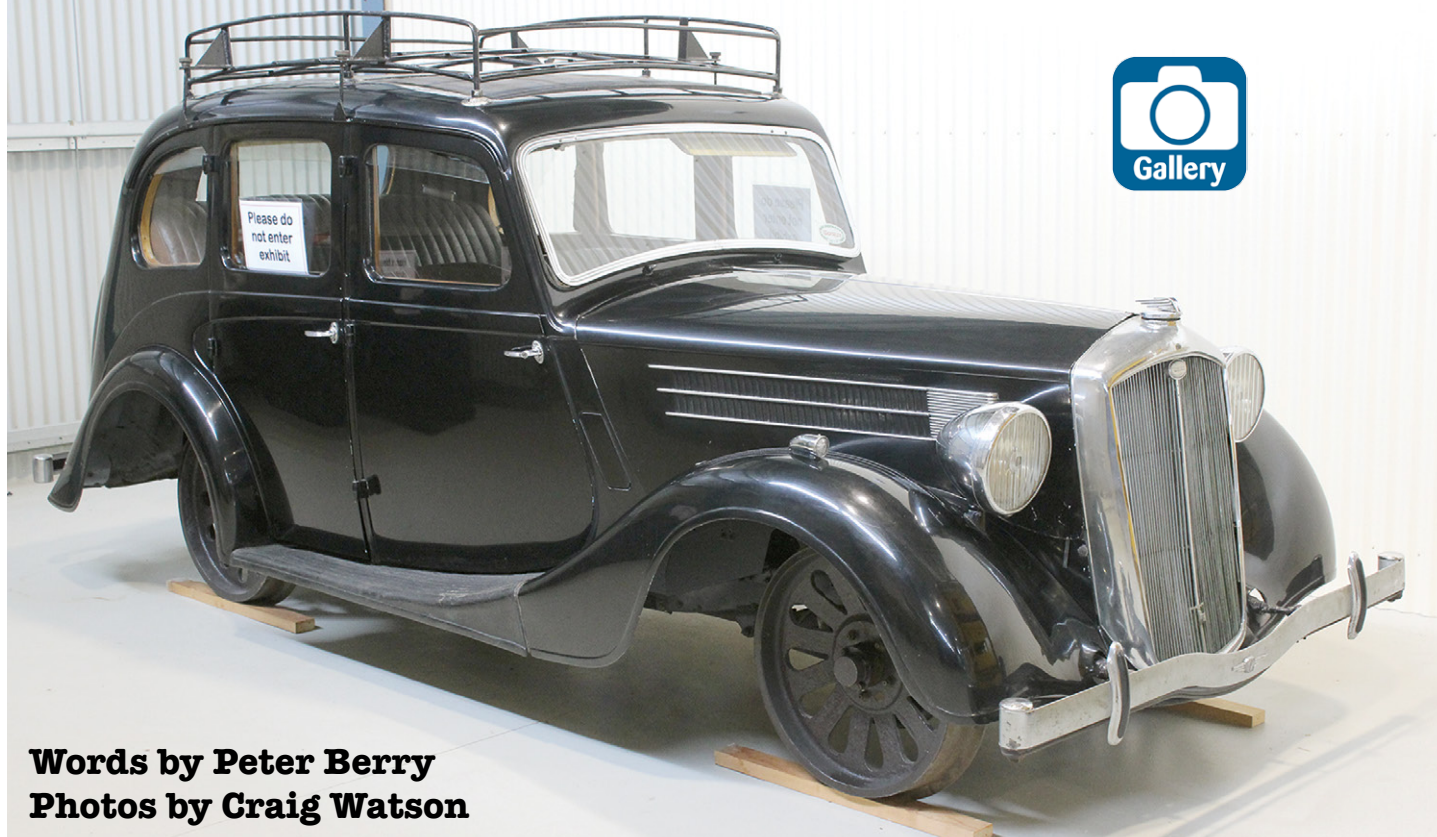
Information on the early history came from www.horsedrawntram.com.au and www.victor.sa.gov.au



Two of the carriages were restored in restored time for the 2015 Port Elliot Show.



PEPPERCORN RENT



Words by Peter Berry
Photos by Craig Watson

Following on from our story on the Morris 25 rail inspection car in *BMCE* Issue 11 comes the story of a similar car in Tasmania, that was subject to the smallest of leasing fees.

The Emu Bay Railway was a very successful private railway company that ran trains on its own line between Burnie and Zeehan, in Tasmania's north-west.

The Tasmanian Government ran trains between Zeehan and Strahan, while the Mount Lyell Mining Company ran trains between Strahan and Queenstown. During the 1920s it was possible, with three changes of trains, to travel continuously by train from Burnie to Hobart.

In 1947 the Electrolytic Zinc Company (EZC), whose headquarters were in Melbourne, purchased a Wolseley 18/85 Sedan for the exclusive use of its Director.

This was transferred to EZC's workshops at Rosebery, in Tasmania, in late 1951 for conversion to a Director's railcar for the company's use on the 3'6" gauge Emu Bay Railway, between Rosebery and Guildford Junction.

The conversion was quite substantial considering something like a Ford Prefect could be converted to run on 3'6" gauge by simply replacing the road wheels with

flanged ones and locking the steering.

Obviously, the Directors recognized quality and wanted to travel in style when visiting their site at Rosebery. The cost of conversion could not have been an issue.

The conversion entailed shortening the rear axle assembly by gas cutting and welding, and fitting new, shortened axles to match. The chassis was altered to provide support for the front and rear spring hangers, which were moved inwards.

A new front axle was fixed to the stub axles and all steering components were removed. The horn switch was relocated to the dash.

The bumper-mounted fog lights were removed, as were the side lights fitted to the front guards and all unnecessary wiring. Only one rear red light remained, as per railway practice. A large roof rack was fitted. Interestingly, only one windscreen wiper was retained.

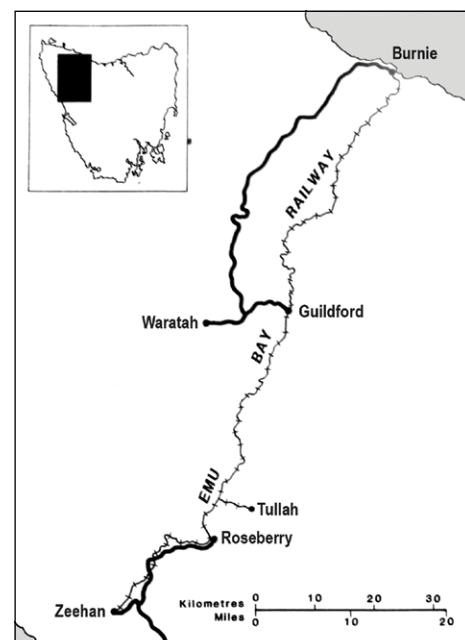
The specially-cast railway wheels bolted directly to the original hubs and the original braking system was retained throughout.

At this time, EZC was the Emu Bay Railway's best customer, and with no road between Guildford and Rosebery the railway was the only connection to Burnie and the rest of Tasmania.

However, the Emu Bay Railway refused to allow the converted Wolseley to traverse its line because the railway unions were strongly opposed to anything on the line not under the control of the EBR.

The solution was to lease the Wolseley to the EBR at a "peppercorn" rental, to then be run by EBR for the exclusive use of EZC.

What follows was unearthed from the records of the EBR by Lou Rae while researching the Centenary Edition of





Ready to leave Rockhampton for its new home in The Alice.

his book, *The Emu Bay Railway*. With acknowledgement and thanks to Lou Rae, an abridged version of events is related here.

(Note: For those who are not familiar with peppercorns, the *Schinus Molle* or "Peppercorn Tree" as found in many Australian gardens, though native to Central America, is sometimes referred to as the 'false' peppercorn. True peppercorn, as usually associated with food, comes from the flowering vine *Piper Nigrum*, hence the request for the real one. Nothing like being pedantic! This just goes to prove that a sense of humour can prevail between heads of company departments.)

So, to continue with the story...

All went well until the EBR Secretary questioned the exact amount of rental to be paid. The EZC Secretary replied that a payment was not necessary.

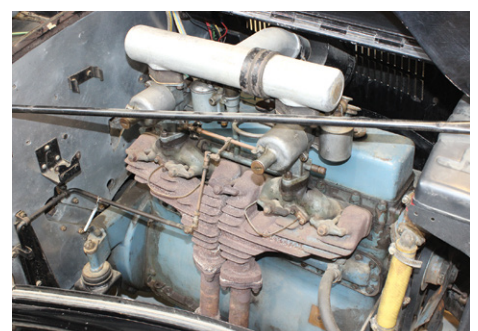
Because the Drivers and Firemen Union was "stirring the pot", the Emu Bay Railway was forced to pay something to the Electrolytic Zinc Company for the lease of the Wolseley, even though it was used exclusively for EZC

So the EBR sent a packet of seeds to the EZC with a short note: "I'm not sure if we are required to pay one peppercorn per annum or per use of the car, so here are 599. Please let me know when our credit runs out and I will make a further remittance. An official receipt for audit purposes is awaited".

The EZC replied: "Thanks for the flowers but the payment is in the wrong currency. We need *Piper Nigrum*, one dried berry of the legal variety – not the *Schinus Molle* of our gardens. I am sorry I cannot give you a receipt for one year's rental until you pay in the proper coin!"

Not to be outdone and wanting the matter to be settled, the EBR replied: "Your learned letter of 14 April 1953 to hand and your need noted. We had to go on the black (*piper nigrum*) market to get your required currency, dried berries to you. May we now have our receipt?"

The receipt was duly received by the EBR for nine and one-quarter peppercorns, representing payment for the next nine and a quarter years; with the next payment due in 1962, and it is not known if the rental was paid at that time!



Front axle was narrowed and spring shackles moved inboard, with standard hubs used.

Into Retirement

During the 1950s various Hydro-Electric dam projects were under way and although the Emu Bay Railway was coping with the increased traffic, major lobbying to the Government saw the eventual completion of the Murchison Highway between Somerset and Rosebery.

A new sea/road link between Melbourne and Devonport had been established and the ferry "Princess of Tasmania" was bringing many tourists who wanted to see the sights by road. Also the Pioneer Tours Company was interested in catering for the bus tour trade.

Because road traffic had significantly increased in anticipation of the highway opening and tourism, The Emu Bay Railway answered this new found trade and provided a passenger and road vehicle train named the 'West Coaster' that ran between Burnie and Zeehan from 1961 to 1964.

The train would depart Burnie and travel to Guildford where cars, trucks and buses were loaded onto flat-top wagons for the rail journey to Rosebery. Here the road vehicles were able to continue their journey by road.

Once the Murchison Hwy was fully opened, there was no longer a need for the West Coaster or the Wolseley railcar and both were retired from service.

By all accounts, the Wolseley 18/85 gave the EZC twelve years of trouble free running and always started at the press of the button.

It was driven by a qualified engine driver employed by the EBR, as a union requirement. EZC was happy with this arrangement, as the Railway was paying the driver's wages.

The intended use of the 18/85 was to transport the Directors and their guests between Guildford and Rosebery and, although it got plenty of use as intended, it was also used for a variety of other important jobs.

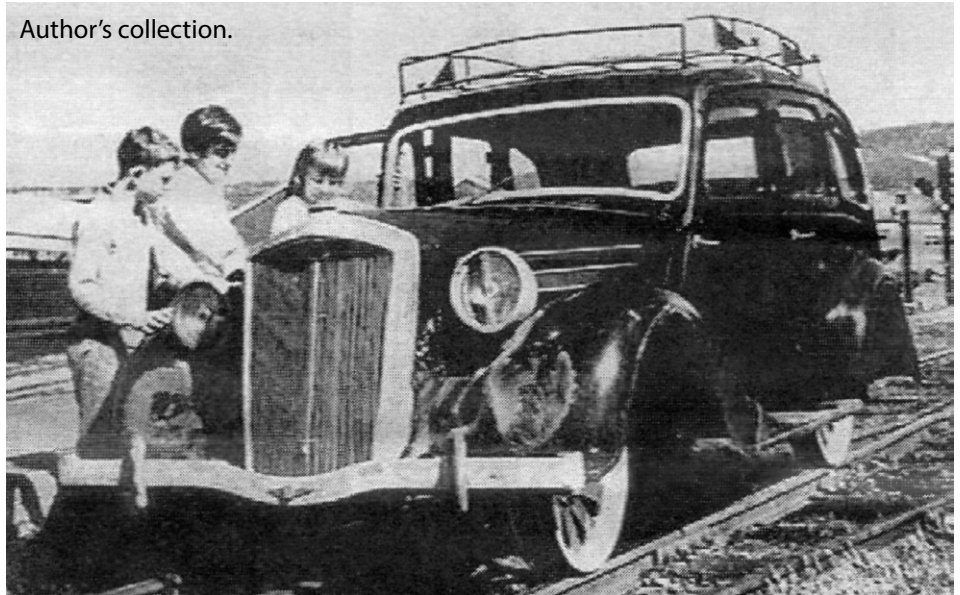
These included as a courier service, with the transportation of important documents and urgent supplies, and it proved to be the quickest way of transporting injured workers to the main hospital in Burnie.

After being retired, the car shared a shed with a Ruston Hornsby shunting engine. One day in 1964 the loco didn't stop in time and its buffers hit the car's mudguards, denting them and pushing the car into the back of the shed.

Museum Life

In 1972 the Wolseley was donated to the Tasmanian Transport Museum Society, based at Glenorchy in Hobart, and was moved from to the museum in 1977.

Author's collection.



In its last days with Emu Bay Railway in 1964
Note the damage to the front guards, done by an errant shunter driver.

After years in storage, the museum turned its attention to the Wolseley.

Missing parts were sourced locally and the motor was returned to running order.

The car was repaired and repainted by the students of the Hobart Technical College and the museum at Glenorchy built an extension on the rear of the locomotive shed to display this most interesting exhibit.

In 1996 it was taken to Burnie for the Centenary celebrations of the EBR.

About ten years ago the museum undertook some mechanical and electrical maintenance on the Wolseley, but due to its cramped display location, without rail access to rest of the museum, it could only be tested in-situ.

In 2014 the Wolseley was moved to the museum's new open-plan road vehicles display building. During this move, the opportunity was taken to give the Wolseley a few short runs on the museum's rails,

to check that everything was working properly. A series of photos and short video footage of the day, by museum volunteer Stuart Dix, can be seen on the website – www.railtasmania.com (search under Railway Exhibits: Miscellaneous).

This Wolseley 18/85 remains the sole survivor of several road-based vehicles that were converted to run on the rails of the Emu Bay Railway at one time or another.

These included: a Montagu Medical Union Chevrolet ambulance, that operated between 1928 and 1962; a 1930 Chevrolet railway inspection car; 1938 Chevrolet for the General Manager; a 1954 Morris Z van used for light maintenance work; and a 1962 International station wagon, which replaced the 1930 Chev for railway inspection.

In addition to these converted cars, the EBR operated a total of twelve purpose-built railmotors between 1906 and 1968 for carrying people and parcels. 📺

Photo by Stuart Dix



During the move to its new home in 2014, the Wolseley was given a short test run.

Team BMC: Break! Mend! Continue!

Doing it for the kids!



22-29 October 2016
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The past couple of months have been very hectic in organising sponsors and getting the Mini ready.

In the first instance, we are pleased to announce that RACV has come on board as our major financial sponsor, guaranteeing our entry to the event.

Long-time readers will be familiar with the fact that we used RACV Total Care to get the Mini home from Darwin in 2014. I really can't speak highly enough about RACV's Total Care service. I have bought the package for myself and suggest anyone with at least two cars should look into it. It covers your main listed car for anyone driving it, and yourself in any car you are in.

With this in mind, having already bought the service, I approached RACV and suggested that sponsorship of our Mini in this high profile event, and which would be spending five of the seven days in Victoria, would be a great idea.

Happily, they agreed, so the decision was made to paint the Mini yellow, to match RACV's corporate colours - and to make the Mini look a little like a 1960s RACV service van.

I think you will agree that the bright colour means we will be a stand-out in the event - which will be of benefit to all our sponsors - even more so when we get all the signage on.

But before the car could be painted, the new floor had to go in. As explained last issue, Ben from Minis Plus offered to put the new floor in for me. That was one job I was not confident of being able to do myself, so gladly past it to him.

It turned out a much bigger job than anticipated, but Ben, with considerable help from Vic Mini Club Member and all-round good guy Matt Webb, got the job done. The Mini is now even better than before, and the doors close properly,

without having to be slammed. That is a great bonus!

When the floor was in, Craig Illing and I went over to Minis Plus to help with the final reassembly. Well, Craig helped do the work and I helped by keeping mostly out of the way and taking photos.

At this time, Ben informed me that they had noticed a number of issues with the Mini that would need attention.

Firstly, and most importantly, was the head gasket was leaking. Back at Craig's the head was removed and it was discovered that one head stud had pulled a helicoil out of the block - the hole that we had stripped on the 2013 rally and that someone had fixed with the helicoil.

Craig said the only solution was to fit a Timesert or a Keysert. It took a bit of explanation for me to understand, but basically the Keysert, which we used, involves drilling a slightly larger hole, then



Matt Webb grinding the old floor.



The new floor and cross member.



Craig Illing bolts in the seat brackets.



Stickers removed and ready to paint.



DAV gets a new colour scheme.



Back at Kingston Cars ready to reassemble.

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tapping a new thread into it. The Keysert is then screwed all the way in, so that just the four little "keys" are sticking out. These are then knocked down into the thread, damaging the thread and effectively locking the Keysert into the block.

A new head gasket was then fitted and everything looks good in that department.

Over the next few weeks, Craig replaced the rear wheel bearings, both CV joints, checked and adjusted the brakes and then stripped most of the parts off the outside of the Mini for the repainting.

The paint was taken care of by Dave from Autostyle Paint & Panel Repairs in Herald St, Cheltenham. From a distance the car looks brilliant. Certainly it is not a perfect paint job, but for the price (free) and the fact the car wasn't properly prepared - just rubbed back to give the new paint something to bite in to - and considering the use of the Mini, it is exactly what I wanted. It is bright, looks great and will stand out in any crowd.

I then ventured over to Craig's to help put the car back together again. Thanks again to VMCI member Ian Mitchell, who donated the Mini for our 2013 rally and lots of parts as well, for again coming up trumps by donating two rear wheel arch flares. I destroyed one on the rally last year, when the wheel came off near Birdsville.

Craig had already done a lot of the assembly work, so with just a couple of hours' work, the Mini was back and raring to go. We took it for a short run to check it out and immediately discovered what

appeared to be very noisy front wheel bearings, so Craig has now replaced both front bearings as well.

Meanwhile, another VMCI member, Gordon Paterson, did his annual good deed for us by cooking up a huge batch of ANZAC biscuits to sell at the April club meeting. This raised \$152 which was paid toward our fundraising goal.

Minis In The Gong has also again helped out by providing us with \$840, being much of the profits from their annual show, and from the sales of their fabulous Mini calendar.

But individuals are also getting behind us, and we thank everyone for their support - whether it be \$10 or \$200, it all helps toward our fundraising.

I originally set a goal of \$10,000 and I think we will have no trouble doing even more than that. At the time of printing, although the actual amount in-hand is a little over \$1,400, with the money that has been pledged (much of which is going to be paid in the new financial year) we are looking at around \$9,500.

So, now the Mini is ready for the first of its stickers to go on. Thanks again to Ian Gartley from Graphic Effects in Mitcham, who has offered to do the signage on the Mini for us.

Next Issue we should have a lot of the signage done and the car mechanically completed. Then it just remains for taking it to lots of events to help spread the word about Camp Quality and raise even more funds for them.

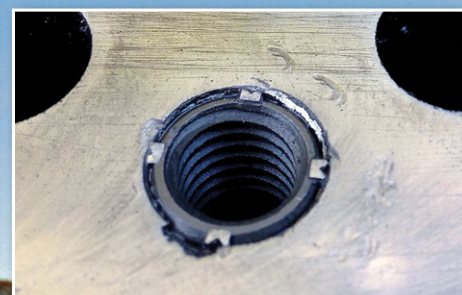
Thanks to our supporters:



- Autostyle Paint & Panel Repairs
- Ian Mitchell
- Gordon Paterson
- Rod Quick



DAV is ready to have all his new stickers applied.



Keysert is screwed in, then the "keys" are knocked down flush with the block.

Total raised so far (at time of printing) is: \$1,412.75 plus pledges.

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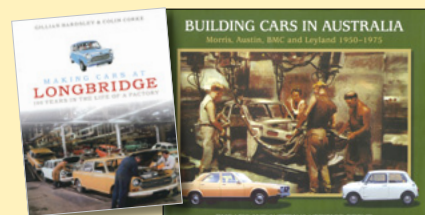
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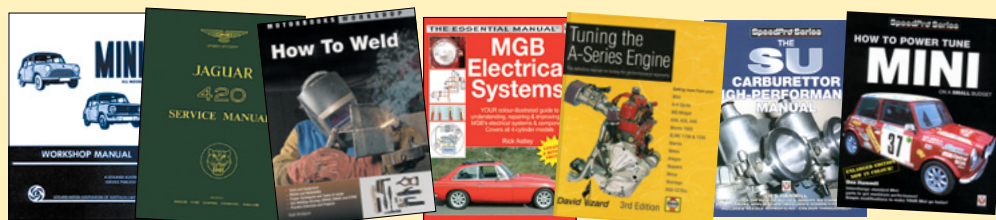
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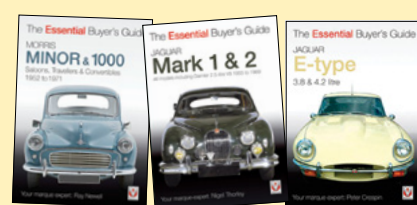
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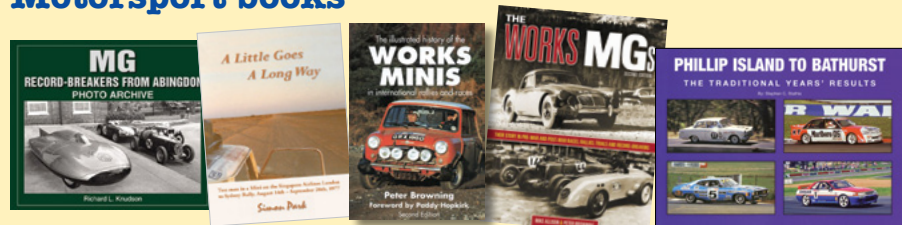
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...and much more!



Issue 19 on sale 16 September 2016

Information correct at time of printing



Pete Gillam took a wild ride at the HRCCQ Super Sprint at M
Photo by Ian Welsh - Shifting Focus Photography: www.shiftingfocusphotography.co.uk

Final Turn



Morgan Park, Warwick, Qld on 21 February 2016.
shiftingfocus.com.au

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