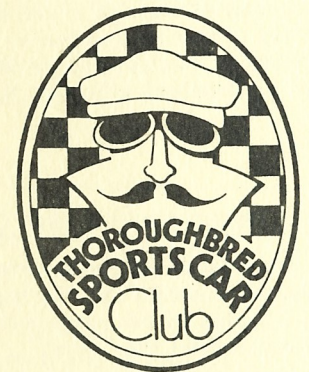


top gear

MARCH 1987



REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST — PUBLICATION No. NBH 6791

NEWSLETTER OF THE THOROUGHbred SPORTS CAR CLUB



SUBJECTS OF THE CLUB

"Fostering better acquaintance and social spirit between the various owners of thoroughbred sports cars in Australia".

"To help and advance thoroughbred sports car owners and ownership".

"To establish and maintain by example a high standard of conduct and a respect of the laws of the road".

GENERAL MEETINGS OF THE CLUB

The General Meetings of the club are held on the second Wednesday of each month, commencing at 8.00 p.m. at the Sydney Rowing Club, Great North Rd., Abbotsford.

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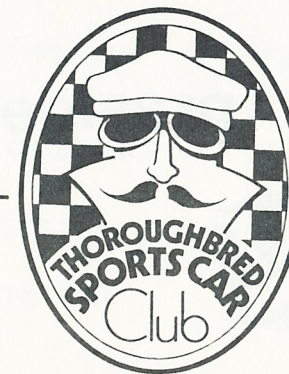
SEND ALL COPY FOR "TOP GEAR" TO: Geoff Sara,
8 Trevellyan St., Cronulla, 2230.

DISCLAIMER: Any opinions published in this journal should not be regarded as being the opinion of the club or the committee which also cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy of any information in the journal which is published in good faith as supplied to the editor. Articles and or photographs are invited and should be forwarded to the editor for publication bearing the name and address of the writer.

ADVERTISING POLICY AND COST

Advertisements are accepted subject at all times to the discretion of the committee.
Display and Advertising: Full page \$30 per issue, half page \$20 per issue, 1/4 page \$11 per issue, 1/8 page \$5 per issue. Advertisements are on a monthly continuing basis unless the advertiser notifies the Editor.

Classified Advertising:— Financial members of the club receive the first four lines free of charge. Rates are \$1 per line of ten words with a minimum charge of five lines (\$5.00). Non members should send payment when lodging their advertisement.



COMMITTEE

| | |
|------------------------|---|
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| Vice President: | GRANT LIDDELL — (H) 81 5596 (W) 908 4711 |
| Secretary: | LYNDA DU CROS — (H) 639 4153 |
| Treasurer: | MIKE DU CROS — (H) 639 4153 |
| Competition Secretary: | VIC ANDREWS — (H) 528 3227 |
| Social Secretary: | JIM PETERS — (H) 922 6807 (W) 669 5311 |
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| Committee: | LESTER GOUGH — (H) 799 3209 (W) 750 8188 LEN MADAR — (H) 652 2061 (W) 651 1812 |

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presidents prose

Happy New Year to you all and I hope 1987 will be a rewarding year in your endeavours. On our club scene we have already had one general meeting, a committee meeting and a social meeting at Amaroo on Sunday 25th January. At our committee meeting we planned what we believe is a fairly comprehensive calender for this year, details of which will be presented to you for your comment at our next meeting on February 11th at Top Ryde R.S.L. We think we have something for everyone in our calender and we therefore look forward to the pleasure of your company several times throughout 1987.

Also on the good news front your committee has decided not to increase the club fees again this year. They will remain at last years level except for our competition members where C.A.M.S. have increased the fees for a club license to \$9.00, up from \$7.50. So when you are writing out your cheque tonight for your membership renewal, due January 1st, please make the necessary adjustments.

Since our last magazine we have had both our annual presentation night dinner at McMahons Manor, Hurstville, at which Chris Johnson was seen sneaking out the door before we all descended at his house, and a Super Sprint at Oran Park, attended by several members.

Congratulations to all our trophy winners in 1986, who are all mentioned by name in the following article. I take this opportunity to apologize to all the trophy winners in 1985 as somehow by oversight their names have not appeared as one would expect and we therefore publish the 1985 list as follow :-:

| | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------------------|
| CLUBMAN OF THE YEAR | - | Vic Andrews Len Madar |
| MOTORKHANA CHAMPIONS | - | David Muir Lynda duCros |
| CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE | - | Lester Gough |
| ROOKIE OF THE YEAR | - | Vic Andrews |

LIFE MEMBER - Roland Clarke

Looking forward to seeing you all soon

RAY ROSS

Coming Events

MARCH

1st Super Sprint - Amaroo Park.
Bookings - Vic Andrews (H) 528 3227

11th Club Meeting - Ryde RSL Club.
"Guest Speaker"

22nd Historic Bus Trip and Picnic (Barrenjoey).
Bookings - Jim Peters (H) 922 6807

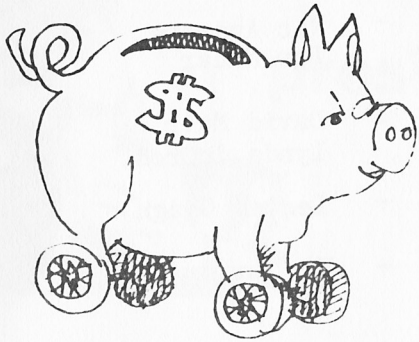
APRIL

5th Super Sprint - Oran Park (South Circuit) TBA
Bookings - Vic Andrews (H) 528 3227

8th Club Meeting - Ryde RSL Club.
"Video Night"

MAY

2th Gambling Night - D & B Muir Home.
"Black and White Theme"
Bookings - Jim Peters (H) 922 6807



money matters

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE PERIOD

1/2/86 to 31/12/86

CASH ON HAND 1/2/86 648.20

ADD RECEIPTS:

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| Subscriptions | 1,427-70 | |
| Advertising | 591-50 | |
| Functions | 3,683-60 | |
| Sale of Magazine Folders | 205-00 | |
| Interest on Account | 28-03 | 5,935-83 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 6,584-03 |

DEDUCT PAYMENTS:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Magazine preparation and printing | 664-00 | |
| Postage | 125-30 | |
| Cams | 436-00 | |
| Functions | 4,395-38 | |
| Videotape | 11-95 | |
| Corporate Affairs Comm. | 60-00 | |
| Design of T-Shirts | 42-00 | |
| Account & Govt. charges | 16-67 | 5,751-40 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 832-63 |
| | | <hr/> |

JANUARY BEAN COUNTING

OPENING BALANCE 832.63

ADD DEPOSITS

| | | |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| MEMBERSHIP FEES | 390.50 | |
| ADVERTISING | 155.00 | |
| A/C FEE ADJ. | 3.50 | |
| | <hr/> | |
| | 549.00 | 549.00 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 1381.63 |

LESS PAYMENTS

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------|---------|
| A/C FEES | 11.00 | 11.00 |
| | | <hr/> |
| BALANCE AS AT 31.1.87 | | 1370.63 |
| | | <hr/> |

If its music or musical instruments you, your family or friends require contact

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Phone: 872 3439

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

The club hosted it's Christmas dinner early in December last year at "MacMahons Manor", Hurstville. Everyone met around 7.30 p.m. for a 'noggin and natter' before sitting down in the raised dining section.

About 40 members and friends enjoyed a splendid repast with an excellent choice of entrees and main courses. Staff were effecient, very friendly, plus the standard of cuisine was high. Our usual 'D.J.', crazy Dave Lee, played background music during dinner until trophy and prize giving, hosted by the President, Ray Ross.

Some interesting give aways this year included an African Safari trip to far off Warragamba (is that near Zimbabwe?), won by an appropriately lion-mained lady friend of David Mason's, Debbie.

The DuCros family pocketed a nice \$60-00 to be spent on a dinner for two (receipt required by Mr. Keating thanks Mike).

The dubious honour of winning trophies entitled 'Up your bonnet', and 'Piston broke', went to Gary Bruce and Adrian Walker respectively. Gary's may be viewed on the shelf of his outside loo.

'Weekend away' trophy went to the Saras (Geoff & Michelle) who obviously turned up at all the social Saturday and Sunday features.

Down to the real stuff, with Pat Gretton and Mark Anthony taking out the Ladies and Gents Motorkhana prizes.

Rookie of The Year was deservedly presented to the hard charging Don MacDonald.

Hillclimb awards from some exciting runs at Silverdale gave the Bruces two trophies to actually put on the sideboard. Karin took out the Ladies section and Gary the 3 litre sports car.

Ray Connoughton won the 2 litre class with Don MacDonald pushing the big Statesman through to gain the over 3 litre saloon car trophy.

Fastest time of the day went to the yellow buzz box of Vic Andrews, who again is a worthy Club Champion.

Concourse winner with his immaculate Ford G.T. was Rob McCoy, who took home a fine trophy care of John Thompson Performance Cars.

Last, but certainly not least, the 'Clubman of the Year' went to the clubmen of the year - the Goughs. Lester and Debra's choice was obviously popular judging by the applause they received.

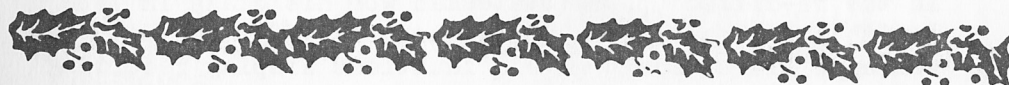
Afterwards the disco was in full swing with plenty of energy being expelled on the dance floor.

Around coffee time each couple were presented with an excellent bottle of Tawny Port, sporting the club logo on the label. The fine print suggested it would be best laid down for one year, to reach it's peak, not the one minute it took the Larkeys to remove the cork. Their table seemed to think it tasted just fine all the same.

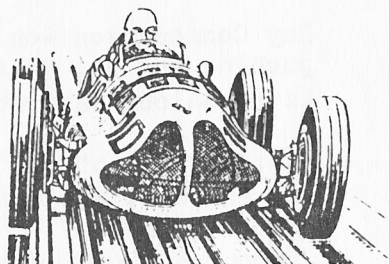
So, a great evening enjoyed by all who attended. This was all too obvious by some of the sore heads noticed at the 'Seaforth Grand Prix' next day.

Make sure you put this function on your calendar for 1987.

BOB SMITH



sporting report



ORAN PARK SUPER SPRINT

Sunday Morning. (The day after)

New member Martin Odell and I hooked up the Charger and eagerly headed out to Oran Park on an overcast day for more spills and thrills.

Members in attendance were Chris Jackson, Don MacDonald, Martin and myself.

There were plenty of interesting cars in the pits with some fairly serious competitors among them.

The usual array of very quick Toranas were there, lapping the South circuit under 40 seconds.

In the Sports Sedan over 3000cc class a very fast V8 engined Capri lapped in an impressive 48.5 for F.T.D.

Chris Jackson in his very first attempt at Oran Park very nearly christened his 6cyl Torana Type II into a concrete wall, but he managed to hang on and improved his initial time to 59 sec flying.

After 5 tries, he followed the Statesman around improving to 57.8 flying and 64.3 standing. Dad, (Don MacDonald) in the re-diffed (3.08) Statesman won his class in Type I with a 63.2 and 57.5. Dave Mason driving his fully worked 2 litre Escort gave a faultless display recording a class win easily with a 59 standing and a 53.4 flying. Dave built his car himself and races it a lot in Open Sports Sedans gaining valuable experience. He is in the process of carrying out further head mods and will be even more competitive.

The Charger was running great, Weber problems fixed, new slicks all round and I was looking for a quick time but 57.6 standing and 51.00 flying was all I could manage on the day.

Martin Odell also shared the Charger in his first ever drive. A hell of a car to learn but he cruised around in a good time of 63.5 standing and 57.4 flying. He is now very keen and is preparing a XUI Torana for this season.

The Volvo team had an unfortunate day with members hitting the walls and losing wheels, an expensive day for the doctor's car.

Results of our members :

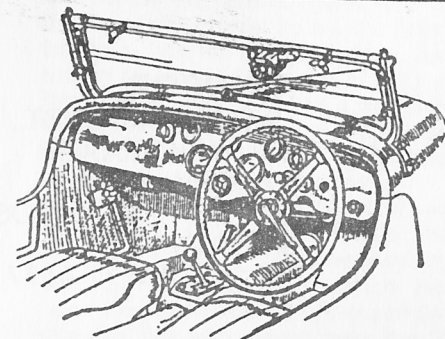
| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------|
| G. MacDonald | Type 3 3000cc+ | 6th |
| D. MacDonald | Type I 3000cc+ | 1st |
| C. Jackson | Type II 3000cc+ Reg | 3rd |
| D. Mason | Type 3 1601 - 2000cc | 1st |
| M. Odell | Type 3 3000cc+ | 10th |
| Fastest Lady (again) | June Winterbottom | 115.4 |

Good luck in the new year,

GARY MacDONALD

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EXPERIENCE.



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Roy Johnson

POINTSCORE AFTER 8TH FEBRUARY ORAN PARK -;

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------------------|
| L. Madar | 3 | <u>Scoring Method</u> |
| D. Mitchell | 2 | 1st in class = 4 pts |
| C. Jackson | 1 | 2nd in class = 3 pts |
| D. Mason | 1 | 3rd in class = 2 pts |
| G. Macdonald | 1 | Entry, DNF, DNS = 1 pt |
| R. Ross | 1 | FTD = 5 + 1st in class |
| D. Macdonald | 1 | pts |
| V. Andrews | 1 | |

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PORSCHE AND THE REDEX

IT WAS a sparkling 1950 summer's day in the Austrian Alps as Melbourne-based pump manufacturer and distributor, Norman Hamilton, backed and filled the barge-like rented Oldsmobile Rocket 88 around the serpentine sections of the famed Grossglockner mountain road.

Hamilton was on his way south from a successful coup in Holland, selling pumps to the Dutch to help them repair their war-ravaged dykes, when suddenly the alpine silence was shattered by the blaring of klaxon horns.

On his tail, weaving and ducking, was a small, rounded, silver machine, which had seemingly appeared from nowhere, and was worrying the American car's flabby flanks like a Messerschmitt to a Flying Fortress.

Hamilton edged the barge as close as he dared to the precipitous edge and in a flash the little car was past and gone, an occasional flash of silver signalling its flying climb around the Grossglockner's hairpins to the summit.

Later that day Hamilton pulled into an inn, outside which the little car was parked. He was still full of the sight and sound of it and when he found the driver, who was well refreshed and talkative. They struck up a conversation which was to sow the seeds of a multi-million dollar business.

The driver was Richard von Frankenburg, a prominent racing and test driver, and the two men formed an immediate friendship. Charged with 'Gemütlichkeit' (good cheer), Hamilton on the spur of the moment changed his plans and decided to accompany von Frankenburg to nearby Gmünd, Austria, where the cars were made.

He was so impressed with what he saw at the little factory that he ordered

two cars on the spot, negotiating successfully with the wise but elderly engineer who headed the works for the exclusive Australian franchise for the marque.

The engineer was the late Professor Ferdinand Porsche. The era of the 356 Down Under had begun.

The cars Norman Hamilton ordered — a bright red coupe with tan interior and a metallic green cabriolet — were the first two right hand drive Porsches built. In fact it was only through some hard talking by von Frankenburg which convinced the Professor to part with them and not before having Hamilton agree to wait for delivery until after the 1950 Paris Salon. The cars reached Australia, via Genoa, early in 1951.

Today, after those humble beginnings, Norman Hamilton & Co still holds the Australian concession to import and market Porsche cars, despite various attempts over the years to wrest the lucrative franchise from it.

Headed by Norman's son Alan, Porsche Cars (Aust.) P/L, held import licences to sell 411 cars during 1981, after recording a turnover of some \$27 million for the year 1979-80. It has substantial sales premises in fashionable Chapel Street, South Yarra and has only recently moved its central administration, parts stock, bond store, racing division and centre service administration facilities, into a new warehouse of almost 5000 m² on 1.3 hectares of prime industrial land at Noble Park south-east of Melbourne.

But behind the glossy new 928s with their super specification, distinct from the enduring 911s, and divorced from the Audi-inspired 924s which have been the firm's attempt to maintain a financial link with mortal men, the 356 models still shine through. They're the

cars which captured the hearts of Australian enthusiasts and laid the foundations for Hamilton's small but substantial automotive empire.

Although the last 356 (the C series) was produced at the re-located Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen factory during April 1965, taking the overall tally to 76,302 in 16 years, the Type 356 is undergoing a born-again boom in Australia.

The Type 356 at all stages of its production represented a model to other car makers in terms of basic engineering integrity and design simplicity. It was designed to perform the functions of a modern sports car with the minimum of complication and the maximum of efficiency.

As those virtues have been rediscovered by many Australians in just the past four or five years, ironically it has been the starkest and most simple variants of the 356 range which have swollen in value quite out of proportion with their natural place in automotive history.

Basic 356B and 356C series Porsches are currently realising between \$5000 and \$15,000, very much dependent on condition of course; A-series coupes range between \$5000 and \$10,000; B and C cabriolets and roadsters command anything from \$14,000 to \$30,000, and if you have a yen for an early split-screen 356, or a 356 or 356A Speedster, expect to be dealing in the span from \$15,000 to \$35,000 depending on originality and the state, and manner, of restoration.

The 356s' price-flation in recent years has been in part inspired by the soaring prices of new Porsches and in part by the general desire to clutch at examples of the recent automotive past as new cars become increasingly bland. But diminishing availability of rarer models, such as Speedsters, has produced an unprecedented market scramble.

The highly modified and customised Speedster of Jeff Dutton (featured in SCW May/July 1981), recently changed hands for a figure believed to be in the mid 20s. Another C cabriolet

is about to come on the market in Australia for over \$30,000, while there have been mutterings of around \$80,000 for a Melbourne-based 550A Spyder at present being restored.

Australia's isolation from convenient export markets, and our climate which in most parts is kind to vehicles, has resulted in a high preservation rate of many old cars. Once a car has been imported it generally remains here for life. Counter-balancing that point has been the high attrition rate for 356 Porsches. The combination of spirited performance (for their day), and swing-axle rear suspension claimed most early 356s at one stage or another in their time, some beyond recovery.

Today, locating one of those pioneering Porsches which has escaped its formative years unscathed is unlikely. Perhaps it is rivalled by finding a stuntman who has never broken a bone. This attrition factor in the 1950s was compounded by repair problems on the 356 series.

To this day, Hamiltons doesn't have its own body repair division, but instead entrusts customer cars to selected authorised repairers.

In the heyday of the 356 around the late 1950s, even authorised repairers in Australia were few and far between. Lacking the tools and formwork to re-create the delicate rounded nose section of the cars, or to correctly rectify chassis alignment, badly damaged cars often deteriorated rapidly after repairs.

Even today, there is only a handful of people left in the business around Australia with the recollection, knowledge, patience and equipment to re-create Professor Porsche's up-market version of his people's car.

But in early 1951, when those first two 356s arrived for Norman Hamilton, everything at Porsche was in the formative stage world-wide.

The production commenced at Gmund in southern Austria, where it remained until the death of the 76-year-old Professor Porsche in 1951. The company then moved to Stuttgart-

Zuffenhausen, following the decision of the American forces to move out of the original factory in 1950.

Hamilton's first two cars had only just reached Australia when Porsche celebrated the production of its 500th car in March 1951, all with a staff of 214. But six months later the 1000th Porsche had been delivered.

The cars at Gmund came together on an assembly line when parts from VW, bodies from Reutter, and specialised components from Porsche, all joined to form a car which was in the forefront of performance vehicles.

Norman Hamilton's first demonstrator coupe would top 167 km/h, which was rapid for anything in 1951, let alone a puny vehicle with just 1.3 litres. Supply of cars then, as now, was the limiting factor on the marque's expansion in this country. After securing the Porsche franchise, Hamilton decided to make the car business worthwhile by adding Hanomag, Lloyd and Borgward to his inventory. But by the time he arrived back in Australia, the Government had introduced heavy import licencing, based not on quantity as is the case today, but on total value. Taking the other franchises into account, this left Norman Hamilton with a Porsche licence quota for fully 2.5 vehicles in his first year of operation.

An interesting point here is that the enterprising Hamilton also picked up the VW franchise for Australia at around the same time, but relinquished it after Lord Nuffield visited Australia and convinced the Federal Government that that car was quite unsuitable for our climatic conditions.

Despite that shaky start, Porsche sales picked up as Norman Hamilton rationalised his franchises. Business began in earnest on the eighth floor of the Southern Cross Insurance building in the heart of Melbourne. The showroom was the kerb outside and a parking officer was on the payroll to keep the tickets under control.

The Spares department was equally grand; an old car crate in the Hamiltons' backyard in Burwood, while new vehicle preparation and customer ser-

vice from 1956 occurred at Day & Stone's BP Garage in St. Kilda Road. The Stone was Otto of MG K3 fame, and his apprentice, John Sawyer, carried out the tuning work.

With the release of the 356A in Australia in 1956 and, in particular, the arrival of about 150 Speedster rag-top and curtain roadster versions over the following two years, Porsche sales soared. In 1958 they reached a peak of nearly 100 cars, largely as a result of the Speedster's popularity and because of the aggressive marketing of Hamilton's new NSW distributor, Arnold Glass.

Now, Arnold and Norman were chalk and cheese in their respective marketing methods. Arnold was the brash new-and-used car retailer, selling Porsches by the score on 10 percent deposit and seven year terms to young hopefuls caught on the crest of the car's popularity wave. Norman didn't really agree with this approach, feeling that it didn't fit the image he sought to create. Ultimately, they went their separate ways.

Meantime, Porsches had been making their presence felt in other States too, largely through attention received while competing in the early Around Australia trials and speed events during the 1950s.

Hamilton's original bright red coupe was in fact raced and climbed by Les Murphy and Ken Harper, soon after its arrival. By the time the first Redex Reliability Trial was convened in 1953, the coupe had been resprayed a pale metallic blue, and was sitting squat and low on the Sydney Showgrounds starting line with Norman Hamilton and Ken Harper as its crew.

While they didn't figure among the front-runners, they made it home over that gruelling 10,500km course, collecting the award for the first overseas entry home.

Despite all efforts, history tells us that Porsche never won a big trial in Australia although its less sophisticated cousins, the VW Beetles, dominated endurance trials in the late 1950s.

History also tells us that Porsche almost died in Australia in the early '60s, with the breath of life almost being withdrawn from the franchise as quickly as it had been ingested.

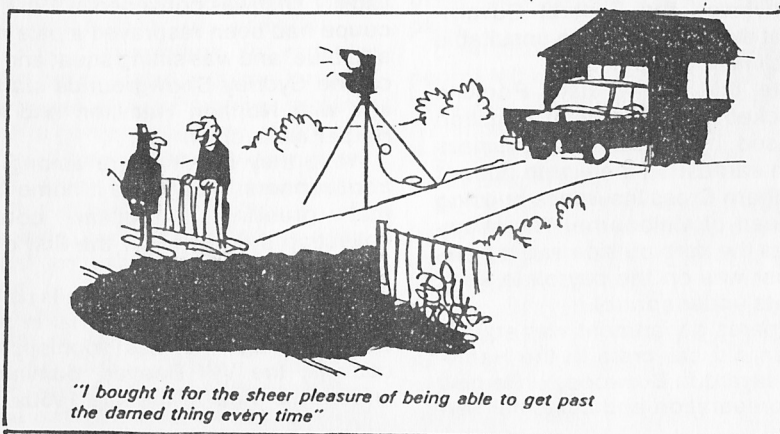
If you crave for a 356 Porsche, it's not yet too late. But there are traps, many traps, for the unwary, and no car should be bought without a full examination from an experienced Porsche 356 specialist. Although a simple car, they

are now mobile parts museums, with prices in keeping.

For all this we have the foresight of one man, Norman Hamilton, to thank. And one can only wonder at the thought of what might not have occurred to the marque *down under* if Norman Hamilton had changed his itinerary on that sunny morning in the Austrian Alps back when. □



A battered but still functioning Australian driven 356 in the Monte Carlo Rally.



André

Brilliant engineer, bon viveur, charmer, business man, and a genius at public relations — that was André Citroën, the founder of the company which bears his name. He made it, then nearly broke it . . . Philip Turner chronicles his life

FEW OF the early motor manufacturers were qualified engineers. Henry Ford, William Morris, Herbert Austin, Louis Renault, all were in varying proportions a mixture of the highly skilled mechanic who was good with his hands and the traditional mad inventor. But André Citroën was indeed a qualified engineer, a product of the prestigious Ecole Polytechnique in Paris which has provided so many of the top French industrialists. Not that Citroën finished in the elite top ten in the final examinations, for after a school career during which he did little but work and gain prizes for practically every subject, as a university student he blossomed into a social butterfly and was the life and soul of all the parties.

Maybe it was a reaction from his rather sad childhood, for his Jewish father, who was a diamond merchant and had come to Paris from Amsterdam in 1870, leapt out of a window to his death after being ruined by swindlers. André, who was born in 1878, was six at the time. His Polish mother, too, died when he was still young, but it was on a visit to her family in Warsaw after leaving the Polytechnique that he saw some very unusual wooden gear wheels with double helical teeth at work in a local factory. It was typical of Citroën that he realised their potential for development and started a gear cutting concern for making double helical gears when he returned to Paris. Owing to their power transmitting capabilities, Citroën secured contracts for supplying steering gears to large passenger liners — including the Titanic. The gear teeth are also the basis for that double Chevron badge carried by all Citroën cars.

Citroën first became involved in the motor industry in 1907 when he was chiefly responsible for rescuing the famous Mors company, whose car had won the Paris-Madrid race, from financial disaster.

It was during the Great War, however, that André Citroën made his name. The French Army were very short of shells, which were being made by knife and fork methods at the rate of six a day. Citroën offered to make them by the thousand and was given financial backing to try. In 60 days he built a massive new works alongside the Seine on what had been a market garden, and, using mass production methods he had seen in operation during a visit to the United States just before the war, he made good his boast, becoming a national hero.

When the war ended, he was left with this vast plant but no demand at all for shells. He therefore decided to use it for making cars, foreseeing correctly that there would be an expanding demand for a reliable, middle range family car. He hired Jules Salomon, the designer of the successful pre-war Le Zebre small car, and then shook everyone by saying he was planning to build 100 cars a day. The Type A Citroën, when it was unveiled in May 1919, proved to be a simple but sturdy four cylinder machine of 1,327cc that sold at a most reasonable price in spite of the fact that, unlike its rivals, it came fully equipped with lights and electrical equipment and many other basic items that were charged as extras on other makes.

Perhaps it was André Citroën's engineering background that enabled him to appreciate the potential of new developments well ahead of his motor industry rivals. Time and again he was the first European manufacturer to introduce major new advances in automobile engineering. Not only was he the first with the modern assembly line in Europe in 1919, but in 1923/4 he brought over some engineers from the American Budd Corporation to instal the necessary plant for making all-steel bodies, so that the 1924 Citroën B2 was the first European car with such a structure. Then, at the

1931 Paris Salon, the new models all carried a cut-out of a swan floating on a lake on their right rear wings, to show that their engines were flexibly mounted, for Citroen had bought the licence to use Chrysler Floating Power techniques which made a four cylinder engine almost as smooth as a six, now that it was no longer bolted rigidly to the chassis.

André Citroen excelled against his rivals in other directions too. He had a very shrewd idea of the point of view of the average motorist, and catered for his needs at a time when most manufacturers treated their customers with a somewhat lofty disdain. He also had a positive genius for public relations. His name appeared in lights from top to bottom of the Eiffel Tower, he backed fantastic long range expeditions over impossible country with the Citroen-Kegresse half track vehicles, and a small section of the Citroen works was devoted to making model Citroens in order to get young and potential future owners thinking along the right lines.

Unlike his great rival, Louis Renault, André Citroen was an urbane man of the world with such incredible personal charisma that he could not merely charm the birds out of the trees but convince them they'd feel much better if they plucked out all their feathers and gave them to him. Alas André often needed all his charm in order to keep his giant company in existence, for he habitually treated cash as if the huge Quai de Javel plant had a large section devoted to printing it. He spent money like water on the plant, and he encouraged all his dealers to erect vast marble palaces in which to sell his cars. In his private life, too, he was one of the big spenders. It was thus completely in character that the Citroen family villa was at Deauville which in the 1920s and 30s was the smart French watering place. It was in easy reach of Paris — only 100 miles down the road. It had a casino in which Citroen could wager vast sums. It had a race course at which he could lose even greater sums backing horses. In season, there were probably more Bugattis, Delages and Hispano Suizas parked in Deauville than anywhere else in France.

The biggest gamble André Citroen ever took was not at the casino or on the race course, but putting into production the famed Traction Avant, the low-slung car which was

not merely pioneering front wheel drive in quantity production but also the monocoque body, replaceable wet cylinder liners for the cylinder block and torsion bar independent front suspension. Ever since the depressed days of 1931 André had been thinking in terms of a revolutionary new design as the only way in which to stimulate sales. His design department, headed by a man who did not hold a driving licence and who could not drive a car, was totally against such new-fangled notions. Then Citroen's friend, Gabriel Voisin, put him in touch with a young engineer, André Lefebvre, who was then working for Renault but who had designed Voisin's 1923 Grand Prix car — and driven it to finish in the Grand Prix. Lefebvre had plans for a front-wheel drive car which he brought with him to Citroen when he joined the company on March 1, 1933.

Two prototypes of what was known in the works as the PV (the petite voiture) were running by August, disguised on their test runs by being fitted with GB plates. And while work went on at high speed on the cars, Citroen pulled down and rebuilt the main assembly building at the Quai de Javel in readiness for the new model, celebrating the completion of the building in typically lavish Citroen fashion by holding a banquet in it for 6,500 guests. To the outside world, therefore, André Citroen when he addressed the assembled guests seemed at the very height of his power and prosperity. In fact, the money was running out at last, and he and his engineers were engaged in a desperate race against time to get the new revolutionary car into production before financial disaster overtook the company.

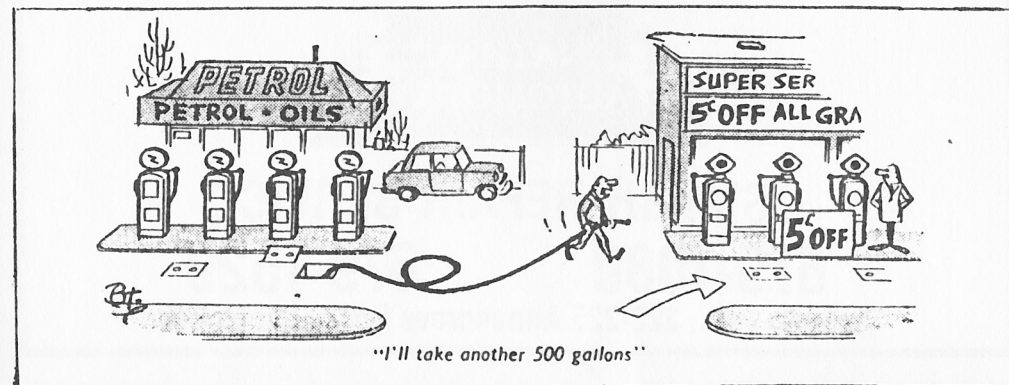
As if the high pressure development of this revolutionary new car was not difficult enough, André Citroen nearly sank the project by deciding it should be fitted with an automatic transmission. Unfortunately, he had opted for the system devised by Senseaud de Lauvaud, consisting of a fluid coupling and epicyclic gears. It worked well when André drove a car so equipped on his usual run to Deauville, for no hills were encountered, but in the mountains the fluid coupling boiled its oil and the epicycle gears jammed. The crunch came in March 1934 when five test cars set out but only one returned, the other four having

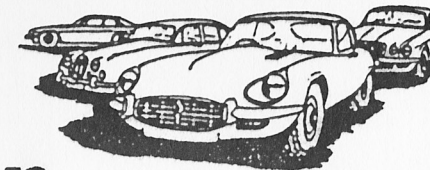
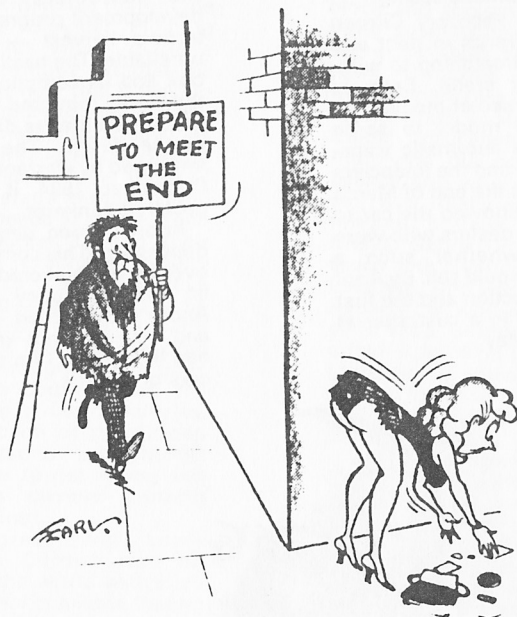
stopped with transmission trouble. A crash programme was then instituted to replace the automatic transmission by a normal gearbox housed in the automatic casing.

By the end of February Citroen was 150 million francs in debt and the banks were threatening to withdraw any further credit. Early in March at a highly secret meeting he showed the new model to some financiers but the automatic transmission played up and the financiers departed. Towards the end of March Citroen therefore showed the car to the 40 top Citroen dealers who were in two minds whether such a revolutionary car would sell. By April it was in full production and the first car was delivered to a customer at the beginning of May.

If André Citroen thought his troubles were over, now the new car was in production he was, alas, gravely mistaken. For, once in the hands of the customers, the too rapid development programme brought a terrible harvest — the cars were unreliable. The hastily devised gearbox and its complicated linkage for the fascia mounted gear lever gave untold trouble, as did other aspects of the design. The company was swamped by warranty claims until in December 1934 it was officially declared bankrupt.

André Citroen, desperately ill, was deposed and his company was taken over by its chief creditor, the Michelin Tyre Company. In July, 1935, André Citroen died, broken hearted and a failure, not knowing that he had left behind him one of the great cars of all time.





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