

September 2001

Alvic

THE ALVIS CAR CLUB of VICTORIA (Inc)
A0017202F

Volume 40

Issue 8



CELEBRATING THE AOCs 50th ANNIVERSARY
See report and pics



From the Archives

National Rally
report & photospread

More—PETROL TALK!

The Australian contingent with the oldest surviving Alvis outside Blenheim Castle

TORQUE

Greetings. I have now had the good fortune to be able to attend two major Alvis events in the past few weeks - the U.K. Alvis Owner Club Golden Jubilee celebrations at Oxford, and the National Rally, in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. There are articles on both events, elsewhere in Alvic. For me, what came out of both events was that the Alvis movement and, more generally, what some call the old car movement, is alive and well in its the enthusiasm for preserving and enjoying classic cars, both here and in Britain. The care, love, attention (and, in most cases, money), that has been put into the cars, on both sides of the world, does real credit to their owners, and, of course, to their patient and understanding partners.

Of particular interest to me, as a Victorian, was the appearance, at the National Rally, of Tony Hannam's beautifully restored Firebird, that was completed and transported to Queensland only days before the start of the Rally. The pleasure that Tony felt in having the car back on the road was obvious, as was his feeling that his late father, Andy Hannam, who had owned the car almost from new, would have been very proud. Tony's family, who were with him in the car, seemed to be enjoying themselves, which bodes well for a long and happy second life for the car. The ex-Frank Mornane 4.3 litre tourer, now in the hands of Frank Moore and Susan Pryor, of Brisbane, was at the Rally, having been splendidly restored and looking quite magnificent.

Concern is often expressed in Alvis and other classic car circles, that the owners are ageing with the cars, that the cars will not be kept on the road when their drivers hang up their string-backed gloves and that those beautiful pieces of machinery will rot away in garages, barns or paddocks. Well, maybe. But the fact is that our Club now has more members than it had five years ago, many cars have passed into the hands of new, younger owners, and many cars have been refurbished or restored. While our children (and grandchildren), may not be lining up to take over the Old Man's Alvis, the fact is that there is an ongoing interest in the cars, and in their preservation and use, as was shown at the two recent rallies. The slump in the prices of Alvis and other fine marques in the early 1990's was, at the time, predicted to be the death-knell of the movement. It didn't happen. And it won't happen while interest in old cars is maintained by clubs such as ours. The clubs must attract, and hold, the enthusiasm of their members, and the members' partners, as I believe the ACCV is doing. It is the Club, and how well it works, that keeps Alvis alive, not just the cars.

Richard Tonkin
President

CRUD

Sorry, I know it is neither a nice word nor a well defined technical one but we are not dealing with nice, precise material. The 12/50 radiator contains a large mass of putty like material which is causing overheating. It is difficult to describe the stuff: it is a bit like set silastic though it would not have the same tensile strength and its hysteresis factor would be much lower. It is a pale beige or stone in colour and is odourless. It does have some similarities to some rather disgusting medical, perhaps forensic medical, specimens but I refrain from assailing the sensibilities of the lay reader. Advice from a knowledgeable source about suitable and safe cooling system cleaners was followed but nothing achieved. With backwashing the material floats out of the filler neck so I decided to try some "in vitro" testing to identify, hopefully, a solvent or at least a softening agent. With that identified I would be able to decide whether or not it really would be a magical medicinal compound and safe to put into the radiator. I can report that none of the following are solvents: caustic soda, hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid, petrol, mineral turps., kero., toluene, acrylic paint thinner, epoxy paint thinner, acetone, metho., isopropyl alcohol, detergent, sodium hypochlorite or eucalyptus oil! I had rather hoped that eucalyptus oil would take the prize because the smell of that wafting back from a hot radiator on a cold morning would have meant no more blocked sinuses - ever!

What is this stuff? I am reminded of the Quatermass Experiment in which some vicious bugs were let loose and were about to be nuked - until the hero of the movie proved that they thrived on radiation. I am not quite at the stage of nuking my radiator because back washing is slowly doing the trick and I have not seen very much crud for several days. My local radiator fettle (he is the bloke who built me the replacement V shaped core for the Speed 20 a few years ago) tells me that the specimen I took into him is a deposit which follows mixing different anti-corrosion compounds without adequate flushing between the old and the new. He has no idea what it is composed of and no knowledge of a suitable solvent. So, on with the back flushing, he reckons. And if that does not do the job I will take it into him for treatment by the "Richter Machine". This a home made contraption that allows blasts of compressed air to be added to the back-flushing water flow. Perhaps air and water is after all, the answer to crud! Watch this space.

Some lessons learned so far: Avoid ethylene glycol unless you really do need its anti-freeze properties. If you do use it and subsequently drain it, flush out the system thoroughly before using anything else. Do not leave a cooling system empty after it has had glycol in it. When dry, the glycol can form crystals on the innards which may be insoluble later. You probably don't need an anti-freeze but you must use a corrosion inhibitor. But beware, some contain glycol. A commonly available one is put out by Castrol in a small tin. Read the label! Anti corrosion compounds lose their ability to anti-corrode with time, so follow the advice on the label about replacement.



If anyone knows of an effective and safe crud crusher I would be delighted to hear from them.

JOHN HETHERINGTON

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Supper SEPTEMBER - The McDougalls

COMING EVENTS

21 September—General Meeting

19 October—Annual General Meeting at Links

21 October— Club outing to Mt. Tarrengower
Hillclimb. Details next newsletter.

25 November—Annual Luncheon (See Below)

9 December—Christmas Party at the Heads. Details to follow.

PLEASE NOTE:

Perpetual Trophies MUST be
returned prior to the AGM

ANNUAL LUNCHEON AND TROPHY PRESENTATION Sunday, 25th November

The Luncheon and Trophy Presentation at the Diamond Creek Hotel (between Greensborough and Hurstbridge), where we have booked a private room. Food and liquor prices are very reasonable and the venue is welcoming (even a pokies room for the girls!). There will be a pleasant mini tour around the North-East Hills Country before the luncheon. Full details in the October Newsletter

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THE ALVIS OWNERS CLUB 50th ANNIVERSARY



Blenheim Palace Jubilee from an Australian perspective.

Back in the early 1960's Carol and I, together with our Silver Eagle, took part in at least two Alvis Owners Day rallies at Crystal Palace. So we were enthusiastic when it was suggested that a group of Victorians should go to the Jubilee celebrations of the UK club this year. Plans were finalised at last years Christmas BBQ and, together with Annie and John Link and Pauline and Richard Tonkin, we agreed that we should take a house in Provence for a week, then fly to the UK where we would do our own thing for a week before meeting up again in Oxford for the Jubilee. Of course, we agreed that we wouldn't take our cars, something to do with the fact that with the present exchange rates we would be too tempted to sell them and leave them in the UK.

Having travelled to Marseilles from Paris by fast TGV rail system we had arranged to meet the Tonkins at the railway station after Richard had picked up a car at the airport. Quite a challenge since he would be thrust into a LHD environment and would not only have to find the station but also a place to park the car.

Richard's mobile phone came into its own when, after arriving at the railway station from Paris the Tonkins were nowhere to be found. I managed to locate a public phone that worked and using my Australian phoneaway phonecard, which also worked, dialled Richards mobile. I was connected to his phone via Australia only to find that his phone did not respond and I had to leave a voice mail.

So there we were stranded at a multi levelled railway station, temperature of 34° C, Carol on one level, me on another, hoping that Richard would check his message bank.

Now, I strongly suspect that it was actually Pauline who remembered to switch on the phone, managed to map read Richard to the station and found the parking spot. I can confirm that it was definitely Pauline who found Carol at the station. Richard was, of course, guarding the car and luggage and, in Marseille, who could blame him.

Suffice to say we had a great time in Bonnieux sampling the local wines and food and enjoying the many sights in the surrounding villages and countryside. After a week of cloudless skies we all flew from Marseilles to the UK where Carol and I went to the Isle of Wight for the week. The Links and the Tonkins went to stay with Julian Collins. Carol's mother lives on the Island about one kilometre from the house where I found our Silver Eagle back in 1959, so it was bit nostalgic going back to the roots of our Alvis experience. We had not only used the car on the Island as general transport but it was also our wedding car. We took it to the mainland on the day of our wedding and it has never been back.

On Friday the 6th July the Victorians and the NSW President Richard Budd and his wife Ann, all met up at Oxford. What a magnificent city, full of history and culture. Magnificent buildings and gardens...and the bookshops are the largest I have ever experienced. I know that John Link would have been over the moon. He has an extensive library and would have been very tempted to add some volumes.

Saturday the 7th July was the first day of the Jubilee and the AOC had laid on a few events. My interest was drawn to a visit to the Benneton Formula One factory. Despite a restricted entry there were two spare seats for the tour and I was able to obtain one and join Richard Budd who already had a pass. Having been involved in the development of the Ford GT40 I found the technology being used at Benetton mind bending. There is no doubt that they are a very professional operation. Their problem is a lack of 125HP in their current engine, compared to the opposition. They expect the new Renault engine to make them very competitive next year and I have to agree.

After the visit we returned to Blenheim to meet the rest of the group and made ready to drive to a pub for lunch. Martin Boothman from the UK club had offered the Australians the use of his two Alvises, a 4.3 litre Saloon and a 12/50 two seater. Carol and I again subjected our safety to the driving prowess of Richard Tonkin, but this time in the 4.3 litre RHD. The Links drove the 12/50 and followed us through country

lanes and, for a short period, on a motorway .Richard actually had the 4.3 litre up to 65mph at one time. We knew Richard was getting serious when he had donned his new string backed driving gloves before entering the driving seat.

We eventually managed to find the pub and after a very pleasant lunch and the customary warm English beer we motored back to Blenheim. We spent a pleasant afternoon looking at the small number of cars which had arrived that day before retiring to the B&B to prepare for that evenings dinner at Keble College at Oxford.

The venue for the dinner was magnificent. Some 400 people sat down in a Baronial Hall steeped in tradition and history, a small military brass band played in the gallery and we enjoyed magnificent food and company. We had taken out best finery to ensure that the Australians were well represented and it was worth the effort of carrying it all way to be worn just that once. We have a photo to prove it that was taken beside the oldest Alvis in existence which Carol and I had last seen at Crystal Palace back in 1963.

That night the skies opened up and it poured with rain which did not bode well for the next day's event. However, the big day dawned overcast but it was not raining. By the time we arrived at Blenheim the car park was beginning to fill up and eventually some 270 Alvises arrived. However, this was not as many as I had expected and not as many as would have attended in the 1960's. My personal disappointment was that the Silver Eagle which is the twin of ours did not turn up due to its owners illness.

There were many cars from the continent including a large numbers of Grabers from Switzerland. One gentleman brought his car over from the US and we were beginning to wonder whether we should have made the effort to bring ours.

Apart from the pleasure of meandering through the rows of cars which were parked in no particular order, we were able to see the new Alvis ATV, the Graber collection and the 12/50 register display whilst being entertained by the Eureka Jazz band who were transported in a 12/50 around the displays. Naturally, we assumed that the band was named in honour of our visit but it actually turned out to be a coincidence.

One of the highlights of the day was the cavalcade of cars from the Vintage, PVT and post war eras, with drivers and passengers dressed in period costume. Each driver stopped their car and together, with the passenger alighted to have their costumes judged before driving on. This would be a great event to copy at one of our events in Australia, but there would be a cost which may be difficult to justify.

Apart from viewing the cars and talking ad nauseum with the owners, the event proved a great opportunity to swap addresses and obtain information regarding suppliers and I was able to find a supplier of parts for Andre Silentbloc shock absorbers, particularly the transfers for the cover plates.

Richard Tonkin and Richard Budd both presented plaques to the president of the UK AOC to commemorate the event. During their speeches they did not mention cricket, swimming, or rugby, so some diplomacy was embraced, even if they did mention that the NSW club had already celebrated its Jubilee. They also offered to host any of the UK members who will visit New Zealand in 2003 should they wish to come over the Tasman at the end of the NZ rally.

After the conclusion of the rally we made promises to do it all again next year but, on reflection, we have decided that the exchange rate will have to move a lot in our favour before we can return. However, there is no doubt that the Jubilee was celebrated in great style by all concerned. The organisers did a wonderful job and the venue was magnificent. Our congratulations to all concerned and our thanks for looking after the Australian contingent.

The visit was topped off by an invitation by Nick Simpson and his son, Alex, to visit their restoration business in South Wales, on the Monday and to stay for lunch. Our party travelled down separately and met up at the Simpson's premises. Actually, finding their establishment was deemed by Nick to be impossible, and he was right. We ended up phoning in and Alex came to the local town to ferry us through.

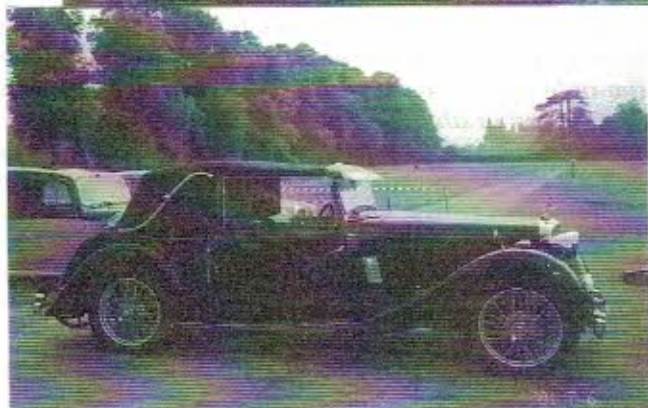
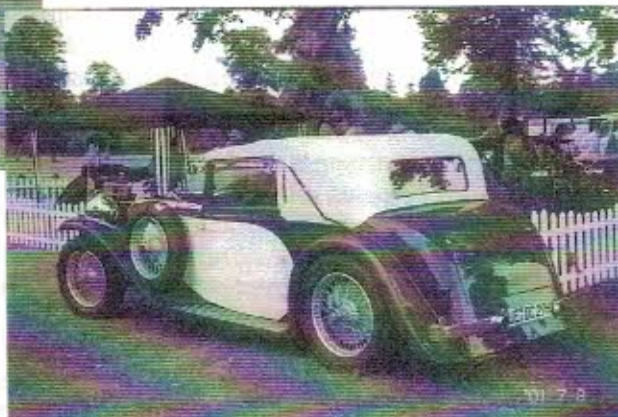
Earley Engineering, the Simpson's trade name, is doing a great job in saving many Alvises from extinction. There were some dozen vehicles either being restored or waiting their turn. The business has a machine shop, body shop, painting facility and the usual supporting facilities to bring a wreck back to a prestige condition. There are racks of salvaged parts waiting to find a home, the only bad news is that Nick won't sell any. I did see a pair of driving lights of the correct period for our Alvis, but I was unable to prise them away from him. After a very pleasant lunch with the Simpson family at their lovely home we reluctantly took our leave and made our way off to see other members of our family and to chase steam engines in North Wales. This rounded off what had proved to be a very worthwhile trip to Europe and the UK. We have our memories and photographs and a video to remind us of a great trip in years to come. I have copied the video which it is available should anyone wish to see it, please contact Richard Tonkin. Also, the Tonkins and the Links have compiled an album of all of their photographs which make an excellent record of the cars at Blenheim. Again I suggest you contact Richard.

David Head

MORE FROM THE AOC CELEBRATIONS



President Richard Tonkin presenting the ACCV commemorative plaque to Arthur Fairburn, Chairman of the AOC.



Some of the cars present at the event

CALENDAR 2002



Selling fast at \$22 (Incl postage)
For NSW members Alan Russell has supplies.
Call him on (02) 9522 8771

Kendall McSkimming has not been well. Best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The Point Lonsdale Weekend, planned for 17 & 18 November has been postponed to a date to be decided next year.

The editor would once again like to thank all newsletter contributors for their efforts. They will be rewarded.

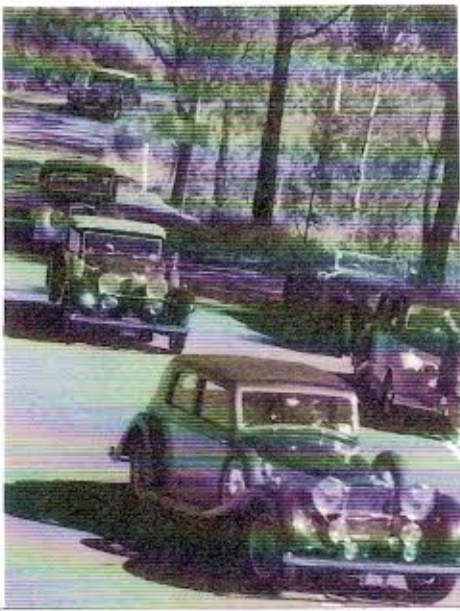
PLEASE NOTE

It has been necessary to change the date of this years Christmas Party to be held at David & Carol Head's Batesford estate.

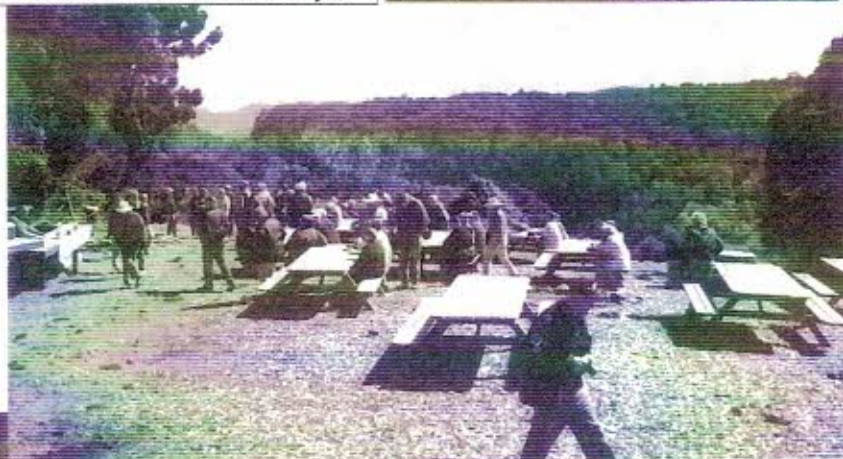
9th December

Details to follow

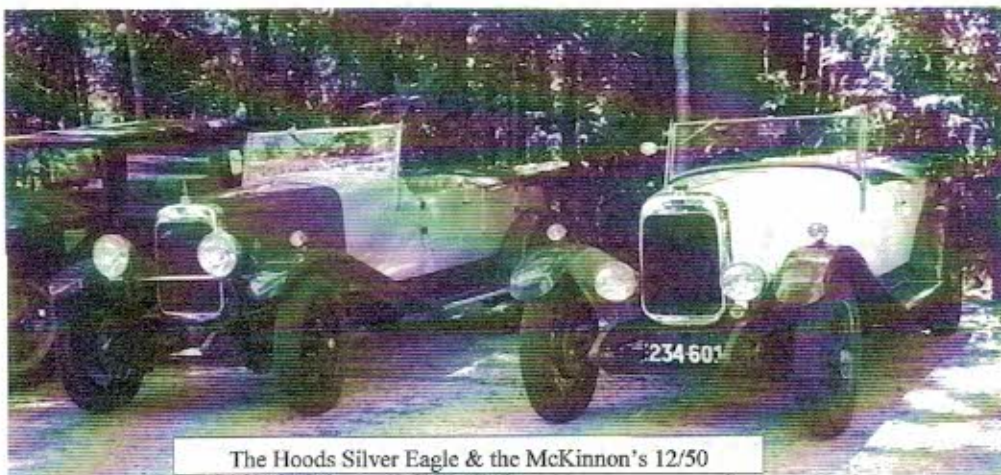
NATIONAL QUEENSLAND



Down the mountain road from O'Relly's



Cinderella,
alias Bob Northey,
with Tony Hannam,
Bob Blacket & Brian Hemmings,
the Fairy Godmother



The Hoods Silver Eagle & the McKinnon's 12/50

Geoff & Helen Hood — Silver Eagle
Maritta Parsell — Firefly, John & M
Parkinson — TA21 and Bob & Be
from Victoria to the National Rally
days of travel. Other Victorians
Northey who flew up and borrow
and Margaret Denner did likewise a

These 8 cars bought the total
approximately 90 Alvis people.

The Rally started with three night
National Park, just south of Brisba
garage the cars for a few days an
were so inclined) bush walking an
this amazing family, and be prov
and night as well as morning and
hungry). The Guest house opened
farming property and although the
enjoyed increasing popularity ever
made the journey up the moun
coming back regularly ever since).

After this introduction to Queensla
to Byron Bay for the remainder of
and the final day first visiting the
lighthouse on the mainland) and t
itself.

Bruce Jorss and his team did a m
can hardly wait for the next one
group. 5-6 days was barely enou
ones and see the sights. The goo
roads to exercise our cars made th

I would like to close by asking t
concerning past National Rally's.
of the earlier ones and as with th
shape on my web site, I would
Rallies to try and preserve them fo

Dale



The E

RALLY AND 2001

Alan & Noeline McKinnon — 12/50, Dale & Margaret Hetherington — Speed 20, Ian & Pat Kerley Graham - Speed 20 made the trek covering approximately 2500 miles in 5 attending where. Richard Tonkin & Bob and Richard's recently sold TA21 and Steve and borrowed Des Donnan's 12/50.

number of Alvis attending to 38 with

at O'Reilly's Guest House in Lamington. This location gave us the opportunity to enjoy some leisurely (or energetic if you prefer) bird watching and soak up the history of the area with magnificent meals morning noon and afternoon tea (and supper if you were still in the 1930's as an extension of the family's tradition). There were no real roads until the 1960's, has since. (One lady on our bird watching walk was on horseback in 1938 and has been

and we then moved 150 miles further south for the event. A day was spent touring the area around Byron Bay Lighthouse (The most easterly lighthouse in Australia) and doing our own thing around Byron Bay

significant job organising this event and we hope that which will be organised by the NSW Alvis Club to catch up with old friends, make new friends, a mix of socialising and magnificent touring and a memorable event for all.

I encourage readers to write to me with information before too long we will have forgotten many details of our club's history, which is beginning to take shape. I hope to add a pocket history of the National Alvis Club over all time.

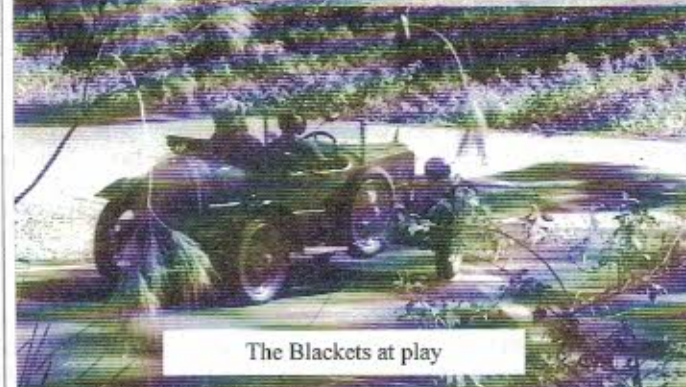


mett's Ducksback

Parsell



The lighthouse at Byron Bay



The Blackets at play



Bruce Jorss explores his 50th Birthday present - a size *large* Alvis G-string

John Hetherington managed to source the following from his local BP service station. Unfortunately they were not forthcoming in regard to what metal element is used in their LRP.

The ACCV takes no responsibility nor makes any recommendation in relation to the use or non use of LRP. All articles published are done so to help you decide what is right for your operation. ED

TUNING VEHICLES TO RUN ON LRP

1. Introduction.

Lead Replacement Petrol (LRP) is a fuel that is suitable for all pre 1986 vehicles. Older cars and motorcycles must be in a good state of repair and properly tuned to get best performance.

Motorists may detect four significant changes:

- That the LRP may be either yellow or red in colour (leaded fuel was red)
- No longer will their cars produce a 'grey' exhaust. In the past, many motorists tuned their cars by the colour of the exhaust. This 'grey' was caused by the laying down of lead oxide deposits in the exhaust. As there is no lead in LRP, exhaust pipes will look black as with unleaded.
- Spark plugs and combustion chambers may have a rusty brown colour with some brands of LRP. This is caused by the lead replacement additive and is not detrimental to the operation in any way. Other colours include beige, brown, grey and black.

The following sections outline reasons why operators may not be getting the best performance when their vehicle is using LRP and gives some guidance on what action can be taken to improve performance.

- What is different about the fuel
 - The lead replacement additive produces oxide coatings on exhaust valve seats, to prevent wear, the same as lead did. The common additives used in Australia are potassium, phosphorus and manganese based.
 - The lead additive helped to burn off lead and soot deposits from spark plugs. The lead replacement additives do not do this, so plugs must get to full operating temperature before self cleaning begins. Engines doing short trips and never fully warming up may have sooting of spark plugs, which can cause serious driveability problems.
 - LRP is less volatile at low temperatures and this may cause cold start and cold run problems. This is a result of blending high-octane components, which replace the lead.
 - LRP has a higher density that relates to a higher energy content. This means that fuel consumption will be improved.

1.1 What this means to an engine

These differences mean that an engine needs an effective choke for cold starting and initial cold running. On the other hand, a rich mixture during low speed running will soot up spark plugs so the choke should come off as early as possible and the carburettor must be set up correctly. The hot soak of the carburettor overnight can boil off volatile fuel components from the float bowl and make cold starting even more difficult, particularly in V8s.

- Common misconceptions about LRP
 - The different colour in the combustion chamber when using the manganese additive has lead some people to believe that there is something different about the combustion characteristics of LRP. In reality this fuel burns at the same temperature and at the same flame speed as leaded petrol and the other unleaded fuels.
 - The octane rating of LRP is 96, which is the same as leaded petrol was. If an engine has begun pinking on LRP or pinking is louder on LRP, it could either be a mechanical/tuning issue or it may be that the engine is sensitive to compositional changes in the new fuel.
 - LRP is similar to Premium Unleaded Petrol (but with an anti valve seat recession additive).
 - Some operators have blamed LRP for valve guide wear. This is not correct because lead oxide did not lubricate valve guides and nor do lead replacement additives.

1.3 Driveability and Performance

For the majority of cars and motorcycles, driveability and performance on LRP will be the same as on Leaded Petrol (Super). There are minor variations in density, composition and vapour pressure to meet the new regulations, but generally these variations will not affect performance. Since the introduction of LRP, experience has shown that:

- The majority of pre 1986 cars run fine.
- Some pre-1986 cars can change to regular or premium unleaded without additive.
- Some vehicles needed maintenance but still found that cold start was not as good.
- A minority group that needed some modification.

The main problems in this last group, can be broken down to spark plug sooting and cold start problems.

2. Spark plug sooting

Setting the correct air fuel ratio is critical when running on LRP, as it is for any unleaded fuels. This is because without the lead additive, the spark plugs can suffer fouling more quickly, especially if the engine is running rich. Engines can run rich for many reasons, among them are:

- Automatic and manual chokes are open too long
- Driving cycles are short so engines do not reach operating temperature
- Engines have been incorrectly tuned
- High performance carburettors are set too rich

Running rich fuel mixtures can lead to excessive deposits on spark plugs, which causes rough running, surging and hesitation due to miss-firing. This will result in poor fuel economy, excessive exhaust emissions and

wasted money. Some engines modified with Holley carburetors do not need choke for cold starting or running. This means they are jetted very rich and will probably cause spark plug sooting on LRP.

2.1 Spark plugs - what to look for

Inspect for fouling; in particular soot on the insulator around the centre electrode. Spark plugs can misfire after they become coated with carbon deposits. This can occur for four main reasons:

- A weak spark
- A rich mixture (coating of the plugs with too much unburnt fuel)
- Cool spark plugs (insufficient heat to burn carbon deposits off again)
- Deposits from another source, eg engine oil

Note: the centre electrode is the critical area because the spark may track back to earth across the soot. Deposits on the centre electrode are rarely an issue except in extreme cases. All plugs will have a thin black coating following a cold start and the soot will be burnt off as the plug reaches normal operating temperature. Fouled plugs have a thicker black deposit that also covers the insulator and often has a wet appearance.

2.1.1 Spark plugs must reach the self cleaning temperature.

The lead in leaded fuel helped to catalyse carbon burn off during engine warm up. Now that lead has been removed from the fuel, carbon burn off requires a higher temperature (around 500Deg C). It is therefore more important than before to minimise the amount of carbon forming on the plugs when the engine is cold. This is achieved by use of the correct air fuel ratio and will often require leaning the mixture slightly. It is also more important than before that spark plugs get up to temperature as quickly as possible by driving immediately rather than prolonged idling.

Plugs with carbon coating their insulators, can sometimes be cleaned. If the carbon has penetrated the pores of the insulator, grit blasting may not be effective and the plugs will need to be replaced.

2.1.2 Spark plug heat range is critical for short trip driving

Check that plugs are of the recommended type and not a colder heat range. In some extreme cases different spark plugs have been beneficial in conjunction with other adjustments and maybe a change in driving patterns. Classic motorcycles often suffer plug sooting at highway speeds. Their choice of cold plugs is an overkill that was OK for leaded fuel but not for unleaded fuel.

If the vehicle is used mainly for short trips and is not also used for long distance, high speed running, consult the spark plug agency about fitting hotter plugs. Usually only 2 or 3 ranges hotter are available. Note that generally in these problem engines, the hotter the better, but change the hot plugs for the standard recommended heat range for high speed, high load driving.

Note that for Bosch and Champion plugs, hotter plugs have higher heat range numbers, whereas for NGK plugs, hotter plugs have lower numbers. Take care to use design of plug recommended for the vehicle, i.e. long or short nose, tapered seat etc.

3. Cold starting and cold running

Fouled spark plugs will obviously affect cold starting, but the low volatility will also exacerbate the problem in some engines. There are a number of factors that can contribute to cold start and cold running quality. These include:

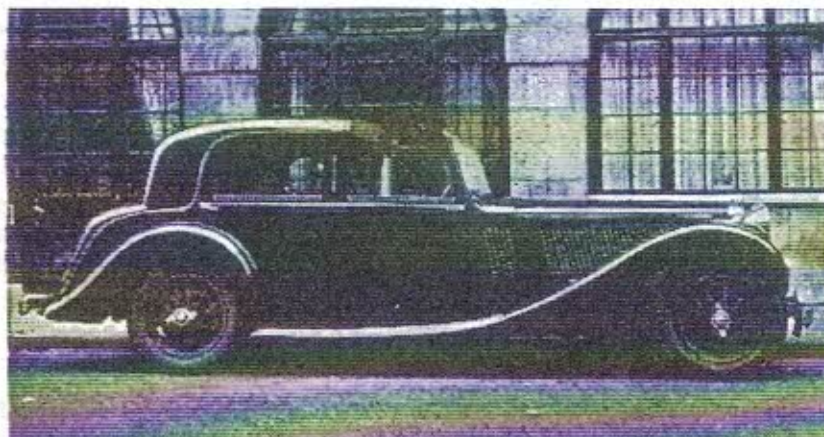
- An effective choke is essential
- The hot air intake is essential
- The engine and carburettor must be in good condition
- Winter temperatures require winter grade fuel
- Vapour loss from carburettor overnight is a problem
- Rich jetting will help cold running, but will exacerbate spark plug sooting

3.1 A warm air intake is essential

Ensure air intake is on winter setting during winter and other cold weather. Check that the original inlet temperature regulating system is in place and working properly, especially that the intake ducting leading from the vicinity of the exhaust manifold to the air in take is intact.

4. Summary

The vast majority of complaints of operational problems when changing to LRP have been fixed by careful attention to engine maintenance. It is essential to have a good spark, so ignition points, plug leads and distributor cap must be in good condition. Check the air fuel mixture using a properly calibrated exhaust gas analyser and adjust if the engine is burning too rich. Do not rely on spark plug or exhaust pipe appearance. Plugs are often black on unleaded petrol depending on driving conditions. The choke must work and automatic chokes adjusted to suit the new fuel. Sometimes the fast idle setting needs to be faster to get the engine through the difficult stage when cold. To minimise plug fouling when starting the engine, minimise engine idling time when the engine is cold. If possible, drive away after a cold start and push the choke in as soon as possible.



THE STORY OF ONE MAN'S 12/40

This is the story of a 12/40 Alvis, a car built in 1923 and still in use thirty years later, it had a 1 1/2 litre four cylinder side valve engine and the car I owned carried a wood and steel four place touring body.

The car was a simple unpretentious design of very sturdy construction, easy to maintain and economical on fuel.

The 12/40 Alvis is not recommended for inter-capital record breaking or sprint events but as vintage or post-vintage transport their equal I have yet to experience.

1953 saw me working with Babcock & Wilcox erecting the boiler plant for the Wangi-Wangi power station.

I was living in barrack type accommodation and at times would be away from home for long periods. After 12 months of this kind of living a flat was obtained and I shifted my wife and three children to Wangi on the shores of beautiful Lake Macquarie.

I owned a Model 52 Chrysler with which I planned to transport my family and goods and chattels to our new home. This Chrysler was fitted with Walter P's Braking system of four wheel brakes with external contracting bands hydraulically operated. These brakes had a most Heath Robinson like system of operation.

The brakes on my car had a very trying habit of not releasing after a full blooded application. When this occurred, one would alight from the car, arm yourself with a pinch bar and pliers and disappear beneath the car and unlock the offending wheel.

I grew a little ill-tempered with this shortcoming and one day after unlocking the brakes several times on returning home I cut the rear hydraulic fluid lines reasoning that many cars were equipped with two wheel brakes. The first heavy application of this modified braking system to say the least had a nerve shattering result. The front end of the car curtsied violently and the rear end replaced the front end. I will say this for Walter P Chrysler-he believed in plenty of brake area.

One could live with this little idiosyncrasy but then the clutch started to slip and as it was engaged it emitted a blood-curdling shriek. We were about to undertake this trip to Wangi over some hilly territory so it was thought that a change of vehicle might be wise.

The Saturday edition of the Sydney Morning Herald, was obtained and the classified examined.

This is a little aside I think worth mentioning. In those days the S.M.H. did not put all the advertisements starting with "A" in their correct order, for example you might have-Austin; Albion; Ansaldo; Alvis; Alfa Romeo etc. It was much more exciting going through them. Not like The Age where everything is in its correct order - you would never find an Austin before and Alvis, now when the A's are finished you turn straight away to the "Vintage" section unless you want a Daimler or Bentley.

Back to the story.

Right down at the bottom of the A's there was a man who had a 12/40 Alvis for sale or would consider and exchange, at an address in North Sydney.

I collected a friend, Bob Johnson, and we coaxed the Chrysler to see the Alvis. The young man who owned the Alvis was just as anxious to dispose of the Alvis and I was to part with the Chrysler. The Alvis had the loudest knock emanating from the engine that I have ever heard. The oil pressure was good so a gamble was taken after both cars had been road tested. The ex-two rear wheel braked Alvis owner having almost catapulted himself out of the two front wheel braked Chrysler. "Johno" and I set out for home. Crossing the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the most awful vibration set in and persisted all the way home to St. Marys.

After rising early on Sunday morning the entire Sabbath was spent fitting a new set of fabric universals that had been left over from a previous 12/40, then all the fluids were drained and replenished, the chassis greased and incredible amount of belongings were loaded. An early start was planned for Monday morning, but no amount of whirling of the fixed crank handle would start the engine, The services of the man next door were enlisted and a start of a new life began.

The first thirty five miles were covered in one hour, which in those days was good unless you owned a post war car. The next thirty five were a different story. The road from Hornsby onwards is very hilly and winding. One notable descent is the run down to the Hawkesbury River bridge. To negotiate this hill with a heavily laden two wheel braked car with ones own kith and kin to say nothing on ones own precious hide is an experience one should prolong for ever.

The next trial was the ascent of a hill known as Moony-Moony. It is very long and steep. By now it was mid-morning and becoming very hot as the ascent of Moony proceeded, the water temperature rose from a gentle simmer to a violent boil, a stream of dirty brown coloured steam and water gushed from the radiator filler cap, most of this settled on the windscreen and defied the efforts of the hand operated wiper to clear it, the only way that forward vision could be maintained was to peer around the corner of the windscreen.

Having one's head in this exposed position meant that the face was covered with large brown spots taking on the appearance of an escapee from the infectious diseases hospital.

The car was in low gear with the oil pressure gauge showing a steady decline. All the accumulated grease and oil adhering to the engine block and crankcase was on fire causing the passenger space to be filled with smoke. The whine of the gearbox was very much like a reaper and binder and the throttle pedal was fully depressed. Under these conditions the last thought on my mind was to overtake.

Our speed must have been about .002mph faster than a large Shell petrol tanker that was ahead of us. The driver had his arm extended indicating to me to overtake him

Moony behind us the run down to Gosford was fairly easy. About one mile before we reached Gosford just prior to us reaching a bridge there had been a multi car accident. Police, ambulance and tow trucks completely blocked the way and this bridge is in

a depression so a push start was out of the question. So with no starter motor and the knowledge that the engine would not start on the handle, we sat there until the road was clear. The engine became hotter and hotter, for a time the children were encouraged to go down to the little creek and fill small receptacles with water and transfer it to the engine. Of course the children removed any visible live stock from the water before pouring it into the radiator, a very humane act I thought.

I think I know how "Smithy" felt mid way across the Tasman Sea with Capt. Tayler transferring oil from the U/S engine to the functional one. As the engine grew hotter it became dangerous for the children to add water to it as it was immediately flashed to steam. So a halt was called.

We received the "All Clear" and proceeded gently into Gosford and stopped at the first garage that sold Castrol and was situated on a slope. We remained at this garage for an hour to allow the almost incandescent engine to cool. I spent over half an hour dribbling water into the radiator. A young attendant telling me to run the engine while adding water - I told him that did not apply as this car did not have a water pump, he told me that it had a fan so it must have a water pump. I carefully explained that this was a colonial model, all the others did not have a fan.

My wife and kids refreshed, the car's vital fluids replenished and an extra quart of Castrol added to the crankcase, the journey was resumed. Before leaving the garage we asked the garage proprietor the temperature. He told me it was 101 degrees in the water bag and he had heard on the wireless that it had been declared an acute beer danger day.

When we reached Doylestone we left the sealed Pacific Highway and turned onto a narrow corrugated unsealed bush track. It was really hot. Clouds of dust entered the car via the loose floor boards, thousands of flies settled on us, they had not trouble keeping pace with us. The Alvis had assumed a rather peculiar gait. Due to the corrugations the car was subjected to a rapid vertical movement which set in. The fabric universals were breaking up and allowing the tail shaft to run a considerable distance out of truth. This imparted a movement in the horizontal plane. I believe this motion is experienced by the crews of steam locomotives when on fast main line working. The locomotive has a forward pitching movement and the tender moves from side to side, the fireman stands with one foot on the footplate of the locomotive and the other on the tender.

The kids were becoming distressed and set up a constant barrage of "how far is it now, dad"; "I want a drink"; "I want to go to the toilet". Finally after what seemed like hours the township of Morriset was reached, and the wondrous sight of an hotel situated on a hill. Clutching a ten shilling note in my clammy palm and the wife and kids disappearing in search of toilets and milk bar, I headed for a door marked "Public Bar" - my needs were much more simple. I croaked out "a schooner of old please". The barman obliged and without any ceremony I lowered a fair proportion of the contents into my nether regions.

There was an audible hissing sound. The barman said "What was that noise?" I knew but could not reply as my mouth was full of steam. A doctor friend of mine told me that his condition is brought about by wet cold beer passing over a hot parched epiglottis, I cannot recall the medical name but he assured me it is not fatal but to be avoided if possible. He said it was common in the Simpson Desert, the Nullarbor Plain and in countries bordering the Sahara. I managed to demolish three of these schooners before belching my way back to the car. As I approached I could see the family gathered about the rear nearside wheel with all eyes cast earthwards - a flat tyre.

After almost unpacking the car the tool box was reached, the car jacked up, wheel changed, car repacked, all refreshed and aboard, reverse gear engaged and a prayer to St. Christopher about the torn universal joint, the car was allowed to roll backwards and it fired. I think St. Christopher must have engaged extra staff that day as he would have had his hands full just looking after my requests alone.

After a mile or so a small voice was heard to say "Dad the car is making a funny sound". One learns never to ignore these small voices, so the car was brought to a halt and examined. The findings did nothing to bring joy to the driver. A large percentage of the spokes had pulled through the rim of the rear side rear wheel, the spare that we had just placed on the car. It was now mid-afternoon and we were in the mulga so the decision to gently press on was not hard to reach.

The next town was Coorambong and was blessed with a garage. The Alvis wheels were of enormous diameter and of the demountable rim type, possibly a very good wheel in their youth but this one was certainly past its prime. The demountable rim and the rim proper were corroded together into an almost homogeneous mass. The garage man was thinking that he should have taken up lion taming or been a stunt man before we separated them. When he had finished he held out his bleeding, nail torn hand for seven and sixpence. I gave him a ten shilling note saying "have a drink with the change". This was rather mean of me a Coorambong is a Seventh Day Adventist town and odes not have a pub.

When we reached our destination, I left the Alvis in the yard for a day or so, then had a look at it, dressing up magneto points and brushes, changing plugs etc, and it would then start on the handle, but the knock was still with us.

One day I dropped the sump off, nothing appeared to be unduly worn or broken. Next the cylinder block was lifted clear and revealed hundreds of piston rings, "Cords" I think their trade name was. With the connecting rods removed the knock still persisted. With only the magneto shaft left in the engine, it still knocked. The magneto shaft had about on sixteenth of an inch play and a sump stud had been screwed in too far and the magneto gear was striking this stud thus causing the din.

I think I bought a Rover 75 and the Alvis did not go back together, however when I was sent to Victoria I brought as much as possible with me and I still have a few of those pieces.

A few years ago after being invalided out of the boiler erecting business, I had, with the aid of Guenter Ibrom enough parts to assemble either a 1/40 or a 12/50. When I recalled that epic trip to Wangi the choice was not hard. I recently sold all the surplus 12/50 bits and have obtained a TA14 from Norm Adams. I am presently working on restoring this car although I may be tempted to mount a low open touring body as the TA 14 chassis is extremely "vintage" in appearance.

UNLEADED FUEL, Part 2



You may be aware I burnt a valve (two actually) in the Firefly on the way to the National Rally in Queensland. At the time I estimate I had probably covered close to 1,000 miles using unleaded fuel, not a huge amount.

Let me state at the outset that I do not believe that unleaded fuel was the major cause of this problem although the higher valve temperature obviously contributed to the failure.

Fortunately, through the valiant efforts of Geoff Hood and Alan McKinnon with myself and John Hetherington playing a much smaller support role in the rebuild, we were soon on our way

again. I would also like to take the opportunity to recommend Precision Wheel Alignment, Beni Street Dubbo, who kindly allowed us complete access to their workshop and also provided us with some used exhaust valves for us to replace the damaged ones.

Now, to the probable cause of the valve failure. On dismantling the head it was found that there was no evidence of valve seat recession (the first thought we had) however whilst I have owned the car I have been loosely following Mr Alvis' recommendations and have set the valve clearances at 5 thou (Firefly handbook states 3 but I thought this was a bit too tight). It would appear that whilst using leaded fuel the clearance was OK (probably only just) but with the higher operating temperature of Unleaded fuel the valves just couldn't cope.

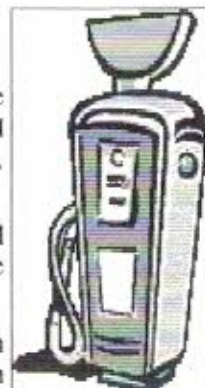
On reassembly we set the valve clearances at 10 thou and continued on to Queensland, carefully checking the clearances every couple of days. No further problems have been encountered and having covered a further 2,000 miles since the rebuild it appears that disaster has been averted for a while longer.

It should also be said that I am now running the Firefly on Regular Unleaded as Optimax was difficult to obtain in Northern NSW and Queensland. Although the performance appears to be down slightly it is relatively insignificant.

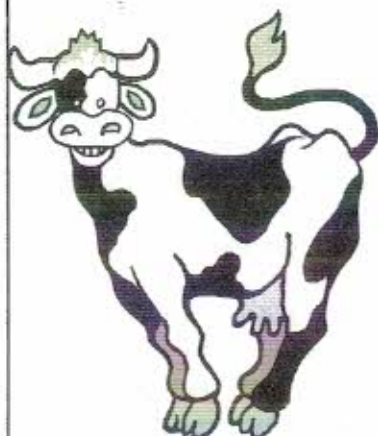
My only suggestion after this experience is that you check your valve clearances regularly and be very sceptical of some of the tight tolerances which were generally recommended by Alvis.

Happy Motoring,

Dale Parsell



"I'm Glad Cows Don't Fly!"



While recently driving the Vauxhall, I became aware of several white patches on the bonnet! And on the windscreen! And on the rear tourneau cover! And on the seat! AND ON ME!

I did not see the offending bird or birds, but further investigation found white deposits stretching from the radiator to the hood bag including the left front headlamp glass, the spare wheel and bonnet side. Something frightened the depositor! At 35mph, I don't think it was me.

I now have a better understanding of the phrase "To be shot on from a great height."

JL

NEW IN THE LIBRARY!

"101 Ways to Wear Your Alvis G-String"

Parkinson, Patricia,

Published by Jock Strap,

Beaudesert

Waiting list applies. First in Best Dressed!

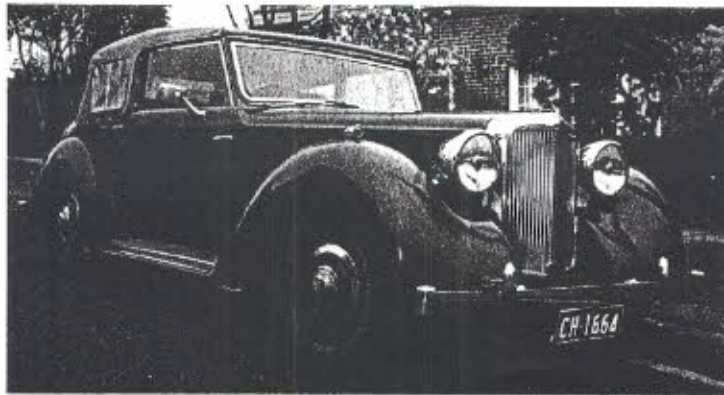
Frances

The Club carries a selection of spare parts that are available to financial members and to the Members of The Alvis Car Club of NSW. Only reproduction parts will be supplied to non members and a surcharge will apply. Members contemplating the reproduction of parts are asked to contact the Club to determine if others need such a part and whether it is feasible to order some for Club spares.

FOR SALE

ALVIS TA 14 Tourer 1949	\$14,000
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MORRIS MINOR 1952-3 (SV)	\$ 2,000
4 Door Sedan	
VETERAN HUMBERETTE 1914	\$ 20,000

Ring John White
Phone 88007829



WANTED Desperately seeking low mileage superfluous stock: ALVIS G-STRINGS from Queensland Rally X 3 required. Must suit 1940's PVT models absent from National Rally. Prefer front end mounting, one size fits all, but can be machined to fit. Will consider swap with slim line body model. Needed to be ready for next National Rally. Please send in sealed plain brown paper wrapper (by "Male" order only) and mark to the attention of Pauline, Margaret & Kay.

WANTED 12/50 Cylinder block, Head & Side Cover
Patricia Bren, Woodhurst 29 Poriati Rd, RD2 Napier, Hawkes Bay 4021 New Zealand.
Fax 64-6-8444265 Phone 64 6 8442971 (evenings)

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some of the locals