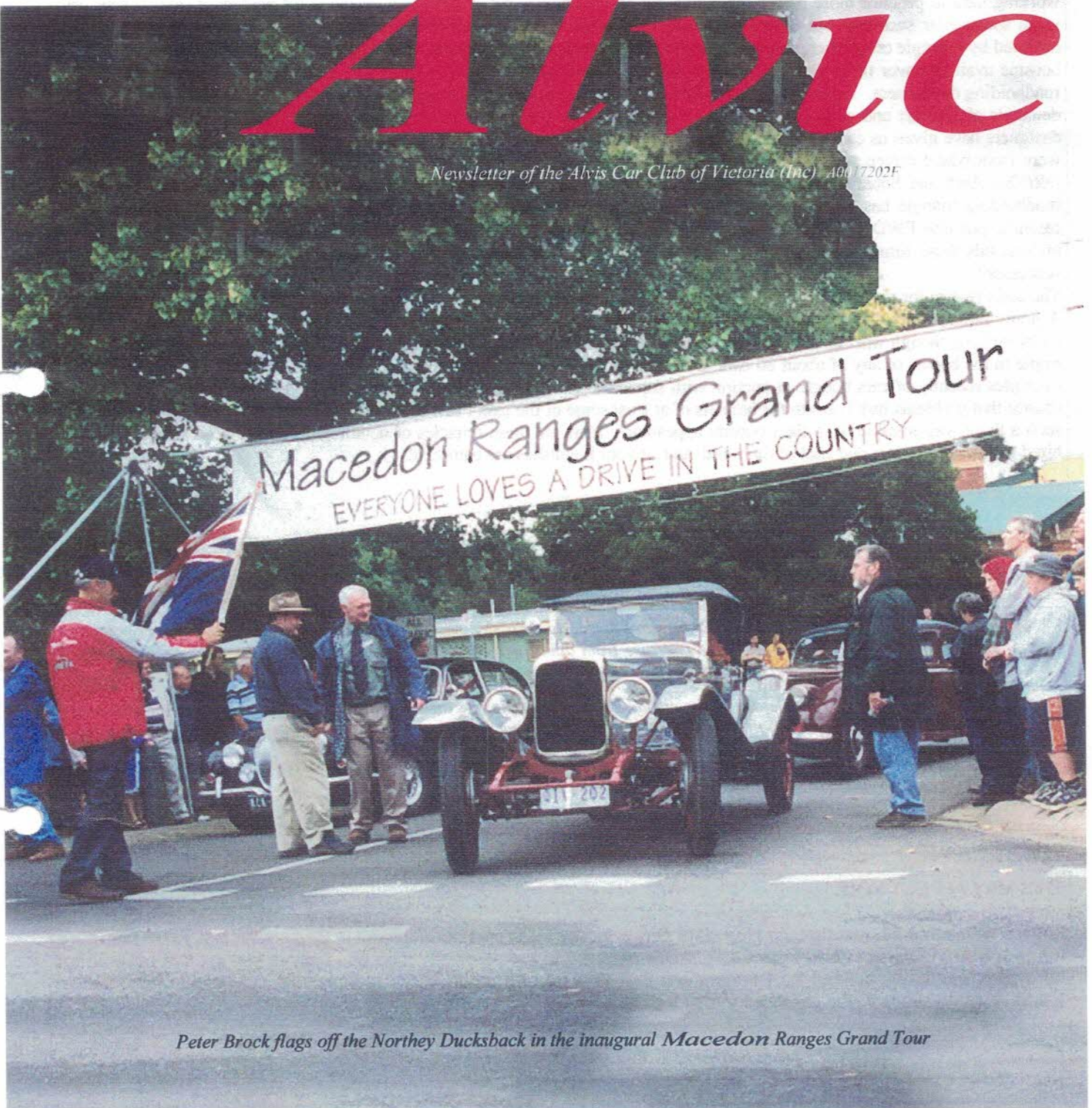


March 2003

# Alvic

Newsletter of the Alvis Car Club of Victoria (Inc) A0017202F



*Peter Brock flags off the Northey Ducksbach in the inaugural Macedon Ranges Grand Tour*

*Inside:*

*What's in a name?*

*FWD Alvis*

*(R)ACV Second Outing*

# ALVELOCITY

I went to the Melbourne Motor Show the other day. Can't say I was thrilled to bits by any of the exhibits, though the "All-Wheel-Drive" Jaguar sounds as though it might be fun. In the seventies and eighties many talented motor engineers were working hard to produce more power for racing out of V8 engines which had been designed for passenger cars. There were some spectacular successes but it was obviously hard work. Then came *THE TURBO* and all that ingenuity and skill was defeated by a simple crude alternative to supercharging. Where skilled engineers had struggled to produce 500 horsepower, 700 became available over the counter. I wonder whether we are now seeing a parallel with those developments in the comfort/roadholding department. It has always been difficult to obtain a satisfactory compromise between the almost mutually exclusive demands of comfort and good road holding - especially when a need for good handling is added to the equation. But many designers have given us cars delightful to drive. Most of the cars have been rear wheel driven but Lancia excelled in cars that were front wheel driven and Citroen tried as well. Alvis tried but made their run too early. But now we have *ALL WHEEL DRIVE*. Audi and Subaru have cars on the road which are surefooted and a delight to drive because the comfort/handling/roadholding triangle has been elevated to a higher plane. Is AWD essential for this purpose or could the same effort and resource put into FWD or RWD have achieved equal or better results? Just a thought - and a question. Who in the club understands these things well enough to answer it? I suspect Horrie Morgan would have picked up his pen. Have we a successor?

The main reason for visiting the Motor Show was to see the line up for the annual Shannon's auction of vintage and classic cars. A pretty mundane lot this year though there were enough interesting vehicles present to make the visit worthwhile. What was really striking though was the almost total absence of a stone chip - anywhere. The paintwork gleamed and there was hardly a ripple in the bodies of any of about 80 cars. Definitely not a baked grasshopper to be seen at all! There have been a couple of examples recently of cars bought at auction with superb bodies but with - as it turned out - dodgy mechanicals. So there is a chance that problems lurk beneath the bonnets of at least some of the cars I saw the other day. But you would never dream that such a thing was possible from their outside appearance. How are these miracles of detailing obtained? Can the duco fairy be hired by the hour or is it one waft of the wand and all your blemishes are banished?

Happy polishing!

JOHN HETHERINGTON



**N**ewsletter Editors are normally a bit shy when it comes to featuring their own cars, however under some pressure from other members, the back page features the 1939 Speed 25 that I recently acquired.

Details of the car are listed and it may be timely to make a regular feature of members cars providing detail that may of interest to the general membership.

If you would like to send me a photograph of your car with some of the interesting details, dates, previous owners etc, it will appear in a subsequent issue.

John Lang

## THIS MAY AFFECT YOU!

I notice with some interest that the club plate permit for my FWD was not renewed in September last year. I am sure the renewal was not received from VICROADS! Are you in the same situation as I believe you are not covered for third party insurance without it. I understand that at least one other ACCV member did not receive her renewal either. I would suggest you check your expiry date.

John Lang

## The Bas Bowes Trophy

You will recall the note that appeared in the February newsletter in relation to the Bas Bowes Trophy. The February General Meeting was the forum for some passionate discussion that argued that the trophy should be preserved and not awarded again, to it's revival and to be awarded again for sporting prowess. The meeting agreed to appoint a sub committee to determine it's future. You will be advised of the outcome.

# THE ALVIS CAR CLUB OF VICTORIA (Inc)

AOO17202F



## NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 42

ISSUE 2

March 2003

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CLUB ROOMS:- Rear of "ALVISTA", 21 Edgar Street. GLEN IRIS. [MELWAY p59 F 8]  
MEETINGS:- THIRD FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH [EXCEPT DEC/JAN] AT 8.00 pm

### **MARCH SUPPER—THE BARBERS**

MAR 21 GENERAL MEETING

MAR 23 **LUNCH AT WATSONS CREEK**  
*See inside for details*

APR 6-12 NATIONAL RALLY  
**GOOD LUCK & SAFE TRAVELING TO ALL!**

APR 24 (THU) GENERAL MEETING

MAY 16 GENERAL MEETING

MAY 17 HEIDELBERG RUN

JUN 6-8 WEEKEND AWAY

JUN 20 GENERAL MEETING

JUL 18 GENERAL MEETING 'ROUGH RED & PIE'

JUL 20 RIVER RUN

AUG 10 LUNCH WITH THE BRISTOLIANS

AUG 15 GENERAL MEETING

AUG 17 ANNUAL LUNCHEON

SEP 19 GENERAL MEETING

OCT 4-5 WEEKEND AWAY

OCT 17 AGM & GENERAL MEETING

OCT 19 WESTERN WANDERS

NOV 16 GEELONG SPEED TRIALS

NOV 21 GENERAL MEETING

NOV 23 MYSTERY EVENT

DEC 7 XMAS PARTY

### **STOPRESS**

Reasonable TD21 sold on the internet for US\$6,935

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In the late 1940's, R. Falkner of Toorak Australia owned a 12/50 Alvis. The car is described on page 352 of the first edition of The Vintage Alvis as an SD 12/50 Ducksback, with 21" wheels and non-original big port engine No.4785. It carried Victorian registration number HF 866, but unfortunately no car or chassis number is quoted.

Theo King of Brisbane bought this Alvis in June 1951. In a letter in the October 1955 edition of Alvibatics Theo says he bought the car for competition use and that he modified it extensively by shortening the chassis 12", lowering it and modifying the engine. He also states that this Alvis was "brought to Queensland some years ago by Bob Falkner of Victoria".

There is also tangible evidence that this car came to Queensland, as I owned the crankcase from engine No. 4785-L201 for a period of 10 days in 1986. I believe that this crankcase is still in Sydney with the person I sold it to in 1986.

I would be interested to hear from anyone who knew of this Alvis when Bob Falkner owned it. I am particularly keen to determine whether it was a genuine SD 12/50 chassis with a non original engine or whether it was a sub-frame car. It is possible that it was incorrectly listed in the Vintage Alvis.

Over the last 10 to 12 months, evidence of a sub-frame 12/50 with a non original rear axle, modified to accept the Alvis brakes and hubs has come to my attention. Theo King in his letter to Alvibatics stated that his car was fitted with a non original rear axle that matches the description of the one in this previously unknown sub-frame Alvis. I am trying to determine whether this "new" car is in fact the one that Theo King bought from Bob Falkner or whether Theo owned more than one Alvis.

This is a somewhat difficult task after 50 plus years, so any knowledge that anyone might have about Bob Falkner or his Alvis, would be much appreciated. I can be contacted by telephone any evening after 7.00pm on (07) 3378 7280, or at PO Box 218 Kenmore Qld. 4069 or e-mail "f. corbett@peddlethorp.com.au". I am also sure that if anyone wishes to respond through the Newsletter then Editor John will welcome such contributions.

Frank Corbett

## **WATSONS CREEK ANTIQUE CENTRE & CAFE RUN SUNDAY, 23rd MARCH**

Locals Pauline and Richard Tonkin have arranged a lunch at the Watsons Creek Antique Centre and Cafe on Sunday, 23rd March. The Centre is run by John and Jo Van Eeden, who live on the premises and have developed the Centre in a delightful valley that is on the way to the Rob Roy Hillclimb.

The Centre has a wide range of furniture, clocks and other antiques for browsing, together with a sumptuous menu of light lunches. The Cafe is licensed, not BYO, with a good range of wines and beers.

The Centre is on the Eltham - Yarra Glen Road, at Melway Map 272, Ref. C 5, marked "Antiques & Cafe" on the map. To get there, drive through Eltham or, the other way, Lilydale and Yarra Glen

Aim to arrive about 12 noon. An area for proper cars will be roped off for us.

After lunch we will visit the Heide Museum of Modern Art in Bulleen to view what the media describe as "Guns drawn in sexual target." It goes on to say "Guns, girls and flesh. It sounds like a B grade movie, but for tattooist and visual artist eX de Medici, these are the essentials of inspiration."

*My guess is there will be lots of blokes on the outing and a spattering of interested ladies! .....Ed*

*from Paul Bamford with acknowledgement to Country Life— 21 April 1994*

FORD's latest coupe, hailed as a successor to the Capri, is called the Probe. To an American ear the word supposedly has hi-tech connotations, as in "space probe". For a British audience, alas, the name seems far less obviously glamorous. Indeed, it risks calling to mind an unspeakable medical instrument.

Car manufacturers have long struggled to find names for new models that sound enticing in a variety of world markets. Drove of dream-mongers are deployed to devise shortlists of euphonious or evocative words, and run them past consumer groups in search of a positive response. Yet new cars still appear with incomprehensible, unpronounceable or plain silly-sounding names.

Toyota's Corolla, sounds as if it might be contagious. Proton could perhaps be the cure for it, or possibly be some distant planet, rather than a Malaysian car. Not everyone might clap when invited to admire a Daihatsu Applause. Even Mondeo, intended to suggest its "world car" aspirations, needs to be mouthed a few times before it becomes clear where to put the stress; but at least it is improvement on Ford's lemon of the 1950s, the Edsel. After Detroit's "motivational people" had agonised over 6,000 possible badges, that car was named after Henry II's father, "on a hunch". It now languishes on the list of all-time lulus, along with the Daf Daffodil and the Toyota Cedric.

But if the choice of names for models of car is sometimes odd, there are often even odder reasons to account for the makers' names. Take Volvo. The people who first started making Volvos in the 1920s worked for a famous Scandinavian maker of roller bearings, SKF, which had a sort of works motto: Volvo---I roll. They thought it would make a nifty name for the company's first car, rolling along on its roller bearings

#### **Romantic Images Evoked**

Many car-making pioneers used their own names. Henry Ford, Herbert Austin, or the Hon. Charles Rolls and Sir Henry Royce but some sought to evoke romantic images, as with Rover, originally a bicycle, which was intended to suggest that owners could rove hither and yon on it. Jaguar, with its hint of cat-like alacrity, was originally a model name. The manufacturers had begun as makers of Swallow Sidecars for motorcycles, and for a period they were known as SS Cars. Understandably, the name was changed when the Second World War began. Vauxhall is derived from the companies first stirrings at the Vauxhall Iron works, near London's Vauxhall Gardens which came from a corruption of Fulk's Hall, home of a 13<sup>th</sup> century knight, Fulk le Breant.

The best-known car initials are BMW, for Bayerische Motoren Werke, but perhaps not so many know that SAAB stands for the original Swedish Aeroplane Company Ltd. Fiat is an Italian acronym for the Turin Motor Company---Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino; the Alfa in Alfa Romeo stands for Anonima Lombardo Fabbrica Automobili. The Romeo part refers to Nicola Romeo, a Neapolitan who made ploughs and tractors but cherished a dream of manufacturing racing cars. He did so in the 1920s and employed as his driver a certain Enzo Ferrari.

One of the more exotic motoring badges is Mercedes-Benz. Karl Benz is well enough known, because together with Gottlieb Daimler he is generally credited with having invented motorcars. The Mercedes bit dates from the turn of the century when Herr Daimler was trying to interest the beau-monde motorists of the French Riviera in his new-fangled machines and sought help from an influential acquaintance, the Austro Hungarian Consul-General in Nice, Emil Jellinek. He obliged, but requested that the motor cars bear the name of his 10-year-old daughter, Mercedes. The apparently auspicious name stuck.

Names for Japanese cars are notoriously inscrutable. Mazda, which the British might easily take for a light bulb; refers to the oriental principle of harmony between good and bad (mazda is the good side), and Toyota is a variation on Toyoda, Loom Makers who turned their attention to cars as early as 1894.

Mitsubishi is Japanese for "three diamonds", once the symbol of the Tsukumo-Shokai shipping line from which today's industrial giant evolved.

Go back into motoring history and you can find the Black Crow, Wolverine, Ego, Krit, Pic-Pic, Na-cke or Motobloc. None would have passed muster with modern marketing men, yet they may be said to have had a certain ring to them. Whether the Probe will make a big impact or be consigned to motoring's long list of "also-rans" remains to be seen.

*good to hear from our NSW friends .....ed*

## **RICHARD'S RAMBLINGS**

Autumn is here and the National Rally is only couple of weeks away. If by some chance you have forgotten to send off your final payment please send it now.

The rally committee comprising Marj Jarrett, Richard Williams, Mike Menzies and myself, have covered many kilometers over the past few weeks, just to make sure everything is as planned and hopefully the rally will run like clockwork. However, we did strike some obstacles like the failure of the Botanical Gardens to assist us with parking forced us to change the venue, which in turn set of a chain of events of finding a suitable alternative. You will have to wait until you receive your rally pack to find out what the alternative is.

Canberra may be a planned city but it can be terribly frustrating actually getting to where you want to go. We will be issuing maps but there is little doubt that some of you will become frustrated when you think you are at the destination you are forced to do a right turn when you wanted to go left and you are whisked off in the wrong direction. The Canberra leg of our rally will have the motto "patience is a virtue". Parking has also given us a few headaches, it is apparent that the people who look after the parking do not control the venue, thus the problem.

On the Wednesday we will be going out to Sutton Road Driving Skills Centre, where those who wish to can drive three circuits of the track. Only two cars are permitted on the track at one time, 1½ minutes apart. Strict disciplines will apply so please co-operate.

We have allowed a fair amount of free time as Alvis owners are very much individuals and it is their nature to do their own thing. We hope that all those who do attend enjoy the event as much as they will enjoy the company.

On another subject in the March issue of Thoroughbred and Classic Cars there is a very rare Alvis for sale - it is a Duncan bodied TA14 drophead coupe (I did not even know one existed, in fact three were made). The price is £20,500. It looks great. Sorry, the picture is not good enough to copy.

John Lang emailed me an enquiry relating to the owner of a TA21 in Montreal, Canada. The owner, a French Canadian, was after information relating to the interior of the car. I gave him details of the TA21 Register, Red Triangle and the AOC. It wasn't until later that I remembered Wayne Brooks who lives in Bainbrigde, Pennsylvania, which is only a stones throw away from Montreal has a TB21 and is a well known Alvis enthusiast. I have now put them in contact with each other and I am sure that Wayne will be able to assist. The TA21 incidentally has a Chrysler implant.

*Richard Budd* 9 March 2003

## **URGENT NATIONAL RALLY UPDATE**

**The final payment is now OVERDUE**

It is imperative to have all payments be in prior to the commencement of the Rally.  
Please send your cheque immediately to our Treasurer, Scott Cunningham.

Thank you.

Mail to :- PO Box 17N,  
Campbelltown North  
NSW 2560



**P**at Parkinson has been very ill in the last fortnight. By the time you get this newsletter we hope she is again leading the Chicken Dance and keeping the treasurer on the straight & narrow!

*Pat get well soon, we needs ya!*

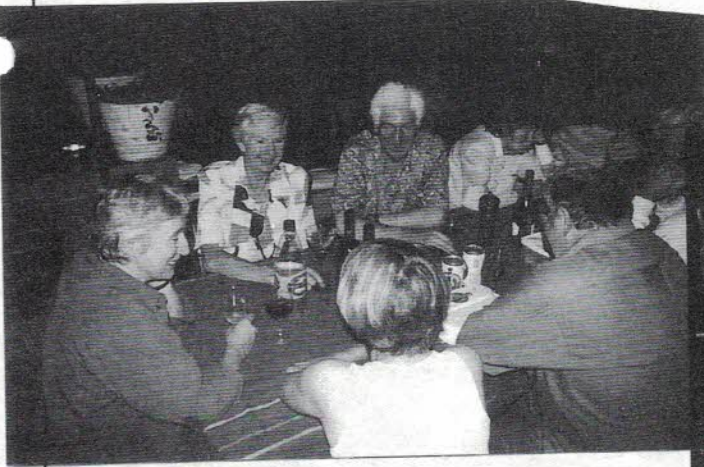


**R**on Wilson is on the mend again after the heart surgeon called for a plumber to fix four blocked drains. The plumber found his drain snake was just what the doctor ordered and we look forward to seeing Ron at a meeting very soon.

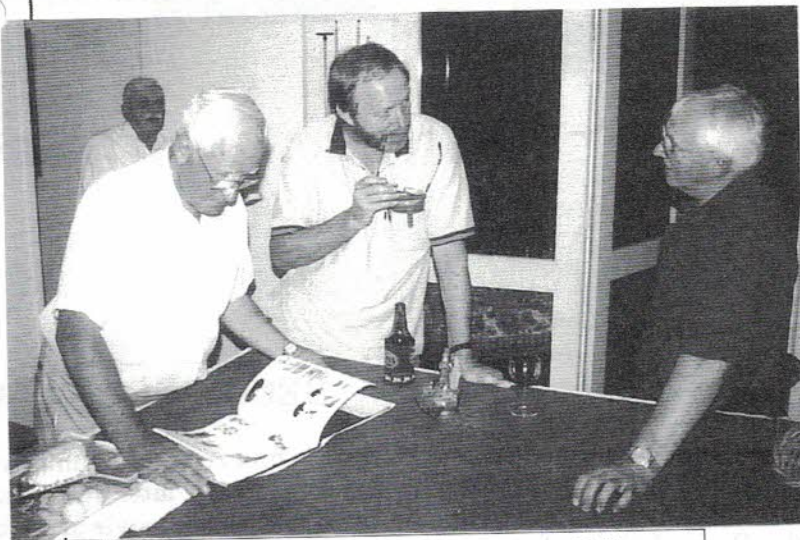
# JANUARY BARBECUE

Alan and Noeline McKinnon's home was the venue for this year's January Barbecue to launch the Alvis New Year. Location, location, location! Says it all, with an outdoor dining area fit for a banquet—it had everything, great company, lots to eat and drink and two guard dogs looking after proceedings.

Two surprises; the MacDonalds were over from South Australia (we always enjoy their visits) and David Caldwell received an unexpected kiss!



The Mob!



Stuart MacDonald, Andrew McDougall & Alan McKinnon



Marg Lang, Clare MacDonald & Marg Hetherington



## SECOND OFFICIAL OU

The (Royal) Automobile Club of Victoria staged its first run on 31 January 1904, v  
beach at Aspendale on Port Phillip Bay. The second outing, later in the year was  
Divide. In winter it is snow country, hence the slightly alpine style of the building  
comfortable. Scarved picture hats are *de rigueur* for the ladies and dustcoats for th





## MEETING OF (R)ACV, 1904

When 30 motor cars and 20 motorcycles traveled 24 km from Princes Bridge to the much further, some 90km to picturesque Marysville, in the foothills of the Great, but on a warm afternoon the smartly yet casually dressed motorists look very drivers. Of course, one chauffeur is wearing a uniform.

## HISTORY

I am fascinated by the mechanical history of the motor car and this article outlines some of the results of my research into the designs that make the basis of today's cars.

In the early 1860's Etienne Lenoir built a gas powered engine fired by an electric spark using the world's first spark plug. It was not very efficient because the gas was ignited at atmospheric pressure. Dr Otto designed his engine to have four strokes—induction, compression, power and exhaust and it was much more efficient. This was the four stroke engine and was the most important contribution to engine design up to this time, and the Otto cycle engine provides power for most of today's cars.

Most early motors had what was called hot-tube ignition in which the outer end of a tube was heated white hot by a Bunsen burner type device. The fuel/air mixture was pushed into this tube on the compression stroke and thus ignited. This system worked well but the main drawback was that the timing of ignition could not be varied. Another system of ignition was by a low voltage trembler coil, a make and break device operated by a cam and a spark plug. In the mid 1890's Robert Bosch devised an efficient low-tension magneto system and so the glow plug system was being discarded. Later, in 1902, Robert Bosch produced the high tension magneto which became a most reliable standard fitting for many years to come.

Carburetion was a difficult problem. Early carburetors used a wick dipped in a reservoir of fuel and the air passing over the wick drew off petrol thus creating an explosive mixture. This was a most unsatisfactory method, as controlling the level of fluid varied when going up a hill or around corners or even hitting a bump. In 1887, one Edward Butler, invented a carburetor working on the Venturi system with separate jets, which type of mixture supply to the engine was standard until the invention of fuel injection either mechanical or electronic. Early cars didn't have a throttle mechanism (accelerator pedal) and the method of controlling engine speed was by advancing or retarding the ignition timing.

Most early cars had a chassis frame made of wood, on later cars the wood was strengthened with flitch plates of steel. The Franklin air-cooled cars of America had a wooden chassis up until 1930 or 1931. Some cars manufactured by preciously bicycle makers had a tubing frame and in some cases this tubing was used to carry the cooling water. In 1901 Mercedes had the first pressed steel chassis, indeed it led the way with the steel chassis, honeycomb radiator and a gate change for the gearbox.

Early cars had the motor in a variety of positions, front, mid or rear. Sometimes the front wheels were driven and sometimes the rear and sometimes even all four were driven. Levassor of Panhard et Levassor soon developed the basic layout of engines in front, the gearbox in the middle driving the rear wheels. This was called the Panhard System as was adopted by most constructors. Drive to the back wheels was commonly by belt or chain although Louis Renault had shaft drive to the back axle in 1898. Differential gear was employed in most cars and had been used in a steam powered vehicle back in 1760 or thereabouts. Straight cut bevel gears in the back axle were the norm until about 1910 or so and then spiral bevel gears were adopted for two reasons. The spiral bevel gear teeth are wider than straight cut teeth and hence are stronger and are also quieter. Cadillac introduced hypoid back axles in 1932 for two reasons. The hypoid teeth are wider than spiral bevel teeth and thus stronger, and also the below centre hypoid pinion allowed a lower floor level. Of course worm drive also lowered the centre line of the pinion giving a lower floor, it is also silent and was used quite widely. Peugeot even used worm drive in their back axle until about 1960.

That is all for the moment - I might do more research at a later date.

R. G.

### **BOCCE:**

Not a good turnout by any Club. Overcast but dry day. David & Moira were very hospitable & gracious, as usual. Armstrong Tiddlers did not attend. They had something else on. There were three Daimlers present and 8 Daimlerians. Of "pure" Bristolians there were none. The only Bristol Club card carriers were David and Moira, Margaret & myself. Alvis cars present: Chris Higgins in 12/50, Rex Roberts in 12/40 and Bob Graham in Sp 20. Also, in modern cars were John White, Eric & Barbara Nicholl, Prez & M and Andrew McDougall in Citroen 2 CV. After lunch the contest began. Multiple 3 way games provided winners and the Tournament was decided by awarding three points to a club for winning a game, 2 points for second and one point for third. It is my solemn duty to record that not only did the Alvis Club lose the Tournament and hence the trophy, but it came LAST! Andrew declined the suggestion that the 2CV be given as a substitute trophy so that we could bring the genuine one back to the Club rooms under false pretences but with our pride unquestioned. Further, having lamentably let the Club down your President then donned his Bristol hat and proceeded to a handsome win - sufficient to bring in the Bristol Club second to the mighty Tournament win of the Daimler & Lanchester Club. We will have to field a strong team to wrest the trophy back next year. My thanks to Andrew for bringing the trophy to the event and the thanks of all of us go to David & Moira for their warm welcome.

cheers jfh

# FRONT WHEEL FORWARD

The most innovative Alvis cars, the front wheel drive models of the '20s, represented a major technical advance. Yet they were a commercial failure.

Anthony Pritchard explains why

When Alvis's chief engineer, Captain G T Smith-Clarke, originally proposed a front wheel drive car, it was intended for use in sprints and hillclimbs, where it was hoped to challenge the supremacy of J A Joyce's AC in the 1500cc class. Having the greater proportion of its weight on the front wheels, Smith-Clarke argued, if the car skidded the driver could avoid losing time by accelerating out of the skid instead of having to ease off to prevent wheelspin. The absence of a propshaft would allow lower construction, giving greater stability. It was an ingenious theory, if not terribly persuasive to those of scientific bent.

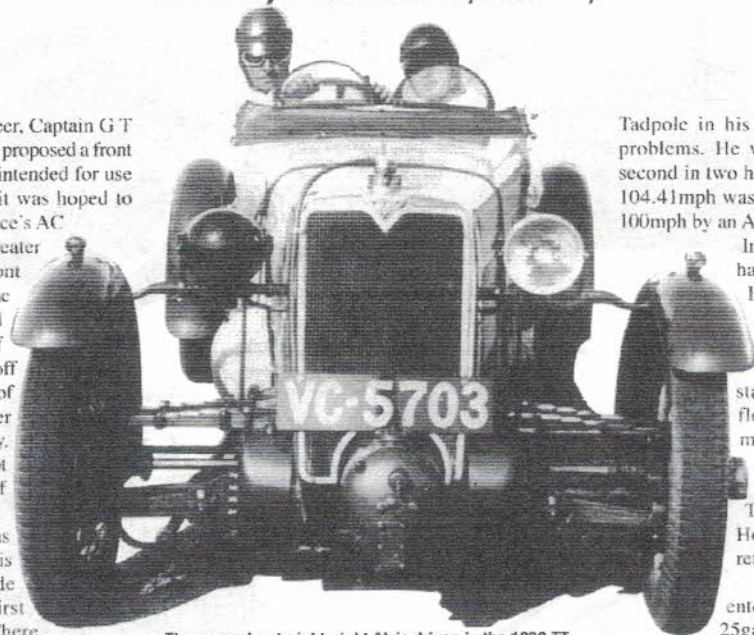
To reduce weight as much as possible, the 8ft wheelbase chassis of Alvis's 1925 fwd car was made of Duralumin throughout — a first for a British car manufacturer. There were two longitudinal members, about 8in deep, with Duralumin cross bracing and superstructure. The front suspension was by pairs of quarter-elliptic springs superimposed parallel to the chassis on each side. The front axle comprised two tubes, one above the other — a form of reverse de Dion arrangement. Originally there were no shock absorbers, but friction-type dampers had been fitted by the time of the JCC 200 Miles race at Brooklands. At the rear there was a single trailing quarter-elliptic spring on each side.

The engine was a 1496cc (68 by 103mm) pushrod unit reversed in the chassis with a Roots-type supercharger, protruding well into the cockpit. There was a single horizontal Solex carburettor. Power output was said to be 100bhp, though this seems to be well on the optimistic side.

At the front of the engine the single-plate clutch was in unit with the four speed gearbox and straight tooth bevel final drive. Two exposed halfshafts with universal joints at each end took the drive to the wheels. The front brakes were mounted inboard on the sides of the final drive casing.

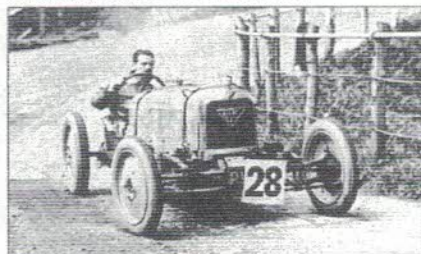
The earliest competition cars and the GP cars had patented Michelin disc wheels made under licence by Dunlop. This was apparently the only way Alvis could obtain sufficient dishing to provide clearance for mounting the steering hub in the centre of the wheel. The later production fwd cars with wire spoked wheels had nearly vertical inner spokes for the same reason. A very simple body was fitted to give a weight of just under 10cwt, of which 6cwt was on the front wheels. At the works this car was known as Tadpole.

At Kop hillclimb in March, Major C M Harvey, Alvis works driver and service manager, drove Tadpole in its debut in unsupercharged form. He was second in the 1500cc class behind Joyce with the AC. Harvey next drove Tadpole, now painted yellow, at the Easter Brooklands meeting; history does not relate how he fared. By Shelsley Walsh hillclimb on 23rd May, Alvis had completed a second fwd car. One ran with the engine bored out



The ex-works straight-eight Alvis driven in the 1932 TT by 'V Karachi', a monk who had left the monastery to run his family business. His real name was E Coleman.

Below: The first of the 1925 1500cc fwd cars, Tadpole, with C M Harvey at the wheel at Shelsley in May, 1925. A streamlined tail was later fitted and other modifications, including supercharging, were made during the year (Guy Griffiths Collection)



These two slightly modified FA short wheelbase cars were entered at Le Mans in 1928. Harvey is pulling out of the pits with the car that he and Purdy drove into sixth place. Behind is the ninth-place car of Davis/Urquhart-Dykes

to 75mm to compete in the 2500cc class. Harvey won the 1500cc class from Davenport (Frazer Nash) and Joyce, and came third in the 2500cc class.

The fwd Alvis first ran in supercharged form in June at Skegness. Although Harvey beat Raymond Mays (supercharged AC) in their heat, both were overshadowed by Joyce in the finals. At the Brooklands Whitsun meeting Harvey retired

Tadpole in his two handicaps with front tyre problems. He was out again in June, coming second in two handicaps. Harvey's fastest lap of 104.41mph was the first Brooklands lap at over 100mph by an Alvis.

In 1925 the record breaking classes had been changed. In August Harvey and Tadpole set British Class F (1101-1500cc) records of 73.27mph for the standing kilometre and 80.84mph for the standing mile. These stood only fleetingly: before the end of the month they had been beaten by Segrave with a supercharged Talbot. Harvey then drove Tadpole at the August Bank Holiday Brooklands meeting, but retired.

At the end of September Alvis entered the two fwd cars, now with 25gal fuel tanks in the scuttle and short, pointed tails, in the JCC 200 Miles race. The drivers were Harvey and Mark Pepys, Earl of Cottenham. The main opposition came from a team of three supercharged Talbot-Darracqs, widely regarded as invincible in their class. Although Harvey could not match the speed of Segrave's Talbot, both Alvis entries ran well.

Probably because of the high level of lining wear when the cars were driven hard, Harvey had brake trouble; he was in third place when the constant use of engine braking broke a pushrod. Nearly 30 minutes were lost while it was changed; although the car was still running well at the end, Harvey was too far behind to qualify as a finisher. Cottenham had risen to third place when he retired; heat from the brakes had seized his transmission.

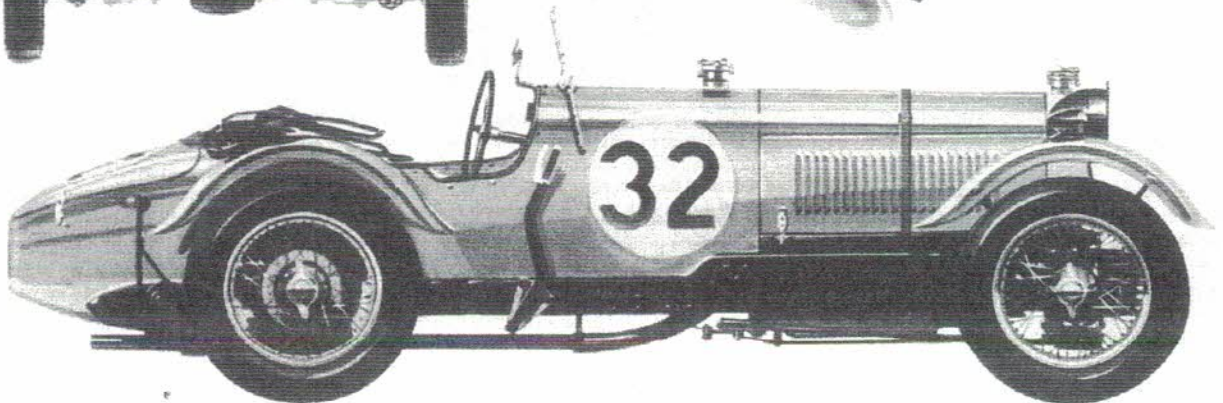
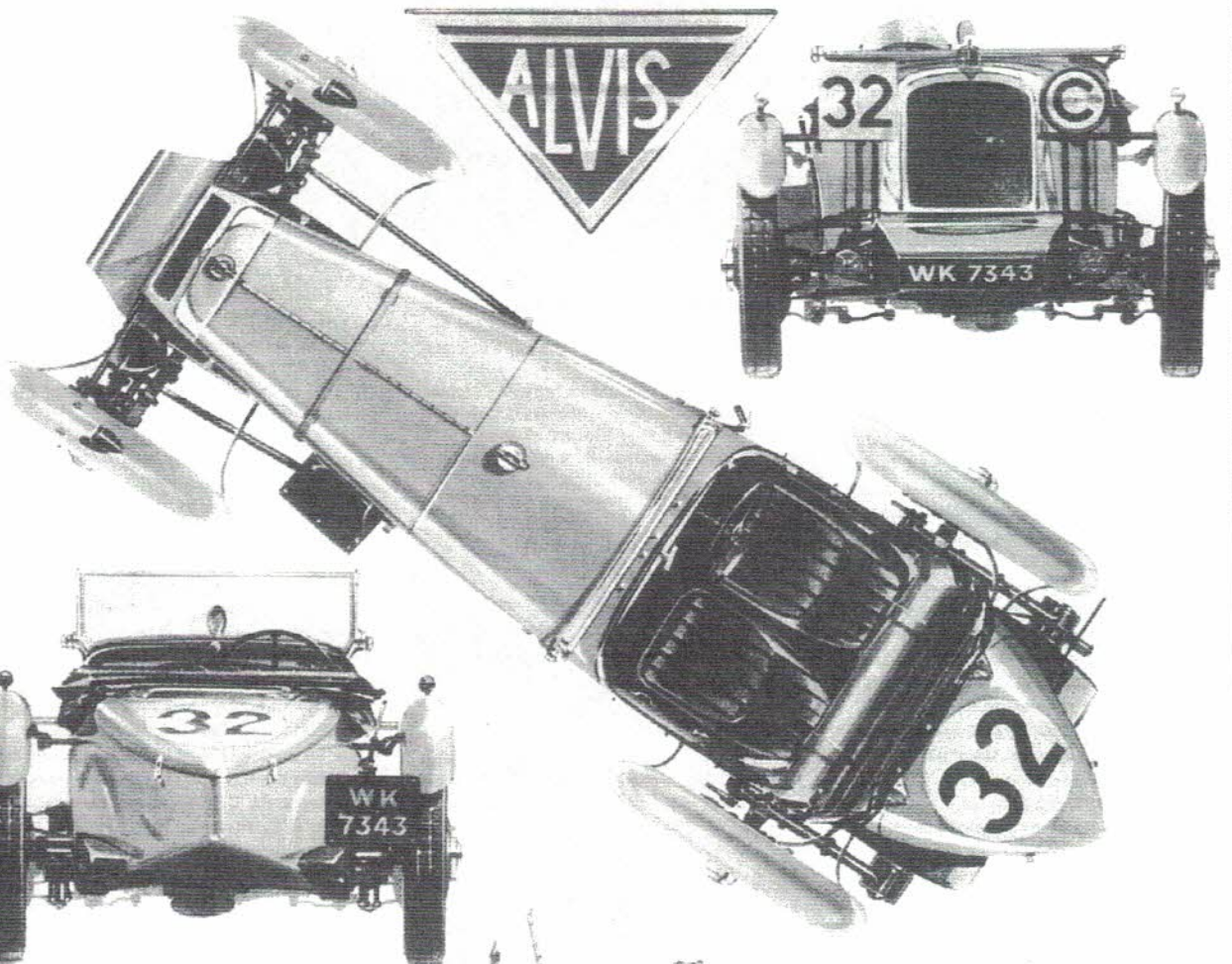
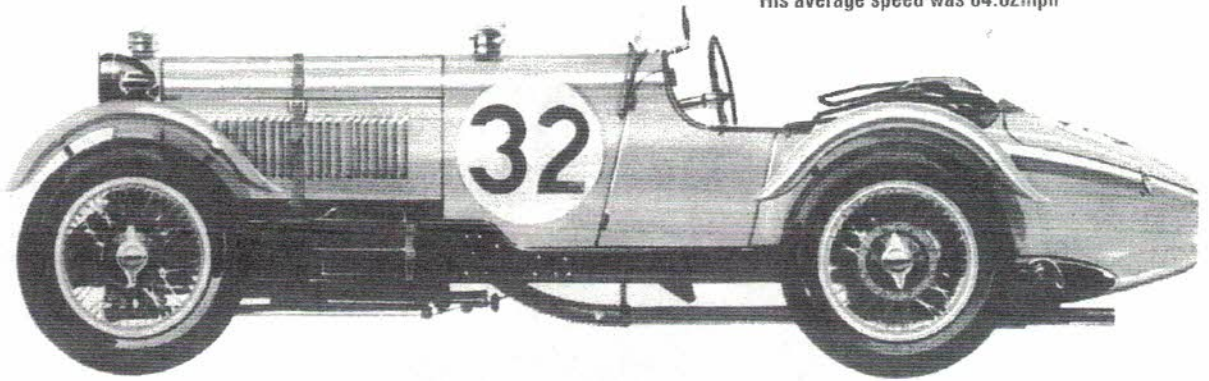
The two 1925 cars were little more than low-cost specials; their performance represented very good value for money. One was occasionally hillclimbed by Harvey during 1926. The other was rebodied and exhibited at the 1926 Scottish Motor Show with a price tag of £1000. There were no takers.

It was remarkable that Alvis should expend substantial sums developing a GP car when their finances were weak. But both T G John, Alvis founder and chairman, and Smith-Clarke believed the project would help to develop future production cars. They had in mind one particular race: the RAC Grand Prix at Brooklands.

The 1926 GP formula was for two seater cars (though no mechanic was carried) up to 1500cc and weighing not less than 700kg (1543lb). Another requirement was a minimum cockpit width of 80cm (31½in). In the event, the most successful contender in 1926 was the Anglo-French Talbot, though a Delage won the RAC Grand Prix. It was recognised that an eight-cylinder engine with smaller reciprocating parts would rev higher than one with fewer cylinders, and that there would be excellent gas flow and good torque. Alvis were unique in using fwd.

The Alvis had an in-line eight-cylinder engine of 1497cc (55 by 78.75mm) with two high-

The 1928 supercharged front wheel drive Alvis which was driven into second place in the 1928 Tourist Trophy race at Ards by Leon Cushman. His average speed was 64.02mph



mounted camshafts, one on each side of the engine, operating the horizontal valves through short vertical rockers. There was an alloy crankcase split along the centre line of the camshaft; no flywheel was needed and the crankshaft with its circular webs ran in five plain bearings. There were Duralumin con rods and plain big ends with Duralumin bearing surfaces. The cylinder head was fixed.

Ignition was by twin magnetos driven from the front of the camshafts; each fired four cylinders. The Roots-type supercharger was driven from the rear of the crankshaft, projecting into the cockpit; the fuel was supplied by a single Solex carburettor. Dry sump lubrication was used. Power output can be conservatively estimated at about 115bhp at the flywheel.

Transmission was by a small multi-plate clutch and a four speed gearbox with drive to the front wheels; the suspension was similar to that of the 1925 cars. The pressed steel chassis had deep channel section side members tapering to the rear, stiffened behind the radiator by a substantial bulkhead that also served as a front engine mount, and tubular arms running from the frame to the crankcase. The fuel and oil tanks were mounted alongside the engine to lower the centre of gravity. The body was well streamlined, originally with a sloping nose cowling, completely flat underside and sloping, pointed tail.

The new cars were not tested until the end of July and first appeared at Shelsley Walsh in September. The straight-eight was wrongly geared and Harvey came third in the 1500cc class with a time of 53.6sec. A single car was instead entered in the RAC Grand Prix, but the entry was scratched.

Two cars for Harvey and the Earl of Cottenham ran in the JCC 200 Miles race at Brooklands on 25th September. Talbot-Darracqs took the first two places. Harvey held fourth place until Longden, driving a 7hp touring Fiat ineptly, blocked him at the fast artificial turn on the Finishing Straight. In avoiding him the Alvis driver spun off, damaging the tail of his car badly and forcing him to retire. Cottenham moved up into fourth, dropped back a place and then retired when misinformed by a faulty gauge that he had lost his oil pressure.

The decision was made to rebuild the cars for 1927 when single seater bodywork was allowed for the first time in GP racing. The engine now had the twin overhead camshafts that were more usual in GP racing by this time, and there were hemispherical combustion chambers. The valves were inclined at 90deg and the springs were enclosed in dashpots. The alloy crankcase was a single casting.

The camshafts were driven from the crankshaft by an enormous idler pinion over a foot in diameter. The gear-driven Roots-type supercharger was mounted on the right of the engine. Again there was no flywheel. The sump contained four oil pumps: two scavengers, one at each side, drawing oil to the cooler mounted below the radiator, and two feed pumps, high and low pressure, the first supplying the crankcase and the other the camshafts and timing gears. Power output was said to be 125bhp.

At the front of the car the four speed gearbox now projected well into the air stream,

concentrating even more weight on the front wheels. A multi-plate clutch was again employed. The differential was mounted between clutch and gearbox; because the car was of such low construction the input shaft passed under the differential and back into it at a slightly higher level. The inboard brakes were bolted either side of the differential. The 1927 Alvis was the first car to race with independent front suspension. It consisted of quarter-elliptic springs each side, paired above and below the drive shafts and with twin Hartford shock absorbers. The rear suspension was unchanged from 1926.

Alvis adopted a central driving position for the first time on a European GP car. A 25gal fuel tank,

retired with engine problems and Campbell won.

At this point Alvis withdrew from GP racing. In a long letter to *The Autocar* T G John set out the company's reasons for entering and why they had withdrawn. He commented that Delage, the most successful contender, had spent more than 25 times Alvis's racing budget. But the bottom line was that Alvis were impoverished and had spent money they could ill afford on GP racing, with no results to show for it.

By now both Smith-Clarke and John were convinced of the merits of fwd. In February, 1928, Alvis announced production fwd cars in FA 12/50 short 8ft 6in wheelbase and FB 12/50 long 10ft wheelbase forms. They were not shown to the

public until May. Alvis used a channel section chassis, deep and narrow at the front, wider and shallower at the rear, with substantial cross bracing. Front suspension was independent by transverse quarter-elliptics, as on the 1927 GP cars, and there was new independent rear suspension by leading arms with quarter-elliptic springs bolted underneath.

The 1482cc (68 by 102mm) four was derived from the well established pushrod 12/50, but there was now a single overhead camshaft driven by a very noisy gear train which also powered the magneto, water pump, dynamo and, if fitted, supercharger. The engine was reversed in the chassis; ahead of it were the clutch housing, four speed gearbox and the rear part of the differential housing, all in a one-piece aluminium casing.

This layout resulted in a very long bonnet, giving the cars a sleek, racy appearance. Most had a scuttle mounted fuel tank with the filler coming through the front bulkhead into the engine bay. Both versions could be supplied with a supercharger. Open two or four seaters initially cost £597, or £625 with supercharger. The FB was also available as a saloon.

Alvis originally entered five cars at Le Mans in 1928, later whittled down to two slightly modified FA short wheelbase, unsupercharged cars with Cross and Ellis fabric bodies. The company was doubtful whether supercharged engines would last 24 hours. But after problems in practice both cars enjoyed trouble free races: Harvey/Purdy finished sixth at 59.20mph

behind cars of much larger capacity and Sammy Davis/Urquhart-Dykes came ninth. Subsequently Alvis built 12 Le Mans Replicas on the FA chassis; another 29 followed on the later FD chassis.

The 410mile handicap Tourist Trophy at Ards in Northern Ireland was held at the end of August. Alvis entered five modified short wheelbase, supercharged cars known as the FC. The specification included a revised engine capacity of 1496cc (68 by 103mm), a fixed cylinder head, roller bearing big ends and a special crankshaft. Power output was 72bhp at 4470rpm. The gearboxes had special constant mesh gears narrowing the gap between third and top. The bodies were Carbodies aluminium alloy two seaters, narrower than the Le Mans cars, with the top of the tail hinging forwards for access to the spare wheel and with an outside handbrake.

Only the car driven by Leon Cushman qualified as a finisher, in second place (after an

### ALVIS FRONT WHEEL DRIVE PRODUCTION

TYPE	NUMBER BUILT	SURVIVORS
<b>Racing Cars</b>		
4cyl 2 seater (1925)	2	-
8cyl 2 seater (1926)	2	-
8cyl single seater (1927)	2	1*
<b>Production FA 12/50 4-Cylinder, Short Chassis, Early Type</b>		
Le Mans Team cars, Cross & Ellis 2 seater	2	1
Le Mans Replica, Cross & Ellis 2 seater	12	3
TT Replica Carbodies 2 seater	4	2
Other bodywork	2	1
<b>Production FB 12/50 4cyl, Long Chassis, Early Type</b>		
Cross & Ellis 4 seater fabric saloon	17	-
Cross & Ellis 4 seater tourer	4	1
Carbodies 4 seater tourer	3	1
<b>FC 12/50 TT Team Cars</b>		
Carbodies 2 seater	6	2
<b>Production FD 12/50 4cyl, Short Chassis, Later Type</b>		
Le Mans Replica, Cross & Ellis 2 seater	29	12
TT Replica, Carbodies 2 seater	6	2
Other bodywork	4	3
Chassis not assembled	1	-
<b>Production FE 12/50 4cyl, Long Chassis, Later Type</b>		
Cross & Ellis 4 seater saloon	22	2
Carbodies 4 seater saloon	1	-
Cross & Ellis 4 seater tourer	3	-
Carbodies 4 seater tourer	25	7
Other bodywork	3	2
Chassis not assembled	5	-
<b>8cyl Sports Cars</b>		
TT Team Cars — Carbodies 2 seater (1929)	4	-
Le Mans Team Cars — Carbodies 4 seater (1929)	2	-
TT Team Cars — Cross & Ellis 2 seater (1929)	4	-
<b>Various</b>		
8cyl Record Breaking Single Seater (1929)	1	-
8cyl saloon by Cross & Ellis (1931)	1	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>40</b>

\*Chassis and parts of body of a 1927 Grand Prix car currently fitted with gearbox from a 1929 TT car and engine from a 1930 TT car

which was emptied first, was mounted in the long, pointed tail and there was also a 20gal scuttle tank. Driving position apart, it did not look very different from its 1926 predecessor. Maximum speed was 125-130mph. It was technically a very advanced car of immense potential which its very short racing career gave it no serious opportunity to fulfil.

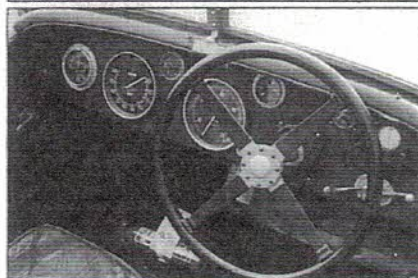
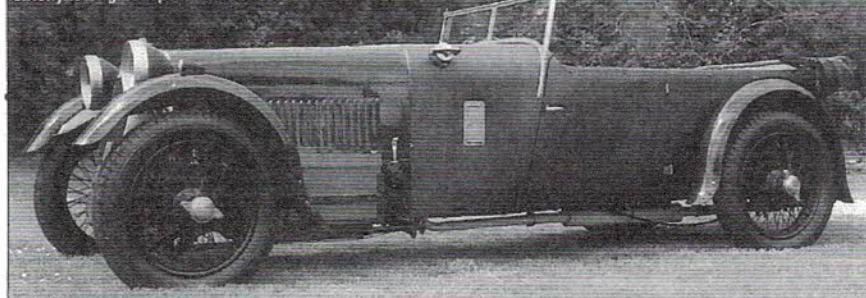
Just as in 1926, the cars were not ready until late in the year: only a single car, for Harvey, appeared in the RAC Grand Prix. During practice a piston broke, wrecking an oil pump, and despite much hard work the night before the race it non-started. The winners, Delage, won all four races they entered in 1927. The two Alvis GP cars ran in the JCC 200 Miles race at Brooklands two weeks later. The oil coolers had been removed and fixed starting handles fitted. Harvey led away from the start with team-mate George Duller taking up third place behind Campbell's Bugatti. Both Alvises

# FRONT WHEEL FORWARD

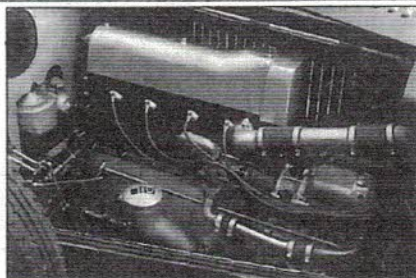


Perhaps the best known fwd Alvis is the one owned by the company and usually on display at the Museum of British Road Transport in Coventry. Incorporating parts from three fwd cars, it was rebuilt by Alvis apprentices in the late 1950s

Alan Stole's long wheelbase FE tourer, WK 8047, with Carbodies four seater coachwork similar to that of the London-Exeter car, apart from the divided windscreen. This Alvis has been restored to a very high standard, strictly to original specification.



The instrument panel of Alan Stole's car, with large diameter competition instruments



An underbonnet view of Alan Stole's car, showing the right hand side of the single overhead camshaft engine

off-course excursion) behind Kaye Don's supercharged Lea-Francis. Shortly after the TT, Harvey drove the second-place car in the 279-mile Georges Boillot Cup at Boulogne; he was lying third when he retired with piston failure. Later the TT cars were sold off after being fitted with standard engines. A few TT Replicas with standard engines were built: four on the FA chassis and six on the FD.

Alvis's commitment to fwd was such that production of the established 12/50 ceased for 1929 before being quickly resumed. In late 1928 the company introduced improved fwd cars, the short wheelbase FD 12/50 and the long wheelbase FE 12/50, with changes that included rear suspension arms pivoted on ball races instead of plain bearings. Although Alvis had attained their goals of exceptional grip and excellent roadholding, no weight saving had materialised and neither they nor the French Tracta company achieved the compactness which was to prove one of the ultimate benefits of fwd. In any case the fwd Alvis was too new-fangled and too much of an out-and-out sports car for most buyers. Reluctantly Alvis ceased production of these cars in April, 1929.

But the company still wanted to sell fwd cars if anyone would buy one; catalogues continued to be printed. A special six-cylinder Cross and Ellis saloon was built for T G John in 1931 and five other fwd

cars were delivered that year. These cars, a Le Mans Replica, three four-seater tourers and a saloon, had been built in 1928-29 and kept in storage.

In 1929 Alvis built six supercharged straight-eight sports-racing cars, known as the FA 8/15. The engine was a development of the 1927 GP unit with a slightly shorter stroke (78.5mm), giving 1491cc. Steel con rods with needle roller big ends replaced the Duralumin rods of the 1927 cars; the crankshaft ran in ball and roller main bearings and there was a wet sump — although, being almost separate from the engine, it was known as 'semi-dry'. The twin overhead camshafts were as on the 1927 cars and the cylinder head was fixed. Power output was about 125bhp.

As on the 1927 GP cars, the gearbox was mounted ahead of the final drive, but the cars were taller, and the input shaft entered the final drive at a higher level. The 10ft wheelbase was similar to that of the production cars, but at the rear there were twin transverse semi-elliptics. Four of these chassis were initially bodied as short-tail two seaters by Carbodies.

In 1929 the first JCC Double 12 Hours race was held at Brooklands. Alvis entered three straight-eights in Smith-Clarke's name. None survived this long ordeal. Willday/Griffiths retired early on the first day with a broken oil pump drive. Mr and Mrs Urquhart-Dykes were eliminated on the second day by a broken spring anchorage,

while Cushman/Paul had gearbox problems giving top gear only and retired just over an hour before the finish with clutch failure.

Two regulation four seater straight-eights were entered at Le Mans for Cushman/Urquhart-Dykes and Paul/Davis. In practice they had a fine turn of speed, but they were plagued by problems. Paul/Davis non-started when their crankshaft was found to be out of line following big end failure. Urquhart-Dykes/Paul ran well in the opening laps until a water leak developed. The regulations forbade replenishment until after 210 miles; when this was done the cylinder block cracked.

The final appearance of the straight-eights in 1929 was in the handicap TT held in August at Ards. These were two seaters driven by Harvey, Paul and Cushman. The main opposition in the 1500cc class came from five Alfa Romeo 6C 1500s. The FA 8/15s were equally fast but some 400lb heavier. They ran very well until rain began to fall, but then were slowed by misfiring caused by the protruding carburettor intakes sucking in water. They finished well down the field: Cushman eighth, Harvey 10th and Paul 17th. Campari's Alfa Romeo took second place behind Caracciola's seven-litre Mercedes-Benz and other Alfas were fifth, sixth and seventh.

Alvis were not planning to race the straight-eights again, but Charles Follett, who had become the London distributor, persuaded them to enter a team in the 1930 TT, and probably provided part of the finance. The cars were similar to the 1929 models, but with new front suspension by two upper transverse semi-elliptics, lower radius arms and Hartford shock absorbers. Weight had been substantially reduced; there are good grounds for believing that three of the cars had Elektron crankcases. The 1930 cars had wider Cross and Ellis bodies with less sloping beetle-back tails. A bulge in the bonnet side covered the carburettors to prevent a recurrence of the 1929 problem.

Three of the cars at Ards were works-entered for Harvey, Cushman and Paul, but the fourth, driven by Purdy, was nominally a private entry by D K Mansell. The race was dominated by the Scuderia Ferrari 1750cc supercharged Alfa Romeos of Campari, Nuvolari and Varzi, but Paul took a fairly satisfactory fourth place at an average 69.61mph compared with Nuvolari's 70.88mph.

At the first pit stop Harvey, who had been the Alvis front runner, left his car in neutral with the brakes on (the correct procedure was to leave it in gear with the brakes off) and his mechanic had difficulty turning the brake adjusters. In his haste to rejoin the race Harvey jumped in, fired the engine and started to move off. The mechanic narrowly avoided being run over and hastily leaped aboard. Very shortly afterwards a brake locked. Harvey hit a bank and the Alvis spun round, damaging its tail. Although Harvey was able to carry on, he was too far behind at the finish to be classified.

The straight-eights had been raced by the works for the last time. Although they were catalogued in 1930-31, no production straight-eight was ever built. Works cars passed into private ownership, were raced for a few years and then used on the road. Owners praised them highly, but sadly, as there is not a single survivor, no modern appraisal of their merits is possible.

*The Vintage Alvis, by Peter Hull and Norman Johnson (third edition, The Alvis Register, 1995), contains information that I could not have tracked down elsewhere. I am indebted to Tony Cox, of the Alvis Register FWD Section, for information, especially on cars built and surviving.*

# SWAP, BEG, BORROW or STEAL

## **WANTED: 12/50 parts**

Please has anyone got an early (1921-23) offside steering arm. This is for an early Elliott pattern axle in which the end of the axle is forked and the king pin is located top and bottom, with the stub axle moving on the middle of the pin (or perhaps it's easier to say "like a Model T"). The thing is located by taper into the stub axle in the normal way, but the outer end of the arm divides into two; one end locating to the track rod, and the other to the drag link. Desperately seeking one any condition, even borrow one for pattern to fabricate?

Also, scuttle mounted fuel tank, any condition, or has anyone experience of making one. Any info gratefully received.

Steve Denner, Ph 9230 2236, or 0418 510 235, or [steve.denner@aspect.com.au](mailto:steve.denner@aspect.com.au)

## **WANTED**

Dashboard mounted Coil/Magneto changeover switch from Speed 20/ Crested Eagle etc.

Hand throttle levers from base of steering column for Silver Eagle/

2/50. Phone Dale 03 59685 170 or 0428 832 126, email [dparsell@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dparsell@ozemail.com.au)

## **FOR SALE**

1928 ALVIS 1928 FWD, Supercharged, short chassis engine NO 7653, chassis NO 7190, original body NO 7025, Engine 1482cc exported to Australia 26-11-1928, completely rebuilt to rolling chassis,

Price \$40,000-00 AUST. Graham Cook, Australia. Phone 351271401

[www.it-fl.com.au/cook](http://www.it-fl.com.au/cook)

[sales@it-fl.com.au](mailto:sales@it-fl.com.au)

## **FOR SALE**

5 wire wheels—23" open hub, split rim. Chemically stripped and phosphor treated—2 wheels respoked. Require painting. Brian Hemmings (02) 9484 7857

## **WANTED:**

For Alvis 12/50. Engine block, Camshaft and Rocker Cover.

## **FOR SALE:**

12/50 - new clutch Springs, sets of 12, NZ\$50.00 Patricia Bren, 29 Poraiti Rd, R.D.2, Napier, Hawkes Bay 4021, New Zealand, or phone 0064 6 8442971 (evenings) or fax 0064 6 8444265 or [easeports@actrix.co.nz](mailto:easeports@actrix.co.nz)

## **WANTED 12/50 PARTS**

Set of valve rockers

2 Push Rods

2 Push Rod Springs

Pair of Oil Pump Gears

Bob Anderson (08) 9275 3494

## **FOR SALE**

DO YOU WISH TO OWN ONE OF THE LAST ALVIS MADE?  
Reluctant sale of "Rowena" my 1967 TF21 saloon. Mechanically perfect including total engine rebuild 9,000 miles ago. Asking \$45,000 ono.

John Forbes-Proctor 0417 738119

*If your advertisement appears on this page and is no longer relevant, please notify the Newsletter Editor.*

*John Lang.....ed*

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**1939 SC SPEED 25 CHARLESWORTH SEDAN**  
**Car Number 20154 Engine Number 15153**

One of the last SP25s to leave the factory. Original owner, a Jewish gentleman from Melbourne. Sold to Edward Godfrey. Sold to a Mr Wilson who painted the car grey and changed the colour of the leather seats. Next owners Peter Opie and Keith Werner. Purchased by John Murray in 1961. Sold to Harold Welsh in 1962. Owned again by John Murray in the years 1964—1972. Engine reconditioned 1972. Sold to Don Bosanquet, major body work carried out in 1980. About 3000 miles in the last 30 years.

I am indebted to John Murray for the provisional list of owners and meticulous attention to detail in recording technical information and dates in relation to issues affecting the car.

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO HEAR FROM ANYONE WHO CAN FILL IN ANY OF THE GAPS OR PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION

.....John Lang