

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

JUNE 2004

Alvic



*How Often Do You Go to a Club Night & Find Two New Owners with Cars
that have not been seen for Many Years?*

ALVALACRITY

I thought the last issue of the Newsletter was a great one. I hope those who were unfortunate enough not to have toured Tasmania got as much enjoyment out of it as those of us who did. Thanks, John. And the issue was neatly collated and stapled. Ten years ago the world was being treated to periodic issues of "World Alvis News" published by the late Peter Black and his "Alvis Club de France" from his home in Provence. It was a truly international or multi-national publication and definitely the product of a zany eccentric mind. (Is this the fate of all editors?) Some issues appeared in English, French and German and they were always unstapled while running into perhaps fifty un-numbered pages. God help you if you ever dropped the lot and then sought continuity of a story you were in the middle of! Someone once asked Peter to staple the issues but he explained that not every-one wanted all three languages (even though sometimes there was more than one language on one page!) and certainly no-one would want to take the whole issue to the dunny with them! The difficulties editors face! And the lengths they go to, to ensure that we, the readers, have all our needs taken care of. Still, I guess that is what we pay them for. But please remember that the job of an editor is to collate, correct and arrange articles which are sent to him. It is not actually his job to create the copy in the first place. So carry on writing, drawing and submitting. Come to think of it we do not seem to have anyone with obvious talent with the pencil active in the club at the moment. David Caldwell gives us exact technical drawings from time to time and the late Horrie Morgan used to submit wonderful diagrams displaying very clearly the most abstruse elements of steering geometry in forms that were extremely difficult to reproduce. George Smith used to treat us to drawings of cars in interesting settings which were both accurate and artistic. Alas, since George died I don't think there has been a real drawing in the Newsletter. Is there no-one out there with such talent? Has it all been overwhelmed and overtaken by digital photography?

JOHN HETHERINGTON

Stuart MacDonald had a recent fall while skate boarding down a slope at Historic Mallala and on 28th June is facing a knee replacement. I recently spoke to him and it has not dented his exuberance for life but he is annoyed at the limitations to his mobility.

Stuart we will be thinking of you on the 28th and look forward to seeing you at the National Rally next year.

P.S. we've warned the nurses!

front cover.....

Generally one or two cars change hands annually within the club and it's a same car, new owner situation. What a surprise to find firstly a car that I did not know existed, fresh from a now defunct museum in the hands of a couple who take their driving seriously and then before the meeting was to start, a rumble in the garage outside to find the ex Austin Tope SP20 Special that I had not seen on the road since 1997 in the hands of another couple who also take their driving seriously.

I became aware of Bob Northey's interest in the SP20 and during a visit to Castlemaine in preparing for *Castlemaine Capers*, found the car at "Up the Creek Motors" in Campbells Creek. The SP20 carrying a very pretty Martin & King body, had been restored some years ago and displayed in a museum at Fryerstown in Central Victoria. Bob suggests that there are some items that need to be attended to, but a look at his immaculate Ducksback would suggest that not much needs to be wrong for him to give it attention. I'm sure he and Lesley will derive a lot of pleasure from the car and we will certainly enjoy it being held within the club membership.

Bob provides the following information:

- The chassis is No 10622, the 4th-last SA Speed 20 (of 351 produced)
- Ex factory 4/7/33, bodied by Martin & King in Melbourne as a Sports Saloon
- The first owner was Frank W.T. Clarke a "surgeon dentist" from Newcastle
- Apparently owned by Ian McNee since 1971
- Restored by Max Houston's garage

The "rumble in the garage" came as a complete surprise to me, although others knew! ***There should be no secrets withheld from the newsletter editor!!!!*** The SP20 Special is a car I had admired on several occasions, all but one in the garage. The car features a shortened chassis with a very sexy drophead body reflecting its Alvis origins.

Happy Motoring!

.....ed

THE ALVIS CAR CLUB OF VICTORIA (Inc)

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NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5

CLUB ROOMS: - rear of 'ALVISTA' 21 Edgar St, Glen Iris (MELWAYS 59 F8. Meetings—third Friday of each month [except DEC/JAN] at 8.00pm. Newsletter Deadline—first Friday of month.

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SUPPER—the McKAIGES

18 Jun General Meeting

ACCV ANNUAL LUNCH AND TROPHY PRESENTATION

SUNDAY 11th JULY 2004 at 12 NOON

TATRA RESTAURANT & RECEPTIONS

1401 Mt Dandenong Tourist Road
Mount Dandenong 3767
Melway p 66 G2
Tel 9751 1065
Ample parking

We have our own room with bar.
Three course meal including tea, coffee and soft drinks \$38.50 a head.

Drinks at bar prices.

Come and meet the famous! Award and prizewinners will be there in person.....

Come anyway, to spend a great winter afternoon discussing matters Alvis and everything else under the sun with friends and colleagues.

See the amazing and famous "WALTZING WATERS".
I will need to know definite numbers by Monday 5/7/2004; please let me know of any special diet needs. John Hetherington 03 5821 6422

16 Jul General Meeting

18 Jul Rob Roy Hill Climb

5 Dec Xmas Party at the Parkies

A Chance Meeting

It was one of those ideal Saturday mornings, a bite in the air coupled with the urge to take the Alvis for an early morning blast before the traffic got too heavy with people out and about doing their shopping.

With the fuel tap turned on and after three pumps on the Ki-Gas pump, the strangler pulled out and a quick push on the starter button, she fired up on the third revolution the engine settling down to a rhythmic note once the raw fuel had dispersed from the inlet manifold.

A quick look at the oil gauge to check pressure, and with first gear selected, she moved out of the garage and was left idling away in the driveway whilst I closed the garage door and the front gate.

Once more ensconced in the car, and with first gear selected we proceeded out into the street and up the road, our first stop being to remove some cash from the hole in the wall situated in Centre Road, Bentleigh.

Whilst waiting to make a right hand turn at the traffic lights, I noticed an elderly gentleman walking with a stick in the direction I was going. He had stopped in his stride as I was making my turn his attention no doubt caused by either the sound of the engine or my terrible change from first to second.

He was of slight build wearing an old tweed coat over an even older green jumper. He wore cord brown trousers with an old pair of brown brogue shoes. On his head was a flat peaked cap covering most of this thin gray hair. His back was slightly hunched and his stick appeared of similar vintage to himself. A pair of spectacles suspended on a piece of string around his neck hung limply on his chest.

As I passed him, he gave me a slight nod of approval, and I wondered to myself what sort of car he had owned when he was lad and all the old stories that he no doubt could tell.

The bank was a further fifty yards up the road and I was fortunate to get a parking spot directly opposite. I switched off the engine and clambered out trying not to do my usual trick of getting my pants burnt by the exhaust pipe during my dismounting process.

By the time I'd extracted my card from the machine, collected the takings and receipt, the old man had caught up to me and was looking inquisitively at the car.

"It's a 12/40 touring chassis with a duck's back body fitted to it. It's a longer chassis than the 12/50 but I can see that there is more legroom than in the short chassis 12/50's. We should have looked at this as I always felt that that a couple more inches would have made a great improvement in road holding."

"Er yes" I replied not quite sure where this conversation was leading to.

"Have you still got the Solex carburetor fitted" he asked, his eyes not moving away from the car.

"You know we originally were going to fit Zenith carburetors to all our models, but Herbert Austin got in front of us and had the main contract to supply all of his cars with Zeniths, so we had to go to Solex. We had no end of trouble with them as they would insist in providing various models and sizes each with a multitude of jets, jet caps and carriers. I can tell you, our tuning boys had a hard time sorting those things out. They also produced very little information so most of it was trial and error. They always had a flat spot no matter what you did to them. S.U.'s, never gave us any trouble at all".

"On thing we did get right was the gearbox. It's a good box and quite simple. I noticed you changed gear rather well back there."

"Do you think" said I, "I have an old 3 litre Bentley so I'm quite used to changing gears with a crash type box."

"Old Bentley eh" he replied the note of voice changing dramatically. Old Walter built his chassis like locomotives because he worked for the railways. Then he built his engines like aero engines because he worked for the Admiralty. They weren't a bad car but very heavy."

"They won Le Mans five times" said I hoping I'd change his mind about his feeling towards Bentleys." "That they did" he replied "but they were truck like as somebody once said, Bentley made the fastest lorries in the world".

"That comment was attributed to Ettore Bugatti, but I believe it was someone else who said that" I chimed in.

"I think your right" he said "as I don't believe Le Patron would have said that, he wasn't that sort of chap. You don't want to believe all you read in books you know particularly books written these days. Even back then there were many people writing a load of rubbish. EB was ok but he came unstuck producing so many varieties of cars. If he stuck to three or types then he would have been ok. I think it was his family who pushed him along. He had this thing about his father Carlo. He always wanted to be one step ahead with whatever he did. Probably bought about his demise".

"Would you like to look under the bonnet," I asked my mind by now traveling at a million miles an hour. Who is this bloke and where did he come from I asked myself whilst undoing the bonnet strap and lifting the bonnet?

He staggers out onto the road and peers into the engine bay adjusting the glasses on the end of his nose.

"Ah yes" he replies after what seemed to be an ageless time of silence. "The sub-frame made all the difference" he says with an air of certainty. "We had a lot of problems with cracked crankcases before we fitted rubber but had hardly any troubles with the sub-frame cars".

I was going to mention that this was a new crankcase that he was looking at the old one replaced due to a crack but I bit my lip and let him continue.

"That's a big fan," he says studying the thermo fan mounted on the radiator core. "We could have done with those back then. We experimented with a fan on the cars dispatched to the Antipodes but they were useless. I guess you need a fan in this day and age"

He stepped back onto the footpath and closely studied the hare mascot (complete with his tartan scarf around his neck.) A wry smile came to his face. "You know the real story about the hare he says" looking at me straight in the face for the first time?

I get no chance to reply. "People think it was to do with the slogan about the hare leading the hounds but that had nothing to do with it. The hare was chosen because it was fleet of foot and at the time we were looking for a useful gimmick to suggest that our cars were nimble and fast unlike the rather pedestrian cars that were being built when we first started. We sort of led the field when it came time to have a mascot or a form of identification. The eagle was good, but it didn't seem to have the same connection with our cars as the hare did".

"You must have known a lot of interesting people back then" I enquired having spent the last five minutes trying to work out his age now and his age back then and then giving up when I ascertain he would have to be over 120 years old!

"Oh yes" he replied. "I had two mentors that I always looked up to. Old Fred Lanchester is an interesting cove. He had a slight stutter when I first met him, but he practiced and practiced until it went away. He was like that with his cars. He was a perfectionist. The other was Brunel. He and his old man are an interesting couple. You should have heard the arguments they used to have. His father ended up in goal for cheating at cards. By God he could drink. His son could never afford a new set of clothes so he relied on donations. Never had two coins to rub together. He's a scruffy bloke, but by God what an engineer".

With that he straightened himself up to the best of his ability and removed his glasses letting them fall back against his chest.

"Best be going" he said and as an afterthought "and take care of the old girl; we never built them to last 80 odd years, twenty more like it" and with that he turned and walked back towards the way he had come.

"What is your name" I yelled out whilst he was still in ear shot.

"John", he replied without turning around and before I could say "not T.G. John" he disappeared into thin air leaving me standing alone with one hand still holding the bonnet, mouth wide open and brain in neutral.

"Geeze", says a passer by, "looks like you have just seen a ghost, you're as white as a sheet. Has the machine eaten your bank-card or something?"

"I have" I blurt out my voice and manner now resembling something like a blundering idiot, "and not just any ghost either".

My new friend takes a wide berth around me and continues on his way his pace quickened as he tries to get a significant distance between himself and me.

I close the bonnet and get back into the car. I start her up and move off into the traffic.

When I get into top gear a voice rings through my ears.

"Thanks for showing me your car, I'll pass on your compliments to Walter Bentley when I see him next".

Chester McKaige

MEMBER'S CARS

IMPRESSION OF A 1931 ALVIS SPEED 20 SPORTS SALOON

Dale O'Sullivan

The needle on the Smiths tachometer spun around the dial and flickered between 2500-3000 rpm, it dropped as the four speed crash gearbox selector was placed into second, and after a further rage into the high revs third gear was selected with a positive business-like crunch. By now the sports saloon was gathering momentum and the mature elm trees that sided the long driveway at Cadella Park flashed by reminiscent of the narrow groves of Le Mans in the vintage years. The calliopyony of machinery, the smell of hot oil, the warmth of the 6 cylinder ohv motor fed by triple 2" SU carburetors in the cold afternoon rural Woodend air was sheer joy to any British thoroughbred enthusiast! A brief burst in fourth and the gravel driveway ended at the double gates to the property.

Dale stopped the Alvis and noseyed onto the dirt road, due to the slushy wet conditions this was the extent of our travel. The turning circle was certainly not one of the car's better features, in this area my vintage Austin would put it to shame. To select reverse a clip on the side of the gearbox has to be released and the gearstick can be pushed to the upper left extremity.

Dale then allowed me to take the large diameter sprung wheel. The first observation is, like many other vintage cars, that the accelerator is between the clutch and the brake. The hand brake is on the right of the driver in front of the suicide doors. The original leather seats are without a pattern, likewise the leather door trims which are capped by a panel of varnished wood. The wooden instrument panel is set in from the glove boxes either side, with a liberal spread of Smiths gauges for both the drivers and passengers information. In the centre of the steering wheel are levers for advance and retard of the magneto/coil ignition, hand throttle, head/side lamps and battery charge.

The engine revs freely hungry for sporting use as high lift cam engines always do. Due to the dampness and lack of use the car gets, it had taken a while to warm up and blow out the cobwebs. The steering position was a little close for me, not allowing for a straight arm pose. The column is raked to give the car a low scuttle line and has some considerable length as it disappears through the aluminium fire wall. The clutch is light in direct contrast to the effort required to actuate the anchors. The non-synchromesh gear box is in fact separate to the engine and sits below the dash, so the gear change is positive without the remote control gear linkages used on cars of a later era. The long bonnet, huge Rotax (Lucas) P100 head lamps, the domes of the mudguards and a flying radiator mascot complete the driver's view through the windscreen, which can be opened outwards for extra interior cooling on hot days.

Despite the sporty character of the engine it nevertheless was very docile and torquey, it permitted low speed gear changes and I endeavoured to get used to driving it. The changes up were no problem but due to the nature of the beast the changes down required a different technique. The engine needs a spin, double de-clutch and into the lower gear. I have achieved this manner of gear change in the Austin, with its gate change gearbox, and the method of heel and toe in an MG TC I had years ago, however I'm a little out of practice now.

The Alvis is a Speed 20 SA. SA indicating it was the shorter sport chassis, hence the compact saloon body. Saloons were usually fabricated on the longer TA touring chassis. The chassis price new was 780 pounds, which was more expensive than a Roll Royce 20hp chassis. The sport chassis had a top speed of 85mph (85/90 bhp), however while the engine was at Repco, engine tests indicated that it produced 120bhp, giving the car a potential speed of 100mph.

Dale had all the mechanical parts reconditioned in 1972 for a cost of \$3000. As Dale had the idea of converting the saloon into a tourer or a more sporting body, he has yet to renovate the car's interior.

The Alvis features one shot lubrication not unlike the Rolls Royce. The friction shock absorbers can be adjusted to give the car a firmer ride. The dipstick is not one that needs

removal to read the level of the oil. Like the Austin 7 hp, it floats on the oil and indicates the oil level on a graduation at the side of the dipstick. The head lamp reflectors dip as a whole unit, unlike most cars with dual bulbs. As standard equipment the radiator is protected by a stone guard as the expensive to replace narrow "V" shaped honeycomb radiator is in two angled section.

The Alvis was originally purchased by Lady Longmuir of the Western District, who had the Martin and King body constructed on the chassis in Australia. She must have been a very enthusiastic driver as she won the Melbourne to Sydney motor race in 1935, quite a feat considering the Hume Highway was unsealed in those days! It was traded in, in 1941 to Bryson Motors, used by the company director for a year then sold to Len Hogan of Warrnambool. Dale bought the car in 1969.

Many thanks to Dale for allowing me to explore the experience of being in the driver's seat of the Alvis. I wonder if I'd be stretching relationships if I asked if I could try out the Rolls Royce Silver Cloud one day? Or perhaps the Centurion tank, well, maybe the ride-on mower!

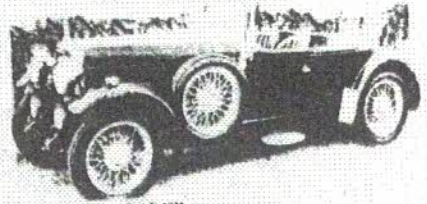
David Vaughan



Motor Manual Service Station

ALVIS

	1939	1936
	Speed 25	Speed 20
Firing Order of Cylinders	1, 5, 3, 6, 2, 4	1, 5, 3, 6, 2, 4
Carburettor Setting:	3 S.U. Carburetters	3 S.U. Carburetters
Choke		
Main		
Auxiliary Set		
Starter Jet	Air Petrol	
Location of Valve Timing Indication	Flywheel. See instruction plate on valve gear cover.	Flywheel
Valve Timing:	.006 in. .009 in. c/shaft c/shaft	
Inlet opens before T.D.C.	15 deg. 11 deg.	15 deg.
Inlet closes after B.D.C.	55 deg. 51 deg.	55 deg.
Exhaust opens before B.D.C.	55 deg. 51 deg.	55 deg.
Exhaust closes after T.D.C.	15 deg. 11 deg.	15 deg.
	1 deg. = 3.1 m.m.	
Location of Ignition Timing Indication	Flywheel. See instruction plate on valve gear cover.	Flywheel
Ignition Timing	9 deg. Distributor at full manual advance.	Advance range 27 deg.
Tappet Clearances:	Hot Hot	Hot
Inlet006 in. .009 in.	.006 in.
Exhaust006 in. .009 in.	.006 in.
Best Plug Gap025 in.	.025 in.
Distributor Gap018 in.	.018 in.
Tyre Pressures:		
Front	36 saloon 32 open	32 lb. per sq. in.
Rear	36 saloon 32 open	32 lb. per sq. in.
Toe-in of Front Wheels	Toe-out 1/4-1/8	Toe-out 1/4-1/8
Length of Fan Belt	—	—
Oil Pressure (Hot)	40 lb. per sq. in. at 40 m.p.h.	40 lb. per sq. in. at 40 m.p.h.
Recommended Lubricants	Engine: Castrol XL, mobilol BB. Gearbox: Castrol F. Moiloil A. Axle: Castrol H & Press. Mobiloil B.P.	
Accumulator Voltage	12	12
Accumulator Capacity	70 amp. hr.	63 amp. hr.



ALVIS 12/50 of 1930

One of the most popular models with vintage car owners is the Alvis 12/50 and the following information would be handy to know:—

TIMING:

The inlet opens at T.D.C. and closes 50 deg. after B.D.C. The exhaust valve opens 55 deg. before B.D.C. and closes 10 deg. after T.D.C.

The B.T.H. polar inductor magneto is likely to squeak if lubrication is neglected.

Late in the life of the car a backlash of the timing gear may announce itself in the form of a slight knock, the cure being a close adjustment of the dynamo mounting inwards towards the cylinder block. At every 30,000 miles play should be taken out of the timing gear bearings.

CARBURETTER:

The Solex is found to be best with the following settings—choke, 24; main jet, 110; pilot jet, 50-55.

And the sports model—choke, 7 or 28; 160-170 main jet; 60-75 pilot jet.

CLUTCH.

The clearance between the adjustable studs on the three radial withdrawing arms and the plungers with which they engage should not be more than .015 in. When it is intended to make changes for speed purposes, screw up the spring tensioning nut at the back of the clutch stop brake until the spring is compressed out of action, thus exerting the full force of the brake.

Appearing many years ago in the now defunct Australian Motor Sport magazine this article is worth a repeat!

SO I BOUGHT THIS ALVIS.....

by Brian Creer

"A rare and individual thoroughbred....." the advertisement stated, ".....a car for the sportsman who is irked by the commonplace." On reflection, one can see what a classic piece of motivational advertising that small classified was.

I arrived at the address and was brought up short by the vision before me. There stood the Alvis, like some aristocrat at a garden party. A rare one indeed, for it was one of the four-cylinder front-wheel-drive models.

I have often wondered whether the seller had studied stage management. Certainly, his placement of the car – at the summit of a curving, tree-lined driveway – was superb. Beyond it rose a brace of antique wrought-iron gates, while a few feet away a panelled Tudor entrance hall beckoned with cool shadow. An ex-university student fabric bodied Austin Chummy would have looked like a Rolls in such a setting!

The Alvis was 13 ft long, yet its tapering bonnet, and the fact that the driver occupied only the last third of its length, made it look enormous. Wire spoke centre-lock wheels and cycle guards simply reeked of the banking of Brooklands. The pointed tail and vertical steering wheel suggested Le Mans, in the W.O. Bentley days.

The fact that it was painted (poorly) a faded blue and the upholstery was showing horsehair every few inches, went unnoticed. On the brass radiator shell was the revered re triangle and beneath the bonnet reposed a bulky sculpture in cast iron and aluminium, coloured red and black, with polished metal trim.

I located the owner, who quickly set about extolling the virtues of the vehicle. He seemed somewhat nervous and over-willing to answer questions.

Features were rapidly pointed out as we circled the car: the Roots-type supercharger (it's supposed to deliver 91/2 lb but I've never managed more than four...."); the massive magneto ("...converted from an Avro Anson aircraft maggie...") and the long torque-rod which connected the right-hand floor change with the nose-mounted gearbox (".. gotta watch that – sometimes comes out...").

The FWD Alvis was powered, he told me, by an OHC engine, which was virtually the famed 12/50 motor turned back to front. With the blower at full chat the motor would touch 5000 rpm to deliver a road speed of 80-85 mph. Now... would I like to try it?

A short, ear-shattering hurtle around the local streets convinced me that – in the interests of the local residents – I should quickly purchase this gem and remove it from the district.

I suppose one should be practical at such times and inquire about gap settings, fuel consumption, timing, castor and camber figures and the like, but sporting vehicles are bought, not with the head, but with the heart.

So I bought this Alvis and from that moment it became a **MONSTER!**

Two days later I arrived to collect my prize, only to find that the seller (cunning chap) was out. He had, however, left a note, which said, ominously: "Good Luck". Below this cheery greeting was scribbled a list of instructions for starting:

1. Turn on fuel tap
2. Turn engine by hand four times
3. Lift bonnet and place hand over blower air intake
4. With the other hand, operate the starter motor with the solenoid button (make sure ignition is off)
5. Turn engine on starter motor for about 10 seconds
6. Get in
7. Switch on and press starter button (not throttle). The engine will fire immediately.
8. Wait for oil pressure to stabilise at about 30lb before moving.

Although this ritual may seem totally unnecessary and pointless, I can only say that, in 'dead cold' conditions this was the **ONLY** way to get the Alvis to fire. In the 12 months that I owned the car only once did it fail to start in this way. Of course, for a normal start it was only necessary to switch on the fuel, turn the engine over without ignition a couple of times and then switch on.

I have never been able to fathom the subtle difference between turning the motor by hand and then turning with the starter motor, but I very soon established that the above-mentioned 'cold start vital actions' drill was essential. Any omission or variation would result in a despondent cough and silence/

A FWD Alvis at idle, sounds remarkably like three or four Leyland diesel double-decker buses, even to the point of an accurate mimicry of the diesel 'clatter'.

To sit in a FWD at idle is roughly similar to squatting on the propeller-shaft bearing of the "Queen Elizabeth" at 20 knots during an Atlantic storm.

The seat pulsed up and down, the instrument panel shuddered from side to side, the plywood floor performed a kind of horizontal belly dance and the bonnet leaped and trembled like a thing alive.

As I released the large handbrake and allowed the long blue "thing" (my father's description) to roll down the driveway, it seemed that the entire world was jumping, jolting and quivering. I turned warily into the street, snicked into gear and gingerly toes the throttle. The jelly-like world suddenly crystallised as if by magic and the vehicle once more became a single integrated unit.

To drive a FWD Alvis is to be propelled within and all-embracing balloon of pure sound.

From the nose came the swish of large-diameter tyres and the hum of busy half-shafts. From within, the differential gears buzz and whine and the mighty straight-cut gear train between crankshaft and OHC grinds its merry song. The blower adds its whines and whistles in tempo with the gentle "huff-huff" sounds of each rear suspension arm.

I had learned to drive on an old Dodge Flying Four and matriculated via a Red Label Bentley, Hispano and Alfa Romeo. None was forgiving of the inept cog-swapper. I was therefore delighted to discover that the Alvis box allowed smooth, silent changes at a fairly rapid pace.

My homeward route took me along a multi-lane major highway and I was revelling in my purchase and its hearty sounds. I think I noticed the police car ahead at the same moment that I realised the "40" I had been holding on the big instrument before me was on the rev counter – not the speedo. It was too late to throttle off and hope. Obviously, the law had seen me overhauling him at a rate of knots. Luck was with me, however, for as I drew abreast I noticed something amiss with his vehicle. In my best "I've-been-trying-to-catch-up-to-tell-you" voice, I called: "Your back door is undone", and sped brazenly on.

In the rear-view mirror the law drew to the kerb and walked around to the rear of his vehicle to inspect the offending door. Then I was around a bend in the highway and swung off onto a side road. Just to be safe I reduced speed to a more sensibly unlawful 55 mph. This was one of the very rare occasions when the law did not ignore everything else in order to maintain scrutiny of the Alvis.

In the security of our backyard I examined the Alvis more thoroughly and it was obvious that – bodily – it was in poor shape. However, it ran like a charm and I could not bring myself to pull it sown until we had notched up a few miles together.

The first mile we notched up together ended rather embarrassingly when the gearbox torque tube detached itself and left me stranded in the centre of a peak-hour intersection. That night a small metal "fence" was erected around the tube's attachment point to prevent any early repetition of that problem.

For the next three weeks the Alvis startled motorists twice daily on our journeys to and from the city. Twice weekly "Algy" Alvis startled me as I dipped into my wallet to pay his feed bill at a petrol pump. Obviously, he was running rich. One expects a healthy appetite from a rare beast.....but 11 miles per gallon?

Two weeks of bus travel later the mixture problem appeared resolved and the Alvis was returning a steady 24 mpg around the city and showed a heady 28 1/2 mpg on a 90 mile run at a fairly constant 60 mph.

To drive a FWD Alvis on the open road is a joy as rare as the car itself.

Because the Alvis was independently suspended all round it was a remarkably comfortable vintage machine. Two massive swing-arms (like king size VW arms in reverse) and one hefty leaf spring either side comprised the rear suspension. Up front, each wheel was hung on no fewer than four semi-elliptic leaf springs arranged in superimposed pairs. Front brakes were inboard, mounted beside the differential.

The wheelbase (from memory) was 9 ft and the centre of gravity was exceptionally low. This, coupled with the usual FWD cornering virtues, made the Alvis superbly comfortable and enjoyable for rapid (if noisy) transport over reasonable distances. It was, however, occasionally temperamental when travelling in other than a straight line.

On a sharp bend one could find the front wheels moved by some unseen force to the full lock position, where they would set solid. If one was fortunate, car and driver would halt on the verge in a swirl of dust and adjectives. I experienced this interesting phenomenon only twice (Editorial note: "twice" constitutes a record – if they survive the first occasion, most people sell the car). The first time was at low speed. No sweat. On the second occasion I was motoring rather enthusiastically and, in next to no time, found myself blackberrying some 40 ft from the roadway.

To corner a FWD Alvis is to be often amazed – sometimes surprise.

Early on Sunday morning I pushed "Algy" from the garage and prepared to go through the complex ritual of a cold start. Alas – the battery was flat, and so I took the long starting handle, pressed it home and heaved. There was a slight resistance, a small snap, and the handle swung uselessly in my hand.

Examination revealed that the meshing pin had snapped and must therefore have clattered down inside the massive collection of gears, splines and shafts. Somewhere inside that polished aluminium and cast iron sculpture lay a small metal dowel. It was less than two inches long, yet it could easily wreck the beast. I changed my clothes and started work.

To dismantle an FWD Alvis is to build the Great Pyramid in reverse.

The differential, gearbox and engine sumps were drained and flushed. No pin emerged. I decided then that the massive front-chassis cross-tie must come out. This entailed freeing some dozen bolts which had remained tensioned since 1930 when "Algy" had left the Alvis factory. Three evenings later the final bolt came free and the

chassis member was painfully prised out.

The front wheels were then removed, half shafts dropped and the radiator detached. All this was necessary to reach the differential. FWD Alvises were not designed to be dismantled. In point of fact, it was necessary to remove the engine from the chassis merely to reline the front brakes! The search for the missing pin continued through diff and gearbox until it finally reached a point – some 4 ft from the front of the car – where the crankshaft was located.

The pin, it seemed, had vanished.

It was about two weeks since the search operation began when my father stooped over and pointed to the cross tie chassis member lying in the garage. "That's not what you're looking for, is it?" Following his finger, I was amazed to see the long sought pin. It was embedded in a dollop of grease, within the channel shape of the cross member. Had it been noticed the first day I could easily have removed it with one finger, through the starting handle hole.

To work on an FWD Alvis is to experience the natural perversity of inanimate objects.

This fiasco did, however, have two compensations. By the time I had reassembled everything, I had learned a great deal more about the car. The con rods were duralumin, with white metal bearings pressure cast into place. The counter balanced crankshaft was carried in three plain bearings. It was machined all over and as a beautifully balanced piece of engineering. The overhead camshaft was hollow and carried a pressurised oil feed. Engine lubrication was by means of a rotary- geared pump, operating on a demi dry sump principle. This supplied oil to the main bearings and the overhead gear. Yes – I learned much on winter's chilly nights.

The second compensation was that, by the time everything was back together again – it was SUMMER. By the height of the bushfire season "Algy" shone with a new coat of lacquer and sported a carpeted floor, neatly pleated upholstery and door trims. The chrome radiator now carried a very chic stoneguard.

Following steps on to seven of the "cold start vital actions" routine, I fired up "Algy" one Sunday morning and set off for a day with friends some 30 miles distant. The day went well and by late afternoon several of my friends were pleading for a lift home aboard the Alvis. Finally it was decided that the honour should go to Bill, since he had rarely travelled in other than staid family saloons. He had never ridden in a died – in – the – wool, fire – and – brimstone vintage monster.

I doubt if he will ever again travel in an Alvis.

With the tachometer fluttering between 45 and 50 and the three inch diameter copper tailpipe bellowing its song over three shires, we were going great guns when my passenger tugged at my sleeve and cupped his hand to his mouth. "I can smell something burning" he shouted against the miniature tornado eddying over the screen.

How difficult it is to carry on a conversation in a hurricane, while squinting to see the road between strands of hair plastered by wind to your forehead. "Don't worry," I yelled, "probably the weak spot in the muffler has burnt through."

For a short time this appeared to satisfy him, for he sat silently while I wrenched through groups of Detroit tinware. Admittedly, his knuckles were white where he clenched the grab handle and his legs were braced rigidly against the firewall. At least he was passive.

Finally, he gave a sort of twitch. "I'm getting bloody hot", he whined.

My patience was short with unbelievers, and here was an obvious unbeliever. "Well," I snorted, "stand up for a while."

Surprisingly, he took me at my word. As his nether regions ascended from the pleated upholstery a tongue of yellow-orange flame followed them. "My Gawd!" He was wild-eyed now. "My Gawd! We're on fire!"

I'm not sure whether he said anything further, because he immediately disappeared over the windshield onto the bonnet, as I locked all four wheels and skewered from the bitumen into the adjacent waist high wild oats.

There followed a short period of utter confusion, of which I have few recollections. I do recall leaping up and down on my newly carpeted floor until it split in two with a shower of sparks. I then hurled both smoking pieces into the tinder dry wild oats. Also among the oats was the seat (well alight), an old travelling rug (joyously aflame) and Bill (confused).

It seems that wild oats require little provocation to burst into flames, and the ones I had chosen to invade were no exception. A small but fierce grassfire took hold and I sweated several gallons of blood pushing the Alvis upwind of the blaze. This was made more difficult by the fact that burning pieces of Alvis kept falling off and starting fresh outbreaks, which pursued us along the roadside.

While I was thus engaged my companion ran in demented circles, beating at the flaming oats with an overcoat. I have never discovered how he came to be carrying an overcoat at the height of summer. I guess he was some kind of nut.

Between us, Bill and I learned much about bushfires that day – we extinguished no fewer than nine. Actually, there was only one big one and eight miniatures – like stepping stones to "Algy".

I learned something about people that day, too. They don't really care about fine old motorcars. While we fought to save my car and prevent a major grassfire developing, several dozen Sunday motorists passed by, but not one

offered any help. They slowed down, lowered windows, peered out and then they turned to their passengers and said: "Look.....man's gotta fire." They then drew back to the centre white line and returned to 25 mph mooching.

To have a fire in and FWD Alvis is a sobering experience.

Several hours later I finally arrived home. I had dropped Bill on the way and gained the distinct impression that he was not unhappy to see the last of the Alvis. I don't know why – he seemed perfectly comfortable straddling a chassis cross-member for the last 12 miles. For my part, I had driven from the fire scene perched upon an upended toolbox. It had been quite comfortable, really. By craning my neck just a trifle I had even been able to see over the scuttle.

I will admit, however, that things did get a trifle dicey when I went for the anchors and precipitated myself into the baggage department. Still, one learns to be tolerant.

At home I surveyed the toll of the fire. The Alvis had no floor. The door trim was torn and charred, seats were no more than blackened coil springs and piles of horsehair ash and the paintwork was blackened and blistered. To top it all, somebody put a foot through the rev counter.

In addition to this toll, Bill was minus one overcoat and spent the following week complaining of a channel-shaped indentation on his blunt end.

I shrugged and decided to get the wreck into the garage and start all over again AND THEN IT HAPPENED!

I pressed the starter, floored the clutch, snicked into first gear and started to ease my foot, when.....K-K-K-KLUNK! The gear box torque tube slipped again. In my dismay, I accidentally lifted my foot from the clutch pedal.....

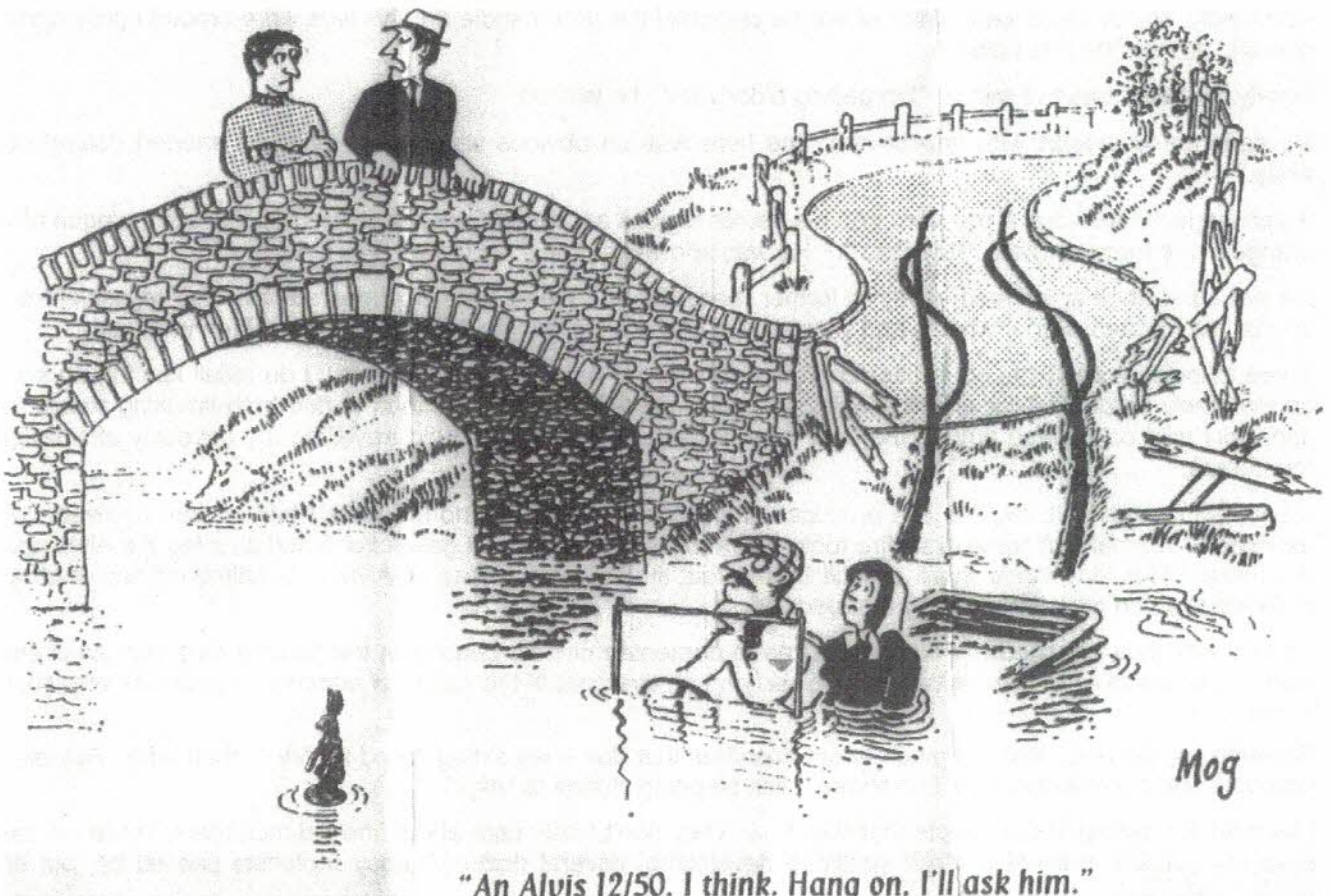
It wasn't really a big dent. More like a shallow depression. The side of the garage was large and so a small depression was scarcely noticeable. One could clearly see it on the Alvis, however. One of my "dinner-plate" huge Lucas headlights was a mangled mess and I was fit to be tied.

Some weeks later I watched silently while another enthusiast loaded the Alvis onto a trailer and towed it away. I was left with nothing save a cheque, a dented garage, some charred flooring and an immense feeling of relief.

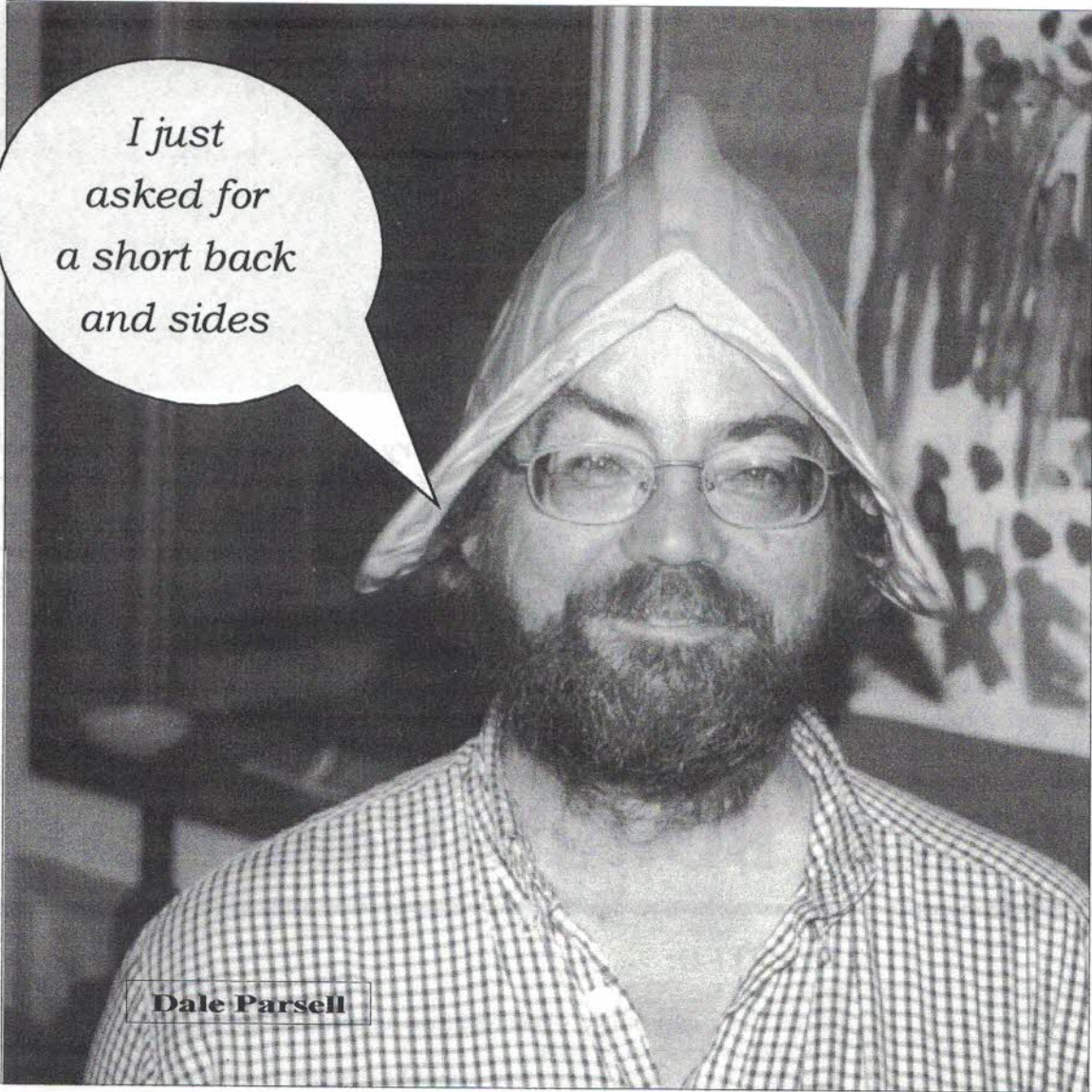
Looking back now, I can see what a cantankerous, costly, infuriating, fiddling, selfish, vice-ridden beast of a thing it was. I could have bought three cars – newer, faster, more reliable – for half of what I spent on Algy. I could have won a Concours d'Elegance had I lavished on another car the time and effort that was put into the Alvis.

And, yet..... Y' know, it's funny, but knowing all these things to be true, I also know that I would buy that car again today, given the chance.

You see: To own a FWD Alvis is a nightmare, but to lose a FWD Alvis is a tragedy.



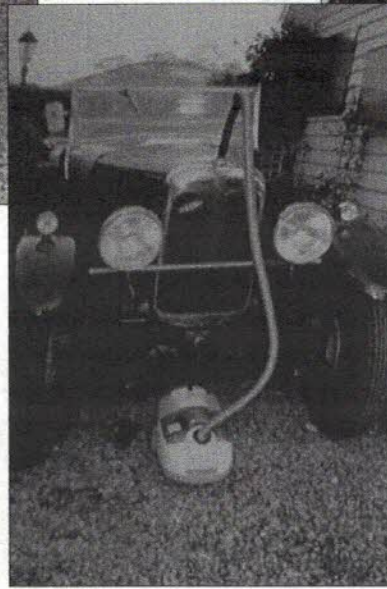
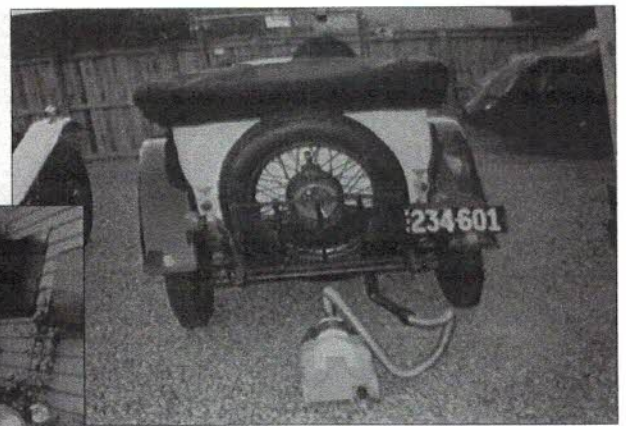
*I just
asked for
a short back
and sides*



Dale Parsell

JUNE

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



While other (normal) Tassie Rally participants were inside doing normal things, one member who shall remain nameless was outside searching for inner cleanliness or was he exercising his artistic talent, practicing for his

entry in next year's Archibald Prize? Or do I have it all wrong & it's security footage of the Mitsubishi Motor Company looking for Alvis secrets for the new Magna.

Photos by Jackson Productions (whoops!)

SWAP, BEG, BORROW or STEAL

SWAP:

SP25 for 12/70
Call Dale Hanley (07) 3219 1141

WANTED:

For a TA14
C2860 Exhaust manifold—later type (part number moulded on casting)
C1500 Lever for clutch pedal
C2256? Clutch pedal (earlier type with solid rod stem (not tube))
C2055 Radiator tie rod (scuttle to radiator)
C2233 Hub Caps
? 4 X Brass hollow terminals for spark plugs—screw onto ends of plugs—original TA14 equipment
John Murray 08 8339 4746

WANTED:

Steering box or worm for a TA14.
Ring John White (03) 9890 7066

WANTED:

Pair Bosch 10 inch diameter Headlamps JG 240 or JG280 and a pair of Bosch side lamps J120.
Ring Geoff Hood (03) 9842 2181

WANTED:

Speed 25

Hand Brake lever arm
Generator louvred band to cover brushes
2 x 1/2 Ball and wing nut as located on threaded brake rods
Pass light Glass--2 of
Gear Box mounting brackets--offside, nearside and rear
Likely, models other than the Sp25 will share the componentry.
Cheers, Michael Lavender, NZ Alvis Club
Call Collect 0064 33255704 (New Zealand)

FOR SALE

ALVIS TD21 2-door saloon by Park Ward. Chassis & Engine # 25996. Body # 18025. One of 783 built. 11 in Australia. Car suitable for restoration, straight body, good interior, pretty polished woodwork. Very original. Factory extras include sun roof, front disc brakes, wire wheels, original radio. Engine, gearbox, radiator, brakes & tank not fitted but with car. A/H manual gearbox. Comes with new water items, extra 4 outstanding Alvis wire wheels and most history since day 1. Unfortunately, spinal problems dictate selling. Price \$9500. Contact Robert Penn Bradley, phone (02) 6386 4348 or fax (02) 6386 4349

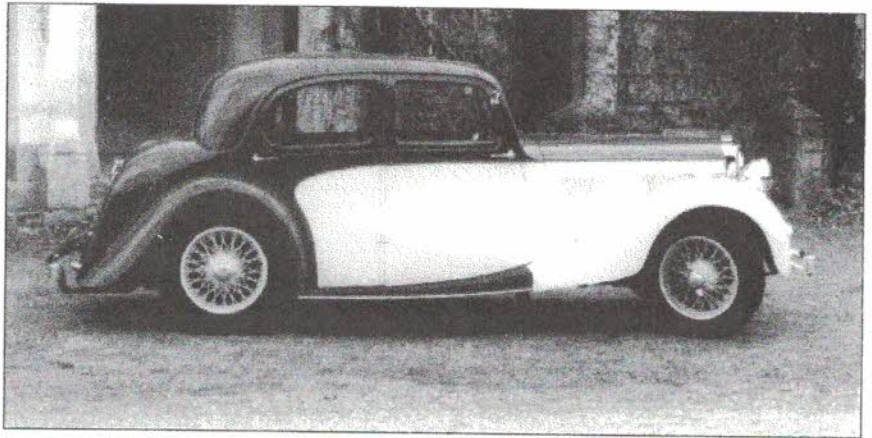
FOR SALE:

1937 12/70 Alvis Sedan.

Grey and white. Mechanically checked over & in good order. New rings fitted. Fully registered, completely re-trimmed, re-painted and re-chromed. Under 1000 miles since work carried out. 12 months full Victorian registration
\$38,000 ONO

and

Good petrol tank for a 12/50 \$150
Contact Eric Nicholl (03) 9754 5412



FOR SALE:

TC 21 formerly owned by Barry Turner as featured in October 2003 Alvibatics. Rego ADD45V. Red over silver \$20,000 ONO. Patricia Turner 02 6361 7739 or mob 0404 466 881

WANTED:

Differential centre carrier or any parts for a mid 30's six cylinder car. Crown wheel and pinion condition not important.

Dale Parsell Tel (03) 5968 5170
or dparsell@ozemail.com.au

FOR SALE:

1 pair steel front mudguards and valance panels for mid 1920's 12/50 sports tourer and 1 pair steel rear mudguards for 12/50 beetleback, all require work - the lot for \$250 or near offer. Frank Corbett (AH) (07) 3378 7280; (BH) (07) 3228 6200; E-mail: f.corbett@peddlethorpe.com.au

FOR SALE:

1951 TA21 Saloon. Black with tan sunroof, period radio. Excellent interior. Previously owned by Richard Tonkin for 20 years. \$19,000. Phone John Willey (07) 5543 3929

WANTED:

Head light reflector for a 14.75
Eric Nicholl (03) 9754 5412

FOR SALE:

Model: Alvis 12/70 Mulliner Tourer
Year: 1939
Price: 130,000.00 MYR / 49,159.14 AUD
Located in Malaysia
Photos available, contact the newsletter editor
MohdShakir.MohdKhalid@ing.com.my

FOR SALE:

(from the Coota Hoota, the journal of the Cootamundra Motor Club)

1950 Restored TA21 Sedan. Metallic Silver. Unregistered. Chassis # 24303. Imported and sold by Harden & Johnson of Sydney.
\$15,500.

Contact Derek Whitcombe (02) 6230 2812
RMB 154 Woodgrove Close, via Walaroo Rd, Hall ACT

WANTED:

TA 14 Petrol tank. TA14 Temperature Gauge.
Bob Hudson (07) 493280787
ahud3488@bigpond.net.au

If your advertisement appears on this page and is no longer relevant, please notify the newsletter editor.

John Langed

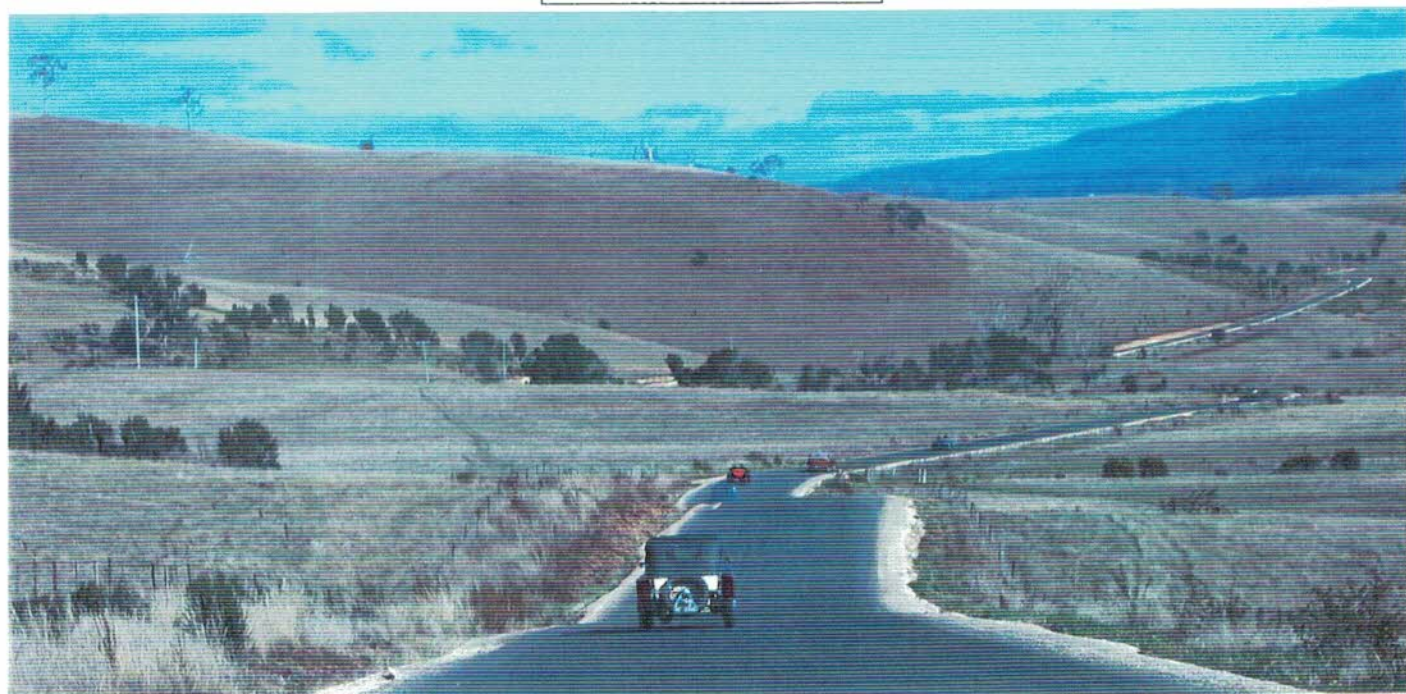
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Parkies' Porker Greeting all at Bruny



Bruny Island



Alvis Heaven!

TASSIE REMINISCES