



# NEWSLETTER

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## PREZ SEZ!!

With pride I thank all members for the sudden influx of information and contributions to the newsletter. I now have sufficient detail for the next newsletter as well as this issue. Letters from Eric Cunningham and Horrie Morgan will be included in the August newsletter, also the balance of correspondence from Rob and Lynne Robson from Queensland, and David Caldwell.

|                 |                   |             |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| COMING EVENTS : | ANNUAL FILM NIGHT | JULY 26th   |
|                 | AUCTION NIGHT     | AUGUST 16th |

Please remember that the auction night is designed to help keep the annual budget down and thus the annual subs.

Thank you from Gwen Twomey for the card from ACCV from the Interstate Rally.

See you at the film night.

RICHARD

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IMPORT DUTY 2% OR TOO MUCH!! from Col Winslade, Lake Boga

Duty on imported vintage parts may shortly take a hike to nearly 40%. It's been well advertised with petition forms being in magazines and club papers. I personally had a yarn about it to our Federal MP, Peter Fisher (National Party, of course) and he is against an increase in duty and will do his best to help the vintage buffs to stop 'Matthew the Tax-Gatherer' from collecting any more from us. Keep thy fingers crossed!

COL WINSLADE

DON'T PINCH PETTICOATS : by Col Winslade

Always looking for pieces of rag on which to wipe thy greasy hands? After reading newspapers, cut each sheet into four pieces and stack neatly on thy bench. Wipe your greasy hands on the sheets of paper.

At least this will ensure that mother does have something to wear.

COL WINSLADE

THE 50th ANNIVERSARY VSCC RALLY : from Rob and Lynne Robson, Glenella, Qld

We arrived in the UK in mid-June, a couple of weeks prior to the start of the rally in case John wanted any help to finish off the Star, as he had it off the road for a year to effect some repairs. But John being very competent and organised had the car ready for us.

The Sunday prior to the start of the rally we took the Star on an interesting journey back to where it was built in Wolverhampton. The STD Register organise this as an annual event and after a picnic lunch at the meeting point, we drove in convoy to the Sunbeam factory where we were warmly received by the present owners, The Andrews Group, given cups of tea, posters and a small booklet on the history of the factory. Many of the former Sunbeam employees attend so it is a great day for them as they recall and see some of the cars they helped to build. To complete a very nostalgic day we took the Star back to where it was built, from where the sign Star Motor Company has long since disappeared.

To get the Rally off to a good start, the idea was to start from the local group's pub and drive to Malvern. Rob and I drove down from Manchester early and joined the Wolverhampton group in their tour of Pirelli Tyres and the Marston's Brewery. This was to be a turning point in the rally for us as we made a group of friends whose company we enjoyed throughout the rally. John was to follow later in the day in his 30/98 with his TWO Irish navigators (no Irish jokes please) as they did win a second class award.

John had chosen a hotel in the nearby village of Upton-On-Severn and with its relaxed atmosphere and being nicely situated on a pretty bend of the river, we were well pleased, as it provided easy access to Malvern. Tuesday afternoon provided a gay and interesting scene at the Winter Gardens Theatre as entrants gathered from all parts of the UK (and Australia) to pick up their rally packs and renew old friendships. The cars, with luggage strapped on and roaring up the hill towards the Abbey Hotel thrilled us with their exhaust noises in the narrow streets. Tuesday night there was a reception at the Abbey Hotel but of greatest interest was the spacious carpark where we wandered at will, totally enjoying the vast variety of cars.

On Wednesday we all gathered at the venue for all the car events, The Three Counties Showground, John and the Irishmen lining the 30/98 up for the Concours and the Robsons opting for the quite difficult driving tests. They are too complex to describe but perhaps you will enjoy their names : Wiggle-Woggle, Shuffle-Shuffle, What a Dice?, Stop on the Ladder, Victor Sylvester, Balls, Roll-a-Ball. That night we gathered at the Winter Gardens as guests of the Malvern Hills District Council for a Civic Reception. Because the English weather was so kind to us these evenings were a huge success because people could wander from the food and drinks out to the cars and back as need arose.

Thursday was a free day for us as we had decided not to make the fairly long journey to Silverstone for the race meeting but to be observers of the Light Car and Edwardian Rally. John decreed it a rest day for the 30/98 and joined us in the commodious front seat of the Star for a gentle trip through the hills to the lunch stop of the two hundred odd competitors. By this stage I had decided the English sun was so consistently hot that I went and purchased a hat. A barbeque at the Three Counties Showground was the evening entertainment and again we had that marvellous backdrop of hundreds of interesting cars. Also another new experience was in store for us as we were to meet the Morris Men that night. Dating back hundreds of years and dressed in their traditional costumes with blackened faces we were fascinated by their dancing, singing and antics.

THE 50th ANNIVERSARY VSCC RALLY (continued)

Friday was the Navigation event, so we gathered our maps, calculators, etc. for the quite difficult rally through the most scenic countryside around Malvern, even though we didn't have much time to admire it. The main event for the evening was the River Boat Shuffle, but Rob and I joined John at a 30/98 gathering at Julian Ghosh's at which Australia was well represented, as were the Vauxhalls - there was even a Rolls Royce with a Vauxhall T-shirt on its radiator.

The Scenic run was scheduled for Saturday with over 300 cars entered. We had the option of three routes, one via a strawberry farm (I was tempted but I think I was out-voted by my four male companions - the smell of ripe fruit in the fields the day before when we were rally-ing and could not stop was too much!), one via Birtsnorton Court where Nigel Dawes has his collection of Vintage and Historic cars, and a quick route. (I think you know which was our route.) Prescott Hill Climb, owned and developed by the Bugatti Owners Club, was our destination, so with good cars, good weather and a nice picnic lunch, we enjoyed the picturesque setting as the cars sped up the hill in front of us (you got one go at the hill included with your entry, extra runs for 50p).

Saturday night had arrived and with it the final evening function, The Golden Jubilee Ball at the Winter Gardens. It was an excellent evening, with a delicious cold meal being served on the balcony and the entertainment provided by the speakers and the committee being first class. I think these couple of verses from the song especially composed for the evening sum up the tone of the audience and participants alike :

A front-drive Alvis in '28 -  
So avant-garde we lack words!  
To make your ducks-back avant-garde  
You'll have to drive it backwards.

Vauxhall owners boast a lot,  
We'll really have to drop 'em,  
They just go on and on and on,  
Like their cars you cannot stop 'em.

Bugattis are long lasting cars  
(They're still concocting plenty)  
They'll still be around when oil runs out  
They've leaked since nineteen-twenty.

Bentley drivers stand in bars  
And whether or not they're bidden  
They talk of Le Mans, and, like their cars,  
They're mainly cliché-ridden.

The final day of the celebrations was at Shelsley Walsh and it was fitting that we were also celebrating 50 years since the first ERA appeared at the Hill Climb, so a special effort was mounted to get as many ERA's as possible there on the Sunday. The spectators were well rewarded in the third event when four ERA's competed and we enjoyed watching the Alvis 200 Miles Race car perform against the big Clutton Itala, and so you could go on and on - another grand day, but it all had to come to an end, and we started on the journey back to Manchester, to return the Star to its garage.

One of the nicest parts of the rally was that we finally got to meet Des Donnan after just missing him twice when we were away in our 12/50 in North Queensland.

LYNNE ROBSON

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (continued)

To the Editor,

Congratulations on a most admirable newsletter for June. I especially enjoyed Roy Henderson's report on the Lake Boga Interstate Rally.

There is one tiny criticism that I would like to utter, however. It must be said that my heart sank a little when the TB 14 was referred to as the "white whale".

Surely, for such a desirable, distinctive and celebrated car, the use of CAPITAL LETTERS is obligatory?

R.G.

ALVIS : PART I per David Caldwell

G. P. H. de Freville, a French minister's son, had been making aluminium pistons for D.F.P. (Dorio, Flandrinet Parent, an automobile firm that flourished successfully in France from 1906-1926) for several years when he met T. G. John, an Englishman with an interest in designing motor cars. John was a marine architect by trade, but he had worked for a while for Siddeley-Deasy, one of the numerous early British car companies. His heart was with the sporty British cars that were just reaching the market after World War I. He thought he had a better idea of how to build one, but he needed a partner. He felt a man with experience in engine design would make a good second half to a firm.

John's ideas sounded worth gambling on to de Freville, who had been watching business fall off at D.F.P. when they lost their export market. He didn't even mind if his name wasn't on the company's letterheads, so the first venture into partnership was named T.G. John, Ltd., licensed in 1919.

The name to be put on the car was another matter. John had no desire to put his name on the radiator, nor did he want 'de Freville' on an English car. The aluminium pistons his partner had made carried the name 'Alvis', a trade name dreamed up by de Freville, and that sounded unethic enough to put on any British motor car. The cars carried the name Alvis from the beginning. In 1921, the company was renamed Alvis Car and Engineering Company. In 1937 it was shortened to Alvis, Ltd., and continued under that name until 1967. Headquarters for the firm was Coventry.

Their first car, a 10/30 hp light car, produced until 1922, was nothing exceptional yet it was priced in the higher bracket and it sold because it quickly attained a 'never wears out' reputation. It came in a two-seater, four-seater or super sports model, had a four-cylinder 1460cc engine and a 110" wheel-base. The designer, a Capt. G. T. Smith-Clark, used an L-head engine coupled with a four-speed gearbox. With 30 bhp, the top speed was an impressive 60 mph. On the chassis was a fine aluminium body designed by either Morgan or Charlesworth. (The Charlesworth was the famous 'duck's back' body.) The sporty little car took the fancy of the young Britishers, and by the end of the first year, 1919, they had orders for enough cars to guarantee staying in business.

Little change was made in the 1920 model. It had a 112-inch wheel-base, would go 60mph and had full pressure lubrication. The company saw no reason to make any changes in the gutsy engine.

In 1921, the company had a temporary setback when a metal worker's strike forced them to cut back on their cars and they turned part of the factory into a headquarters for the manufacture of J.F. Buckingham's cycle-car. This was a short marriage that ended a year later when Buckingham went out of business, but by that time John was in a position to resume work on the Alvis.

The 1922 Alvis was touted as an 'all new' concept in sports cars. The engine was increased to 1598cc, the bore enlarged to 68mm and the horsepower upped to 11/40. The success of the car saw Smith-Clark designated as chief engineer in 1923. He immediately designed a 1496cc Alvis for competition use. It featured

ALVIS : PART I (continued)

a pushrod overhead valve engine that produced 12/50 hp and won the Brooklands 200-mile race that year with an average speed of over 93 mph. Part of the design was an adaptation of the De Dion swing axles driving the front wheels. In 1923, the same car took the first three prizes in the Essex 6-hour race.

The Alvis was raced both by private owners and factory teams from 1923 on. The 'snorty' little car showed up regularly at Brooklands and other English tracks over the next five years, yet it was never entered at Le Mans, nor did it take part in the British Tourist Trophy runs in those years.

The most famous factory driving team was headed by Major C. M. Harvey, with S. C. H. Davis and H. Urquhart-Dykes piloting the responsive cars to victory. But in 1923 the factory pointed out in its ads that the car was not a race car; it was an all-round road car. Alvis cars were never world beaters in competition and there was a sound economic reason for this. At first the company concentrated too much on their appeal to an over-specialised market - the British driver who wanted a race car for his driving - but by 1924, it was apparent they had to appeal to a larger market of people who wanted not a race car, but personal transportation with performance built in. By 1924 they had not attracted enough of this class of buyer, who needed primarily a family car, and secondarily a performing car.

John was a better PR man than he was a business man, and suddenly the company had too little capital to fill the orders on hand. Much to his chagrin, a receiver had to be appointed for the company in 1924. While other companies had gone under in these circumstances, the reputation of the Alvis, a car solidly built from fine materials, using a conventional proven design, led to easy raising of the needed monies, and the company was again on sound financial footing. It would falter from time to time in the next seven years, until in 1931 they would be forced to forget the racing approach altogether.

The switch from racing car to classic sports car was made smoothly by a decision to keep the engine at 1496cc which would allow Alvis to compete in the 'Under 1½ liter' class. The 12/50 would remain in production until 1932, changing little over the years. The 1924 model with its aluminium body and outside exhaust system was known for its strong power output complemented by light weight. The pick up to its 75 mph cruising speed was reached quickly and smoothly; it was a car for car lovers.

By this time, an alternate body style - the beetleback - was offered to buyers who disliked the duck's back. In 1924, all models, including the tourings and saloons, switched over to the 1496cc engine. Although some performance was sacrificed in the larger cars, it remained in demand because of its complete reliability.

In 1925, the sports model kept the small engine, but the tourings were equipped with a 1645cc engine. The body design was average for the day, resembling very closely the American Overland Whippet of that era. The flat radiator was marked with the original pointdown red triangle. Center-opening doors and a horizontally-split windshield on the tourings gave the car a matronly appearance.

The technical details of the 1925 model explains why the car was popular. The four in-line cylinders had a bore of 68mm on the sports model, and 69mm on the touring. The stroke was 103mm on the sports and 110mm on the touring. They both used a Solex carburettor with magneto ignition. Four forward speeds worked on a cone clutch with a bevel gear for final drive. Mechanical brakes were on all four wheels and suspension featured half-elliptics all the way around. The wheelbase was 112½ inches. With a weight of slightly over a thousand pounds, the cars reached 104.4 at Brooklands.

ALVIS : PART I (continued)

So many cars were sold in 1925-6 that the company was able to reduce its price in 1926, even adding front wheel brakes. Previously the car had been equipped with an auxiliary frame that supported the gearbox and engine. By re-designing the frame, there was now only a single unit, with the engine mounted on rubber. While the car was never really mass-produced, there were almost 1,000 cars a year made and sold by 1928.

These were the years of experimentation for Alvis. While the regular line was turned out with faithful regularity, a lot of trial and error was going on in the backrooms. In 1926, a straight-eight engine was placed in a front-wheel drive race chassis, but the cost was prohibitive. It was called the Grand Prix model and had many innovations - dual magnetos, light alloy pistons and connecting rods, horizontal valves actuated by a high camshaft on each side of the block. Maximum speed was over 110 mph. A low streamlined aluminium body with belly pans over a pressed steel frame made the car weigh only half again that of the 1925 four cylinder cars. It was entered in the Brooklands 200-mile race in 1926, piloted as usual by the dashing Major Harvey, and it might have won solely on its quick handling and cornering. Unfortunately, it was involved in a crash when a slower car got in its way, so its ability was unproven.

Impressed by its showing, the company entered a pair of similar Alvis models in the 1927 Brooklands race. The new dual overhead camshafts increased the output to 125 bhp. Again the cars were unproven because, although they out-paced the Bugatti team at first, they both developed mechanical trouble and had to drop out partway through the race.

At least the new design influenced the 1928 Alvis. A sports/racing version of the car with front wheel drive was produced. The big difference was the use of a four cylinder engine combined with the single overhead camshaft. A combined gearbox and final drive, coupled with inboard brakes, was bolted directly to the front of the power unit. The drive was taken by ballended trunnions through short shafts to the front wheels.

Completely independent suspension was used, the front having four transverse elliptics to each stub axle and the rear by trailing arm and one  $\frac{1}{4}$  elliptic. The wheelbase was 102 inches on the two seater sports model and 120 inches on the four seater model. The final drive was open half shafts to front wheels. The clutch had been changed to a single plate. The stroke was still 103 mm and the engine was the trusty 1496cc. Gear ratios were advertised as 4.88, 7.26, 10.10 and 15.44 to 1. The catalogue specified blown or unblown models; the supercharged model was fitted with a Roots type blower. With a low centre of gravity, the car was reported a joy to drive.

Two of these 1928 supercharged models were participants in the Le Mans 24-hour race, and this time Major Harvey managed to snare a 6th place for his car, while Davis finished 9th in the general classification, and won the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  liter class. Encouraged, Harvey and Davis drove in the Ulster Tourist Trophy rally and one of the cars came in just 13 seconds behind the winning Lea-Francis.

The 1928 models offered to the public could be had with either the usual aluminium body, or with a fabric body. Acceleration was good and the price was within reason - from \$3,000 to \$4,000 - depending on the model - for the supercharged sports saloon, usually referred to as 'the 12/75 Alvis-ta'. A fine 1928 supercharged Alvis can be seen today at Lord Montague's Museum at Beaulieu.

SUPPORT YOUR CLUB : Col Winslade

The local people were amazed at the large attendance at the Lake Boga Rally; and of Alvis cars, some people had only heard of Elvis and thought there may be a connection. As one and all apparently had a good time, it is fitting at present to remember that the Club is like the collection plate in church. You can only get out as much as has been put in.

COL WINSLADE

CARS AND PARTS FOR SALE/WANTEDWANTED BY CONNOISSEUR

Parking Lights, bulb holders rims and glasses - to suit 1951 3 litre Alvis D.H.C.

Any deal considered as I need help.

COL WINSLADE

C/- P.O. Lake Boga, 3584  
050 372244.

FOR SALE

B.S.F. taps and Dies (most sizes). This may be your last chance. Stock is limited. (If writing please enclose self addressed envelope for reply.)

COL WINSLADE

Ring evenings only please

John Needham has 15 tooth speedo gears for 12/50's available at \$65 each.

John Needham to make sets of 12/50 C.R. gears - orders wanted.

COST \$820 per set

CARS AND PARTS WANTED AND FOR SALE

|             |                                    |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| W. BARBER   | Set of Cycle guards for 17" wheels |
| R. UNKLES   | 2 of K 515 side lamps              |
| A. COUNSON  | Generator for Flange Frame 12/50   |
| D. CALDWELL | Front engine mount for TA 14.      |

FOR SALE

1 - 1924 - 12/50 SA. This will be completed approximately December, 1985 having a new 4-seat tourer body and full mechanical overhaul, presented as a restored rolling chassis, ready for seats, upholstery and hood.

PRICE \$12,000.00

Details from Ron Wilson, 22 Park Close, Vermont, 3133. Phone: 874 2450.

WANTED

Weathershield sliding roof lock locking mechanism for sliding roof panel, TA 14 or 3 litre.

This is a series of levers and cams, attached to a long piece of steel plate, with a square shank in the middle of the handle. It is fixed to the underside of the panel. There are also two cams, one each side of the panel, in front.

A similar device was apparently used in the P 3 Rover. (It is NOT the same as the mechanism used in Jaguars or MG Y types.)

JOHN MURRAY

Clairmont, Longwood Road,  
Stirling, S.A. 5152  
Phone: (08) 339 4746

WANTED (by N.S.W. Alvis owner)

Seat cushion (coiled spring frame) for the driver's seat of the 3 litre.

ALAN RUSSELL

(02) 522 8771

