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The official magazine of  
the Thoroughbred Sports  
Car Club

Spring/Summer 2021



Spring/Summer 2021

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**Closing Date for the Autumn 2022 Edition 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

# About Our Club

## Calendar

The [Official Calendar](#) is published on our web site. Print a copy to keep in your historic log booked vehicle.

## Club Meetings

[Club meetings](#) are held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month except December and January at Carlingford Bowling Club.

## Club Objectives

- To foster a better acquaintance and social spirit between the various owners of Thoroughbred Sports Cars in Australia
- To help and advance Thoroughbred Sports Cars in Australia
- To establish and maintain, by example, a high Standard of Conduct and a Respect of the Laws of the Road

## Club Shoppe

Visit the [Club Shoppe](#) and make sure you are dressed appropriately for the next event.

## Correspondence

All correspondence to The Secretary, TSCC  
P.O. Box 3006, Dural, NSW 2158.  
Email: [secretary@thoroughbredssportscarclub.asn.au](mailto:secretary@thoroughbredssportscarclub.asn.au)

## Incorporation

TSCC is incorporated as an association.  
Registered No. Y15083-35

## Affiliation

TSCC is affiliated with CAMS Limited

## Other Information:

[Administration](#)  
[Annual Awards](#)  
[CAMS](#)  
[Club History](#)  
[Club Plates](#)  
[Membership Forms](#)  
[Pointscore](#)  
[Sporting](#)

## Disclaimer:

Any opinions published in the Newsletter should not be regarded as being the opinion of the Club, of the Committee, or of the Editor. No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of any information in the Newsletter, which has been published in good faith as supplied to the Editor.

Articles are invited and should be mailed to the Editor for publication showing the name and address of the author

## Website

[www.thoroughbredssportscarclub.asn.au](http://www.thoroughbredssportscarclub.asn.au)  
Contributions to the Webmaster:  
[webmaster@thoroughbredssportscarclub.asn.au](mailto:webmaster@thoroughbredssportscarclub.asn.au)

## Top Gear

Top Gear Magazine was [first published](#) on 1st September 1981 by the Club. There is no connection or affiliation with the British based Top Gear magazine first published by Immediate Media Company on or around October 1993.

Current and previous editions may be downloaded [here](#).

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Alfa Editor: [Barry Farr](#)

Aston Martin Editor: [Les Johnson](#)

Jaguar Editor: [Terry Daly](#)

Lotus Editor: [Roger Morgan](#)

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Top Gear has been continuously published since September 1981.

## Cul de Sac

The automotive world we've known all of our lives is changing rapidly and irrevocably. The current crop of high performance internal combustion engines are probably, right now, at the acme of their development, not because there is no more to be gained, rather as a consequence of changes in legislative and consumer attitudes. High performance naturally aspirated engines are now few, notable exceptions including, naturally and historically, Ferrari, Porsche and surprisingly GM with its stunning new ZO6 Corvette engine. Similarly, the manual gearbox, which has been rendered unnecessary through 80 years of development since GM introduced the Hydramatic transmission in its 1939 Oldsmobiles, only lives on as an option in a few high performance cars.

Engines are also getting smaller with fewer cylinders too. Soon I suspect, most mainstream ICE engine passenger cars will be sold with three or four cylinder turbo engines, maybe with a maximum size of two litres.

Are electric cars the answer? I don't know, however right now with the investment in electric technology and infrastructure that is occurring, it is difficult to see any other technology overtaking it. Is electric the best alternative? I don't know the answer to that either, however, remember when VHS and Betamax were competing for market dominance, Betamax came to market before VHS, however, VHS ultimately dominated not because it was necessarily the best, but because it was more consumer friendly, through longer recording times, was cheaper and most importantly, more widely produced.

Interestingly, COVID has had a hand to play in these market changes, material supply issues, mainly chips, have affected production, leading to vehicle shortages, exacerbated by increased demand as consumers spent less on holidays through lockdowns and health concerns. Car manufacturers have now learned what Rolex has known for years. Once you have a desirable brand the best way to enhance its desirability is to make it hard to acquire, thereby supporting the purchase price and, of course, margins.

Another impact for we Australians is the brief period of being able to buy RHD US performance cars may be coming to a close, despite GM appearing to commit to RHD Corvettes. The big news from GM is the C8 mid-engined Corvette and the most exciting part is the release of the new ZO6 version. We are supposed to receive the ZO6, however, have a yarn to your local HSV dealer, they can't tell you the price (but figure on around three times the US price) if we will receive them, or when they might be available. All supported by a significant pre-order book. Here's an interesting thought, is time running out for RHD vehicles, as fewer manufacturers tool up for them?

So, what does all of this mean for car enthusiasts? More supervision and control, more cameras and more regulation. I think the "classic" car (whatever that means) market will change, it will continue to be vibrant, however, to retain or grow in value and be genuinely collectible, cars will have to transcend demographics and become art. The cost of our obsession with grow, fuel will become more and more expensive and harder to get. Track days will become the primary outlet for performance enthusiasts, we will probably see more complexes built to cater for motoring enthusiasts, which will further raise the financial hurdle for participation.

This is all speculation, of course, what do you think?

A huge thank you to all those who responded to the call for articles, and best wishes to all for a happy Christmas and a happy, healthy and COVID free 2022!

The world met the PRAD when it appeared on the cover of the February 1959 issue of Sports Car World. The headline read 'FABULOUS NEW AUSTRALIAN SPORTS-RACER'. But it was left hand drive! Well, no it wasn't. Clearly the typesetter didn't realise that the words NORTH SYDNEY cast in the concrete fence were to be read from the harbour, not the adjoining park. The mistake would have been obvious had the race number not been reversible. Still, you think someone would have noticed.

This was the fifth car to be called PRAD from the names of the builders Jack Pryer and Clive Adams - its full name was PRAD-ALTA in its original format.

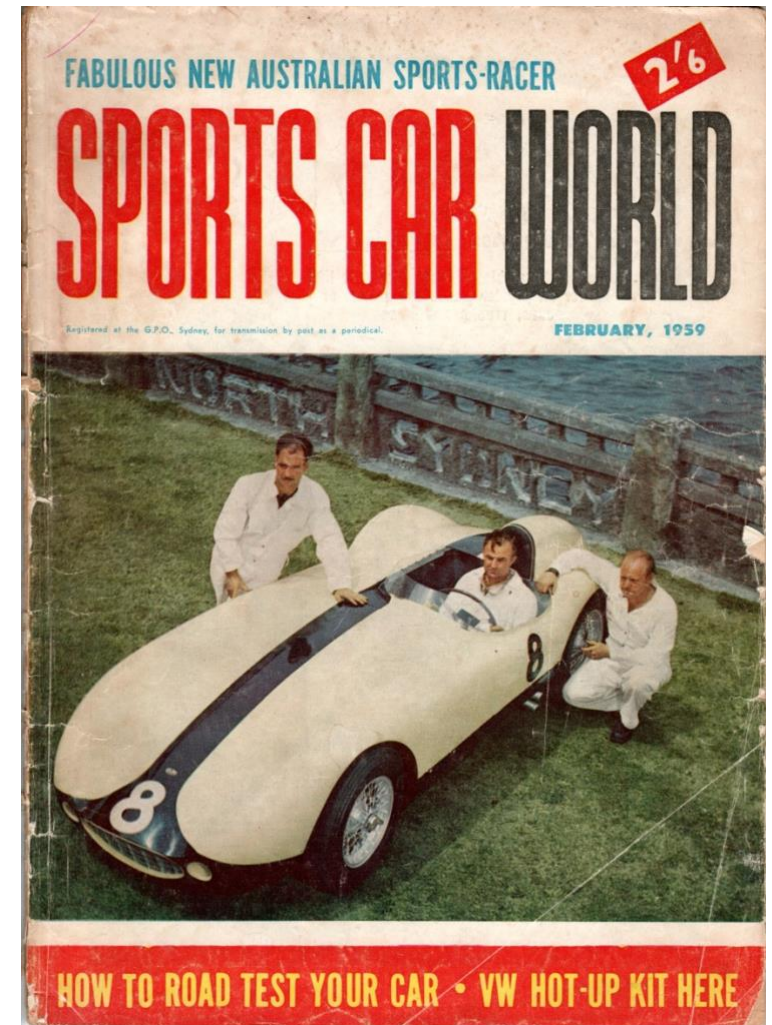
The most outstanding feature of the car was its gorgeous bodywork, drafted by Clive and beaten, wheeled and welded by bodywork virtuoso, Stan Brown.

The specifications were state of the late 1950s art. It was powered by a 2.4 litre DOHC 4-cylinder Alta engine producing about 200 bhp and was in a similar level of tune as those used in F1 Connaughts. It had a dry sump and breathed through two twin-choke Weber carburettors.

Behind that was a Jaguar XK 120 gearbox and a de Dion rear axle. Brakes were disc at the front and Alfin drums at the back, although there were plans for discs all around. As it was never intended to run in sports car events, there were no headlights and it was fitted with a louvered aluminium tonneau cover.

The car was painted a light yellow with a black centre stripe but when Leaton Motors brought out their Lotus 15 in similar livery, the stripe was changed to dark blue.

Sadly the car never reached a high degree of development. Bill Clarke was testing the car on a dirt road near Bathurst, described by Clive in an interview with Graham Howard as 'just a track', in preparation for Easter races at Mt Panorama when it crashed, rolling end for end two or three times. The car was destroyed and the driver spent six months in hospital.





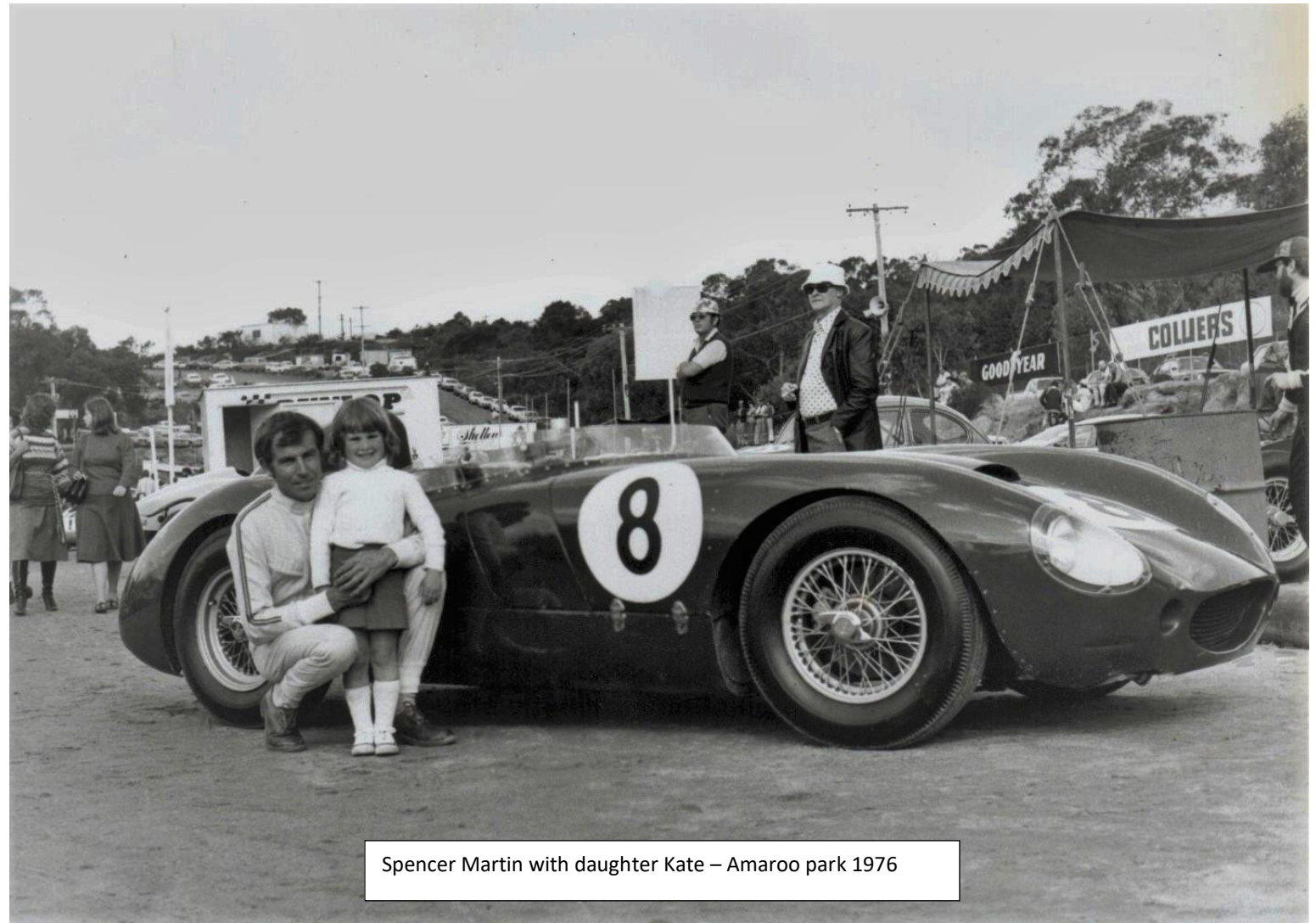
Clive Adams and Jack Pryer took the wreck back to their workshop, known as The Cave, in Mount Street North Sydney and set about rebuilding it with more prosaic components. The Alta engine with twin Weber's was replaced by a grey Holden motor with triple SUs. In place of the Jaguar gearbox one from an MG TC was fitted and a Holden live axle took the place of the de Dion set up. The front wheels which had been Borrani's (they were Jaguar at the back) were replaced with steel wires.

Around this time they employed a young panel beater named Spencer Martin. Spencer really wanted that job because it gave him the opportunity to work with master metalworker, Stan Brown.

After a while, Spencer was considering a job change but Clive wanted him to stay on, so he gave the car to the young man free of charge in return for his promise to stay on for another 12 months.

The proud new owner set about making some changes. With Stan Brown looking

over his shoulder, Spencer reduced the height of the scuttle, initially high so the bonnet would cover the tall Alta engine. He made the headrest more like that on a Maserati 300S, which also influenced the twin side pipes. His work received its ultimate accolade when Stirling Moss asked who owned the 300S at an International meeting at Warwick Farm. *(I had the same experience in 1984 at an HSRCA historic meeting. When I pointed out my car to Stirling he said, "Oh, a Maser." SK)*



Spencer Martin with daughter Kate – Amaroo park 1976

The PRAD brought Spencer to the attention of others in the sport and he moved on to the Boomerang Service Station 48-215 Holden, then the Scuderia Veloce and Bob Jane Brabhams, two Gold Stars and a stellar career in motor sport.

Meanwhile, back at ground level, the PRAD moved on as old racing cars do, until it found a new home with Bob Beer. Bob was like many of us, too many projects and too little time, so he advertised the car for sale. I had stars in my eyes when I saw the ad and had decided I'd buy it even before I arrived to inspect. It was still one of the best looking cars ever built in this country and held its head high amongst cars from overseas.

I asked Bob why he was selling. He said that his hobbies were cars and vintage printing machinery. "I've calculated that if I don't buy anything else," he said, "and continue restoring what I have at the rate I'm going, I'll have everything completed in 153 years!"

On 5th June 1982 I became the very proud owner of the PRAD-HOLDEN.

Over the next seven and a half years I raced the PRAD at various historic meetings on the East Coast. I'm pleased to say it was an enjoyable time with only one mishap. At Amaroo I spun just after the kink on Bitupave Hill, clouting the back and damaging the beautiful bodywork. Subsequent investigation suggested that the accident I had all by myself was caused by a rear axle moving sideways. Under high cornering stresses when the Panhard rod was in compression, the rod was shortened as it bent. This lateral movement of the axle caused the wheel to rub against the radius arm, making predictable handling impossible.

Damage was confined to one rear 'guard. I was very fortunate to have the repairs carried out by senior students of Vehicle Trades at Sydney Tech, Ultimo, returning to me resplendent in Dulux Carnation Red.

In July 1986 I took my Alfa Romeo 2000 GTV to a lap dash run by the AROC at Amaroo Park. It was a revelation, the more modern car handling so much better than old live axle PRAD and I started to have disloyal thoughts about my old girl.

*If an unmodified road car handled as well as this, how good must a later model racing car be?*

The long and the short of it was that that ultimate car salesman, Paul Samuels, just happened to have what I was looking for - an Elfin Mallala, the fifth of five built.

As the purchase of the PRAD indicated, I'm a sucker for a good sort and the Elfin was as pretty as the PRAD, albeit from a different era. And so began years of fun with the Mallala, but that's another story.

The PRAD was sold at auction in November 1989 to John Hall of AMOC. Ian Cummins owned it for a while and I understand it now resides, out of sight and sound, in Frank Moore's huge collection of (mainly) Aussie specials. It's time we saw it out again.

## Background preamble:

Successive Australian Federal Governments from the early 1900's pursued protectionist tariff policies to encourage the development of local industries and infrastructure. (In fact, favourable rates applied for Commonwealth countries, especially the UK, or at least until Britain "turned its back" on Commonwealth member nations and joined the EEC in 1973.)

Following the Second World War, the then Labor Federal Government's advice was that a further world war within 20 years was probable, and that, without a substantial increase in the country's population and its industrial base, Australia was likely to face an Asian invasion from the north. In the jingoism of the late 1940's this was commonly referred to as "The Yellow Peril".

"Populate or Perish" became the guiding political motto. Consequently a massive immigration policy was instituted, predominantly from the UK, Ireland and Europe.

Simultaneously, major encouragement was given to overseas motor vehicle manufacturers to establish production facilities in Australia.

General Motors and BMC were the earliest to proceed with local manufacturing. General Motors- Holden released their first Holden in 1948.

## Victoria Park, William Morris and the Nuffield Group

The Nuffield facilities (later BMC (Australia), and later still, BLMC and then JRA) were located at Victoria Park, just 5.8 km from the centre of Sydney. The adjoining suburbs here were Zetland and Waterloo, (and hence the business address changed, depending which frontage the administrative offices occupied!)

The area was originally a swamp, and then from 1900 a horse racetrack. A speedway track also occupied the site from 1908 to 1920.

Interestingly the first powered flight in Australia was made from this site, in 1909.

William Morris had come across the Victoria Park site in 1945 on one of his visits to Australia. (He enjoyed spending the English winters in warmer climes!) As a patriotic British subject, Morris was eager to see the Australian market remain substantially British. He recommended





to the Nuffield Group board that they purchase the Victoria Park site for an Australian factory. The board considered and rejected this proposal, whereupon Morris purchased the site himself.

Morris subsequently sold the property to Nuffield a matter of months later, and what's more, at a considerable profit!

However, Morris only sold about half of the approximately 115 acre site to the Nuffield Group for their Australian factory.

Morris then sold off parts of the rest of the site to support industries and feeder companies, such as to James N Kirby, Joseph Lucas Ltd, Champion Spark Plugs, Olympic tyres etc.

Clearly William Morris was an extraordinarily astute and successful entrepreneur.

Nuffield Australia commenced operations in 1950. The first factory was completed in 1952. By 1957 BMC in Melbourne had been shut down, and all assembly moved to Sydney.

The factory site was later named BMC (Australia) after the merger in 1952 of Nuffield and Austin. From 1968, it became The British Leyland Motor Corporation of Australia and Leyland Australia in 1971.

### **BMC (Australia)**

Most people overseas were and remain quite unaware of just how large a venture BMC (Australia) was. The factory employed about 5,000 people, and by the late 1950s was producing a car every 4 minutes.

Apart from extensive and progressively expanded factory floor area for assembly, the factory, on its 57 acre site, was equipped with its own panel pressing facilities, (the largest presses in the Southern Hemisphere).

Engines, transmissions, axles and bodies were all cast, assembled and/or pressed locally. (Major castings were supplied by “Australian Forge and Engineering” and others in NSW, Victoria and South Australia).

Heat treating of components for hardening, and metallurgical control was in house. (\*)

The “Unit Plant” was where engine, transmission, axle and suspension components were manufactured, ready for vehicle installation. The transfer machines in the unit plant machined cylinder heads, engine blocks and gearbox casings. These transfer machines could index the part automatically from station to station, allowing 30 sets of operations to be performed on three faces without any human intervention. (\*)

The Paint Shop included a “Rotodip” where all assembled vehicle bodies were located onto a frame and rotated through a series of baths and ovens.

All trim was locally sourced and fabricated on site.

There were production engineering offices, drawing and design facilities, a service department and research laboratories, and a department termed “Experimental”.

There was an active apprentice training program with related facilities.

As a result of the highly developed engineering facilities and capabilities available, in addition to the various mainstream vehicles produced by the parent company in the UK, suitably modified for Australian conditions, a number of vehicles unique to the Australian market were constructed here.

The original prototype MGC, incidentally, as conceived by Sydney Enever, employed an Australian produced 2.4 litre 6 cylinder engine based on “one and a half” 1622cc ‘B’ series engines, named the “Blue Streak 6”. This was a much lighter and much more compact engine than the Morris C-series engine ultimately used. This engine could potentially have been manufactured as a relatively small lightweight 2.7 litre 6 cylinder engine.

Even the 1622 cc version of the B-series engine for that matter was conceived and produced in Australia, long before its UK counterpart; the parent company engineers initially claimed that 1500 cc was the practical limit of the B-series engine.

### **MG assembly in Australia**

Despite the highly developed significant local manufacturing facilities available to Nuffield-BMC, because of the smaller production volumes of MG models, prior to 1957, MG cars were shipped to Australia completely built up, (CBU) but partly disassembled. Wheels/tyres and bumpers for example were removed and stowed in or under the cars.

### **The MGA in Australia**

As the MGA, which had been introduced in 1955 was proving to be in significant demand, and there remained encouragement through tariffs to assemble motor vehicles in Australia, a decision was made to commence local assembly in Australia of the MGA.

Due at this stage to having insufficient spare capacity at the Zetland facility, this task was subcontracted by BMC (Australia) to Pressed Metal Corporation, which like BMC was based in Sydney, in the suburb of Enfield.

Consequently shipments of batches of Completely Knocked Down (CKD) MGA cars commenced to Australia in 1957. Until the later part of 1962 these were assembled at Pressed Metal, with ever greater local content.



Indeed, the degree of assembly of these cars here in Australia was very much greater than at the MG factory in the UK, where in contrast to Australia, MGA bodies were received at Abingdon already fully built up and already painted.

Ultimately 2,040 MGA roadsters were built in Australia. (The Coupes and the Twin Cam models remained fully imported due to their lower numbers).

Again because of the production volumes, major mechanical components such as engines, transmissions and chassis were imported (though in the case of the MGA 1500, the engines were built here, from imported components).

### **Pressed Metal Corporation**

Pressed Metal Corporation was a joint venture established in 1930 between the Larke Hoskins group, the Austin agents for NSW and Larke, Neave and Carter, the Chrysler distributor. The PMC factory after WW II occupied a 22 acre site, and had extensive capability for the complete assembly of motor vehicles. A number of the factory buildings were redundant aircraft construction hangars, imported into Australia from the UK after WW II.

Apart from assembling a range of sedans, light commercial vehicles ("utes" and panel vans), trucks and buses, Pressed Metal Corporation also assembled a very significant number of sports cars on behalf of BMC.

### **Between the years of 1957 and 1967, inclusive;**

#### **Pressed Metal Corporation assembled:**

MGA roadster (1500, 1600, 1600 Mk II) : 2040 vehicles.

Austin Healey Sprite : Mk I (Bugeye) through to the Austin Healey Mk 3A: (approx) 3,600 vehicles.

MGB roadster : Mk I (approx) 4,625 vehicles. (Based on VIN plate images, somewhere between 4,600 and 4,650)

**TOTAL:** Around 10,265 sports cars, in a little over 10 years.

### **The MG Midget in Australia**

In the latter part of 1967 Austin Healey production ceased at Pressed Metal Corporation.

The model was replaced by the MG Midget. Unlike the UK and world markets, the Australian market was not deemed large enough to run the two similar models in parallel.

The MG Midgets were assembled at the BMC (Australia) plant, again from CKD packs.

Building the MG Midget commenced at Zetland in November 1967, with the vehicles offered for sale from early in 1968. Features and changes in the series generally reflected those in their UK assembled brethren, but again with a significant inclusion of locally produced components, including electrics, paint and of course local labour, which constituted a significant proportion of the overall vehicle production costs.

Approximately 788 MG Midgets of the series YGGN4 and YGN4 were assembled in Australia. (As with all Australian BMC vehicles, “Y” indicated Australian assembly.

It has been said that the “Y” was meant to represent an upside down “A”, A for Australia. Some with factory first-hand knowledge dispute this as the reason for the choice of Y in the series nomenclatures).

October 1969 saw the introduction of the (ahem) “Facelift” model; GAN5 for the Abingdon assembled MG Midgets, and typed YGN5 for the Australian cars. These cars reached the market about 6 months earlier than the similarly revised black recessed grille MGB models.

A total of 788 MG Midgets were assembled prior to the final Facelift model, of which 396 were built; 1184 Australian built MG Midgets in total, until production was wound up in December 1971.

### **The MGB in Australia**

The MGB was assembled in Australia from 1963 to 1972. A total of something in excess of 9000 examples were built over this period. The Australian content was ultimately 45% of the car’s value.

As with the MGA, the Mk 1 MGBs were constructed at “Pressed Metal Corporation” in Enfield, commencing in April 1963. At the time the BMC plant at Zetland were fully occupied with the production of the Mini and preparations were under way for the upcoming introduction of the other FWD models, the Morris 1100 and later the Austin 1800.

The MGB engines and gearboxes were received already mated at the BMC Zetland works. They were hot run tested, and then transported to Pressed Metal. Suspensions were assembled and painted at Zetland, and similarly transported to Pressed Metal.



Springs, electrics, paint and a rapidly larger proportions of the trim were locally sourced. As a result, and as had occurred with the MGA, local body colours, though similar to their UK counterparts, were unique to Australia. Early colours included colours such as 'Sky Blue', 'Monza Red', 'Nurburg White', Katoomba Grey, and of course, British Racing Green. (The last had been also available on locally assembled MGA's, unlike their UK counterparts). Because of the relatively small production numbers compared to more mainstream BMC models all Australian MGBs were similarly specified. Only roadsters were ever built locally. All cars had wire wheels and (until 1970), pack-away style tops only. Oil coolers, front sway bars, front overriders and ash trays were standard fittings. Like the preceding MGA, the interior trim was, for both cost reasons and because of the harsh local climate, always in vinyl. Contrasting piping disappeared after 1964, and progressively thereafter ever more of the interior trim became black only. The only options were (an initially rarely fitted) heater, and the dealer fitted radio. Overdrive was not available, even as an option, until the last MGB Mk 1 vehicles, which were assembled during 1968.

As with the MGA, and in contrast to the MG cars emerging from the MG factory in Abingdon, the Australian built MGB bodies were locally built up from their most basic pressed components on locally created jigs, whereas the Abingdon factory received the MGB bodies completely painted and assembled.

Rust proofing on these earlier Enfield assembled cars was unfortunately rudimentary at best, with the bodies just "slipper dipped" in primer. (The author's own Mk1 MGB was already visibly rusting by the time it was five years old!)

### **MG Assembly at BMC Zetland**



BMC ultimately purchased Pressed Metal Corporation, and, as with the MG Midget, production of the MGB was transferred from the PMC factory to a dedicated production facility in the CAB 3 building (Car Assembly Building 3) at the Zetland facility.

New jigs were commissioned from Dorman's in Victoria.

Bodies were here far more elaborately rust proofed, going through the "Roto-Dip" process, as described earlier.

Even though the MGB Mk II had been introduced in the UK from November 1967, between January and August 1968 it was still the MGB Mk I being assembled at Zetland. The MGB Mk II was finally built and introduced in Australia 9 months after its UK debut.

It is difficult not to draw the conclusion that left over redundant superseded stock of MGB Mk I car components was offloaded by the British parent company for sale to their less important colonial Australian customers to make way for the MGB Mk II in the UK for the home and other export markets.



A very similar situation had occurred in 1961, immediately prior to the introduction of the MGA Mk II in the UK, when suddenly a large volume of MGA 1600 cars for assembly arrived on these shores, far in excess of the volume needed to fulfill immediate Australian market demand. As a result, the MGA Mk II was first assembled in Australia from February 1962, nearly a year after its arrival in the UK. The intervening period was required to build and sell the excess volume of already shipped MGA 1600 cars. The MGA Mk II consequently had a short run in Australia of just a few months prior to the arrival of the MGB, with a mere 148 MGA Mk II roadsters assembled in Australia.

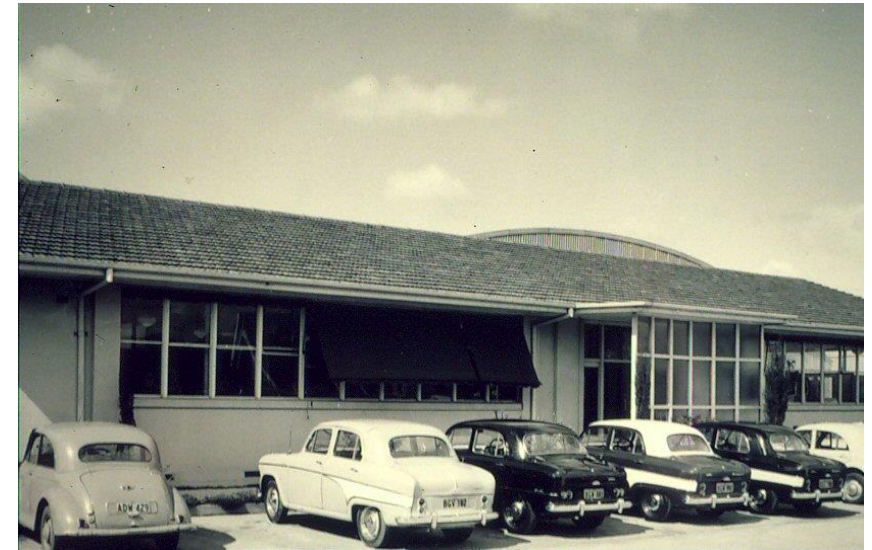
From August 1968 onwards, the models and changes were again more in line with their UK counterparts, although these running changes always generally arrived three to four months later than in the Abingdon cars because of the time needed for shipping and the sourcing of components.

The short-lived “automatic” option was also offered in Australia from 1969, and though well received by the press, it was, as in other countries, not especially popular, and was discontinued within 18 months.

Unlike their British counterparts, the Australian assembled MGB vehicles carried 'Mk II', 'Overdrive' and 'Automatic' badges whenever applicable.

The Australian version of the (debatedly termed) “Facelift” model was assembled from April 1970, and reaching the dealer showrooms from about June 1970.

Unique to Australia, this series of the MGB was ascribed the model description of MGB BL (for British Leyland). Unlike the Abingdon MGB, these black recessed grille models in Australia also had the area forward of the radiator diaphragm painted black to hide this area as seen through the grille in the lighter coloured cars.



Australian assembly of the MGB ceased late in 1972. The Federal Government had announced a restructuring of the tariff arrangements, whereby an 85% local content was to be required for a favourable import duty. In any case, by this time sales of the MGB had dropped to a trickle. The buying public's interest in small, responsive but relatively low-powered sports cars was waning, with a growing interest in high powered sedan derivatives (the local equivalent of the American 'Muscle cars'). Cars such as the Holden Monaro and Torana XU1, the Ford Falcon GT/HO and Chrysler Valiant Charger were extremely fast cars. (The Ford Falcon GT HO was in its time, the fastest four door sedan produced anywhere in the world). These locally built power-houses could be seen competing most weekends on the various circuits around the country (most famously at Bathurst), and it was these cars that now fired the imagination of the young (and young at heart). These two factors, along with the impending P76 large sedan's introduction requiring freeing up of production space led BLMC, to take the decision to wind up local assembly of the MGB.

\* “Building Cars in Australia” BMC-Leyland Australia Heritage Group Published 200

Members of the TSCC of a certain age, especially those of us with more than a passing interest in motor sport will well know the name Spencer Martin. He was twice winner of the CAMS Gold Star (1966 and 1967) driving the Bob Jane Brabham BT11 in that glorious era of open wheeler racing in Australia. There were several TSCC Members present at the book launch on March 2nd this year.

This publication covers Spencer’s career in full. I was amazed just how many different cars he had competed in, starting with a home-built Herald Special in 1960, a Prad Holden and a “Humpy” Holden (in which he started beating the fastest Holden at that time in the country driven by Norm Beechey. The Prad, in Spencer’s words *“...turned out to be the last race car I actually owned. Over the next 50 years I was privileged to be invited to race for a variety of notable motorsport people”*. Spencer’s smooth driving style had been noticed by David McKay as far back as the Prad days and in 1964 he was invited to join Scuderia Veloce, stepping into a Brabham BT4 and the newly acquired Ferrari 250LM, arguably one of the most magnificent cars to ever race in Australia. This was a quantum leap according to Spencer...the Brabham was the fastest thing he had ever driven; *“what an eye opener”* are his words. A case sample of the art of understatement I reckon.

His acrimonious departure from SV in early 1966 and subsequent move to the Bob Jane team is dealt with in some detail, though only reading about it in several different chapters covers that subject matter. Interestingly, SV’s newer Brabham BT11 went with him (having been bought by Bob Jane), as did Spencer’s Shell sponsorship. They retained the Climax engine, having some “inside oil” that the new 2.5L Repco V8 then in development was experiencing reliability issues, and as a result, he drove the reliable 4 cylinder car to his 2 Gold Star Championships. Spencer retired at this stage of his career, and like drivers such as Frank Matich and Leo Geoghegan, we will never know how far their talents might have taken them had they gone to Europe. Following a family tragedy in 1992, Spencer again took up racing, this time, as alluded to in the quote in the 2nd paragraph above, driving some wonderful classic cars in many parts of the world.

Two things struck me reading the book; one was the incredible number of different cars Spencer has driven in his career. His affection for the 250LM is very evident, (and why wouldn’t it be). I had no idea he had driven a C-Type Jaguar at Monaco in the 1997 Historic Meeting, nor did I know that he drove Kevin Bartlett’s Lola T400 F5000 at Bathurst one day in 1977 when the circuit Spring/Summer 2021





was being evaluated as a possible venue for a World Championship F1 Race. I'll leave the interesting details of that for you to read for yourselves. The other thing was what a talented mechanic/body builder/spray-painter/car developer he was. The picture on page 38 showing the 250LM in his Kellyville garage being spray-painted is an eye-opener. His experience with the Herald Special and the Prad from the late 50s clearly stood him in good stead all through his career.

I know Peter Robinson, one of our finest motoring writers was deeply involved in assisting Spencer put his story into words, contributing a fine chapter of his own on F1 as it was in the 1960s. No less a figure than Sir Jackie Stewart has provided the forward and there are chapters contributed by both Mark Webber and Peter Windsor. It's probably a must have for anyone with a more than passing interest in the history of Australian Motor Sport. It is a large format book (that doesn't easily fit into my groaning bookcases) and is printed on high quality paper. It contains many excellent photographs and inside the front and back covers, the montages are a feast-for-the-eyes alone.

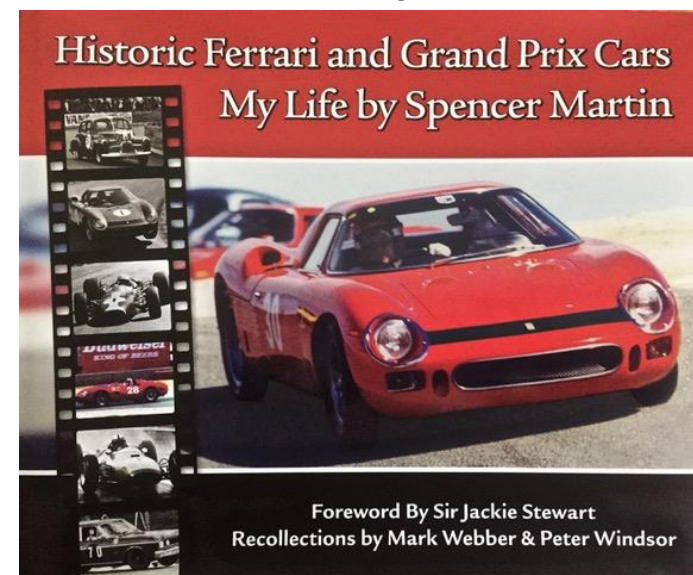
Like several of us, I was at the Tasman revival Meeting in 2006 when Spencer drove the ex Mildren Brabham Alfa (BT23) in what was, at the age of 67, to be his last race. He drove with all the smoothness that had been so evident 40 years before, and gave the more powerful Lotus 49 (the Dawson Damer family's owned car driven by

John Smith) plenty of hurry up. To see these 2 iconic open wheelers being so well driven was a privilege that day. Spencer is now the

patron of the HSRCA and one of the few remaining links with that golden era of open wheeler racing. We should all treasure him!

In these days of lockdown, it is a highly recommended read, and in case you can't find a bookshop that is open it should be available on the many websites dealing with such publications.

*I also have the book and agree with Colin's review (Ed)*



L to R; TSCC Member Jim Catts; Bob Forbes; Denys Gillespie and Spencer MARTin at a private function a few weeks after the book launch

Some people will tell you the Harrah exhibition in Reno Nevada is not a patch on what it used to be. They could well be right. William F Harrah had collected approximately

450 automobiles which he stored in warehouses in Sparks NV. It was the world's largest collection of historic automobiles and was open to the public.

When Harrah died in 1978, Holiday Inn acquired his hotel-casino company and the automobile collection. In 1981, Holiday Inn announced that it would sell the entire collection, a decision that received some opposition.

Nevada governor Robert List attempted to delay the sale while working on a plan to have the state enact legislation that would save the collection. Businessman Thomas Perkins led a group that was interested in purchasing the collection. Both efforts to save the collection failed.

However, a non-profit organisation was formed that ultimately built the museum. Holiday Inn donated 175 of Harrah's automobiles to the group and sold the rest of the collection through three auctions in the mid-1980s. Private owners donated another 60 vehicles. The museum opened in 1989, in downtown Reno, Nevada and we visited it last year. But first a little bit of history about Bill Harrah.

He'd been born into the gambling business with his father operating boardwalk games and concessions in Venice Beach near Los Angeles. The bingo like "Ring" game made twice as much money as anything else and authorities called it gambling and shut the operation down. Harrah had to look for somewhere to operate legally and found Reno and Lake Tahoe.

He started making big money in 1969 when he built large hotels in both Reno and Tahoe. He started having fun as well, marrying seven times including briefly to singer Bobbie Gentry and buying cars ... lots of cars!

Harrah wanted to own one of every car made and as the casinos began generating obscene amounts of money he got a pretty good start on that goal.

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One of Bill Harrah's most famous cars was a Ferrari Daytona which he sent back to the factory for an upgrade. When he got it back it wasn't quite quick enough so it went to a local tuner who put larger wheels, guard flares and an engine upgrade into it. By the time it was finished it was producing 400 brake horsepower and could do the 40 miles between Reno and Tahoe in 17 minutes ... an average of 146 miles an hour.

So on to the story of the Thomas Flyer .....

If you had thought that the 1907 Peking to Paris race was an incredible feat at that time the New York to Paris race of 1908 was an even greater feat crossing yet another continent. The route would take the drivers across the United States including through areas with very few paved roads and then head North into Canada turning left at Alaska which the drivers had to cross in order to reach the Bering Strait.

The organisers had hoped that the Bering Strait would be frozen in the winter allowing the cars to cross. All in all it was a 22,000 mile track in an age when the horse was considered more reliable than the horseless carriage.

On the morning of February the 12th 1908 a total of 6 cars lined up in the swirling snow of Times Square. There were three cars from France, and one each from Germany, Italy and the United States. A quarter of a million people lined Broadway up to the north of Harlem to get a glimpse of the cars and hear the strains of a brass band.

The race was due to start at 11:00 o'clock but Major George B McClellan Jr, son of the union civil war general, who was organised to fire the starting pistol, arrived characteristically late. At a quarter past 11 railroad financier Colgate Hoyt snatched the golden gun from the table and shot it in the air. They were off!

The flyer was driven by Monty Roberts who was definitely a crowd favourite and one of the few American drivers who actually trained for the race. His teammate was George Schuster a 35 year old mechanic for the ER Thomas Motor Company in Buffalo NY. Roberts drove the car as





far as Cheyenne WY where he handed over to E Lynn Mathewson, the son of the general agent for Thomas cars in the Midwest. He drove the Flyer through Wyoming to Utah where professional driver Harold Bricker took over. George Schuster the indefatigable mechanic was the constant throughout.

The Flyer was the first to arrive on the West coast. They took a ship to Valdez where the entire population turned out to greet them. In the meantime the Parisian race committee abandoned the idea of Alaska and directed the Americans to return to Seattle. They would then sail to Vladivostok and drive to Paris from there. There was only one problem. By the time they had returned all the other competitors had left and they were now a few weeks behind the competition. Again the race committee intervened and applied an allowance of 15 days to the American team to compensate for the Alaskan side trip. In addition the Germans in a Protos would be penalised 15 days because they used the train from Ogden to Seattle. This would ultimately decide the race. The Protos actually arrived first on July the 26th and the flyer duly arrived on July 30<sup>th</sup>.



Schuster graciously insisted that Monte Roberts be present for the Flyers triumphant return to Times Square on August 17th 1908. After the accolades and parties had died down he returned to his job at the Thomas factory where his promise of employment for as long as the company was in business came to an end five years later. All the goods were auctioned off including lot number 1829 which was listed simply as the famous New York to Paris racer.



Years later Bill Harrah got his hands on the flyer and in 1964 tracked down George Shuster and invited him to help restore the car as well as authenticate it. The objective was to return the car to the condition in which it finished the race in Paris. They ended up doing too good a job and had to drive it through the sage scrub and desert near Reno to put a bit of patina on it. That is the car that we see today.

There's a great video on YouTube with George Schuster's great grandson telling the story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffS8YDFgkTg&feature=youtu.be>



So back to the Museum. It's just great. It may be missing 1,000 cars but there are some fine exhibits all set in a very sympathetic environment. Here's a couple of our favourites.

This 1921 Rolls Royce was built by Brockman Coachbuilders from full sheets of solid copper in order to avoid welded seams and rivets on the body and fenders. The accessories are nickel and German silver and the beautiful wood trim is made from makash ebony with historical records indicating the coachbuilder had to purchase an entire tree in order to obtain this rare wood.

And here is Julie in some period dress which they make available from the shop beside the car. Lots of fun.



# From 'Austerity Britain': Recalling the First Post-War British Grand Prix At Silverstone Airfield on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1948 - And our Boy's Toys of the Time

Hugh King

In March 1978 my lady wife and I went with our Austin-Healey Club friends to a quite special motoring event at Phillip Island. It was to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the running of the first Australian Grand Prix at that same venue, over the same country roads and with a similar degree of freedom from regulation. This was before my own time of heavy 'collecting' interest, before any 'Shed' existed for me. I was interested especially by some of the 'stars of the show' that were visiting from England - the old 'English Upright' style of the two pre-War ERA Grand Prix cars and of the superb little Austin 7 supercharged racer that had won the first AGP entered by Sir Herbert Austin and driven by his son-in-law Captain Arthur Waite, a Great War veteran and to be a director of Austin of England.



The ERA R12C 'Hanuman II' built 1938 for Prince Bira of Siam, seen at Phillip Island March 1978. T-shirt: White Mouse

The ERA cars were two of the few built pre-War at Bourne in Lincolnshire by the privateer English Racing Automobiles, founded by a London stockbroker Humphrey Cook and championed by broker Raymond Mays, who had driven and developed ERAs competitively as a sort of gentleman's hobby. Post-War Mays attempted to revive the ERA company and together with his buddy Francis Curzon, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Howe (another eminent amateur driver pre-War) prodded the Royal Automobile Club of Pall Mall to consider organising a British Grand Prix 'for the good of the realm and the sport'. Lord Howe prevailed on the RAC, the controlling body for English motor sport and located a disused airfield at Silverstone in the Midlands thought suitable for the great event, that was leased by the RAC forthwith. A short three months later the RAC had the facilities in place, rudimentary as they were, the primitive public relations were under way, and entry lists were open. There was however no prospect that

any British manufacturer other than ERA could field an entry: on the starting grid there were ultimately ten ERA cars and one single additional car made in Britain. The



strength of the seventeen Italian and French entries was overwhelming, and the favourites were the Maserati 4CLT/48 cars trucked in from Milan for the works drivers, Alberto Ascari and Luigi 'Gigi' Villorresi.



Captain Arthur Waite's Austin 7 supercharged 'Ulster' sports, winner of AGP in 1928, seen at Phillip Island March 1978



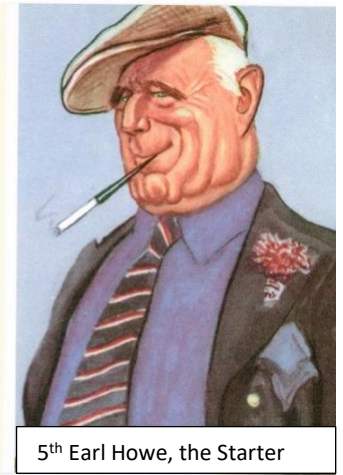
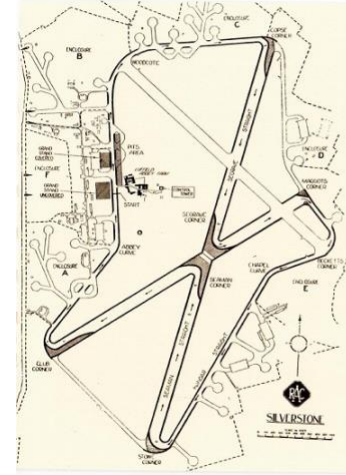
Maserati 4CLT/48 built and first raced in 1948, entered at Silverstone October 1948, seen at Phillip Island March 1978

The Maseratis won that '48 Silverstone Grand Prix, Villoresi first and Ascari second, by a big margin.

There was a generation of difference between the best that Britain could put up for the home grand prix, and the second-best that France and Italy offered the field (dominant Alfa Romeo and Ferrari were not competing meaning absence of the best of the factory drivers – Fangio, Fagioli, and Farina).

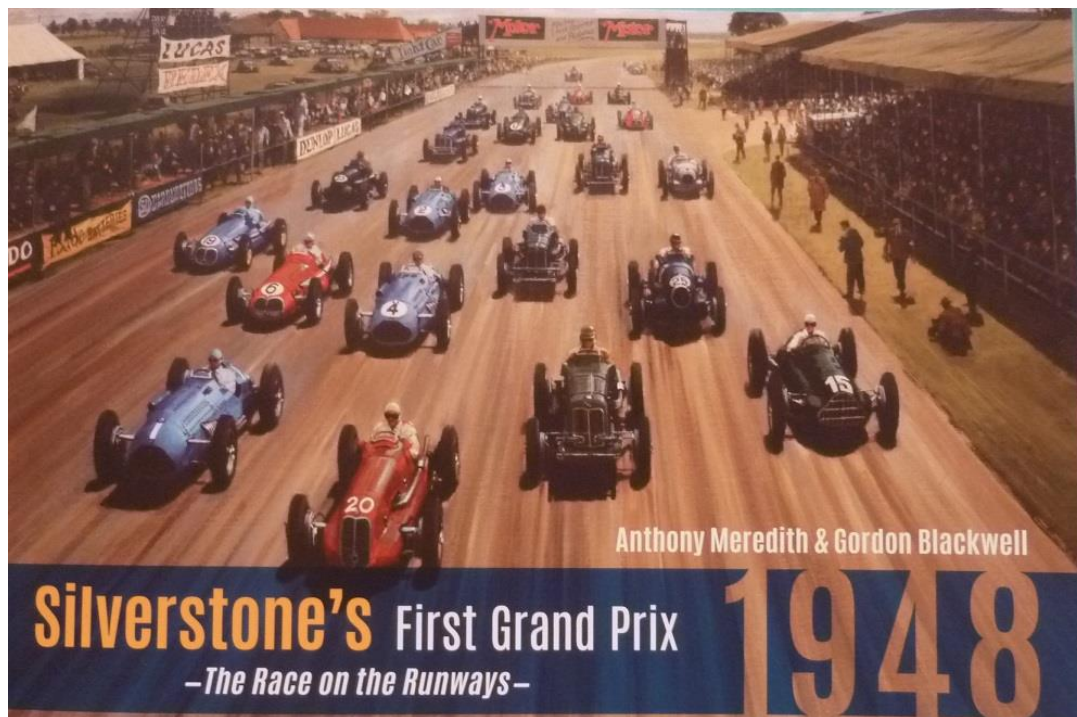
The circuit was a temporary affair, 3.7 miles run in part on the old perimeter roads of the disused airfield but principally along two of the 'X' runways, patched together on the Brits' "we will muddle through" basis. Lord Howe flagged the field away, standing on a soap-box. All the competitors ran 'ragged' around the 65 lap/239 mile race, and half the field retired.

(The loyal British press had much to say but avoided mention of an 'heroic' effort by the gentlemen competitors of England. The public were aware that the report card would read "must do better")



5<sup>th</sup> Earl Howe, the Starter





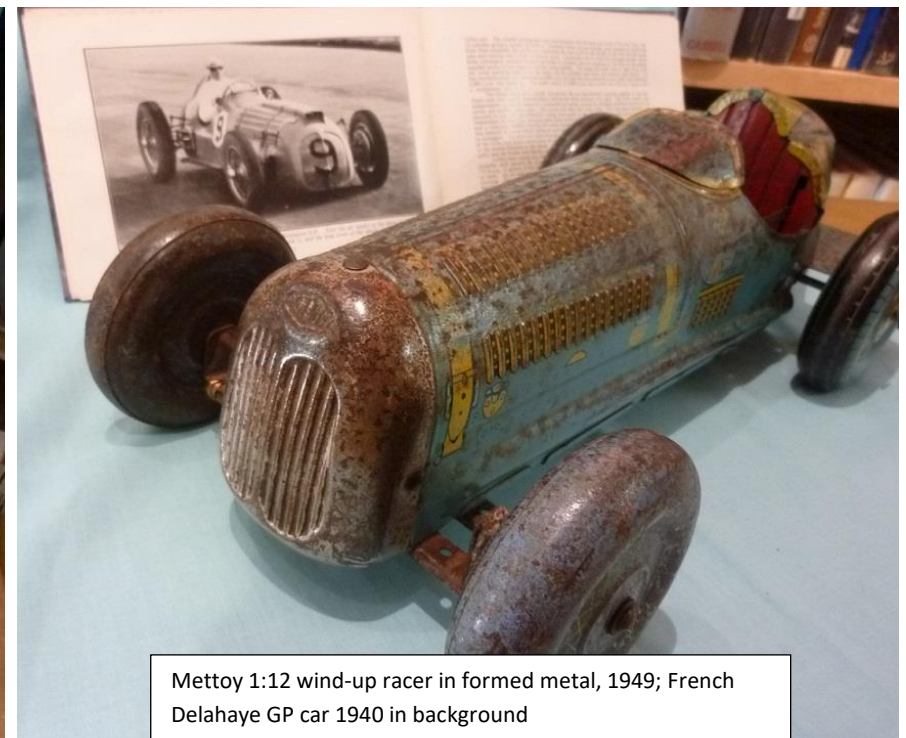
Young boys of England and the dominions in 1948 could look to Dinky Toys for models of the racing cars that graced the runways, and soon also to the new UK manufacturers using plastic moulds - the Matchbox/Corgi group and Merit – for more items for their play, as well as to the formed-metal (or tin) efforts of Mettoy, Triang, Minic with wind-up or friction propulsion. There were examples also from Japan and from Germany but these were not permitted a wide audience. Dinky, part of the Meccano Group of Liverpool, was the top 'ask' and the Sydney dealer Walther & Stevenson stocked the whole range for me and my pocket money (by 'Money Order' from the Uralla Post Office!).





The new 'Gift Set Number 15' from Corgi of Britain, manufactured 1954-1959

*Prix Car* by Laurence Pomeroy (1<sup>st</sup> edition May 1949) and John Dudley's useful *'British Road Racing'* of 1950 demonstrates that indeed British manufacture of, and investment in new racing machinery post-War was almost non-existent. Pomeroy was the long-lived Technical Editor of the British motoring weekly *The Motor* and his knowledge was prolific; his 1949 work was developed, in 1954, to a work of 2 volumes.

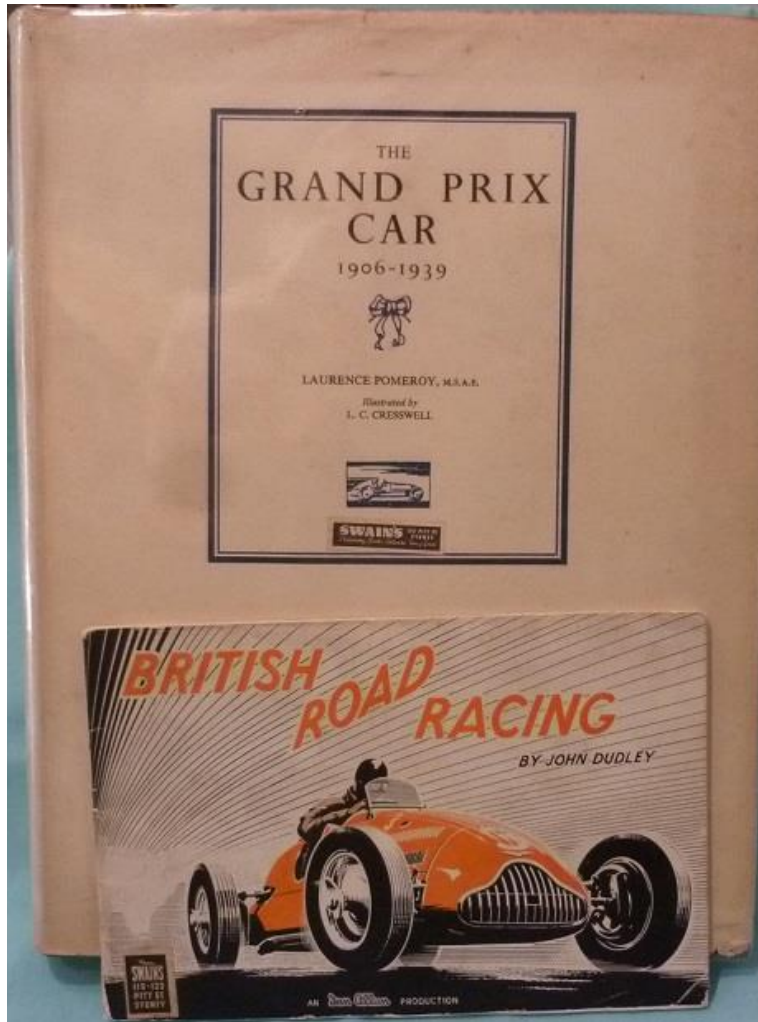


Mettoy 1:12 wind-up racer in formed metal, 1949; French Delahaye GP car 1940 in background

One for the more well-off boys was the large Mettoy wind-up racing car produced in Britain in 1949 at a scale of about 1:12 which was anonymous (or maybe closely related to the French Delahaye grand prix car). Too large to feature in any race-course diorama, it was for playroom settings –

Reference to the main technical works of the time, particularly *'The Grand*

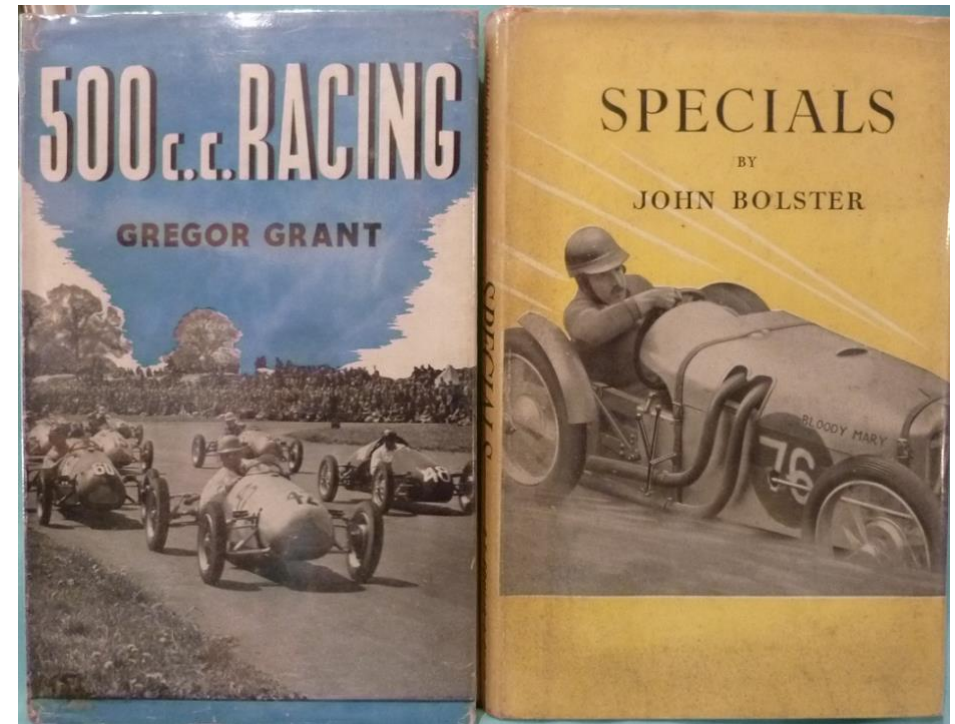




cheerful' racing cars and run them on a shoestring –

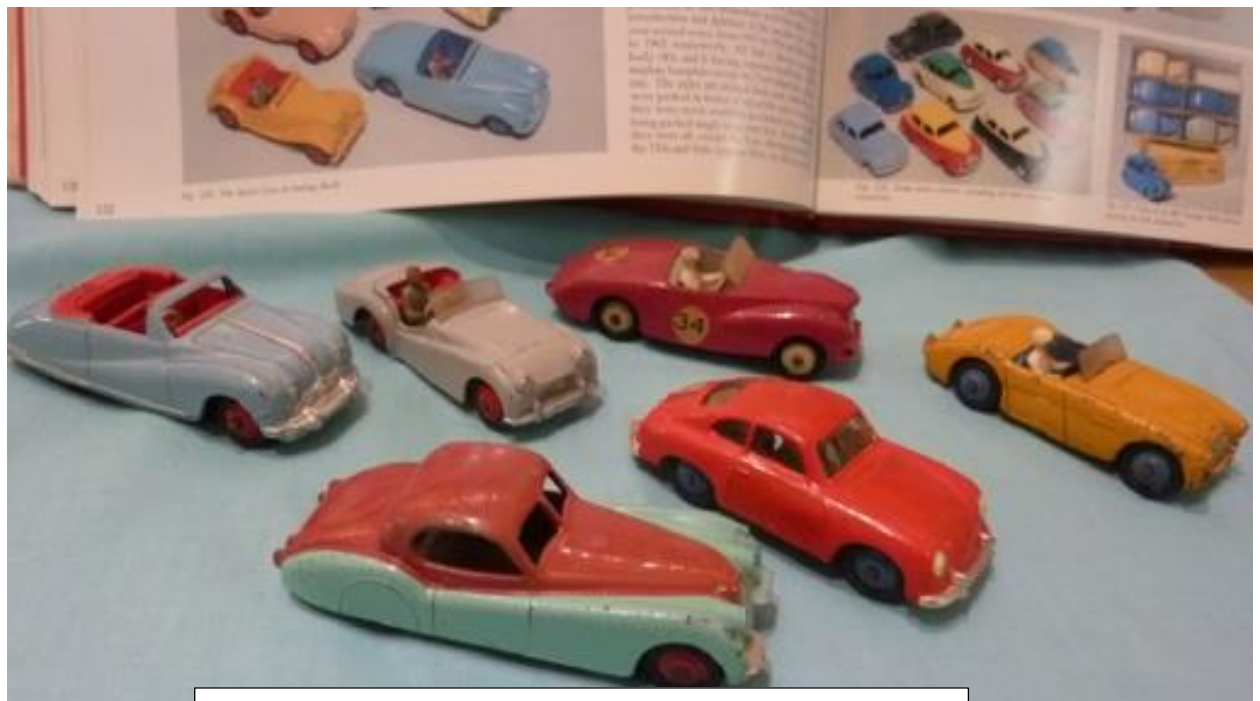
Britain's lassitude in respect of grand prix car development could be explained by the outcomes of the Great War and then World War 2 with the aftermath of continued national debt, rationing and social tensions. No time or space for 'fun'. There was no 'Marshall Plan' to assist Britain; conversely there was the obligation under the Lend-Lease contracts to make payments and more payments to the USA. This led to the 'export or die' sentiment that gripped the country, in particular the motor and aviation industries. The national industrial infrastructure had been impoverished and the skilled workforce disrupted by the war then the demobilisation process. The Cold War took its toll as did the inordinate power of the labour unions. The US was insisting that British investments and initiatives in computers, the jet engine, the Comet airliner, nuclear fission should all be subordinated to US requirements in the name of security; this was part of the price of the 'special relationship'. Britain was investing heavily also in efforts to maintain the remnants of its empire, a vain task.

So those members of the British public interested in 1950 in going motor racing were obligated to sustain themselves, to develop 'cheap and



The boys of Britain and of the dominions were not deeply interested in this austere scene, as they had scent of the Italian Stallions (Ferrari, Alfa Romeo, Cisitalia, Maserati) in their nostrils and they knew of the speed and grace of the big French Lago-Talbot and Delahaye. There were no mass-produced models of the ERA, the Alta. The British grand prix products came in a poor third until finally, in the middle 50s, BRM (British Racing Motors) and Connaught and then Lotus at Cheshunt began to produce some potential winners – then the boys took notice of Britain once again.

There had however been development of British sporting sedans and coupes spurred on by the nation's 'export or die' mentality. These production cars could sell overseas, the grand prix cars were not a good commercial proposition (and never have been – their function has been more related to spectacle, to national prestige and to proving-up technical innovations).



Dinky Toys sports and touring car selection 1:43 scale October 1952

So there were nice new models, some new manufacturers such as Corgi, but Dinky in particular on which the boys could spend their pocket money in the early 1950s. We saw Dinky's good representations of post-War MG, Sunbeam, Austin-Healey, Jaguar, Triumph, Porsche, Bristol, Aston Martin, AC, and Riley coming in to Walther & Stevenson in Sydney as magnets for our attention. None were grand prix contenders.

In about 1952 a small manufacturer in plastics named J & L Randall of Potters Bar in Middlesex made a first offering of plastic kits at 1:24 scale for grand prix cars, of excellent quality in limited numbers. This was an exceptional and welcome product. They became available in Australia and this BLF Member managed over years to acquire a mint, boxed example of each of the fifteen variants on offer. These remain in condition as manufactured. The quality and the accuracy of these models are superb and they are unobtainable classics now. They were in some ways too good to last; the prices charged were not high; the company folded in about 1960 and the moulds then disappeared.

The Merit kits included the classic continental grand prix cars of the late 1940s -1956. For me the Maserati 4CLT of 1948, the Alfa Romeo 158 of 1950 and the Lago Talbot of 1949 are standout examples of the model-maker's craft, the best of the 15 little Merit treasures. British cars from after 1955 are there too – the Connaught 'Syracuse GP' Spring/Summer 2021



and the Lotus XI Le Mans car, and the BRM and the Vanwall - all from 1956, an early Cooper Mark 9 with the Norton engine (as driven by Stirling Moss in Formula 2 in 1955, the fore-runner of the greatest British marque in grand prix racing).

After the Merit kits 'fell off the shelves' in about 1963 there was nothing more available from British manufacturers to depict the progress of design in British grand prix car design, until another small producer in Eton Wick near Windsor Castle – Michael Richardson – established the 'MikanSue' name selling kits for diecast (lead) racing and sports cars from his home. I visited him at home in 1973 and bought some of his 1:43 scale kits for sports cars (Austin-Healey, Elva, TVR, Maserati A6GS). There have been other small British manufacturers such as John Day and Western Models, but their products have not cleared the high bar set by Merit kits.

Some examples of the Merit kits are shown below in order to demonstrate something of the quality there. Pictured with each is my example of the corresponding Dinky Toys model at 1:43 scale.



Vanwall 1956 Merit kit professionally constructed







Alfa 158 of 1950, Merit Kit plus 1:43 Dinky



Lago-Talbot 1949, Merit kit plus 1:43



Maserati 4CLT of 1948, Merit kit plus 1:43 Dinky



Mercedes W196 Fangio – 1954: Brumm



Ferrari 246 Dino Hawthorn – 1958: Brumm

The demise of the Merit kits some 50 years ago marks the end of the best of the contemporary British attempts in difficult times, to mass produce good representations of the British grand prix racing cars of the immediate post-War period. This reflected the fact that British attempts to do well in grand prix racing were themselves uninspiring. In a time of austerity and a certain dullness, the national and

commercial priorities were directed less to play and more to survival. The boys of the period – our baby-boomers today - understood that the continental cars and professional drivers were winners and had the game to themselves ..... and then new Italians and Germans arrived to dominate grand prix racing in their turn, excluding the British competitors for a long period. The Italian manufacturer Brumm issued good die-cast models at 1:43 scale of many winners then.

Eventually the genius of two Brits - Colin Chapman at Lotus and John Cooper in Surbiton - wrought a sea-change in the 1960s with their little mid-engine rockets for Moss, Brabham, McLaren and others.

People join car clubs mainly for one reason, they all love cars. Not your daily driver, not the shopping trolley, or the conveyance to get from point A to B. No, they cherish their special cars for their shape, their performance, their quirkiness and, in some cases, their increasing value. I must say the latter has never bothered me – I buy a car because it appeals to me and not because of its potential value. It has always fascinated me as to why people decide on a certain make of car, especially when it comes to choosing a classic or special car. With this in mind I was motivated to relate the “warts and all” story of my own motoring journey when the editor recently made a plea for future magazine articles.

My childhood motoring experiences began with the family car, a 1938 Dodge. This was followed in turn by a 1953 Dodge Kingsway, two Ford Falcons, an XK and an XP, then a Datsun 1600. My mother also had a Morris Mini 850 for a while. After I left home my parents bought a Datsun 120Y coupe (why one might ask – there is no accounting for taste!!)

My own motoring journey began in 1968 with a 1960 Wolseley Farina-bodied 15/60, a car which shared its mechanicals and some body panels with the Morris Oxford, Riley 4 Sixty-Eight, Austin A60 Cambridge and the MG Midget (BMC believed in making much out of a little in those days by doing a spot of “badge-engineering”!). I wanted to buy a MGTF at the time but was dissuaded from doing so by my father. (“why do you want a car with a rag top?” he asked). The Wolseley had a propensity for acquiring punctures – I had 7 in the 12 months of my ownership. After about the third puncture I took the precaution of having tyre leavers, a pump and vulcanizer patches in the boot. In 1969 the Wolseley was replaced by a new Toyota Corolla SL Sprinter, equipped with no less than twin Aisan carburettors! This car stayed with me for 3 years and was replaced by a Triumph 2500 PI, the worst car I ever owned (with apologies to TSCC Triumph owners). I had no end of trouble with the mechanical fuel injection. This was quickly replaced by what was the best car I ever owned, a Toyota Celica. I even opted for automatic transmission as I was employed in the Eastern Suburbs at the time. I kept this car for 8 years, covering some 140,000 miles (not kilometres) and only replaced the muffler and a battery.



Enough of daily drivers. In 1983 my thoughts turned to buying a old car, a “doer-upper”, just for a bit of fun. (the word “classic” hadn't entered my vocabulary just yet). I looked at a few possibilities, a rather nice Peugeot 403 (which, on inspection, wouldn't start, much to the embarrassment of the owner), a Bug Eye Austin Healey Sprite with an awful paint job and no brakes, a Mark 1 Jaguar with a malfunctioning automatic transmission and a dreadful interior and a Porsche 356 which, sadly, was somewhat above my budget at the time. I finally settled on a tidy manual 2.4 Mark 2 Jaguar, which began a long association with classic Jaguars. I joined the Jaguar Drivers

Club in March 1983 and, with great enthusiasm, and with the help of club members, I embarked on a restoration. I must pay tribute to one club member in particular, one Robert ("Bobby") Walsh (sadly he is no longer with us), who gave me a great deal of help on the mechanical side of things. (long standing members of the TSCC will remember Bob). I decided to replace the 2.4 litre motor with a 3.8, together with the correct suspension items, differential ratio, speedo and appropriate badges. The only item I couldn't alter to turn it into a "proper" 3.8 was the body number. The interior got a makeover with rebuilt/recovered seats and renewed wordwork. And of course I just had to have a set of chrome wire wheels! I never quite finished the restoration and the car was eventually sold with the odd rust spot still remaining. Being a white car it was inevitable that I would be called upon to do a wedding or two. Another club member, Ross Brackenbury, also had a white Mark 2 and it wasn't long before he and I teamed up and did a number of weddings together. I also did a couple of weddings with another club member, John Shaw. John, who was a cabinet maker by trade, did a magnificent job on the wordwork of my car. Whilst I was in the Jaguar Club I met a fellow by the name of John Slater who drove a beautiful Mark 9 Jaguar at the time. During my membership of the Jaguar Club I held the position of Mark 2 Register Secretary for 5 years.

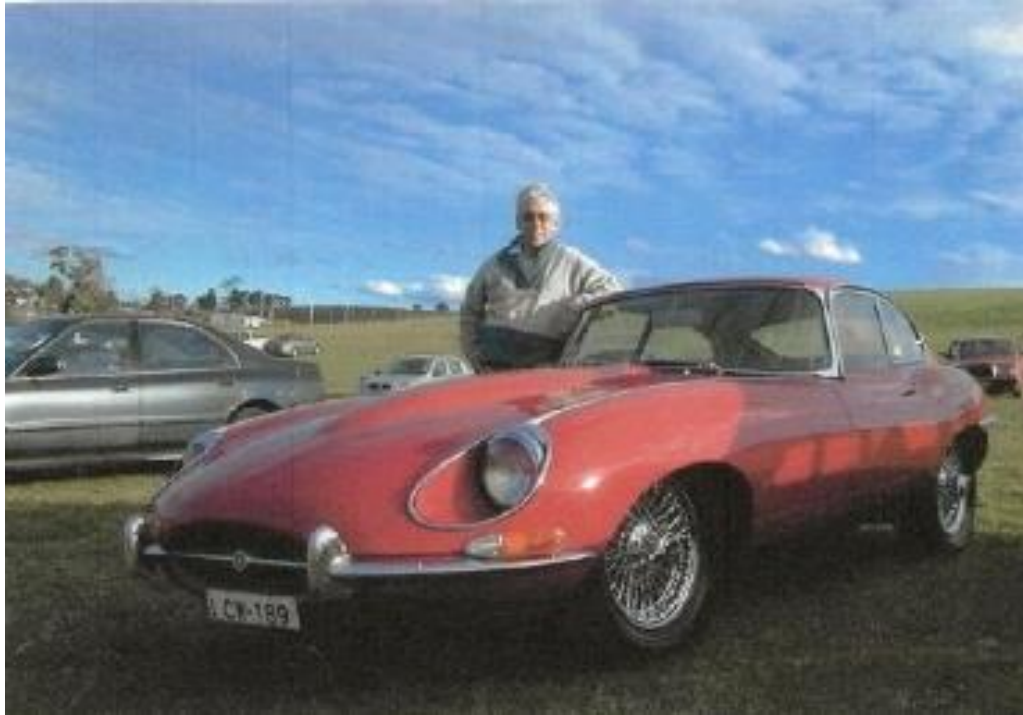


Fun Fact: This car was also used at the Editor's wedding

On perusing the cars for sale in the Saturday Herald one day I came across a Daimler 250 sedan for sale. From the number plate I recognised the Daimler as a car belonging to a Robert Gorell, a member of the Jaguar Club. I knew this car well and thought it was time for a change so I went over to Robert's place and we did a deal. I kept both cars for a while but after 9 years of Mark 2 ownership I eventually parted company with the Jaguar. I enjoyed the Daimler as a great country cruiser, not as fast as the Mark 2 but very comfortable, and with a gorgeous burble from that Edward Turner-designed V8. This engine first saw the light of day in the Daimler SP250 and it was after the takeover of Daimler by Jaguar that the V8 found its way into the Mark 2 body shell with detail touches and badges to make it a Daimler (the fluted grill for example).

I eventually sold the car back to Robert who subsequently moved to Queensland. I always wanted to own a "rag top" car (to quote my father again) and, as a young guy, hankered after an MG. It was time to make this dream come true and, in 1994, I purchased a fully restored MGB from Nepean Classic Cars. I remember my daughter being quite sad at the sale of the Daimler, but this was soon forgotten when I arrived home in the B. She went everywhere in that car and always insisted that the top should be down, even in winter. Naturally I joined the MG Car Club and I well remember Laura waking up in the wee small hours to join me on many a breakfast run. Thus began a love affair with top down motoring - I subsequently owned 3 more convertibles (more of that later). I have to admit that it was with great reluctance that I sold the B. If I'm honest it was probably the most enjoyable classic I ever owned, but I parted company with the B to realise a long held dream.....





I had an early introduction to E type Jaguars. As a teenager I knew a guy who owned one of these magnificent cars. His father was friends with my Dad and, needless to say, I made sure that I became good friends with this person. It was an early 3.8 with the Moss box. Peter and I did some memorable drives in that car and I even got to drive it on one occasion. On one trip I saw the speedo hit 145 MPH, the fastest I have ever been in a car. I just had to own one of these great cars and, in 1999 I purchased a white 2+2 Series 2 from Ian Cummins Classic Cars. It was a strong car - the motor and gearbox had been overhauled 9,000 miles ago and it went rather well. I did see 120 MPH on one trip. At the turn of the century I was attending a Jaguar Club concours and met fellow E type owner, Vern Kelly. It was Vern who convinced me to join the TSCC, which I did in 2001. He and I became firm friends and remain so to this day. The 2+2 served me well but I really wanted to duplicate my friend Peter's E type, a red 2 seater, the purist form of all E type coupes. Back to Cummins Classic Cars in 2004 to purchase the very car, a red Series 1.5. At long last I was the proud owner of my dream car – another box ticked! Up to this point I had always serviced my cars but after 8 years of E type ownership I was feeling my age and crawling under a car on a regular basis began to lose its appeal. Reluctantly the era of E type ownership had to come to an end. I decided

that old classics were not for me at my stage of life as my occupation was making increasing demands on my time so I needed a more modern set of wheels. So, onto my next phase of sports car ownership.

Whilst my next car was, in no way considered a classic at the time (as the early model NA has rightly become), the Mazda MX5 had always appealed to me. I just wanted a reliable dealer-serviced sports car. I purchased a demonstrator NC MX5 with the folding metal roof. I didn't realise at the time that this car had been modified with lowered suspension and a rather rorty exhaust. It was about this time that I was experiencing back problems and the rock hard suspension of the lowered Mazda wasn't helping. I had to have major back surgery and the Mazda had to go. I replaced it with a Honda Civic Type R. What a little buzz bomb! It was redlined at 8,000 RPM, sometimes being described as a four-wheeled motorcycle. It was a shopping trolley under 5,000 RPM but feed it revs and it virtually exploded and became very angry sounding. It handled well too. I had 3 years of absolute fun in this car. I have noticed of late that the asking price for early model Type R's has been steadily climbing - a future classic perhaps?

I had always admired Z cars, (as in Datsun/Nissan). Back in the Celica days I had come close to buying a 240Z but, at the time, I needed 4 seats and economy. I decided to replace the screaming Honda with a 350Z, a car which had always appealed to me. This inevitably led to the purchase of a 370Z a few years later. I enjoyed both cars immensely. Unfortunately a Toyota Camry rearranged the rear end of the 370 to the extent that it was written off. During my "Zed" period I also acquired the third of my "Rag Top" cars in the shape of a fully restored 1969 MG Midget, again acquired from Nepean Classic Cars. This car was a heap of fun. It had a whopping 46 kilowatts and

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twin SU carburettors under that diminutive bonnet and would top 90 MPH downhill with a strong tailwind behind!! I have to admit to feeling somewhat vulnerable in this tiny convertible with only a thin sheet of metal (the door) between me and Eternity. The only real safety feature was an aftermarket roll bar which, given the limitations of the Midget's performance, would probably never be put to the test. The Midget was duly replaced by the fourth and final convertible, a 2004 NB Series 4 Mazda MX5. I wanted the earlier model because, in my opinion, it was a better looking car than the NC that I had previously owned. I found the right car in Nowra, with low mileage and enthusiast-owned. Along with the MGB this MX5 was amongst my all time favourite cars.

Following on from the much modified Nissan 370Z a BMW 125i coupe found its way in to the garage. Despite some misgivings about my purchase by one of my petrol head mates (he said that, in his opinion, I had lost the plot) this was a most enjoyable car.

On approaching three score and ten I promised "she who must be obeyed" that I would reduce the car fleet by one. The Beemer and, very reluctantly, the MX5 left the garage to be replaced with a Mercedes-Benz CLK coupe, enhanced with an AMG kit. I found this low mileage, pampered vehicle at the Oldtimer Centre. So far I have had almost 4 enjoyable years with this car. It is very quiet, rides beautifully and goes quite well and, more to the point, has not given me one ounce of trouble.

Looking back over my journey the 3 cars that I would have liked to retain were the MGB, the Nissan 350Z and the NB MX5. Why not the E types one might say. Yes, they were great cars to own but the aforementioned cars were the ones that gave me the most driving pleasure. After all cars are mechanical devices and deserve to be driven. I have never thought of my cars as mere museum pieces.

Cars that I haven't mentioned in this article are, of course, all the daily drivers. My wife and I have had several Toyotas, a few Mitsubishi's, Fords, Mazdas, a Nissan and, in my early days of marriage, even a Morris Major Elite! At last count there has been a total of 37 cars pass through the Watts household to date and I'm sure there will be a few more to come in the future. I have to confess to being a frequent visitor to the Carsales website and several other similar websites. I also take a great interest in Shannons Auctions as well. Of course being a true petrol head I have a small collection of miniature wheels which number some 300 in round figures. So my motoring journey continues.





What we have here are two outstanding examples of Aston Martins delivered 58 years apart. The earlier of the two is an Aston Martin DB4 Convertible delivered new to London UK paper magnate, the Hon. Max Aiken in 1962, whilst the newer car is a 2020 Aston Martin DBS Superleggera Volante delivered in Sydney, Australia in 2020. Sometime in those 58 years a smart marketing guru changed the name of a soft top from Convertible to Volante. Sounds sexier, doesn't it? Also, the word Superleggera stands for super light and I can verify that as the clamshell like front carbon fiber bonnet on the DBS would weigh less than 10 kilos.

**Grey Power.** Firstly, let us look under the bonnet at the heart of the DB4. The Aston's double overhead cam straight six powerplant-designed by former Austin engineer Tadek Marek was Britain's first all alloy production motor. The engine fitted to this chassis is a little different from the normal DB4 and features a special twin plug head, dual ignition and triple Weber carburetors normally reserved for the high performance and rarer Vantage GTs. This enables the engine to produce 225kw, an increase of 47kw on the standard DB4's of the era, see photo. This engine is mated to a David Brown inhouse designed four-speed gearbox with the optional Laycock de Normanville electric overdrive with a final drive ratio of 3.77.1. Grey power from the sixties at its very best!

Now let us look at what has happened to the heart of Astons in those 58 years. The 2020 DBS has a 5.2-liter twelve Cylinder twin turbo charged motor producing a healthy 533KWs. It is an all-alloy engine with four camshafts and 48 valves making it the ultimate Aston Martin Engine. The transmission is an eight-speed designed especially for the DBS by German company, ZF. This combination now powers the fastest production car in Aston Martin's history and the sounds that V12 makes, with the top-down, matches some of Mozart's best. However, NSW road laws means this Aston can only travel at a maximum 110 kph! What a waste of ten cylinders, two turbochargers, and six speeds.



**Grey Beauty.** They say beauty is in the eyes of the beholder and in this case the writer believes the Series 1 E-Type Jaguar is the most beautiful car ever produced and his second-best friend Enzo Ferrari agrees. However, coming in second would have to be some of Aston Martins creations and a few that come to mind would be the DB5, the Lagonda of the early eighties, the last of the Vanquishes and, of course, the latest DBS.

However, what we have here is an exceedingly rare DB4C that was the subject of a factory upgrade in the mid-sixties. Sir Max was a close friend of David Brown and when the DB5 arrived on the scene, Sir Max arranged for his DB4C to be upgraded. As can be seen in the photos it received basically a DB5 front with the Perspex headlight covers. At the same time, it was fitted with 16-inch Borrani wire wheels (225x70x16 tyres) and the dashboard was upgraded to the DB4 GT instrument binnacle. It is an incredibly beautiful car painted in its original colour of Pearl Black which in the sunlight is a very dark grey. The interior is simply Connolly Red with red stitching.

The 2020 DBS has had a somewhat boring life compared to the DB4. It's colour, specifically designed for the DBS, is called Xenon Grey. On close inspection the paint has small flecks of light blue and gold throughout. Looks perfect in any sunlight. In classic marketing spin, the seats are Chancellor Red with Triaxial Quilting with the optional welt stitching in Obsidian Black, and these little interior extras cost, yes wait for it, a mere \$16,200. Bargain eh! I almost forgot; the headrest has the Aston Martin wings embroidered on the headrests, another \$1400. The other beautiful part of this car is the wheels, those being 21inch 10 twin spoke forged Gloss Black diamond turned with 305/30 ZR 21 tyres. So, wheel size has grown by 5 inches in 58 years and the tyre width has grown nearly 50%. More power and more grip. Basically, both cars are extremely beautiful and are admired wherever they are.

Both cars have black soft tops, the DB4C is manually operated and takes about four minutes to position and secure. Aston was behind the Americans in soft top deployment as most of the convertible Thunderbirds and Cadillacs of the early sixties had fully automated roofs. The new DBS has a fully automated roof that can be opened or closed in 14 seconds at speeds of up to 45 kph. Personally, I prefer to stop before hitting the close button.





**Grey Soul.** The DNA, the very soul of the Aston Martin can be traced back to the founder, Lionel Martin, who used racing to improve his product, and Aston's win in the 1959 Le Mans 24-hour race is testament to that continuing passion. In the last few years, we have seen Astons winning their class at Le Mans and in the World Endurance championship. And this year we see the return of Aston Martin to the F1 championship.

So, what is the DB4C like to drive. As I have only ever driven it around the block, I have sourced a few paragraphs from motoring journalist, David Berthon, who took it for a more intensive drive, and I quote:

"Under acceleration this British Bulldog provides an inspiring feeling of power that quickly puts a smile on your face and firmly stamps it as a true Gran Turismo. This ultimate grand tourer is capable of eating the miles at high speed over long distances. Showing no hint of lumpiness, it just delivers the business with a steady flow of brute power all the way up the rev range and it must have been a revelation compared to the bread-and-butter cars of that era. The inspiring growl from the twin exhausts is the icing on the cake".

Let us quickly motor 58 years along and have a drive of the DBS. It truly is a great car to drive but unfortunately the road rules in NSW don't allow you to exercise the DBS to even a small extent of its capabilities. It has three different drive modes and even the tamest mode produces blindingly fast acceleration all the way up to the NSW States maximum of 110 kph, so let's again rely on a small bit of a road test reports!

"The DBS is faster, louder, and frankly ferocious compared to the DB11. It covers 0-160 kph in 6.4 seconds. This brute of a Supercar handles like no other." "This is a mighty car, not explosive, not urgent, but mighty. In fourth and fifth gears through sweeping roads is where this DBS is. Because at those speeds and in those gears, you can use the torque, allowing the thrust to jet you out of a corner and onto the next straight. As party tricks go, this deep unrelenting push feels marvelous, so effortless, accessible, secure and sonorous that it is luxury all by itself".

That my dear readers is what Aston Martin's soul is all about. However, not being a writer of any note (However, I done well at English at school securing an A in the Leaving Certificate), I would simply say the DBS accelerates rapidly, corners brilliantly, all in the comfort of a superbly appointed cockpit. That beautiful cockpit has not changed in 58 years. Brilliant then, brilliant now.

**Grey Matters.** Some other points of interest concerning both cars and I will start firstly with a bit of history on the DB4C.

This DB4C was delivered on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1962 to Sir Max Aiken of the famous newspaper, the Daily Express, He was a motoring man and in 1968, he, along with Sir Frank Packer were the instigators and sponsors of the famous London to Sydney Marathon which captured the imagination of millions around the world. In 1962 Sir Max paid the princely sum of 3200 pounds (At today's exchange rate that equates to \$5820) for this beautiful car. As mentioned before, it

was sent back to the factory for an upgrade to many of the external and internal features of the DB5. Apparently, Aston upgraded another DB4C to this same spec, making this Aston an extremely rare car.

Fast forward to the early 80's and TSCC member, Les Johnson, acquired this DB4C for 3500 pounds in a less dignified and neglected state. Les, the owner of many other Astons, took some time to get around to the body off restoration and it was finally completed in 2011 just in time to win the AMOC NSW Concours. It was shortly after this that Les offered the DB4C to the writer for the sum of \$500000. In one of my many silly decisions I declined the offer believing the car simply was not worth it! And now ladies and gentlemen, this very car would be worth north of \$2m! Les, sold it to a Victorian guy who kept it for just over a year and in 2015 it returned to NSW and is proudly owned by AMOC NSW and TSCC member Michael M. Incidentally, this car is enjoyed and driven regularly by Michael on just about every AMOC NSW and TSCC runs! It is no trailer queen having already obtained the odd stone chip. Incidentally, this is the only DB4C left in Australia and one of only 68 left in the world.

The DBS has had a boring life compared to the 58 years of the DB4C. Basically, it was built late 2019, signed off by an Ethan Dyer-Poole, and delivered by Trivets' in 2020. The price was a little more than the DB4C being \$660000. However, a staggering \$262972 of that purchase price went to the various Governments in Luxury Car Tax, GST, Stamp Duty, Transfer of Registration and Finally Registration itself. If every Australian brought a new DBS each year, we could wipe out our national debt in no time at all! And for those who cannot remember, Luxury Car Tax was brought in to protect the local car industry, which, if you had not noticed, no longer exists!

These two stunning Grey Aston Martin Convertibles, sorry Volantes, attract enormous attention wherever they go, including a fair amount from the law, much like actor Michael Caine, aka Charlie Croker, did in the Classic 1969 film The Italian Job. The small-time crook's Aston Martin DB4C eventually gets flipped into a gorge by a front-end loader when the Mafia pounce on him at the Italian border. A somewhat funny side to this story is that two DB4C were used in the filming of this movie, one for the English sequences and another for the Italian shots. The Italian designated car was prematurely destroyed during the filming when an electrical fault ignited the pyrotechnics before the car could be filmed meeting its fiery end in the ravine. The film crew therefore used a Lancia Flaminia 3C Convertible mockup of the DB4C and if you study the film closely one can see that it is left hand drive and the bonnet opens in the wrong direction. The opening ten minutes of this film with the Lamborghini Murci winding its way through the Italian alps, is ten minutes of film I could never get tired of watching, but that is a story for another day.

I'll finish by tabling a famous Henry Ford, or should I say, David Brown quote "You can have any Aston Martin in any colour you like, so long as it's GREY!"

# The Big Trip 1<sup>st</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> November 2021

## Day 1 – Terry Daly

Day 1 was Monday the 1<sup>st</sup> of November from Sydney to Dubbo via Bells line of Road and a variety of outback roads finally finishing up in Dubbo. Lunch stop was The Bank in Orange.

The original Day 1 was from Sydney to Tamworth via Stroud and Bucketts way, but Covid restrictions caused a change of date etc., In fact, with the many changes to the Covid rules over the preceeding months, it was great that Jack Jones persisted and a shortened lap on NSW was eventually organized. Thanks Jack.

The instructions told the 25 participants to make their own way to Orange but be there by 1230 for lunch. All managed that requirement except the Dalys who managed to miss the lunch time by a massive two and half hours. They left in plenty of time but had to stop at the BP in Kurmond to fill the Mustang with 98. That petrol stop could have been a lifesaver as about 10 kilometers past Mt Tomah they arrived at the scene of a truck rollover that had just occurred. The rolled truck and trailer took out two cars and blocked the Bells Line of Road for about 8 hours. Unfortunately, one of the drivers lost his life. Both Jack Jones and Michael Markiewicz (driving that beautiful Aston Martin DB4 Convertible) who were travelling about ten minutes in front of the Dalys both noticed the Semi driving excessively fast for the conditions and weren't surprised that it was involved in an accident.

The Dalys had no option but to turn around and drive back through Richmond and up the Great Western Highway and eventually arrived in Dubbo just before five pm. We were so fortunate that Jack had organized the afternoon drink session/get together to start at a rather late 1730.

From discussions, we found that the others had taken a variety of routes with the Stuart Town/Wellington and the Molong/Cumnock/North Yeoval routes being the most popular. The distance either way was approx. 375 kilometers.

Jack had organized a sit-down dinner in the Cattleman's Motel where the group were staying for the next two nights. Much talking was the order of the night and each couple in the group (including a guest couple from the AMOC) were asked to introduce themselves, talk about how and when they became a member of TSCC and little about the cars they drove. Lionel Walker took six minutes and thirty-six seconds to simply introduce himself and he still hadn't even mentioned Gail. It became a long night.

A great night of fun and laughter was the order of the night as many related stories about what they had been doing in lockdown etc . Bring on Day 2.



## **Day 2 – Bob and Jeni Smith**

### **Bob**

First day off, after a long drive from Sydney. Leisurely breakfast in the motel, with most members enjoying the spread put on by the Inn.

Jeni wants to see the zoo, so Craig and Donna very nicely offer to take her. I understand its full of animals.

I wish to visit the Old Dubbo Gaol, which is walking distance from the motel. I'd had enough driving the day before.

Getting to the goal was easy, but I kept bumping into Jack Jones and Robert Clare, which meant getting side-tracked by either coffee stops or cold Asahi pints in the Old Bank Hotel.

Afternoon, I eventually found the gaol, and as it was Melbourne Cup day, the place was practically deserted, apart from the Kortess, who obviously had nil interest in horse racing, either. The goal was quite interesting, with a good map provided for the modest entry fee, and plenty of signage on the various exhibits.

The members met around five o'clock for pre-dinner drinks in a courtyard, which appears to be a tradition on these excursions.

We joined a party of ten for dinner at a very good Japanese restaurant, Tanoshi. We ordered far too many dishes, but managed them anyway. They allowed BYO, so the costing was very reasonable. We all should have walked home, we were so full, but a Maxi-cab miraculously arrived, ending the day.

Weather great and Dubbo a surprisingly delightful town.

### **Jeni**

Having visited the Zoo around 1992 I was keen to revisit and see the changes. I was also keen to rent a bike (cheap at \$17) and with the Discover voucher and Seniors Card entry was less than \$10! What a bargain. There was definitely a lot more variety in the animals and many more of them., plus the vegetation had grown too.

Of course, my favourites were the Meerkats who had everyone entertained with their antics and camera poses.

There were safari drives on offer (apparently highly recommended), African villages to explore and overnight accommodation if so inclined – next visit!

Quite a few TSCC members made it to the Zoo (Melbourne Cup? What's that?) and I just missed seeing Jeremy being interviewed for a news segment on out-of-town visitors. All up a great day out.

### Day 3 – Michael Marckiewicz

I volunteered to write up Wednesday as it was nostalgic - exactly 45 years ago I came from London for a first time look see (Air India 9 stops ☹️) and to visit an Aussie girlfriend (we travelled overland from London to Jo'burg in 1975) who was then teaching in Leeton. From Leeton we bombed around NSW in her orange Honda Civic!

A reminder of all the reasons I fell in love with Australia including the glorious countryside and driving fast on traffic free and scenic roads. And that friendly (less class driven) Aussie warmth and friendship - so evident at TSCC

Jack and Rob set a cracking pace ensuring I could tuck in behind at max speed (100k + a few times) and minimum risk of yet more points (for me anyway!) - already 6 towards my next 3 month disqualification! "Utes In The Paddock" at Condobolin clearly a highlight (but a ute won't be my next car!). Roger and Lionel taking a wrong turn then each going over some previous roadkill likely not a highlight.

From there to Lake Cargelligo where we bought lunch at the supermarket and ate by the lake before heading under threatening clouds to Griffith.

We all enjoyed a huge meal together at La Scala. Another fun and thoroughly satisfying day.

Not forgetting Terry who would only let Robyn near the shops in Griffith during siesta time - but that was the next day!

### Day 4 - Craig and Donna Shiel

After a good night's sleep in a comfy bed at the Quest Apartments, we were ready to see what Griffith had to offer.

Breakfast at 2Sixty2 Café was a popular spot. Sitting outside were several other club members.

After breakfast, we decided to head for one of the recommended attractions, the Hermit's Cave.

On a ridge overlooking the town of Griffith, there is a line of rocky caves and crevices that were once the home to an Italian immigrant for 30 years. Valeri Ricetti moved there in the 1920s and lived as a recluse until 1952. He built gardens and planted vines and an orchard to support himself. While we were there, we crossed paths with; Alan and Liz, Bob and Jeni and Lionel and Gael. Several other members of the group checked out the caves during the day.



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We then moved on to Whitton to have lunch at the Whitton Malt House, a 30 minute drive from Griffith, passing several large vineyards. An impressive, newly completed structure that offered a range of tasty treats for lunch or a snack. Beer and whiskey are made onsite using locally sourced grains and malts. There are several small cabins for those who want to stay amongst the semi resort style gardens and lakes. Craig tried out the beer tasting tray, though not liking any of them enough to order a full glass. Several groups of fellow members also checked out the Malt House. We saw, Terry and Robyn, Jack, Robert, Roger and Pat, Jeremy and Julie, John and Dennis, Bill and Cathleen and Michael.

Following lunch and a walk around the man-made lake, we headed off to Yarran Winery, a boutique winery on the outskirts of Griffith at Yenda. This winery was recommended by the waitress at dinner the night before. We tasted several wines, all were very nice and ended up buying a mixed dozen.

Other members went to other wineries in the area to check out the local wines.

For dinner that night, some small groups went to Giovanni's and some went to Zecce. Donna and I decided to have a simple meal at the Victoria Hotel and head back to our room early. Next morning we would be heading off to Wagga Wagga.

#### **Day 6 – Wagga Wagga to Cowra - Roger Korte**

Saturday breakfast at the International Hotel was a very casual affair with limited choices so we were soon on the road as we had a very busy day ahead of us. The weather looked promising for a fine & sunny day.

First call of the day was to the Junee Licorice & Chocolate Factory which is very old-world in character. Trevor Booth and I decided to leave Pat and Jennifer at the factory while we checked out the attached Car Museum. It was more of a Ford Museum consisting of several early Falcons and Zephyrs with a couple of Capris and lone Customline thrown in.. Lots of old workshop equipment as well as several vintage Victa lawnmowers.

Lunch was booked at the Sir George Hotel in Jugiong about 100km distant. We proceeded there via Cootamundra then some potholed back roads, finally arriving after being held up in convoy with Trevor, Terry and John Bailey behind a very (inconsiderate) slow small truck. The Sir George proved to be very busy (where did all the people come from?) although the service and lunch were excellent.

We needed to be heading to our next stop at Landra Castle, some 100+ km away quite soon after lunch. The route took us via Harden and Young and as we approached from the west the imposing looking Castle certainly stood out from the surrounding beautiful farmland. After an introduction by managers Rod and Bev Kershaw we were permitted to explore and photograph at will.



In 1878 Irish born George Henry Greene purchased 32,000 acres of virgin land north of Young which he called "Landra". Following land clearing and building he bred sheep and grew wheat, in the 1890's he introduced share farming. Around the turn of the century he had 60 share-farmers and employed 350 men with an additional 500-600 during harvest which often produced about 10,000 tons of wheat. The property also carried about 20,000 sheep.

The original 1880 homestead was eventually in 1908 transformed into the existing 57 room castle using steel reinforced concrete. Landra had its own 110 volt power generator, a telephone switchboard, hot and cold running water and septic system.

George Greene died in 1911, this leaving the farm with a manager as George's only son William chose not to become a farmer. Landra was eventually sold in sections until 1954 leaving just 3000 acres including the Castle. These remaining 3000 acres was last sold in 1975, the Castle now being Heritage Listed. It can certainly benefit from some TLC in many areas, mainly the exterior, although some of the main rooms are very well presented.

Before leaving Landra, John Bailey revealed that his trip computer was telling him that he had less fuel than he would require to get to the next service station. Manager Rod Kershaw kindly offered help John out of his predicament.

The 50km trip to Cowra was reasonably easy except for a couple of severe (dry) floodways shortly after leaving Landra. Since leaving Wagga that morning we were on many roads which one would normally hope were great driving roads but unfortunately the hundreds of potholes meant the driver had to observe the road surface very closely. In fact, several road sections we travelled during the past week were badly maintained.

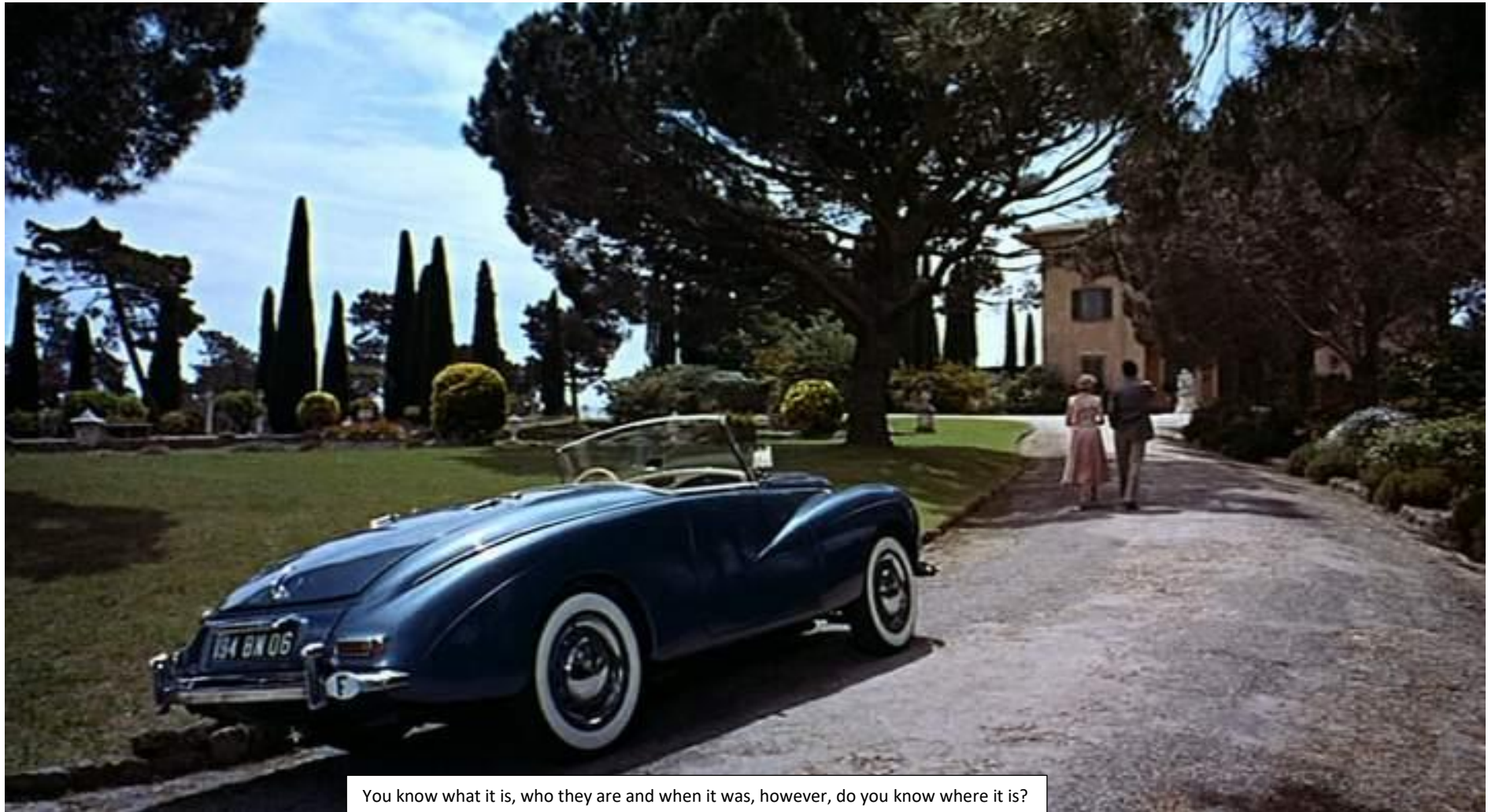
After checking in to the Cowra Services Club Motel, a welcome shower then organizing transport to the Quarry Restaurant for the Farewell Dinner some 9km from town. Jack was quoted \$25 per head each way for a Maxi Taxi...Ouch! Pat and I shared a cab with Lionel and Gael Walker, \$40 return for 4 of us.

The lovely Quarry Restaurant is in a very pleasant location, the staff extremely efficient. We shared the restaurant with a 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday group and 3 or 4 couples who did not seem to mind our noisy bunch. Many stories were told (and re-told?) during the pre-dinner drinks as TSCC members spilled over the smallish lounge area. A scrumptious dinner was then provided by the Quarry staff, after which our Trip Organizer Jack Jones was presented with a bottle of Jack Daniels "Gentleman Jack".

Thankyou Jack for the effort you went to in preparing such a wonderful "Lap of NSW #2" ... We personally saw parts of NSW we had not previously visited, namely the Griffith district, and shall return.



## The Car's the Star



You know what it is, who they are and when it was, however, do you know where it is?



## The End

