

# *Alvic*

OCTOBER 2005

*The Newsletter of the Alvis Car Club of Victoria*



*John Link's TD21 Drophead*

*Inside*

*Bob Graham reminisces about some of the cars he has owned  
and  
Robert Penn Bradly reports on the early days of the RACV*

# The Alvis Car Club of Victoria (Inc)

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Meetings—third Friday of each month [except DEC/JAN] at 8.00pm. Newsletter Deadline—first Friday of month.  
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## ALVIVACIOUS

These days, it is difficult to write about any motoring topic without the price of petrol coming into it. This is a family magazine so is not the place for a polemic about either oil company rip-offs or governmental double dipping by imposing a GST on top of an excise. As mug motorists at the bottom of the heap we will just have to put up with what we are served. Whilst rising fuel costs matter enormously in every day life they really should not much affect our enjoyment of our proper cars. After all, few of us do enough miles in them per year for even today's price of petrol to have much effect upon the overall cost of running and maintaining the machine. Rather than get too upset about it we could learn to relax, to take it easy, to be "laid back," say to ourselves "no worries, she'll be right....." Michael Palin, a well known traveller, broadcaster and author of travelogues recently recounted the tale of Sherpa Wong Chui who has climbed Mount Everest about eight times and on one occasion was so far in front of the party for whom he was sherping that he lay down on the summit and had a forty minute kip! There was a mad Pom called Bullimore who sailed his yacht, in a single handed round-the-world race, deep into the Southern Ocean where he capsized in a storm. He lived in an air pocket beneath his upturned boat for a week before he was rescued by the RAN. Interviewed by a callow reporter as he came down the gangway at Fremantle he was asked how frightened had he been and was he going to seek counselling? "No mate, I think I'll just go down to the pub!" The Alvis ceased producing motor cars in 1967. About 15 years later Richard Tonkin visited "Red Triangle" and got talking to a guy who had been working at the Alvis up to the fateful day. "What did it feel like to walk out of the factory without a job? What did you do?" asked Richard presumably hoping for a tear jerking tale of being ripped from the bosom of all that was good in the world, whilst the adored and irreplaceable marque disappeared forever. "Can't really remember," he replied "probably went down to the pub for a few pints"..... With such sang-froid around to set an example, the rest of us should be able to lay back and relax as we donate not just an arm, but a leg as well, for a tankful of petrol!

JOHN HETHERINGTON

## WELCOME

A very warm welcome to **Keith & Louisa Williams** who joined our ranks at the Rough Red & Pie night.

### **Front Cover:**

*Every now and again a car emerges from an extensive restoration and does not receive the accolades it deserves!*

*On its first major outing, John Link's TD21 was at the 2005 National Rally and looked superb.*

*Formerly owned by Chris Thevathasan, the car had not been on the road for some years and significant work was required to bring it up to John's standard.*

*If the car had been painted bright red it may have stood out in the crowd in what was a wonderful collection of Alvises.*

*However the ice blue colour scheme epitomises the understatement of the wonderful cars that lead up to the cessation of production.*

*Congratulations John, we need to see more of the car.*

JL

## SUPPER—WARRICK HANSTED

## EVENT CALENDAR

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Oct 22 & 23 | Mt Tarrengower  |
| Oct 21      | <b>Annual General Meeting</b>   |
| Oct 28-31   | <b>"Camperdown Capers" - organised by Chester &amp; Sally McKaige 0407 113516</b><br><b>Arrive Friday night / Run on Saturday / Run on Sunday / home on Monday</b><br><b>Accommodation available Amble Inn 5593 1646 @ \$65 per couple per night</b><br><b>Ring Chester if coming</b> |
| Nov 12 & 13 | <b>VSCC 60th Anniversary</b>  |
| Nov 18      | General Meeting   |
| Dec 4       | Christmas Party at the Langs  |

An Open Letter.

During the "Summit to the Sea" Alvis tour in March we were treated to a "CWA lunch" at its best in Buchan. During lunch, for some unfathomable reason, the conversation on our table turned to mechanical matters – in particular float levels in SU carburettors. That in turn provoked discussion about carburation for aircraft, in particular, how are they able to work upside down?

In the excellent DVD of the tour, which Dale Parsell has produced there is a scene showing several of the cars departing from the lunch venue. The cameraman/commentator is Tony Hannam, taking time out from his career as an expert aviator to play part-time Stephen Spielberg. On camera I am heard asking the burning question of Tony but his erudite reply has, alas, been dropped on to the cutting room floor.

For Tony's information – just in case he is ever asked the question again I direct him to a book I have just read. On p. 179 of "RJ Mitchell – Schooldays to Spitfire" by Gordon Mitchell,\* this very question is addressed. In 1940 the Spitfires being flown in the Battle of Britain were Mark Is and Mark IIs. Their Merlin engines had float-type carburettors which would flood, causing the engine to cut when the plane was in a steep dive. This fault was exploited by Luftwaffe Me 109E pilots whose Daimler Benz 601A engines were fuel injected so did not suffer the problem, thus allowing the Me109 to out-manoeuvre the Spitfire.

Eventually the problem was overcome by fitting Bendix-Stromberg pressure diaphragm carburettors. But an immediate remedy or improvement was sorely needed and the ingenuity of a lady scientist at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, by the name of Miss Schilling provided some amelioration. She modified the carburettor by adding a small disc with a hole in it. This device earned the gratitude of the fighter pilots and became generally known in the squadrons as "Miss Schilling's Orifice".

I tell you what, Tony. Let's shoot that scene again. I've given you your new lines and we'll bar Dale from editing them out! It would make a much better scene.....

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JOHN HETHERINGTON

*Every now and again the editor gets it wrong! The policy for supper reimbursement is stated below:*

## SUPPER

**To restate the policy in regard to supper, please be reminded that if you do supper your out of pockets can be claimed from the treasurer. Please do not hesitate to ask for this reimbursement of your costs.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

c/o Barton Associates,  
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Singapore 199589

Dear John,

The other day a mysterious package arrived on my desk which, when opened, revealed a copy of *A 50 Year History of the ACCV*. I was absolutely delighted to receive a copy of this book which will become a treasured possession in my library. I am very impressed that a small group of Alvis enthusiasts has been able to produce such a memorable volume but I am not surprised having met so many active members of your club.

My heartiest congratulations for your fiftieth anniversary and again my congratulations of producing such a splendid record for this notable occasion.

I very much hope to get to Victoria later in this year so that I shall be able to see more of your Alvis activities.

All the best

Yours sincerely

Julian Collins



Dear John

I would like to applaud Chester McKaige and the Alvis Car Club of Victoria for the fine effort in producing a 50 Year History of the Club.

There is one area of the book which I feel calls for some clarification. It is on page 8 under the heading "The Ten Minutes That Shook the World," and is in the second paragraph of that section.

The statement in the book that "The Victorian Branch was an organisation for motoring enthusiasts who do not drive," was submitted to me (as the editor of "Alvibatics" at the time) by a member of the Victorian Section of the Alvis Car Club in his annual report for 1955. The sentence reads, in full, on page 141 of the April 1956 issue thus: "To describe this attitude I must borrow a paragraph from 'Alvibatics' which described the club as an organisation for motoring enthusiasts who do not drive."

Despite my best efforts I have not been able to locate that quote in "Alvibatics" and would appreciate it if anyone can point it out to me. In any case, the author of that remark seemed to be describing his disappointment that the Victorian Section was not responding to invitations "to participate in hill climbs throughout the year, the members of this club tend to neglect, for various reasons, this type of motoring."

In the same paragraph of the book it is stated that "During 1955, unbeknown to Victoria, the Alvis Club in NSW changed its name to the Alvis Car Club of Australia. The first news of this change appeared in the February 1956 edition of Alvibatics'."

Actually, the name change was "Alvis Car Club Australia" and it first appeared on page 73 of the January 1956 issue. As editor of "Alvibatics" at the time I am unable to say now who directed me to change the Club's name on the magazine but I can say with some emphasis it was an imposition with which I was most unhappy as I had vigorously argued against this change when it was debated at Club meetings during 1955.

In the context of this part of the book it looks as though the Sydney crowd was making a sort of pre-emptive move to retain an imagined superior position over the Victorian Section but a perusal of "Alvibatics" and Club minutes shows clearly the origin of this matter and its chief proponent as Reg Babb. Reg had a letter published in "Alvibatics" where he referred to the need to differentiate the identity of the Alvis Car Club in Australia from the Alvis Owner Club of Great Britain (*vide* page 8, last paragraph, of the September 1956 "Alvibatics") when the English club presented a plaque to its Australian counterpart using the above words to distinguish the origin of each club.

A curious aspect of all of this name-changing is why the Club's Constitution was not amended until the latter part of 1956. But in the June 1956 "Alvibatics," page 169, notice of proposed amendments to the Constitution to, *inter alia*, accommodate the change of name, appeared with a request for all members to give them their consideration. The notice continued to say, "When all members, including our country and interstate members, have had sufficient time to

consider the changes ballot papers will be sent out."

A letter from Marc Pain appeared in the August 1956 "Alvibatics" (at page 205) expressing his disapproval of the name change. Marc also let it be known in his letter why he objected to the Club entering a 14.75 Alvis in the Ampol Trial. This project was a major distraction which took up a lot of time for many members. Also, our Secretary at the time was in poor health and resigned from the Club a few weeks later citing his poor health and that of his wife.

All members were appraised of the motion to change the Constitution in June 1956 and if any interstate members objected to the change of name it was not made known to me, Marc Pain and, I think, the other half-dozen members who voted against the change.

A possible reason for a lack of interest in something so mundane as changing the Constitution to give effect to changing the name of the Club was the flurry of activity surrounding the preparation of the Club's entry in the Ampol Trial at the same time.

In hindsight, the combination of both the Club's name change and its folly in putting a Vintage Alvis in such an expensive motor sport event at the same time smacks of the triumph of naive adventurism over prudence and circumspection.

I apologise for the space taken up with this letter but felt that the relevant section of an otherwise excellent work in describing the history of the ACCV may have presented a view of events at the time in an unfriendly climate which, so far as I can recall, did not exist then or since.

Yours sincerely  
Eric Cunningham



## ME and SOME OF MY CARS (MAINLY ALVIS)

Bob Graham

I have owned a lot of different cars and I would like to tell a few stories about some of them.

In 1958 Bev and I bought our first the future looked rosy, I had a few bob in the bank so I bought my first Alvis.

But first let me tell you why I bought an Alvis. As I said, I have had lots of makes and once I had a Ford Model A tourer. I thought this was a good car until some nasty fellow decided he'd like it. It was stolen and I never saw it again! I thought that I would move upmarket a bit and bought a 1935 Chevrolet Master sedan - that is the one with Knee Action independent front suspension. What a horrible thing it was and it put me off American cars, so I bought a quality English vehicle.

At the time I bought it, this TA 14 saloon had two faults, one I didn't realise at the time and the second was that the brakes were not too hot. Now, aficionados of the TA 14 will know that there are compensators between the front wheels, between the back wheels and between the front and rear axles. Also the brake rods pull wedges and expand the brake shoes via a roller on each side of the wedges. These rollers are 5/16 inches diameter and I made two sets of hardened rollers (for the front axle only) of 11/32 inches diameter and fitted them. By some pure fluke this change worked magnificently: to hear all four 16" x 600 tyres scream on the bitumen is awe-inspiring. There was no sideways pull, just a dead straight stop, the back wheels would skid first and then with a little more pedal pressure the front wheels would skid.

To move on, I was offered a job in Sydney and accepted it, this was 1959 so we sold the house, packed the furniture, packed the Alvis and drove off up north to the "Mother State."

Naturally I joined the ACC NSW and met all those Friendly Sydneyites and used the Alvis in their Social and competitive events, learning some of the roads around Sydney and some of the sneaky tricks used in their Navigation Trials. Imagine a trial, the organisers have secretly split the 20 or so cars into a Red team and a Blue team, with a Red car leading out first from a control. A minute later a Blue car, another minute a Red car and so on. There was about 5 miles of reasonably tricky navigation and then the roads form a triangle about 20 miles around, with, unbeknownst to you, the Red cars going clockwise and the Blue cars going anticlockwise. You are driving along, quite happy with everything and you suddenly see an Alvis coming towards you and a minute after you see a second Alvis coming towards you. This sort of thing does nothing for confidence in your navigator!

Just for interest I add this little bit. We were on a Night Trial around St Marys out the back of Sydney on those long straight good gravel (in those days) roads with a brand new MG A Twin Cam "Been timed electronically at 124 miles an hour, don't you know." We set off for the next control and within the next half hour or so, that MG passed us five times at high speed, each time travelling in a different direction. With a bit of luck we found the control but the MG was never seen again.

All those years the Alvis was out in the weather -

we didn't have a garage—and the rain played havoc with the wooden body work. Also, the first fault I mentioned started to show. The motor had been fitted with Cord piston rings, now, all the old timers will gasp with horror. Cord rings are a dished and segmented ring 1/32 of an inch thick and use, say 5 for a 5/32 wide ring groove. They produce a lot of pressure against the cylinder walls and also against the sides of the ring grooves. Everything is fine when the cylinder bore is unworn and parallel but when the bore wears and the rings contract and expand as the piston rises and falls, these Cord rings play merry hell with the grooves. Eventually the motor in the Alvis expired and the body wasn't too hot either.

So I bought a Peugeot 203, the first of my Peugeots and it was very good little car.

In 1965 I was seconded to the company's manufacturing plant in Elizabeth, South Australia. I gave the TA 14 as is it was to Alan Griffin and Charley White of the Sydney club and I think this was the car that was burnt in Chris Higgins' bush fire disaster.

The new job in South Australia meant more status and more money - but little did I know what was to follow.

About this time I upgraded to a Peugeot 403.

After we had been in Adelaide a few months I decided I wanted another Alvis. Keith Fendley of Tweed Heads advertised a TA 14 for sale in Alvicatics. After a couple of visits and a bit of haggling I decided to buy it. I packed a small bag of tools and flew to Coolangatta airport where Keith picked me up and drove me to his home. Sometime in the afternoon we settled the deal and I drove off south. I had intended to stop overnight somewhere but I just kept on driving. At Wagga I filled with petrol and was ready to proceed, I trod on the clutch and the pedal fell off! The shaft to the clutch lever had broken. So I threw the broken bit away and fitted what was left to the clutch lever that meant that the pedal travel was about 1½ inches and getting into first gear was a bit brutal. Still, who needs a clutch once the car is moving?

Adelaide is a nice city with nice friendly people and life was on a pretty even keel.

Then the WHAMMO hit.

The boss collected nearly £1,000,000 of the company's money (they were pounds in those days and it was a lot of money in 1967) and disappeared to, we think, Brazil. Therefore I was out of a job and no income!

I had difficulty finding a decent job in Adelaide but I was offered two in Melbourne within a fortnight and back we came.

That ex-Keith Fendley, engine and chassis No 21732, was a good car and I pedalled it hard in all the ACCV events I could enter. To make up for not being able to hold a job I had to prove I could drive that Alvis. They were really competitive events in those early days, and I managed to win more than my fair share, in fact, over about 12 years I won that most coveted of awards, the Basil Bowes Memorial Trophy either 6 or 7 times. Unfortunately the Bas Bowes Trophy today has lost the glory of former times.

I did a lot of work on that car but I must say that



I could never get the brakes to the same efficiency as those on my first TA 14.

Now for a bit of history. In the fifties and sixties there were semi-informal Interstate Rallies between Sydney and Melbourne Clubs. A party would leave Sydney and another party would leave Melbourne and would meet halfway, say at Wagga. These rallies were always held over the Queen's Birthday long weekend, Saturday to get there, Sunday to socialise and check the local wreckers for any Alvis bits and Monday to drive home. After a while these rallies started to wither and in 1970 a more formal Interstate Rally was inaugurated - still just a three day event. The first of these revived Interstate Rallies was held at Narrandera and the organisers were the ACC NSW.

This Rally was where I had my first drama with the TA 14. I blew a head gasket. Chris Higgins came to the rescue, he had a spare gasket on top of his wardrobe back home in Sydney. By putting many (and I mean many) two bob bits in the public telephone, we arranged for a friend to pick up the spare gasket, drive to Mascot and then put it on an aeroplane to Narrandera. Only a day late we drove to Melbourne without fuss or bother.

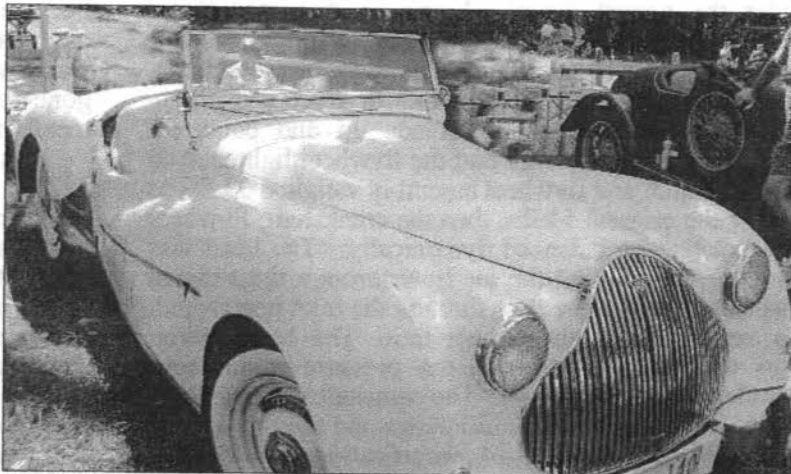
The second drama in the TA 14 was much more traumatic. Bev and I were going to Bright for a few days and taking the long way around. We stopped overnight at Jamieson and the next day were merrily on our way somewhere near Whitfield when there was a most horrendous sound from the engine. It was a noise I'd never heard before. I switched the motor off and sat there turning green and feeling quite sick. Have you ever noted how inquisitive cows are? A whole paddock full wandered over to investigate that funny car, the very concerned motorist and passenger and that peculiar noise. After a while they quietly left. I just didn't know what to do, when another traveller pulled up and asked if he could help. I started up and he said immediately "Broken Piston". Without any fuss he strolled to the nearest corner of a paddock, found a length of barbed wire, hooked us up behind his Vauxhall Cresta and towed us into Myrtleford. We stayed the night in a motel and next morning I pulled the head off. Extracted the top of No 3 piston, pulled out the push rods, put it all back together, disconnected the spark plug lead and drove off on three cylinders. However, five miles down the road there was a muffled explosion and a cloud of black smoke erupted from the bonnet sides. I kept motoring a further 5 miles until there was another explosion and another black cloud, at this point I thought it might be getting dangerous. Bev collected some empty drink cans along the side of the road and I made a duct from the oil-filler cap on the rocker box to near the carburettor intake, this giving enough vacuum to clear the sump of explosive gases, so we drove home to Melbourne, slowly.

Somewhere along the way I had the TA 14 re-upholstered and I repainted it with black guards and roof with iridescent sky blue side panels. To cap it off, Bev painted the Graham family crest which I attached to the front door. Funny thing though - nobody said anything about that. This TA 14 was a very good car, reasonably fast with good predictable handling, comfortable and reliable.

About this time I bought a Peugeot 404.

It must have been 1979 or 1981 on an Interstate

Rally to South Australia I saw Bronte Frisbee driving the TB 14. (Just for interest Bronte flew Lancaster bombers over Germany during the Second World War). I had seen the TB 14 many times parked on North Terrace when we lived in Adelaide but I had never seen it in motion. While I was not enamoured with the frontal aspect of the TB 14) from the side and the rear it



looked really sexy! About 1980 or '81 Bronte offered it for sale and I was interested, knowing what a good car the TA 14 was.

By now, I was the proud owner of a Peugeot 504 TI with the Kugelfischer mechanical fuel injection and that was a very good car. Andre Chaley and I motored to Adelaide in the Peugeot and brought the TB 14 home with only one minor problem - the water pump started complaining.

This TB 14 was Engine and Chassis No 23504 and was one of the seven or eight imported into Australia. It was painted white and that was why it was christened the "Little White Car".

The first job was the water pump. New bearings, new porous bronze bushes for the water pump shaft and a new seal, and I never touched it again and neither did it leak. The second task was to put in new plywood flooring, this time I painted it to preserve it from rain etc, and it should never have to be replaced again. The seating had very little adjustment and to put it mildly, it was not comfortable. The retaining hooks at the top of the squab went back alongside the hood recess and over a positioning pin. I cut another slot in each hook which allowed the squab to lean back a bit further and this greatly improved the comfort.

I covered a few miles around Melbourne and the next big event was the Interstate Rally to Lake Boga. Once there, the evil fairy struck and a tick-tick noise was heard in the motor. All the experts couldn't diagnose the sound and Ron Wilson was kind enough to send the TB 14 home on a trailer while we botted a ride home with Roy and Joan Henderson in the Holden. The car duly arrived and the trucky and I pushed it into the garage. I invited the trucky (a very nice young bloke) in for a beer, and can you imagine it, he said he didn't drink though he would come in for a cup of tea. I pulled the motor to pieces and found that while the block had been sleeved, the original pistons had been used with the grooves widened to take wider rings. This obviously weakened the lands and consequently they failed. Therefore I needed new pistons which I organised from Red Triangle and had a battle royal with Customs about paying duty. I think I lost in the end.

While the block was off I honed the cylinder bores dead round and dead parallel to within five microns (this is the tolerance allowed by all motor manufacturers).

With the motor re-assembled and carefully run-in, Bev and I were motoring along the Calder Highway to Simon Ramsay's place in Castlemaine when that evil fairy struck a second time. That terrible noise happened under the bonnet again! I was so disgusted that I ignored the noise and the possibility of further damage and drove home about 30 miles, not very fast though.

This time I had a set of five (one for spare and just in case) JP Australian pistons made up and balanced. While this was going on I had the flywheel lightened so that the clutch and flywheel assembly weighed 33 lbs as against the original 54 lbs, then the crankshaft, flywheel and clutch were balanced dynamically. The head was flow checked so that the air flow through the exhaust port was  $\frac{3}{4}$  that of the flow through the inlet port, which the experts say is the correct ratio. The compression ratio was changed so that the pressure in all four cylinders was 140-145 psi. The camshaft was reground to give a valve lift of 10 millimetres and the timing was altered to the late TA 14 specification of 20 x 60 degrees. For the non-engineering types this means that the Inlet Valve opens 20 degrees Before Top Dead n the centre and closes 60 degrees After Bottom Dead Centre. Similarly the Exhaust Valve closes 20 degrees ATDC and opens 60 degrees BBDC. I also had an extractor exhaust system made up to replace the cast iron manifold but I don't think this improved anything. I removed the four bladed fan from the water pump shaft and put a thermostatically controlled electric fan in front of the radiator and behind the grille. The electric fan never engaged when motoring on the highway and the temperature gauge would sit on 78 degrees for miles, only rising when stopped in traffic. When the temperature rose to about 90 degrees the fan would automatically switch on. There was a manual switch also, hidden under the dashboard.

I will list some of the performances obtained after these modifications. As a regular competitor at the Geelong Speed Trials Standing 400 metres. On my first attempt before modification I achieved 26 plus seconds (still faster than the 12/50 ducksback that competed that day). After modification about 1990 I broke the magic 20 seconds, 19.87 I think.

At Rob Roy hillclimb I managed 38 seconds. For comparison Geoff Hood in the super-charged 12/50 racing car takes about 28 seconds or less, while a 4¼ litre Bentley saloon was no faster than I.

At the 60th Anniversary of the Grand Prix at Phillip Island on the original track I was inspired by the sight of those aero helmeted drivers in their vintage racing cars and I really let the TB 14 have a go. The tacho only read to 5000 rpm which represents 80 mph. I don't know what revs the Little White Car was pulling but it was way, way past that figure and I must have been close to 100 mph, on the flat.

I recall when I was in England in 1979, I had a long conversation with David Michie. He was previously Spare Parts Manager for Alvis and was, at

that time, a Director of Red Triangle. We talked of many things and various Alvis subjects and he was adamant that the safe rev limit of the TA 14 motor was 4500 rpm. I wonder what he would have thought of the revs I got to in the TB 14. Then again, he might have known about those rotten pistons.

About 1986 I sold the TA 14 saloon and Maurie Chegwidan of Wauchope on the north coast of NSW became the eventual owner. He had that car repainted and re-upholstered and from the photos he sent me, it was a very desirable and smart car. Maurie has since gone to the big Alvis garage in the sky and I don't recall the name of the new owner.

In 1987 I bought the Speed 20 saloon, engine No 12278.

In 1991 I bought a 505 Peugeot GTI Series 11 sedan, a lovely touring car.

While all the mechanical activity was going on with the TB 14, the driveability was also being enhanced. I added a pair of relays to the headlamp circuit so that the dipswitch on the steering column worked in the correct fashion instead of that horrible floor mounted dip-switch and a pushbutton was added to the dashboard to be able to flash the headlights. The dashboard was originally covered in leather and had been painted white and looked pretty crummy.

I made a new dashboard and covered it in vinyl of the same colour as the seats. While doing this I moved the Speedo towards the centre from its left hand position and thus could fit a small lockable glove box. A lot of time was spent fitting piping and carpet around the door openings to stop the terrific draught that came in around the doors.



After that the Little White car went exceedingly well, it was comfortable and reliable and reasonably fast.

The Speed 20 was very sad when it arrived here on a trailer. It was a full ground-up restoration and I mean GROUND UP. One good point about the one-shot lubrication system is that the chassis was well protected from rust in several places.

I won't bore you with all the details but the only things not removed, replaced or refurbished were the rivets in the chassis. The aluminium skin came off and hundreds of dollars worth of air-dried Tasmanian mountain ash was used to replace all suspect timber. Many dollars worth of ball bearings were replaced and



when you realise I was buying bearings at 50% discount that makes a lot of bearings. I won't upset you by saying how many thousands I spent on chrome plating. No discount there! New steering balls and lignum vitae inserts were fitted to the steering track rods. A new wiring loom was obtained and installed although modified a bit to incorporate the flashing indicators, electric fuel pump and thermostatically controlled fan, etc. I added numbers to the wires on the wiring diagram and those numbers were applied to both ends of each wire. The motor was fully rebuilt, shaft reground, new pistons, hardened valve seats, camshaft ground to 20 x 60 degree timing - the same timing as the TB 14. Everything was assembled onto the car to make sure it all fitted, mudguards, doors, lights, everything and were then removed to send the separate items including the car to the professional painters. It took ten years to put the Speed car back on the road. Initially progress seemed so slow but at the end of those ten years it all came together with a rush. As a reward I managed to win two or three awards for the Restoration of the Year.

I only had two major problems with the Speed 20. On the way back from the 50th birthday celebrations of the ACC NSW at Jamberoo, the differential failed at antawanglo - 30 miles up in the mountains behind Bega. Andre Chaleyser was kind enough to put the Speed 20 on a trailer and bring it home for me. Geoff Hood, without whose assistance during the whole restoration I would have been lost, arranged to have a new crown wheel and pinion cut to Alvis design.

I haven't had a problem with it since.

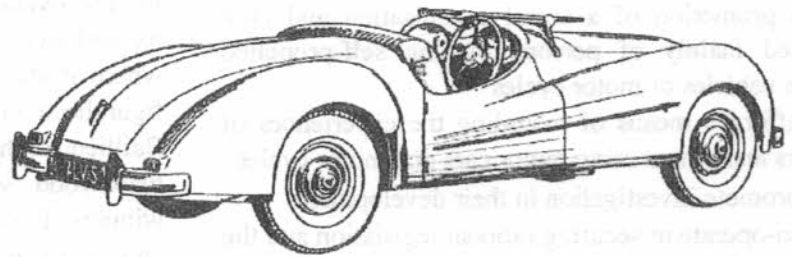
The second problem was with the cam followers. As part of the regular service I had the big circular filter in the sump out for cleaning. With astonishment, not to mention dismay, I found small pieces of metal around the filter. I investigated with a lead lamp through the opening in the sump but couldn't find the source of the

broken bits until at last, I poked my fingers up over the camshaft and felt the flanges on the cam followers, to find that four of them were broken. I had just stoned the faces of the originals flat and used them during the motor rebuild. This failure meant the motor out and the block removed from the crankcase, then it was found a couple of lobes on the camshaft were damaged. The camshaft was built up and reground, new cam followers were obtained from Club Spares and Red Triangle and the motor was on the way to re-assembly. Incidentally, the new cam followers are of a much more robust design and are common from 12/50s right through all the six cylinder Speed cars. You might begin to think my cars have been unreliable but I have told the stories like the Media, all the disasters on the front page with screaming headlines, while the good news stories are on page 8 with small headlines. Beverley and I have driven more than a hundred thousand miles of happy, delightful, carefree motoring, at times competing in Alvis events and sometimes just motoring, just driving for pleasure. In my opinion, these three Alvis cars have been great cars. The first, TA 14, 21732, was the most successful car in our Club's sporting history. The second, TB 14, 23504, was a unique car, not only in its appearance but also in its performance. The third, Speed 20, engine No 12278 is proving itself to be a worthy successor to the earlier two cars.

For me, part of the pleasure of having an Alvis, has been in the restoration work and the sense of achievement from doing that work.

The other great part of having an Alvis is meeting and making friends with all those other lucky people who own an Alvis.

To finish on a sad note. I sold the Little White Car in year 2000 and I was quite tearful when the new owner drove away in it.



*Individuality*

Many thanks to Robert Penn Bradly for the following article as he previews "The Crown of the Road," about the early days of the RACV. This will be the first of several installments.

## HISTORIC MOTORING COMMENTS AND NOTES

I was fortunate to purchase a quite fascinating book on early motoring written from historic RACV records called "The Crown of The Road" by Susan Priestley which I purchased from the most fabulous new bookshop in Harden - (Church Hill Books).

The book was written in the 1980's and covers motoring since c1900 and the foundation of the RACV in 1903 and the history of cars, road laws, attitudes of the day etc up until 1983.

Since I purchased the book I have almost been unable to put it down, so I thought I could extract a number of disjointed but interesting items which can be serialised by our Editor as space permits. Clearly, the 170 pages hard covered book can't be re-produced but I

do hope those associated items about early motoring will be of interest to Club members.

The object of the to be formed RACV Club were adopted by 55 people who formed the steering committee, the original motion as follows was carried, with one minor amendment, being the word "pleasure." This was changed as a result of a number of commercial visionaries who persuaded the inaugural meeting that motoring was not going to be a pleasure only activity as soon business would embrace motoring and the fabric of society would change its transportation patterns - how right they were!

The objects of the Club as proposed were as follows and the only change was the removal of the word "pleasure", these objects have served the RACV very well and are still intact today.

### **Extract from Page 8 - The Clubs Objects:**

"(i) the promotion of a social organisation and club composed mainly of persons owning self-propelled pleasure vehicles or motor cycles

(ii) to afford a means of recording the experiences of members and others using motor cars and motor cycles

(iii) to promote investigation in their development

(iv) to co-operate in securing rational legislation and the formation of proper rules and regulations governing the use of motor cars and motor cycles in cities, towns and country districts

(v) to maintain the lawful rights and privileges and protect the interest of owners and users of all forms of self-propelled pleasure vehicles whenever and wherever such interests, rights and privileges are menaced.

(vi) to promote and encourage the improvement, construction and maintenance of roads and highways and the development generally in the state of motoring and to maintain a club devoted to the interests and

### **Extracted from Pages 15 and 16**

"The Club organised its own reliability trial in the middle of 1905. Cars ran to Ballarat and back on a cold blustery August day and despite headwinds on the outward route, train times were still surpassed by all cars. A sports meeting with races and competitions was also held on Crooke's new Aspendale track. Then with the return of good weather in November, the second Dunlop reliability trial was held. This time the course went north from Melbourne to Sydney. On the first trial one of the competitors was a woman, Mrs Ben Thompson of Adelaide. She wore men's style trousers and drove her Wolseley into Melbourne well up among the leaders. Several other women acted as passengers, fulfilling one of the necessary conditions for entrants. In the second trial, one team was E.W. Cox and his wife. Cox had just joined the Automobile Club, beginning an association which was to last for more than fifty years.

Once again, seven of the cars reached Sydney with a faultless record sheet; and to the despair of the organizers, six of them returned from the run-off to the Blue Mountains and back, still unscathed. It was decided then to send the six on trial all the way back to Melbourne. Some howls of protest went up but back they drove over mountain roads and across the "bad" stretches on the inland plains, scraping through the notorious spoon drains which were 'indicated with a large V sign printed or painted on cardboard and tacked onto a nearby tree'.

When five cars were still virtually equal at the Coburg finishing point, the Dunlop trophy which was the prize for the overall winner was shared between them and handed over to the custody of the Automobile Club, where it still remains. It is a weighty bronze winged figurehead mounted on a blackwood base. The W.L. Baillieu trophy, a crystal bowl mounted on bronze and blackwood was awarded to one of the sectional winners, E. Manifold's Napier, driven by C.B. Kellow and it to was handed to the Club. The publicity generated by such a long trial was enormous. It was estimated that sixty thousand people watched the parade of the finalists in from Coburg to the Haymarket." It wasn't long before roads became a major issue, the following must be close to most motorists hears even today.

### **Extracted from Page 29**

"It was recognized that farming could never be sustained without free-flowing arteries of transport which gave access to markets and this was the rationale

which finally produced the Country Roads Board. Early in 1913, a three man Board was appointed and under Chairman William Calder it produced its first report eighteen months later after a prolonged and intensive tour of nearly two-thirds of the State.

In Gippsland in the Otways district and in the north-east, the main thoroughfares had never been properly defined. They were simply 'natural roads' carved out by horse and bullock drays taking the most practicable route they could find across the landscape. Sometimes the bush had been cleared from the roadway; sometimes the track merely wound in and out of the timber. In Winter when the wheel ruts became simply a muddy morass, these roads were impassable for wheeled vehicles. People went about on horseback, carrying what they could manage on pack horses or on small horse-drawn sleds.

In the Western district, roads through the prosperous well established rural shires had been solidly constructed some forty or fifty years earlier on a 'Telford' base of packed stones, each hand-hammered carefully into place. But with little maintenance, the top layers of gravel had been allowed to wash away, exposing rubber tyres particularly to the tearing roughness of the underlying stones. The main Sydney road and the northern road to Bendigo and beyond had once been similarly constructed but in places huge holes had developed from washaways. Other road hazards where both motor and horse traffic could bog were the patches of sandy drift which occurred on coastal roads, in the Mallee, and on some river plains.

Although there was a sense of adventure in negotiating such roads and this added spice to early motoring tours, too many hazards became simply irksome deterrents. For farmers trying to produce food in marketable quantities, impassable roads meant economic ruin. The three Country Roads Board men found in 1913 that many Gippsland selections had been simply abandoned, even though two main railway lines linked Melbourne to Gippsland. One went to Bairnsdale, the other to Port Albert but however, short the distance between farm and railway station, farmers were too often unable to get their produce out or any but the most limited supplies in. Traders in country towns suffered as well when their potential customers were marooned in a sea of rich Gippsland mud."

Even more interesting is this section covering road rules and construction methods.

#### **Extracted from page 31**

"In some areas the authorities were able to use the tarry residue from the retorts to bind the top layer of stone-metal, the 'macadam' into 'tarmac'. Some main streets could even be stone-flagged or wood-blocked.

Melbourne's wood-blocked streets had been laid down progressively since the middle of the 1880's, while the city's smaller streets and lanes were paved with bluestone after 1891, when the metropolitan scheme of sewerage and drainage began.

When tar was freshly applied, it presented a messy problem to motorists and in 1908 the Club sent letters to the City, St. Kilda and South Melbourne Councils suggesting that such roads be closed until the tar had hardened. Wood-blocked streets were given regular dressings of sand and tar to provide horses hooves with a better grip especially in wet conditions and motorists soon found that a worn surface also made rubber tyres skid dangerously. The Club became the channel whereby these danger spots were pointed out to the appropriate Council.

Concern about roads was concentrated enough for the Club to convene a roads and signs sub-committee in December 1914. Its immediate preoccupation was direction signs and George Broadbent was instructed to survey first the road to the holiday resort of Sorrento, then the other main routes out of Melbourne. By May 1915 he had identified corners that needed sign posting on the Sorrento, Gippsland, Bendigo and Ballarat roads. Accordingly 187 signs were ordered, painted an imperial blue with the words lettered in aluminium leaf and the whole finished with carriage varnish. In January 1916 the signs were delivered to local Councils, some of whom proved rather dilatory in erecting them. By then, Broadbent had determined where signs were needed on the roads out of Albury, Mansfield Alexandra and Warnambool, while other western district routes were about to be surveyed.

The Club also prepared a quantity of Drive Slowly signs and Danger signs. These were triangular and enamelled in red; some had glass reflectors to show up at night. Churches and schools could also apply for an appropriate sign to be put up on the roadway near them to warn motorists to be both quiet and careful when driving past. However, these were not issued after 1920 when the first batch was exhausted.

As CRB road gangs began to rebuild the roads down the peninsula, up into the Dandenongs and out into Gippsland, calls on the Club's touring department became heavier."





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Dale Parsell (dparsell@ozemail.com.au)

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*John Lang .....ed*

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