



The Austral Alvist's Aide

SEPTEMBER, 1961

ISSUED FREE



Hon. Registrar
"Alvista"
21 Edgar Street,
Glen Iris, S.E.6
Victoria, Australia.

BULLETIN
of the
ALVIS CAR CLUB
VICTORIA

Hon. Editor
"The Alvic"
16 Rix Street,
Glen Iris, S.E.6
Victoria.

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This publication is the official newsletter and journal of the Alvis Car Club, Victoria. It is printed in an edition of 150 copies by the Hon. Editor, and is issued free of charge to financial Club members.
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SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING.

8 p.m., Friday, 15th September, 1961 at the Clubrooms, 21 Edgar St.

OUR COVER PICTURE

This photograph (block by courtesy of G/Capt. Shipley of the Alvis Owner Club.) shows a group of Australian 12/70s. These were taken some years ago now at a N.S.W. meeting at Marc Pain's erstwhile residence. It would appear that most, if not all, these cars have belonged to Marc Pain at some time or another. AZJ 955 is an Australian body and the rest are Mulliner coachwork.

Speaking of 12/70s there aren't any in our Club, other than the newly acquired 12/70 fixed head coupe in South Australia (John Murray's). There is, however, a very original white 12/70 saloon seen occasionally around Melbourne's northern suburbs. It has red wheels, and tan upholstery, and although a little tatty at the edges, seems to have been kept in very good general order. When last seen it was driven by a middle-aged gent. If anyone gets the chance to contact the owner we would like them to persuade him to come to the Club (with his car). The car's registration number is Vic. 188 939.

With acknowledgement to Dick Birks, we reprint these articles from the the A.O.C.'s "Alvistas".

ROAD MANNERS AND THE CAR :

by Differential.

In a general way, most car drivers can be fitted into one of the following categories :-

- * 1. The heavy brigade. Driving the stately carriages of the road, including Rolls-Royce, Big Alvis, Daimler and Bentley. Safe, unobtrusive and fairly fast.
- * 2. Vintage and sports wallah. Usually a quick-witted character, who can cope with most situations. Often creates the impression, when driving, that he should have reached his destination yesterday.
- * 3. "L" Driver. Knows all the signals. But, if you are following be prepared to see his car move sideways or vertically. Anything can happen.
- * 4. The ladies. Unpredictable as ever. See note on group 3 above.
- * 5. The bowler hat, 7 h.p., and a Sunday afternoon. Stay in bed on Sunday afternoons.
- * 6. Same as Group 5, plus rocking birds on the rear window. Positively the very end.
- * 7. The badly maintained old wreck. Citizen at the wheel probably in a similar condition. Change into third, down with the right foot, and get the hell out of his way.
- * 8. The shiny new car. Usually driven with very great care. Unless it happens to be a Rover or a Jag, when it probably does not belong to the driver anyway.

Now, there is not a solitary original observation included in these classifications, but here is the point of the story. The various types are so constant that they form an interesting study in group psychology, and this writer holds the view that a driver can be taken out of one group and put into any other (excluding change of sex) and that his subsequent behaviour will resemble that of other members of his new group. It is suggested that one could take a Rolls-Royce limousine and an open Speed Twenty Alvis, and let the drivers change places.

In very few miles, each car would be driven with the characteristics of the car, and not the characteristics previously associated with the individual driver. Reflect, for instance, on your local butcher's delivery van, which normally trundles round with due care and attention. Then, one day during the winter, most of the exhaust system rots off. At once the youth at the helm begins to drive with complete abandon, as he enjoys the roar of the open exhaust, muttering to himself "who is this cove Stirling Moss ?".

Comparison was made recently in these columns between the performance of the Speed Twenty and that of the "4.3", and it was stated that the former would do a given journey in a shorter time. Now, this was largely due to the exhilarating effect of the high general level of noise, the scream of the gear-box in the indirect ratios, and the exhaust note like the Trumpet of Gabriel, which taken together, had an effect on the driver like a spoonful of Dexedrine tablets. The 4.3, on the other hand, had a quietness and refinement which was reflected in one's driving.

If a solitary figure with straw in his hair is ever seen sitting in a field somewhere trying to juggle with three S.U. carburettors, it will be Differential, after some research psychiatrist had tried the effect of fitting him out in a bowler hat, and loosing him off on a Sunday afternoon in a small car with dancing birds on the windscreen. The snake-pit boys know just how much can be tolerated, and their stop-watches click when Psyche takes the wheel, and Ego, sitting in the back seat, reads from a driving manual.

As Jehu thought of saying to Moab: "Show me his chariot, and I will tell you the sort of man he is."

TECHNICALITIES

by "Triangle".

Firstly, let's clear up a query I have had re post-vintage compression ratios. I have been asked about the c/r of an engine, the cylinder head of which is alleged to be machined down to 92 mm. thick.

Well, I have checked on no less than five heads, and find 92 mm. to be about the standard thickness. Only one was different - one that I have had extensively machined, top and bottom - that is 91 mm. None was greater than 92 mm. so that must be the standard thickness.

Anyway, the only way to check the capacity of the combustion chamber is by the use of a graduated measure, bearing in mind that, less compression plate, the piston crown will displace some of the contents of the cylinder head at T.D.C. I would suggest that the cylinder head in question had been faced up, but not very extensively machined.

Valves.

It cannot be denied that they do, occasionally drop inside. Correctly fitted and maintained, this will not occur, but many points must be carefully noted and put into practice.

- * ONE If the valve looks like a sunburned blonde (all red and spiteful), DON'T try and economise . . . SCRAP IT . . . especially if it fits in any but the end cylinders, which have a port to themselves, and are luckier than the others.
- * TWO If an exhaust valve, and not KE 965 (test with a magnet, as these valves are non-magnetic and should have a groove above the Cotter for identification) . . . SCRAP IT .
- * THREE The valve guides must be unworn to avoid sideways movement and to embrace the stem closely to assist in the dispersal and dissipation of surplus heat. This is very, very important.
- * FOUR The exhaust seat should be fairly broad and in good contact all the way round. This helps to get rid of the heat and cool the valve, but it must not be sunk into the head or shrouded at all. In this case you must study point 5.
- * FIVE Care must be taken to ensure that the rockers clear the valve spring retaining caps when the valve is shut. This, in the case of cluster springs, is very important, as there is considerable side load applied if these foul and, should this occur, the valve will break across the stem.
- * SIX Worn, and especially recessed, valve rockers can, too, cause trouble as they transmit side thrust and do not open the valve with as smooth an action as an unworn and correctly profiled tappet would.

As the only return springs on the valve gear are on the valve itself, and have to be of sufficient strength to return the valve, the rocker, the push rod and the tappet up to 2,250 times per minute at peak revs., it will be realised that there is some strain on the poor old valve. I have thought that to fit return springs on the rockers, as on the not very successful Silver Crest, and on the tappets as on the early 12/50, would enable weaker springs to be used on the valve itself, with beneficial results; but I must admit I have never tried this. I do not believe in heavily loading one component if more can be made to share the strain and the load is more evenly distributed.

In practice, I have found that good quality valves in good shape will stand up to very brutal treatment without failure, although the KE 965 does distort, which, when one considers the running temperature they reach, and that they do resist the tendency of more common materials to burn out, is not surprising.

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- **** When I finally got my road map folded, my car was in it.
- **** Some of those new Yankee barges have scarcely enough clearance to pass over a pedestrian.

WORTH QUOTING

The following extracts are taken from an American paper-back edition, "The Hidden Persuaders":

"The New York Herald-Tribune reports that Chevrolet now has a seven-man panel of experts who evaluate the psychological overtones of their various models' sounds and smells. The sound of the door slam is regarded as especially significant. According to the report, the general manager of Chevrolet boasted, when the new models were introduced:

"We've got the finest door slam this year we've ever had - the big car sound . . . "

Buick encountered one of the nuances of the bigness problem when it received a furious letter from an old faithful Buick customer. This irate man said he had been buying a deluxe Roadmaster each year because it had four "portholes" while the cheaper models had only three portholes, but now (1955) all the cars seemed to have four portholes so that he felt the Roadmaster had lost its identity. Therefore, he huffed, he was buying a Cadillac.

Regarding the yearning to make an impression through bigness in cars in America seems to have convinced the U.S. public, although the disadvantages of this were made clear enough. Even the Wall Street Journal, hardly a journal of malcontents, carried a lengthy letter from a writer who complained that the big, heavy car is a chore to drive and to control, with or without power steering (which it shouldn't have to resort to). The writer added: "Also, riding characteristics improve far less than is popularly imagined. As the car gets large, the engine choppiness disappears, but the pitch and roll becomes worse . . ."

Some of the major car makers made a survey to see whether they should bring out a small car. It was found that a great many people expressed the feeling that a smaller car somehow wouldn't be "safe". They kept saying that they might be run over by trucks. People were asked to picture themselves riding in a certain type of compact car (in America) and the images which came to mind most were of being jolted, tense, cramped "and personally small and inferior".

The Chevrolet Car Clubs reportedly made a study of the factors influencing in clinching a car sale. Luxury and size were listed as most important, economy was far below in second place, and reliability came in a poor third.

Faced with such evidence, the manufacturers stepped up their emphasis on bigness. Fords were running double-page magazine spreads showing its cars stretched (in drawings even more than in fact) across the width of two pages, and announcing:

"Never before a Ford . . . so long - and so longed for."

Makes us feel a bit small, doesn't it - unless of course one runs one of those huge, long, uneconomical and powerful Speed 25s or 4.3 Sedans.

JOTTINGS

* Apparently Graeme Quinn is finding that his TC 21 is not as bad a car as he first thought. The other day he took us to task for reporting him as saying only derogatory things about his Three Litre. Actually, these are the only things he has ever said in our presence, but we shall be very pleased to print anything good that he has to say about the modern Alvis.

The moral from this should also be taken to heart by other members. We print in "Alvic" what little we hear about Club cars and their owners. If we hear more, we will print more. All we seem to hear at Club meetings are owners' complaints about their cars, or the latest valve they've dropped, or that some other component has gone bung. Time and time again we wish that we did not have to rely for Jottings, purely on the snatches of conversation we hear at Meetings. The best system of the lot would be if members could WRITE OUT their comments on any matter at all of interest to other members, and leave it for publication. This way, there can be no question of mis-reporting what you intended to say about this or that. It seems that it might be a good idea for sheets of paper to be distributed at Meetings expressly for this purpose. But knowing members' performance in this regard of old, we don't suppose that this would really be of any use. Ah, well, we do our best, inadequate though that may be.

* We recently inspected Terry Plummer's newly-imported 4½ Litre Bentley, and found it a very attractive looking car. Work seems to be proceeding at a meticulous and exacting pace on the engine, and although this must surely be proving an expensive business, the final results should be extremely pleasing. It is rumoured that Terry and Graeme Quinn will be making off for the A.C.C.A. 2 day trial (known as the "200") on the 7th/8th October. They hope to use the Bentley, or failing that, Graeme's Three Litre. Graeme would have liked to think of going in the Alfa Romeo, but apparently the new body will not be finished in time.



ANNUAL DINNER DANCE

The Annual Dinner Dance is very definitely on, and the date has been confirmed by the Social Secretary. It is:

Thursday, OCTOBER 26th

The venue has also been confirmed as the "Bambolina", near the corner of Glenferrie and Wattletree roads. There will be no parking worries. The cost has been lowered from the original estimate:

Single : 35/-

Double : £ 3/ 3/-

Note that it is cheaper per head to bring a partner, and certainly this is a highly desirable thing anyway. The Club's annual truly social 'do' will be much better if there are as many of the ladies as there are men. Furthermore, the Club has to sell at least 50 tickets, or the whole Dinner Dance may have to be cancelled. Members are therefore a) urged to come themselves, b) urged to bring a partner, c) urged to bring their friends along with them - the more the merrier !

Tickets are now available and members are asked to book as soon as possible to help the Social Secretary. Further details will be available at the meeting and from the Social Secretary. Members who can't make the meeting, may write enclosing remittance to John Larsen, at 24 (not 34 as in the last "Alvic") Ralston St., South Yarra, and John will immediately post off the tickets.

So remember:

Thursday evening, 26th October, three guineas
a double ticket.

MYSTERY TOUR - Aug. 27th

To the tune of superb weather and relatively reasonable roads, 10 cars from the Club wended their way through the north-western environs of Melbourne, travelling to Clarkefield, Woodend, Daylesford etc. At the end of the route, a brief form of hill-climb was held and then most of the party repaired to the 'Plough Inn' for a barbecue dinner.

This event was a particularly welcome one for the Club, and perhaps some more can be arranged in the near future. A report has not been received from the Organiser, so full details cannot be given here, but it is believed that Glen Farrel, in a Ford Falcon took outright First place and first Alvis was taken by Bruce Czynski, in the Silver Crest.

BAS BOWES SPEAKS

Did you see ABV's newsreel of the Alvis Stalwart going through its paces near Coventry? Various views of the Stalwart were shown - waterborne, - cross-country, - at speed.

But I thought the view taken out dead in front, at about wheel-hub height, was the highlight as the action of the all-wheel independent suspension was illustrated to perfection. This was rather awe-inspiring actually, as the camera appeared to be suspended about 10 to 20 feet out in front and as the Stalwart rushed forward over very rough terrain, it looked for all the world like some prehistoric giant centipede rushing at you.

* Lance Dixon reports that his FWD 12/50 is gradually getting into shape ready for his intended long distance tour. But for the necessary water-hop, he intends driving all the way from Melbourne to Coventry.

He says that he has been warned that travel through Burma means employing a large and heavily armed escort, which, of course, is well beyond his means. If anyone can suggest how, after driving up through Malaya, he can by-pass Burma, or the need for the afore-mentioned escort, he will be most grateful. This possibly explains why Rob and Ann Gunnell started their overland trip to Coventry at Bombay. This of course, very considerably shortened the actual distance driven over.

* A recent letter from the Reverend Guy Harrison, one of our Tasmanian members, informs me that he has sold his TA 14 and acquired a Singer Gazelle. The reason for the change appears to have been the lack of required space in the boot of the TA 14.

* Alan Griffin, Hon. Treasurer of the N.S.W. Club, visited us last week. Not only this, but he has honoured the Club by becoming a financial member. Those who were able to contact Alan in the flesh considered the meeting a very rewarding one.

* John Murray says that due to great changes in his business, he is forced to sell his latest acquisition - the last Speed 25 to enter Australia. He says that it is excellent mechanically, and that bodily it requires only a few of the coachwork timbers replacing. Unfortunately, although coming over here from South Aust. this month, he cannot attend Friday's meeting, but will be available at "Alvista" the following weekend (23rd-24th). Any one interested in the 25 could mention the fact at the meeting, and the necessary arrangements can be made for John to call personally on the member if need be. This 25 is the one reputed to have travelled from Adelaide G.P.O. to Melbourne G.P.O. in 6 hours 22½ minutes.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Regarding the Burney Streamliner and Marendaz Specials.

Knowing one of the stressmen with the Airship Guaranteed Company, the Vickers organisation, who were building the R 100 at Howden, East Yorkshire, I used to see this remarkable ship at regular intervals during its construction around 1928 - 30.

Towards the end of the 'project', when hangar testing was in progress, things were beginning to run down, and as there was not a great deal of activity in the established aircraft industry, the various technical people concerned were casting around for outlets for their talents.

Sir Dennis Burney, who led the R 100 design team, was experimenting with his "reversed" Alvis, and it proved to be a very capable performer. I recall that in establishing the principle of rear drive units, stopwatch times of better than 80 m.p.h. were measured, using open bucket seats and a negligible amount of bodywork, devoid of streamlining. I do not remember what axle assembly was used at the front, nor can I remember the Alvis model designation - to me, at that time, all FWD Alvises were just out of this world.

Speaking of Marendaz specials, I remember that my sister, then aspiring to the London stage, and probably at an all-time financial low, replied to an advertisement for a Secretary-chauffeur. This turned out to be for that doughty warrior, D.M.K. himself. Having temporarily lost his licence for speeding, he needed a driver to travel between the London office and the factory at Maidenhead.

For the first few trips, I gather, she was petrified, being urged to go faster, and yet faster; however, after a week or two things settled down to a relatively satisfactory level. I must say that since that time I've had the greatest respect for her as a driver. A personally conducted tour of the factory by D.M.K. revealed a wide variety of racing, experimental and production cars.

Of the latter, I have always considered the open 4 seater sports tourer, with the concealed folding hood, as an attractive model by any standards.

Yours,

Bill Jackson.

ALVIS SERVICE DATA SHEETS

DATA SHEET NO. 13

13th September 1938

REAR AXLE BREATHER

If an excessive oil leak is experienced from the front of the differential housing, or through the hubs on to the brakes on the 17 or 20 h.p. Silver Crest, we advise fitting a breather, part number N. 16151, to the rear axle filler cap. The filler cap should be removed, drilled and tapped $\frac{1}{8}$ " gas, and the breather screwed into position.

Care should also be taken not to over-fill the axles with oil, and we are afraid some chauffeurs and owners are not aware of the oil level plug on the nearside of the differential housing. This plug, of course, should be removed when topping up the axles, for it is the only indication as to the level of the oil.

(More data sheets overleaf ...)

DATA SHEET NO. 14.

28th September 1938.

WINDSCREEN WATER LEAKS

If rain leaks in behind the windscreen rubber, it is liable to pile up at the bottom and work through the wiper mechanism or the windscreen fillet.

By punching or drilling one hole on either side of the windscreen rubber at the bottom corners, any trapped water will be released and drained out. The hole should be approximately $3/32$ " in diameter and $1/4$ " from the outside edge of the rubber, and in the lowest position on either side of the windscreen.

DATA SHEET NO. 15.

28th September, 1938.

12/70 GEARBOX REMOVAL

To facilitate the removal of the clutch and gearbox unit from the 12/70, the weight of the engine should be carried by a jack at the rear end, and the clutch housing nuts removed and the unit drawn rearwards and upwards.

If the rear end of the gearbox fouls the floorboard battens, which are secured to metal channels on either side of the propeller shaft, these battens can be sawn through at a distance of 7" from the front edge. It will then be found that the gearbox can be withdrawn easily.

On reassembling, these loose battens can be refixed to the channel members by drilling and tapping an extra hole in each, and using a coach bolt of other suitable afixing bolt.

DATA SHEET NO. 16.

28th September, 1938.

12/70 FRONT AXLE BUFFER

If it is observed that the steering drag link fouls the offside buffer, which is riveted to the frame immediately above the front axle, a portion should be sawn off this buffer and bracket to give a dimension of 40 mm. from the chassis frame to the outside edge of the bracket and buffer.

DATA SHEET NO. 17.

28th September, 1938.

12/70 DISTRIBUTOR

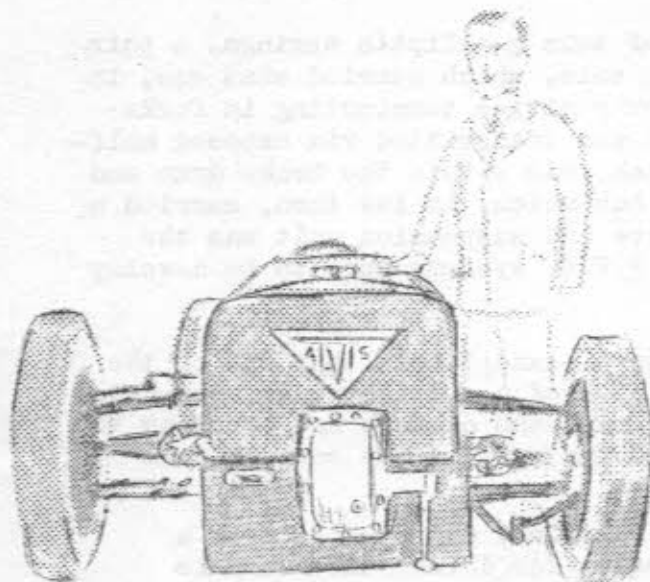
If excessive pinking is observed at low engine revs. it is as well to check up on the distributor type. The later distributor is No. B.U. 26 - 405554, and the timing with this distributor is 8 degrees before top dead centre. The previous distributor was No. B.U. 26 - 405547, the timing of which was 12 degrees before T.D.C.

If you have any occasion to replace any distributors will you please alter the engine instruction plate accordingly.

ALVISTORY

The next few months' Alvistory is taken gratefully from the March and April of 1958 issues of "Motor Sport", and the copies came to us by courtesy of David Manson, Secretary of the Alvis Car Club, Australia.

The article is written by G.N.S. DAVIES, the noted English FWD expert of the Alvis Register.



THE FRONT - WHEEL DRIVE ALVIS

Its Development and Racing Career.

PART ONE : THE RACING CARS.

← LOW HUNG - The outline of Captain G.T. Smith-Clarke, the designer, stands beside the 1927 straight-eight, front-wheel-drive Alvis racing car, thereby displaying effectively its low build.

WHEN, in the early spring of 1925, the Alvis Car and Engineering Company produced the first British racing car to have front-wheel drive, they were living up to their reputation of not being afraid to try new ideas. They had long realised the prestige value of success in open competition, and this, their latest and most adventurous project was, in prototype form, designed purely and simply for sprints and hill-climbs.

Drive via the front wheels, although it had been a talking point amongst engineers for a good many years, was very, very new in practical application, and Captain G. T. Smith-Clarke, Alvis chief designer, had little option but to start from first principles. Before the First World War, he had, while working with the Great Western Railway Company, designed an 'iron horse', which, on account of the work it was called upon to do, had to be driven through the front wheels; from this early work, the F.W.D. Alvis was eventually to develop.

The prototype racing car was interesting indeed, and attracted a good deal of attention in motoring circles at the time of its appearance. In order to reduce weight, light alloys were used wherever possible, and even the channel-section frame was of duralumin, with the side members braced with duralumin tubes in steel sockets; the complete car weighed only 9½ cwt. The engine, supported by stout tubular bearers, was the well-tried and highly successful 68mm. by 103mm., 1,496 c.c., push-rod o.h.v.

12/50 unit. Apart from attention to compression ratio, valve timing and the usual polishing of internals, etc., it was a completely standard unit, placed "backwards" in the chassis. Since the cooling-water entrance and exit were thus at the end of the block farthest from the radiator, some rather "Heath - Robinson" plumbing had to be hastily devised. The car was to be supercharged by means of a Roots-type blower coupled to the nose of the crankshaft. In a single unit with the engine was a bell-housing, containing a conventional single-plate clutch, four-speed gearbox, the bevel final drive and differential. Bolted to the differential casing were the inboard front brake drums.

The front suspension was by means of twin $\frac{1}{4}$ -elliptic springs, a pair on each side of and parallel to the chassis, which carried what was, in effect, a twin de Dion tube with its extremities terminating in forks for the steering swivels. The drive was transmitted via exposed half-shafts, having two universal joints each; one within the brake drum and the outer one being integral with the hub which, in its turn, carried a four-bolt disc wheel. This front-drive and suspension unit was the model from which all subsequent Alvis F.W.D. systems were to be developed.

The rear axle, having very little to do except hold that end of the car up, was of the simplest. It consisted of a straight tube, supported by single $\frac{1}{4}$ -elliptic springs, parallel with the chassis and carrying the rear wheel bearings. The rear brake drums were in the conventional position on the hubs.

The car's bodywork was brief in the extreme, and consisted of a lengthy bonnet, and primitive bucket seats for driver and mechanic jammed as close as possible to the rear-axle tube. A two-gallon scuttle tank fed fuel by gravity to the 40 mm. Solex carburettor.

The new car made its first appearance publicly at Kop Hill Climb on March 28th, 1925. Driven by the late Major C.M. Harvey, the car took second place in its class, with a time of 52.6 sec. Major Harvey was number-one driver for Alvis from the very earliest days until they ceased racing in 1930. Driving a racing 12/50 he had won the 1923 J.C.C. 200-Mile Race at Brooklands, at 93.29 m.p.h.

Having made a successful debut with their F.W.D., Alvis now embarked upon a full programme of competition and at the Brooklands Easter meeting on April 13th, 1925, Major Harvey appeared in the works car, which had been painted bright yellow (and named 'Tadpole'), but achieved no notable success.

Hill-climbing again, Harvey took two cars to Shelsley Walsh on May 2nd, and in spite of very wet weather gave a good account of himself and the two F.W.D.s. One of the cars had been bored out to 75 mm. and entered in the 2-litre class. For some reason, however, this bored out version was slightly slower than the standard car, but still managed third in its class, having climbed in 54.4 secs. In the smaller car Harvey had taken f.t.d. in the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -litre class, with a climb of 54.2 sec, both cars being unblown for the occasion.

(Continued next issue . . .)



VICTORIA

Club Rooms, "Alvista," 21 Edgar Street, Glen Iris, S.E.6, Victoria, Australia
Meetings at 8 p.m. on the Third Friday of every month.

ALL ALVIS OWNERS AND ENTHUSIASTS WELCOME!

Those wishing to become Members please forward

Entrance Fee: 10/-

Annual Subscription: £2.2.0.

Country, Interstate and Overseas Annual Subscription: £1.1.0.

Please make cheques, etc. payable to **ALVIS CAR CLUB, VICTORIA.**



The Club prides itself on its **SPARE PARTS SERVICE** which besides having increasing stocks on hand also imports genuine new and secondhand Alvis parts for Members at cost price.

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- Simm's Vernier Couplings — complete.
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