



# *top* *gear*

OCTOBER 1988



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NEWSLETTER OF THE THOROUGHBRED SPORTS CAR CLUB





## OBJECTS 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 Ryde RSL Club, 724 Victoria Road, RYDE

PUBLISHED BY: The Thoroughbred Sports Car Club,  
P.O. Box 195, Croydon Park, N.S.W. 2133.

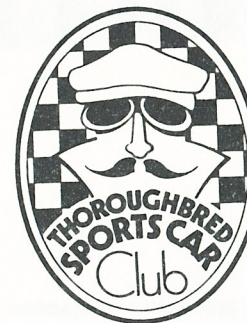
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P.O. Box 206, GLENORIE 2157

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# *thoroughbred sports car club*

POSTAL ADDRESS - 88 OLD BEROWA ROAD, HORNSBY, 2077

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

DATE: 2nd Wednesday each month at 8.00 p.m.

LOCATION: Ryde RSL Club, 724 Victoria Road, RYDE N.S.W. 2112

## 1988 COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	-	Roland Clarke	(H) 899-1205 (W) (045) 77-4577
VICE PRESIDENT	-	Lester Gough	(H) 799-3209 (W) 750-8188
SECRETARY	-	Adrian Walker	(H) 477-4299 (W) 411-1055
TREASURER	-	John Burton	(H) 875-1050 (W) 410-6729
COMPETITION SEC.	-	Vic Andrews	(H) 528-3227
SOCIAL SEC.	-	Don MacDonald	(H) 652-2429
NEW MEMBERS	-	Ray Ross	(H) 651-2013 (W) 872-3439
COMMITTEE	-	Len Madar	(H) 651-1812
	-	Chris Jackson	(H) 871-2806

# EDITORIAL

Hello,

Well it is time once again to get this magazine to print, and I'm late as usual.

We have had a few good events since the last magazine and those who didn't attend should enjoy to read about them.

We still have three important events left on our calendar, one is our Pride of Ownership Day and the others are the Xmas Dinner, for which you will shortly receive tickets, and the Annual General Meeting, so please make a mark on your calendars for these functions.

Hoping to see you on one or all these important dates.

Val Taylor



## presidents prose

The Bicentennial year is rapidly drawing to a close! in the last two months members have enjoyed the hillclimb (Amaroo) Motorkana (Windsor) and the all exciting Village Grand Prix (Blacktown).

Your committee laboured well into the late hours coming up with suggestions for club activities 1989, with some refreshing and exciting activities planned but, we are always open to fresh suggestions.

The enthusiasm for competition within the club is very strong and the points score is being hotly contested, but if you are not competition minded don't forget there is a social event each month that you can participate in.

We seem to be getting the same faces at most of our activities. It would be great to see more members come along and participate, even if only occasionally. We really want to see you.

Elections will be coming up shortly, so maybe you would like to take a more active roll in the club events in 1989.

Don't forget our Xmas Party on December 3rd at the Travelodge Camperdown. This is always a very good night, being able to stay over if you wish.

President  
Roland



## THE GAMES EVENING

A fine Saturday night in May saw plenty of movie stars at the home of Roland and Stephanie for the Gambling night. We had an excellent viewing of their collection of cars, having gone in the wrong entrance.

There were some new faces for us, and it was an excellent evening to meet other members. Indeed some of the disguises were superb - Ma and Pa Kettle did a very good impression of Ray and Margaret Ross, Adrian Walker excelled as a shifty looking dealer, and have you ever seen Tina Turner play Blackjack before?

Our chips disappeared very quickly, as they usually do. The ultimate in calculated betting just had to be slater racing, what a battle of wits that was. The roulette wheel and blackjack were also popular.

Congratulations to Barbara Muir as Annie, and Jim Peters as Rumpole, the evenings winners - for their dress sense of course.

Our thanks go to the organisers and to Roland and Stephanie for the use of thier home. A very successful evening by all accounts and we look forward to next year now we know where the front door is.

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## MOONEY MOONEY SOCIAL

The July Social was held at the Mooney Mooney Club situated adjacent to the Hawkesbury River Bridge.

Earlier in the afternoon I had dropped-in to the Burton's to ascertain directions (the family was "in slumberland") in preparation for a long evening - at least that was John's story. It turned out that I wasted my time asking the whereabouts of the Club - because he also became lost and had to ask directions from helpful locals.

The function was reasonably well attended with Lester and Deborah missing from the starting line because of unforeseen problems.

Stephanie and Roland had the best method of beating the booze bus and paid scant attention to alcohol intake - their cruiser was moored just across the bridge.

The food was excellent, the company fine and the service not bad. A certain unnamed person was seen to be devouring any "left-over" oysters, mussels and calamari - maybe he was replacing his energy reserves lost during his nap!

Surprisingly, most of the evening conversation centred around cars, lap times and F.T.D.'s.

Don and Ray were heard discussing the old road to Hornsby and its inherent hillclimb sections as some sport during the return trip - this did not eventuate however, as the ladies took control of the discussion and the cars.

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, as I am sure did all other participants.

Kevin Leggott

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

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Conditions perfect with a strong country fragrance present (chicken waste I think), six entries from our club competed in this well run event as follows:-

D MacDonald/Turbo Starion who is usually competitive in whatever he drives, was trying out a different tyre size, which seemed like a good idea, but didn't work in practise, however Don achieved a best lap of 55.1 for a third place in a very fast drive to the circuit tyre car.

Bill Long must be the most experienced Torana driver of the eighties and getting quicker by the meeting or every weekend, managed a 3rd place out of a strong field of nine, best lap of 53.0 - Go Bill!!

Peter Maggs/Datsun 1600. Last time I saw him he was under his rear end (ie the Datsun) changing the diff ratio since he had 10 runs. I don't think he returned to the pits again, a very keen competitor with a best lap of 57.8 secs. and a 6th place out of nine.

John Burton/Clubman 1300 fronted with a tasty looking set of new slicks to scrub in after an excursion on the grass for some rapid motorkana practice, won his class with a best lap of 48.3 (146kph average) for a trophy. Congratulations John!!

Ray Ross/Torana. Mr Consistency. Competition was fierce in this class with FTD and 1st place going to a comma-a-door at 45.9 secs. unbelievable, club racing is becoming semi professional. Ray obtained a best lap of 53.0 secs. and a 6th place behind some very quick Vee-ates.

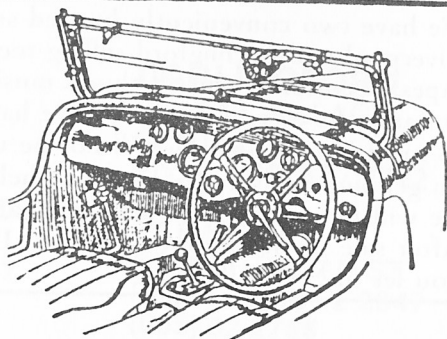
Vic Andrews/Viper Sports. As for myself I spent most of the day fixing various items to many to list. Motor sport is a matter of getting everything to work on the same day and this was definitely not one of those days. I found it difficult to tell whether my new clutch was burning with that chicken smell around the place and was completely out-gunned by a formula 2 type car of Ernie Shankelton who is a regular hillclimber. I was hoping he might have all the wrong ratios but he informed me he changed them the previous night. Darn! My best lap was 51.3 with further modifications I hope to break this 50 sec. barrier, so back to the spanners.

Vic Andrews

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Roy Johnson



## GYMKHANA RICHMOND -- SUNDAY 4th September 1988

Everybody and their dog turned up on an absolutely beautiful day at the Fiat Club Gymkhana grounds at Richmond a Sunday or two ago. It was good to see quite a number of Club members there and that in addition they invited some visitors along to join in the fun.

People sat around basking in the glorious sunshine until around 11.30 awaiting the arrival of the master of ceremonies Lester Gough, master flagman extroadinaire.

Arriving without Debbie who had gone to see her parents (after all it was fathers day), Lester proceeded to set the flags up, with a little assistance from the mini-car club crew, future Revheads one and all. Then the call was heard, "Let the games begin", and with much revving of motors, and eyeing off opponents known and potential, the motorkhana mark II began.

Competition was fierce, particularly between Adrian Walker in the red Alfa and his old adversaries John Burton in his Skyline, Don McDonald who turned up in a V8 Commodore and Grant Liddell thrashing the daylights out of Penny's poor little Datsun 1300.

Mad Max Pegler in the green Aston Martin again provided heaps of crowd pleasing, grass churning, wheelspinning action, and other members who enjoyed putting their cars through the ropes on both the grass and the dirt track included Vic Andrews, Ray Ross, Roland Clark, Garry McDonald and Kevin Leggott. Visitors James, (yes, as suspected last time he has become hooked!) and Martin enjoyed themselves, putting in some very good times.

Competition between the ladies was particularly fierce-who said we were the fairer sex? -particularly with my arch rival Penny in the little Datsun and Val in the Starion. Penny took us all this time with some spectacular times, but just you wait.....next time! Visitors Julie in the Starion and Danielle Walker in her mini also presented a challenge and obviously enjoyed themselves. Special thanks to those who did the timekeeping - particularly on the dirt circuit with all that dust (Stephanie & Roland).

John Burton proved too fast for Don, Grant and Adrian at the end of the day, which goes to show it is the driver, not just the car that counts. Undoubtedly, revenge is already being plotted, strategy re-worked for next time.

The weather was great and the bar-b-que was great, as was the venue and we all look forward to a re-match next year. Come along and join in the fun next time.

Lorraine Walker (red Alfa GTV)

After arriving for an early start, we sat down and drank coffee and tea waiting for the ARDC until 11am to set up the track and lights. After that we were right - our day began.

At the beginning Roland's Cobra was blowing a lot of smoke, Dominic's little Civic and Debbie's Datsun 1200 tried to compete for the most smoke blown for the starters, but Dominic was the outright winner of the private competition when his smoke covered the track. Adrian's new motor in the Jaguar was performing very well.

Judy was only able to have a few runs in the Volvo as she was a bit worried about it as it was their towcar. Vic had his problems when his lower wishbone was bent at the first corner and then was unable to compete in his openwheeler. I think he had a few runs in the Volvo but. Barry also had his problems at the beginning with his Torana dying of thirst but after a few adjustments he was able to do good times. Lester's friend John took his Commodore for a very good work-out up the hill. Brendan in his Falcon ripped up the hill to get some good times. Len's Triumph also had its problems when its clutch jammed and he was unable to have a run. Don and Gary arrived late but tried instantly for FTD in the Starion. I missed Val not being able to compete this year. Ray as he was the starter left his runs until late to compete against Bill for FTD which Ray held for quite some time until Bill's "little red Torana" just got in front to take out FTD. Grant and Debbie in the Datsun went very well. Roland's Cobra was doing very fast times in between Roland assisting on the start.

Our thanks go to Lester for preparing our BBQ lunch which he cooked to perfection. Well done. I thoroughly enjoyed my day having the most runs up the hill and taking out the ladies FTD. It was nice to see so many people from our club enjoying our social day together.

Sue Long

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## 6 HOUR RELAY RACING

By One Who Has Done It (And Enjoyed It)

Relay Racing differs from our normal super sprints in so far as - in super sprinting you need a set of sub-regs, usually around \$35, a Cams basic licence \$9, and a car in reasonable trim \$??

You arrive at the track on the day of the event present your car for scrutineering, attend a driver briefing and away you go.

The events are usually 2-4 laps and after you have your run wait for 45 mins to 1 hour for the next. If you have an 'off' or mechanical failure you fix it or forget it and try again.

The cars are 'classed' in type and engine capacity ie -

- Type 1 Street registered but unmodified
- Type 2 Still street register but modified
- Type 3 Unregistered and modified highly (lightend, slicks etc).

The object is to go out and improve your times around the circuit and hopefully a class win or in extreme cases FTD. There are usually one or two cars sent out at a time but there may be two or three sets of cars on the track. The chance of catching the cars in front is usually remote so there is very little chance of passing or being passed by any other car than the one you are running with. In all it is an individual effort.

In relay racing, it is very much a team effort you must, during the race, obey the Team Manager without question.

You require a set of sub-regs - approx \$500 for the team - a general competition licence around \$75 and a good reliable car \$??+-. For this is endurance racing.

The planning starts months ahead of the event when a team is put together, which can be of 3 cars minimum to 6 cars maximum. A Team Manager, timekeepers, signalman, batten changer and of course pitcrew are appointed, or sort of bribed, but some how obtained.

Regular meetings are held where such things are discussed as SPONSORS, car preparation, ie new tyres, spare parts, oils, fuel capacities etc, SPONSORS, garage requirements such as jacks, compressors, wheel stands, timing lights etc, SPONSORS, support crew, creature comforts and SPONSORS.

As the event draws closer the car preparation all but complete, the interest and excitement grows, a few practice sessions are snuck in and the drivers wait nervously for the "BIG DAY" to arrive.

We, as did some of the other teams, arrived at the circuit on the Friday to set the team and pit and to get a few early practice sessions in and having borrowed a Campervan stayed to mind the cars and equipment over night and be ready for Official Practice on Saturday.



The cars have to be scrutineered twice, once on Saturday and again on Sunday. There were approximately 25 teams in the event and only one car from each team could practice at a time, so it is a busy day, practice, check, adjust and practice. Now we see if all the planning and preparation works out.

During practice day each car must do 6 speed laps which are officially timed and given to the Team Manager, so he may submit a handicap list of the anticipated times each driver will do during the race. This must be done with a great deal of care, as if a driver breaks (goes faster) this time by 3% a penalty lap is incurred. So it is heads together. When all this is done, handicaps submitted, last minute adjustments done, we prepared for a sleepless night for the "DAY" has finally arrived.

Up early on Sunday, cars cleaned, numbers fixed on, who will be the first car out, for he will have the job of getting us a clean start and to stay out for as long as the Team Manager thinks he can maintain a good race speed and get laps on the board.

With 25 cars at a standing start is an awesome task especially when on this particular day it was raining. With a great deal of skill and a lot of intestinal fortitude our number one driver went from about fifteenth on the grid to third outright within the hour he was out which with our handicap put us in a super position.

The change over takes place at the pit entrance where the batten, which is actually is a velcro sash fitted to the lefthand guard, is changed from one car to the other. After this is done the pit marshall allows the next car on the track, he then tries to maintain or improve his position in the field.

The handicap, which is lap given, is calculated from the scratch team, that is, according to your timed lap you should finish 'X' amount of laps behind the fastest team, so a percentage of those laps are fed into the computer every half hour so in theory and barring computer failure, every team should finish at the same time. Amazing but it does not happen that way, a bit of a spin, a penalty lap and you have a lot of time to make up, hence the field spreads out.

When it came to my turn, which was 4th in a five car team, I was extremely nervous as I did not want to make a mistake out there. When the sash change was made and I was in amongst it all, my mouth was dry and my gear changes notchy and after a few laps I settled down and thought, this is not so bad after all. The field had spread out and not too much traffic but I was still conscious of not making a mistake and therefore even though I thought I was going fast I was about 2 seconds slower than my given time. The Team Manager had no choice than to call me in. But this was after about 45 minutes, so I did get quite a few laps in and was quite happy to have been in the team. Unlike super sprinting you are ever mindful of the other cars on the track, your eyes are on the mirrors, the cars in front and the flag marshalls and with 25 other cars out there it is very exhausting.

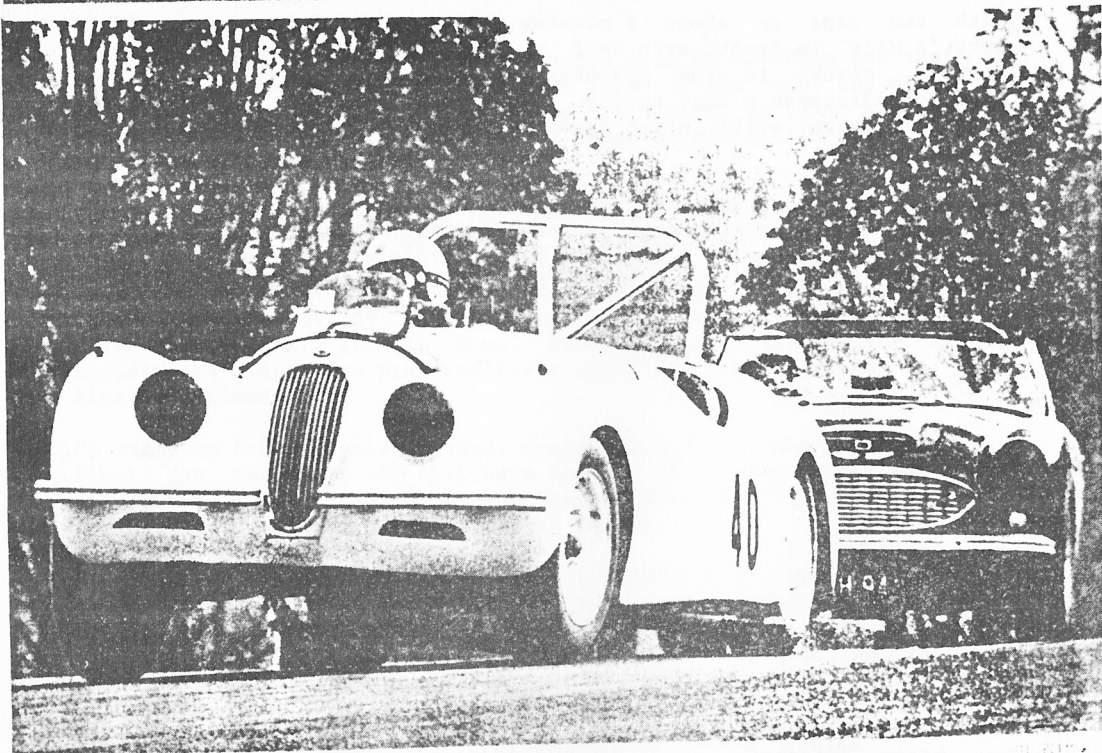
With two laps or about 3 minutes to go the Track Announcer said we were "A Mile" in front, with half a lap to go we did not get a mention, thanks to the computer we came in third by half a lap, but that's handicapped 6 hour racing. The team finished exhausted but with all cars still intact (good preparation) and talking about "The next one".

With all the teams, and there would have been about 120 cars, which ranged from type one through to some very fast type threes. They all conducted themselves in a friendly but a professional sportsman like manner and it was a pleasure and privilege to race against them.

Bill Long

#### COMING EVENTS

OCTOBER	12th	Club Meeting - Ryde RSL Club
	23rd	Oran Park Supersprint Bookings: Vic Andrews (H) 528 3227
	30th	Mount Panorama Hillclimb Bookings: Vic Andrews (H) 528 3227
NOVEMBER	6th	Pride of Ownership Day (Car Display/Picnic) Rozelle Bookings - L Gough (H) 799 3209
	9th	Club Meeting - Ryde RSL Club
	13th	Aust. Grand Prix To be advised
	27th	Observation Weekend - Seven Mile Beach Bookings - Lester Gough (H) 799 3209
DECEMBER	3rd	Xmas Function - Camperdown Travelodge Bookings - Don MacDonald - 652 2429 Tickets not returned must be paid for.
	14th	Annual General Meeting - Ryde RSL Club



## Exciting Excellence Jaguar's XK120

Story by BARRY GREEN

**I**T WAS indeed 1988, although the open cockpit XK120 Jaguar at full noise on the racetrack implied otherwise. Its spirited sight and sound, you see, evoked a chronic dose of nostalgia that made for Amaroo Park's writhing up-hill-and-down-dale layout readily taking on the geographical features and yesteryear atmosphere of another racing circuit — that of the roughly-triangular and ridiculously narrow Gnoo Blas public road course outside of Orange, New South Wales.

And with the old imagination growing more colourfully vivid by the moment, it was no trouble for Bitupave Hill, Skyline, Dunlop Exit, Winfield Corner to blend with a blur into The Dip, Mrs Mutton's, The Radius, Speets Bend; for the vivacious blond in chic Benetton gear to become the chaste figure of a young lady frocked in mid-calf length tweed, and the plastic esky, a wicker basket of cold collations and bottle of Hunter Valley vintage white.

Just as three decades ago when the XK, in the hands of tyro Ross Johnson, was considered the car to beat around the six kilometre black ribbon of bitumen that was Gnoo Blas, this very same car is today campaigned with equal gusto by Historic racing enthusiast, Mal Biddlecombe.

Biddlecombe acquired the white Jag in 1976 as nothing more than an intimidating wreck. He spent three years industriously rebuilding it, although the casual observer would find that hard to believe, going by the way the big bloke throws the car around Amaroo and Lakeside with carefree

abandon.

That this venerable sports car has continued to survive the rigours of two generations of competition and no-holds-barred use is perhaps as good as tribute to Sir William Lyons' design and execution as has ever been paid.

It was 1948 when Lyons and his team of engineers — Walter Hassan, Claude Baily and William Haynes — decided to run off a limited batch of sports cars. Their primary aim was to publicise a newly developed 3.5-litre straight-six motor intended for the still-on-the-drawing-boards Mark VIII saloon.

It has been said the team was influenced by the BMW 328 — in particular, the 1940 Mille Miglia cars — when drawing up what was to become known as the XK120, although it should be acknowledged that the basic chassis had something of a Mk V saloon influence while the body lines, in part, exuded a touch of reminiscence of Continental styling.

What they succeeded in doing, however, was putting together a truly stunning looking sports car. The response was immediately favourable, right from the very first public showing at the world-famous Earls Court Motor Show of 1948.

The demand for this new 'Best of British' was such that the planned run of 200 examples — hand built in the traditional manner with alloy panels stretched over an ash frame — was sold in advance of early 1950 production. This remarkable success

encouraged Lyons to commission Pressed Steel to tool up dies for steel body production alongside the superb Mk VIII.

Sales of the instant classic ultimately exceeded 12 000 in three models — open, drophead coupe and hardtop.

However, as with any motor car, no matter how good, the XK120 was not without its frailties and foibles. The four-speed gearbox, in coping with the engine's power output of 160 bhp at 5 000 rpm was heavy; the car was considered somewhat under-braked with four-wheel drums as standard; the suspension — torsion bar at the front and live rear axle with semi-elliptics — was, it was said, a little too 'boulevard-ish' and, for a sports car, the two-seater bench seat appeared out of place.

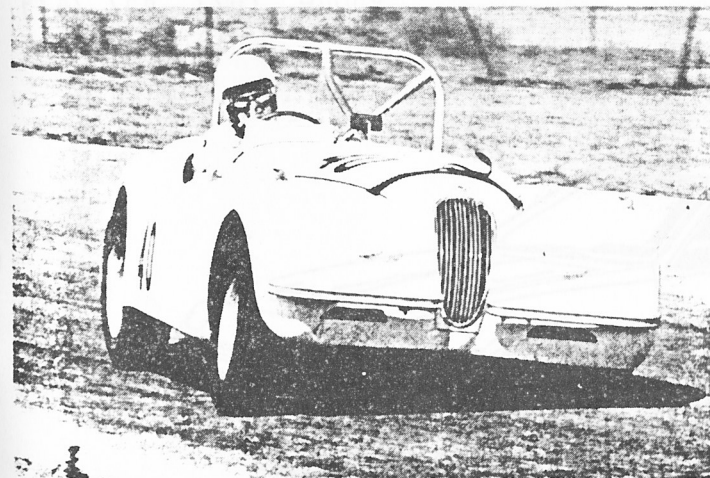
But, for its time, the XK120 was a goer, and it wasn't backwards in showing its paces on the Goodwoods, Montlherys and Elkhart Lakes of the world. Sans windscreen, the big six could hit 130 mph and was immediately race competitive, winning the prestigious RAC Tourist Trophy and Alpine Rally of 1950 and the Liege-Rome-Liege Rally the following year.

Down Under, its impact was equally impressive...

Future luminaries such as Frank Gardner, Bib Stillwell and Murray Carter punted XK120s in the formative years of their long and eminently successful racing careers.

One of the legends of the halcyon Maroubra Speedway era, Hope Bartlett, employed a white coupe to bring down the final curtain on a 30-year run of prominence on the Australian motor sport stage. Aged 61, Hope wheeled his way to a last-up win at Mt Panorama, on Easter Monday, 1951, shutting down the challenges of a field of drivers half his age.

A year later, at the same track, a gentleman named JS Moody pushed his model to a top-10 finish in the AGP, only one lap adrift of race winner Doug Whiteford in the bellowing, blue, ex-Louis Chiron 'works' Lago Talbot.



Frank Lobb went close to matching Moody's creditable performance in the AGP of 1953, when he and his XK headed home a Maserati 6C in 14th place at the inspirational Albert Park road circuit in Melbourne's inner parklands.

Probably the sporty Jag's most significant local victory, though, came in the 24-hour race at Mt Druitt in 1954 when Queenslanders Bill Pitt, Charlie Swinburne and Mrs Georgie Anderson teamed together in the latter's fixed-head coupe.

The talented trio went on to take the lead and the win on a rain-wrecked excuse for a track after English international and 1938 AGP winner Peter Whitehead's C-Type broke its rear end.

Competition success was not contained only to the hot-mix race circuits, either. In August, 1951, an XK120 crewed by Queenslanders Les Taylor and Dick Rendle consumed the 954 tortuous miles from Darwin to the Alice in the amazing time of 10 hours 32 minutes — a record that even

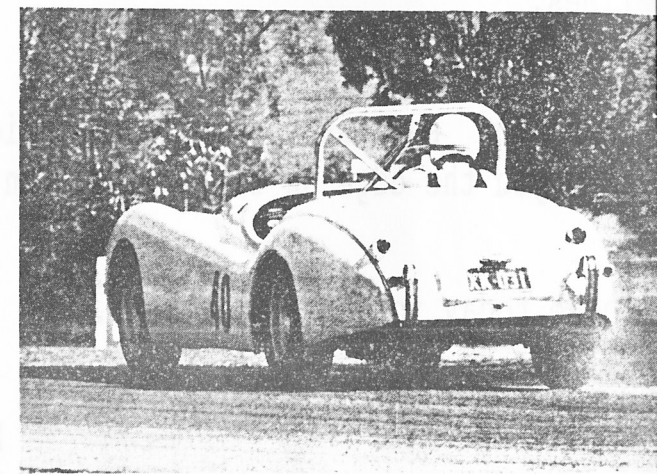
today evokes a mixture of incredulous admiration whenever the feat is discussed.

Not surprisingly, given its condescension as a base model car, the XK's other success in such modified form. The most demonstrable of these were openwheelers: Lex Davison's Two-based HWM and Bill Pitt's hoo Special.

The former is best remembered as winner of the 1954 AGP at Southport, powered by an XK120 motor, brought to Type specs, from out of wrecked roadster. The HWM Jaguar took the great to many victories throughout the of the mid-fifties.

The latter, in contrast, used a stock XK120 motor and chassis, standard roadster body replaced by pleasing, lightweight, offset body

Mal Biddlecombe punts the Jaguar around with — this is a classic example of a sports car. BR



incorporated the production model. Although battling a bump-steer caused by lowering the steering column, the car finished a fighting 11th in the AGP, even after losing 14 minutes on a flat tyre out on the fast and bumpy road circuit.

Today, going on two generations, the XK120 lives on — in Historic Grand Prix racing — in the same vibrant, talkative style, as demonstrated by the forceful Biddlecombe.

Out on Amroo's twisty curves, seemingly as a matter of habit, the Jag right up, looking as he does at and elsewhere as though he is on a bead away from disaster and you wish — as your memory drifts to the flat and featureless country roads of Orange and the young lady in the skirt with accommodating wicker basket back to the Good Old Days — that all drove and made them that way. You really do.



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