The Alvic

AUGUST 2006

BOOK FOR BOYS & Girls

The Newsletter of the Alvis Car Club of Victoria

Alvis Car Club of Victoria (Inc)

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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.
POSTAL: ACCV P.O.Box 634, EMERALD, VIC 3782
www.alvis.org.au

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PRESIDENT
John Hetherington, 71 Hawkins St, Shepparton, Vic 3630
Tel 03 58216 422 Fax 03 5831 1586 jfh@mcmedia.com.au

VICE PRESIDENT
Chester McKaige,
129 Tucker Rd, Bentleigh, Vic 3204
Tel (03) 9527 8423 emc87134@bigpond.net.au

SECRETARY
Dale Parsell 14 Symons Rd, Avonsleigh, Vic 3782
Tel 03 5968 5170 dparsell@ozemail.com.au

TREASURER, PUBLIC OFFICER & 3 Litre Spares
Ian Parkinson, 38 Nobelius St, Emerald, Vic 3782
Tel/fax 03 5968 2927 parky@alphalink.com.au

CLUB CAPTAIN
Alan McKinnon, 195 Lower Heidelberg Rd, Ivanhoe, Vic 3079
Tel 03 9497 3414 alan@antiquetyres.com.au

NEWSLETTER EDITOR & DISTRIBUTION
John Lang P.O.Box 129, Gisborne, Vic 3437
Tel/fax 03 5426 2256 jdmelang@bigpond.net.au

SPARES REGISTRAR &Committee Person
Bob Northey, 2 Orrong Rd, Elsternwick, Vic 3185
Tel 03 9528 6767 bob.northey@qenos.com

PVT SPARES & Committee Person
Eric Nicholl, 17 Ternes Rd, Upwey, Vic 3158
Tel 03 9754 5412

LIBRARIAN & Committee
Frances McDougall, 424 Wellington St, Clifton Hill, Vic 3068
Tel 03 9486 4221 macily@tenex.com.au

COMMITTEE PERSONS
Richard Tonkin, P.O.Box 280, Greensborough, Vic 3088
Tel 03 9710 1465 rtonkin@austarmetro.com.au

Andrew McDougall, 424 Wellington St, Clifton Hill, Vic 3068
Tel 03 9486 4221 macily@tenex.com.au

Chris Higgins, 41 Cootamundra Ave, West Rosebud, Vic 3940
Tel 03 5986 1510

VINTAGE SPARES
Geoff Hood, 37 Thomas St, E.Doncaster Vic 3109
Tel 03 9842 2181

TA14 & 3 Litre SPARES
John White 30 Lyndhurst Cres, Box Hill, Vic 3129
Tel 03 9890 7066

Front page: PARP, PARP!

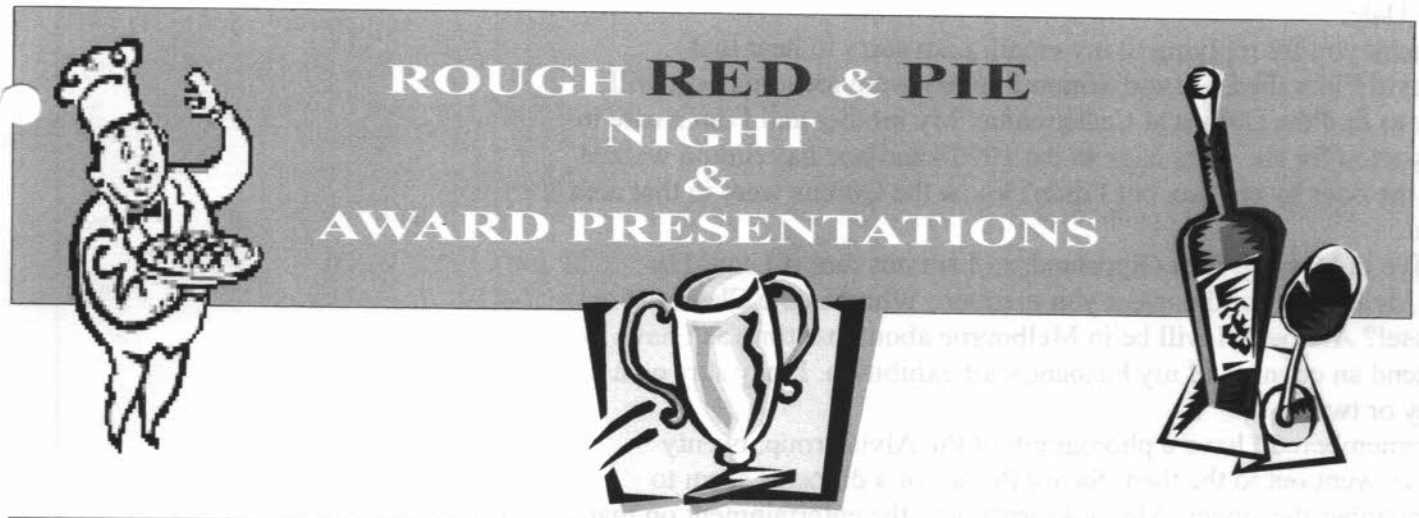
ALVATICINATION

In the last issue of "Alvic" I asked for suggestions from members for guest speakers at our monthly meetings. The response has been deafeningly silent! Surely "someone knows someone who……"? If you don't know someone, how about yourself? As a club we are blessed with members who follow or have followed diverse occupations and have wide interests. So it is reasonable to suspect that there are tales out there waiting to be told. Let us hear them.

Now, for something completely different. In "The Automobile" (UK) a few months ago there were two articles by Bruce Lindsay about an attempt in Adelaide, just after WWII, to build a light car. Clisby, Thomson and Wiles are the names associated with the venture which was so unsuccessful as to produce only a very few cars, of which just one may survive. To encourage the fledgling industry the Federal Minister for Industry offered a bounty payment for locally produced car engines. In the hope of securing such a bounty a car was driven from Adelaide to Canberra in about 1949. It must have been a slow trip because it took a minute to accelerate from 10 to 40 mph! Even though slow, the trip was to no avail because the bounty had been scrapped. Worse was to come: when the car was prepared for its return to Adelaide it was found that its engine hade so little compression and would probably never have re-started had it been stopped. So it was kept running for the whole of the 800 mile journey home. "SA car drives non-stop from Canberra to Adelaide" was the spin put on the affair by the media of the day.

Spin is not new and has over the years been applied in liberal doses in the automotive industry. Those dreadful "clutchless" transmissions used in British cars in the fifties and sixties bring to mind a rich vein. Does anyone have a good tale of spin? Your editor and fellow members would like to hear it.

JOHN HETHERINGTON



2006 EVENT CALENDAR

18 Aug	***General Meeting—*Rough Red & Pie. Club Trophy Presentations** ***PLEASE NOTE THERE IS A CHARGE OF $5 PER HEAD for food!***
20	**Tram Museum & Lunch at the Old Kilmore PO** ***Richard Tonkin & JFH***
	See enclosed Flyer
15 Sep	**General Meeting**
20 Oct	**Annual General Meeting**
29-2 Oct	**Weekend Away - *"The OTWAY ODD-Y-SEA" organised by the Langs—SEE ENCLOSED FLYER—Some detail has changed!***
29	**Run to Trawool—Ray Newell**
17 Nov	**General Meeting**
3 Dec	**Christmas Party at Frank & Pam Mornane's home in Brighton**
19 Jan	**Start of Year BBQ at Point Cook aerodrome**
18 Feb	**General Meeting**
25 Mar	**Kalorama**

EDITORIAL NOTE:

"DARE TO BE DIFFERENT"

There are many facets of an interest in old cars.
Some members lives are over when they finally finish the restoration
Some can't wait to drive the car and get some additional enjoyment from the project.
Others want someone else to maintain the car and for it to be ready to drive on an outing.
Probably all of us have had a dabble in Automobilia.
The ALVIC cover usually carries one or more photographs of Alvis cars—this month we have a piece of Automobilia with an artistic impression of a 12/40 or 12/50 and some textual changes to suit the purpose.

Thanks to Mike Osborne for this contribution.

JL.....

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *et al*

Hi Dale,
Thank you for replying to my email. I am sorry to hear that David Elder died. He and Simon Ramsay were great mates. I will try to find the Quinns at Castelmaine. My brother and I ran a cafe in Kyneton for six years back in the 1990's and one day Simon walked in the door by chance, but I didn't know the Quinns were in that area too.
I live in Metung, East Gippsland, so I am not sure if I could be in Melbourne for the event you mention. Where is the Clematis Hotel? Although I will be in Melbourne about that time as I have to attend an opening of my husband's art exhibition. I may stay on a day or two.
I remembered I have a photograph of the Alvis group, twenty of us went out to the then, Savoy Plaza, for a dinner. I seem to remember the singer, Albert Argenti, was the entertainment on that night. I will take a copy for your records, it is a great photo.
I am a writer, and I often smile at my first attempt to write a poem when I was sixteen. This was my first ever attempt:
ALVIS
The crowd rushed to see the name of the car with the elegant line,
"Alvis," they cried as it roared up the hill easily winning the climb.
The poor old Bentley looked quite forlorn as the Alvis sped up the hill,
And it seemed to shudder as if the scene had given it quite a chill.
Then the old Bentley seemed to brighten as a Fiat came to rest beside him.
This made him feel quitebig again, so he tried to forget the Alvis win.
GABRIELLE SMITH
(aged 16)
I now blush as such simplicity, but interesting to find I tried to give the cars feelings. I guess that is how we loved them.
I hope to get to one of your meetings in the near future. I am amazed you all still meet in Glen Iris. I will pass your email on to my brother as he also took part in the Alvis functions and was a member of the Vintage Car Club.
I will be in touch. Kind regards, Gabrielle.

Dear John,

Many thanks for the Alvic Newsletter and also the badge. You wouldn't have known about it, but your letter arrived on my birthday so was of special interest. I was unaware that Warwick Hansted was going to share my letter and photos, but was happy that he did so. The Newsletter brought back many happy memories. As an erstwhile amateur printer, I thought the magazine was very well done. The photos have printed very well.
As you can see, my address has changed of late. Now being in the Shepparton area, who knows, I might bump into John Hetherington one of these fine days.
As I turned 78 yesterday, I can assure you that even though I might be 'vintage' myself, my connections with 'vintage' cars are well and truly confined to the memory box.
Yours sincerely,
DOUG MOREY

Letter to the Editor! 30.7.06

In the July issue of Alvic, in "letters to the Editor" there was a letter from one Rev. Morey, relating to his motoring activities in early 1950 with an Alvis & Vauxhall, with photos of the cars and others he had owned over the years.

The story rang a bit of a bell with me, because the photos of the Alvis looked very similar to my car when I bought it, and the chap I bought it from also had a Vauxhall for sale.

So I rang the chap I'd bought it from, who is also an old car person, to confirm my thoughts and was able to confirm the fact, yes it was the car I had bought in company with another Alvis owner.

The reason that we – me in particular, wanted the car was in fact two fold, myself for the fact it had front wheel brakes, and all the proper bits, like right gear box, shockers, instruments and steering and my friend for the engine, as he had had a major engine failure, because one of the centre main bearing studs had let go cutting off the oil supply to the mains.

My own car as well as only having two wheel brakes, didn't have the right gear box, no shockers and non original body, even the radiator had been moved forward and dropped a couple of inches and a radiator shell of unknown make put in front of the Alvis one – so you can see why we were keen to buy the car, which we did.

So what next – well my friend took the engine for his car, which by the way was the ex Rex Loose Ducksback, I took the engine from my car and put it into the one we had bought and took my first Alvis to bits some of which I still have.

After a while I decided to build a Beetle Back body and some many years later I finally got it done and its first run was to the 1991 National Rally held in Echuca.

The ex Rex Loose car was sold to another friend who, many years later, sold it to Nigel Scott who is in the throes of completing the rebuild my friend had started many years ago.

So thought I would write to tell you about the continuing story of the ex Morley car – I dare say other members could tell similar tales.

Keep up the good work with Alvic.
Cheers & regards
Vic Elliot.

Dear John Lang,
Thanks for the email re letter from Vic. Elliot.
It was interesting but I have to resist the temptation to accept the honour of being the owner of his Alvis years ago.
I took my Alvis to Adelaide and sold it there to a chap who wanted the engine and found it had serious problems. The body was one I had constructed myself and was in no way original. I don't think it had been a ducksback, but when I got it there was very little body on it to indicate its original shape.
The Vauxhall I also took to Adelaide and sold it. It was complete and original but I have no idea what became of it.
Sorry not to be able to respond positively to an interesting tale.
Yours,
Doug

Part 4

- PAUL BAMFORD'S FWD RESTORATION -

The Tail Light

I had no tail light, and although I knew that the original light was one of those little one inch diameter Lucas lights that look like they would be more at home as a dash lamp, I really wanted something bigger.

There have been many articles written in the Register Bulletin about using large plastic truck lights so that visibility is enhanced. I agree with having good rear visibility at night, but don't understand why it needs to be provided by large, modern, plastic, lights.

I eventually found the taillight that I was looking for at a swap meet (UK, read; Auto jumble). The light was a Lucas 40/AB. The man on the stall specialized in Vintage Lucas stuff, and was able to show me that these lights appeared in a 1930 catalogue that he had and that he thought they had also been available in an earlier catalogue that he had seen. The light was fairly battered but the body was made of brass with the little Lucas "Prince of darkness" Medallion and so I decided that I could gently press it back into shape. This I did but the rim defied all attempts at getting the sharp creases out of the narrow edge. I eventually gave up and machined a new one from solid bronze.

I turned it in my small lathe using small form tools until I had an exact replica of the original turned to a wall-thickness of only 20 thousandths of an inch. I then parted it off the bar. The lamp originally had the lens divided in half by a thin metal panel against the glass on the inside of the lamp. This plate had a hole in the top and a corresponding one in the bottom half.

There was a horizontal metal plate between the upper and lower half of the lamp with the brake light in the top half and the tail light in the bottom. This had the globe holders attached and was made of steel and rusted almost beyond recognition. I decided not to use this and installed a double pole globe holder that would accept a double filament stop/tail globe. Now instead of only half of the light in use when the taillight is on, the whole 3 inch diameter light is seen and becomes blindingly bright when the stoplight comes on. I think I will keep my eye open for another one to put on the other side of the car. Lucas made similar lights to these lights for many years and they are still seen for sale described as "pork pie taillights" but the later ones are made of steel not brass.

Windscreen Pillars and Windscreen.

I wanted the windscreen to be the same as the original screen used for the car and was lucky enough to get drawings of the original screen from Peter Livesey. I was so keen to have this information that I had the patterns for the windscreen finished and ready for sending to the foundry within 24 hours of receiving the drawings.

Making the castings was the easy part. Polishing the castings was time consuming but not difficult. Turning the bosses where the windscreen pivots to fold flat, and cutting the 28 teeth that engage each other so that the screen can be locked at various angles is difficult. This should only be attempted by experienced machinists with a large lathe and vertical milling machine with a dividing head. It is a bit like going to the circus and receiving the warning "Don't try this at home!"

In most cases it would be possible to take a pair of existing windscreen pillars to a foundry and they would be able to cast a new pair from them for you. That is always an option if someone will lend you a pair for a while.

To prepare the originals for casting you will need to fill any holes with "Plasticine" or "Plaster of Paris" or some other easily removable substance. Areas that will need to be machined will need to built up and this can be done with cardboard and glue. When threads will need to be cut the original thread can be covered with a few layers of plastic insulation tape. The castings will come back about a sixteenth of an inch per foot shorter than the originals due to shrinkage as the molten metal cools, but I don't think anyone will notice that. It would make no difference to the operation of the hood at all. If they are of the pivoting variety they could be then sent for machining at a reputable machine shop.

If they are rigid then just polish them up as you would also polish the pivoting pillars after machining. When polishing any castings it is important to always "establish a surface." This means that whether the surface is curved or flat the surface should be free from waviness and irregularities. To do this, file the surface to make it what it was meant to be. If it is a cylindrical surface, then make sure that it is only curved in one direction and that the curve is true to the radius and that the surface is not wavy.

The same goes for flat surfaces. They should be FLAT. This can only be done satisfactorily with a flat single cut file. I use a "Flat Smooth" that I keep specially for filing non ferrous castings. Once these files have been used on steel they seem to just glide over "yellow" metals as though they are greased.

When the surface is "established" simply polish by hand starting with 240-grade "Wet-or-Dry" polishing paper. When all of the casting and file marks are gone, polish at 90degrees to the original direction with 380-grade paper. When you can no longer see any of the 240-grade scratches then change direction again and use 600-grade paper. If the only scratches you see in the surface are 600-grade scratches then the pillars are ready to fit to the car. Don't forget to drill and tap the holes for the rearview mirror before plating.

When all of the holes have been drilled and chamfered, (as all holes should be) then the pillars are ready to take to the platers. (After removing any scratches that appear during fitting.)

The windscreen frame is an interesting exercise and can be done at home if you have access to oxy/acetylene equipment for silver soldering. I was able to buy the windscreen channel from a local industrial supplier of non-ferrous plate and extrusions. They carried two types of channel. One was a channel section with another small channel underneath the bottom of the "U" shape. It was designed to take a rubber weather-sealing strip to seal the gap between the screen and the scuttle. The outsides of the vertical sections of the "U" are slightly bowed out and fuller in the middle section. The other section that they sold was exactly the same on the outside but did not have the groove underneath for the weather strip.

This section is made to go across the top of the screen. I bought one, two-metre length of each (as that was how it was sold and they don't cut it size).

To start making the windscreen I fitted the windscreen

support pillars to the car and then cut out a section of 10mm MDF. (Medium Density Fibreboard) exactly the size that I wanted the finished screen to be. This was made to fit the pillars exactly and small wood screws were inserted through the holes in the pillars and into the MDF to hold the screen in place. I then sat in the car and determined where the wipers should go and where I should mount the wiper-motor. I also used a compass to draw the arcs that the wipers would swing through and also the angle that the wiper-motor would sweep.

While I was there I also marked where I would like the rear vision mirror to be. The MDF panel was then removed from the car and the width of the windscreen channel was marked on the board with mitre joints laid out in the corners. When you are happy that you can no longer improve on the design, then you will need to remove from all around the edges of the board, an amount equivalent to the thickness of the bottom section of the "U" shaped channel. Remember that the section without the seal groove has a thinner base.

As the windscreen channel has a 10mm groove for the glass it will fit straight over the MDF board. Start with the top section to boost your confidence, as that it usually a straight line requiring no bending. Mark out the mitre joints at the end and cut to length with a hacksaw. The use of a mitre box is highly recommended and even so, it is good idea to leave the channel about 1mm too long in order to have something to file to get a good fit when finishing off.

Next cut two pieces for the sides from the section that has the sealing groove, leaving a little extra on both the ends for finishing off. To bend the radius in the side-pieces of the screen at the bottom corner of the screen you will need to make a 10mm thick steel form with a slightly smaller radius than required in the finished screen hack-sawed and filed on one side of it. This should just fit nicely into the channel. Using good soft-jaws (two short pieces of one-inch aluminium angle 4 inches long) to protect the work.

Place the radius form in one end of the side channel and hold it carefully in the vice. Wrap some rag around the channel section and with your bare hands bend it around the form. Don't try to do it all at once and keep fitting it onto the MDF board to see if it is bent far enough.

When you bend it you find there is a certain amount of spring-back. If you can arrange to have something almost touching the end furthest from the vice when you start to apply pressure you will be able to see how much it has actually moved when you release the pressure. This is a great help as it is difficult to tell when it has finally taken a "set" and is not going to spring back. Take care to keep the straight part straight and keep checking this to make sure it is only bending where you want it to bend.

This is tough work and it took me about seven hours of heavy work to get the three channels right. DO NOT be tempted to use heat, as this will cause the channel to tear. DO NOT try to temper the channel to soften the metal as this only makes it "bad tempered." It will bend everywhere and be uncontrollable.

When the curve fits nicely when fitted onto the MDF master template then transfer the mitre joint lines across to the bent channel sections and cut as previously described. The three pieces of channel should be now fit onto the MDF master with perfect joints that would be hard to fit a piece of paper into.

The two bottom joints can now be silver-soldered together while still on the MDF master. It will smolder and smoke a little, but will also hold everything straight while it is being soldered.

The top of the screen needs to be detachable so that the glass can be slid into it. To do this I used a brass angle piece each side. These were silver-soldered to the top inside the channel and the other end of the angle piece went down the inside of the vertical side channel. Holes were drilled through the side channel into the angle piece using a 1/8-inch drill. The holes in the angle piece were tapped 5/32-inch, and the holes in the screen channel were opened up to 5/32-inch and then countersunk to take 5/32 countersunk head screws.

To attach the screen to the pillars I slid 3/16 BSW square stainless steel nuts down the groove that is made for the rubber seal and put corresponding 3/16 stainless screws through the pillars and into the nuts held captive in the grooves. The windscreen is finished and fitted.

Hood Bows

The hood had me really confused. When I tried to draw up a hood system. I found that if it was drawn high enough to fit over my head, then it landed too far back to drop into the hood trough in the bodywork. No amount of moving the pivot position would give me what I wanted. Thankfully, Peter Livesey was able to come to my aid and said that the hood on his car fitted perfectly and that he could supply me with drawings as soon as he could find them. As it turned out I made a trip to the UK before he found them and I was able to spend some time drawing up the hood in Peter's garage.

I only had a limited amount of time and so I asked every question I could think of and took every photograph that I could. I wanted my car to turn out as nicely as Peter's had. After seeing Peter's hood it all became obvious. The hood pivot was on a pivoted arm of its own. This is an excellent design as it allows a hood to take up less room when it is folded.

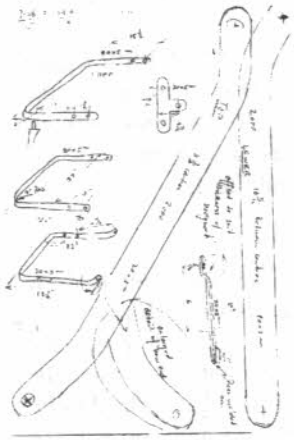
I have since found that this design of hood is also common on 12/60's. These hoods are made from all metal section and don't have the normal wooden hood-bows. I wanted to put just a little rounded shape into the tops of the bows so I made wooden overlays to go over the metal tops that would then be riveted on. I laminated these from two 1/4-inch thick wooden strips.

As with the body timbers, these were done by soaking for several days and bending with a heat gun. (See bodywork). The bows themselves were bent up from 5mm x 20mm mild steel strip, the finished hood was fitted to the car and all of the "lift-the-dot" holes were drilled.

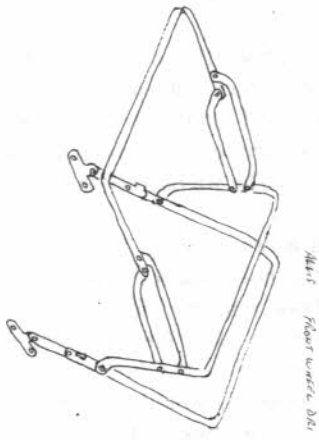
When riveting the hood together it is important to put a washer over the rivet in between the hood arms, so that the arms don't rub against each other when they are raised and lowered. This helps to stop the paint being scraped off when the hood is operated. Make sure that the edge of each metal strip used has a small radius, as paint seems to shy away from sharp edges and leave a very thin coat there. Another advantage is that the paint is less likely to chip off from a radiused edge. Make sure that the washer is made from stainless steel or brass to reduce that little patch of rust that lives next to rivets in hood bows!

Another refinement that is totally worth doing is, putting a paper washer each side of the brass washer just mentioned. The reason for this is that when the hood is first riveted it will be very tight and stiff to use, until the rivet and washer wears a little, and some clearance become available. If a paper washer is placed on each side of the brass washer then the paper gets torn to pieces the first time the hood is used, and this gives one-and-a-half thou clearance each side of the washer. This is an old fitter's trick for rivets that form pivot points. Hoods are not particularly hard to make if you have

the drawings for them. If you don't then find someone who has a similar car and draw your own! Remember that some parts may need to be made in left and right hand configuration. Where possible make left and right parts by clamping them together so that they are exactly the same length and have the holes on the same centre distances. All you need is a hammer, a hacksaw, a file, and a drill.



These are the bits you need to make



This is how it goes together

Made from drawings taken from Peter Livesey's car

Original Chassis Lubrication Box for the firewall

The later FWDs had an Alcyl central chassis lubrication system and it was something I had always wanted to fit to the car. They were made by Ripaults Ltd. London. I believe that they were fitted to the driver's side firewall. Fig.1 of the owner's manual shows a general view of the chassis from just behind where a passenger would sit if it weren't a bare chassis. There is a loop of flexible piping behind the accelerator and coming out behind the brake and the little "banjo" end can be seen hanging out over the edge of the chassis. If this were lifted straight up it would reach high up onto the firewall on the offside of the car.

There is also a nice photo of the engine of T.T. car taken from the nearside and there is no cutout on the near side so I assume that the cutout and lubricator were both mounted on the offside. T.T. cars didn't have them, as central lubricators were not fitted to the FA/FBs. (There is good photographic evidence for this). I am sure however, that they would have continued to mount the cutout on the offside right through the FWD range. It seems to me that it was the favored place for Alvises to have them. I like to try to get things right if I can.

Because my car was delivered to Australia as a chassis, then the body would have been made in Australia so I can always "cut myself some slack" and say "that's how they would have done it here when the body was built!" I can therefore get away with not doing exactly as Alvis did. But only in the bodywork and fittings.

I happened to mention to my friend Geoff Hood one night, that I been searching for one of these lubricators for ages and have never even seen one. He replied, "I've got one under the house somewhere." I find it amazing that you can search far and wide for things that are right under your nose! Another piece of the jigsaw slipped into place.

When I was on the VSCC. Alpine Rally (mentioned earlier) I was telling someone about my good fortune in obtaining a lubricator and he asked me if I had the pipe work and fittings for it. I told him that I didn't but said that I would make fittings and pipe-work to suit. He said, "don't bother, I have yards of that pipe-work covered in fittings and you can have it if it's any good to you."

More of the jigsaw fell into place. It was absolutely marvelous to just screw the fittings straight into the Alvis parts. The threads are not BSP. Having the right fittings is superb.

The Starter

The starter came with the car and fortunately it was one of the things that came in one piece, and even worked when connected to a battery. The first thing I did was to take it to pieces and thoroughly cleaned everything. The commutator was not worn enough to justify machining so I cleaned it by spinning it in the lathe and polishing it with some fine emery cloth. I then checked that all of the armature wires were firmly soldered to the commutator (two had to be re-soldered) I then sent the armature to my local Auto Electrician to have it checked on a "growler." This is not something you can do at home unless you have a "growler" and know how to use it.

Before I disconnected the end plate I made a drawing of all the wire connections to aid assembly. While the armature was away, I took out the pole shoes. Before I removed anything I stamped corresponding numbers onto the each of the screws and pole shoes so that they would be reassembled in exactly the same place. The pole shoes are the big steel plates inside the starter that the field coils are wound around. They are held in place by a single counter sunk screw. These screws are usually "staked" which means that some of the starter body has been punched into the screwdriver slot to stop the screw coming undone. This can usually be pushed back a bit by tapping with a large screwdriver. The screws that hold in the pole shoes are usually very tight and will probably need an impact-driver to get them out.

An impact driver is like a screwdriver that will turn while you hammer it down into the slot in the screw head. The field windings come out with the pole shoes and these were what I really wanted. The windings have cotton tape wound around them to protect them and provide insulation. Over the years this had rotted and needed replacing. To do this, I went to a haberdashery and bought some "bias binding."

I removed the old rotten cotton and re-taped the field coils with the bias binding, finishing the end by tucking it under the second last turn. I then gave it all two coats of shellac. Varnish seems to work fine also, as I have used it before but I think shellac is preferred because it does not dissolve in oil or petrol.

The body was cleaned inside with a wire brush and the outside painted. The nice newly taped field coils were then put back into the housing with the pole shoes. If the tops of the brushes are below the top of the brush holders then you should fit new brushes. Mine were. As the brushes wear down the spring pressure gets lighter and the efficiency of the starter suffers.

A test sometimes used by "shade tree mechanics," when they hear the starter solenoid clicking, but the starter won't turn, is to hit the starter with a hammer. If the car then starts it is because the brushes have been shaken loose and have increased their pressure on the commutator. So if this happens to you then you need to replace your brushes or increase the spring tension.

When I went back to pick up the armature from the Auto electrician, I took a sample of the worn brushes and was able to get some new ones that were just slightly wider than the originals. I was then able to file them down with a fine file to

the correct width.

Starter motors require sintered copper brushes because of the current that they have to carry. Carbon brushes (black) will make the starter turn but it won't have enough power to turn well when it is under load. When the new brushes are inserted into their holders check to see that they contact the commutator across their full cross-section. If they don't then put some fine emery paper on the commutator (rough side towards the brush) and drag it between the commutator and the brush until full contact is made. New bushes and bearings were also fitted, and the "bendix" drive was lubricated.

The positive post on top of the starter was partially stripped so a new one was made from a brass bolt and then installed. The starter was then assembled and tested, then carefully put away for what is know as "Laugh Day" that is the day that the first attempt is made to start the car.

Alvis People

I have already, in previous articles let it be known that I met two of the real Alvis "Old Guard." I met Percy Joseland about 1972 and David Michie about 1980. These were both proper English gentlemen.

I would liked to have known Tom John. He qualified as a Naval Architect and following a few years in shipbuilding, during the First World War in 1915 he became Works manager and Chief Engineer at Siddeley-Deasy building Puma aero engines. After the war, he started his own engineering business as T G John Ltd in 1919. Late in that year he obtained the drawings from G P H de Freville of a 4 cylinder side valve 1½ litre engined car and in 1920 this was produced for sale as the Alvis 10/30.

When Captain Smith-Clarke and Willie Dunn joined Alvis in 1922, Tom John left the engineering side of the business to those two and concentrated on the financial and management side of things. Alvis was doing well in the car business but Tom John wanted to diversify and thus entered the Tank and Aero Engine business in the mid-1930's. What I like about the founder of Alvis is that he "had a go." He didn't wait around for something to happen - he went out and had a go!

Captain George Smith-Clarke was Officer-in-Charge (Engines) Aeronautical Inspection Division in the Coventry area during the war, and after he was Assistant Works Manager for Daimler Ltd. He joined Alvis in 1922 and sorted out the problems of the 10/30, developing it into the 11/40 and the 12/40. Then came his tour-de-force, the 12/50. A four cylinder 1½ litre push-rod OHV engine with great sporting characteristics which became the backbone of Alvis Production until 1932. Then, along with Willie Dunn he developed those magnificent Alvis 6-cylinder Speed cars! All this was combined with his duties as Chief Engineer overseeing the development of the Alvis Tanks and Aero Engines. I have had some slight experience in designing and building machines and mechanical devices over the years, and while I state very loudly and clearly that I was not even in the same paddock as Smith-Clarke, my experience maybe gave me a yardstick to gauge the greatness of his achievements. Put on top of that his work in Radio, Astronomy and Hospital Equipment helps to show what a great engineer he was. I like engineers, they don't talk much but they go out and build things. I would like to have met Captain Smith-Clarke.

Willie Dunn was the guiding light of the post-war 3 litre cars. I feel that the TA 2l was not much in advance of other Post-war cars. It had coil spring IFS, the wheelbase was a couple of inches longer than its predecessor and had a nearly square bore and stroke engine of 3 litre capacity but it didn't grab me much. The first spark of a sporting character was the TA 21/100 which was a genuine 100 mph car. Then came the Graber bodies and the last two models, the TE 21 and the TF 21 with a developed engine and the 5-speed ZF gearbox became very desirable motor cars.

I have an idea that George Lanchester joined Alvis about 1935 as Manager of the Tank Division. "The Vintage Alvis" by Hull & Johnson states that George Lanchester designed the 12/70 and Silver Crest Alvis cars. These engines were completely different to the Speed car engines although using some identical components. Timing chains were at the front of the engine and robust crankshafts provided a strong bottom end. The cars were designed to use bought-in components and cost less than the glamour Speed cars to help boost sales in a slow market.

Now comes the bloke I would really like to have met, Arthur F Varney. Born in 1907, he joined Alvis as a Trainee Draughtsman at the same time as Smith-Clarke. He progressed through the works, only ever worked at Alvis, rose to become Chief Engineer (Aero) and retired in 1972.

In the 1920's gear changing was a problem and some people never caught on to the idea of matching the speeds of the two shafts in the gearbox in order to avoid those awful crunching noises. During the 1920's General Motors patented a synchromesh system which overcame the gear changing difficulties while Alvis tried a couple of models with epi-cyclic gearboxes but these weren't the real answer. It was suggested that a synchro-mesh gear box was what was wanted but Smith-Clarke thought that Rolls-Royce would have already done that if it was feasible. Not satisfied with that answer, at the age of about 25, this cheeky young whipper-snapper thought he knew better than his boss, in his spare time designed that magic all-synchro 4 speed gear box at home. When I dismantled my gear box I was absolutely amazed and astonished by the beautiful engineering contained in it. I thought it was sublime! It showed the very best practice and no wonder it was used to drive a 7½ ton Alvis Tank.

After the Second World War, Alvis needed a new car to start production in a period of very scarce resources. Varney was in charge of the team which took the 12/70, added 50cc to the engine capacity, widened the track by two inches and included a hypoid rear axle. This was the TA 14, a very well balanced car with good handling and reliability, comfortable and very predictable.

It is on record that it took 10 years to build and sell 3705 12/50's, 16 years to build 3661 3-litre cars and only 5 years for 3411 TA 14's to be built and sold. I am quite aware that circumstances and times were very different but surely these figures must give rise to some thought.

There you have it. The man responsible for the 4-speed all-synchro gear box and one of the most successful Alvis cars was Arthur F. Varney and I would very much like to have included him in my list of friends.

Rob Graham

Once again our thanks and acknowledgement to "The Automobile" Magazine for allowing us to reproduce this article.
If you haven't yet discovered "The Automobile," it is in my opinion one of the best.

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Desirable rival to Bentley — THE ALVIS 4.3 VANDEN PLAS

BY Zöe F. B. Harrison

Vehicles which have some form of history attached to them are always of abiding interest. Whenever I purchase a car I am always fascinated to collect copies of the log books from the appropriate authority and write to the previous owners. I am hoping not only for information about any mechanical problems or work carried out, but also for some of those little snippets that will give the car personality and life.

Often people are happy to send you old bills and receipts pertaining to the vehicle, but few can expect to receive such a comprehensive story as Mr. Vic Channing did when he bought his 1939 Alvis 4.3 some years ago. The series of letters the previous owner collected about the car have all been kept and carefully preserved, creating a very unusual record of its progress over a ten-year period.

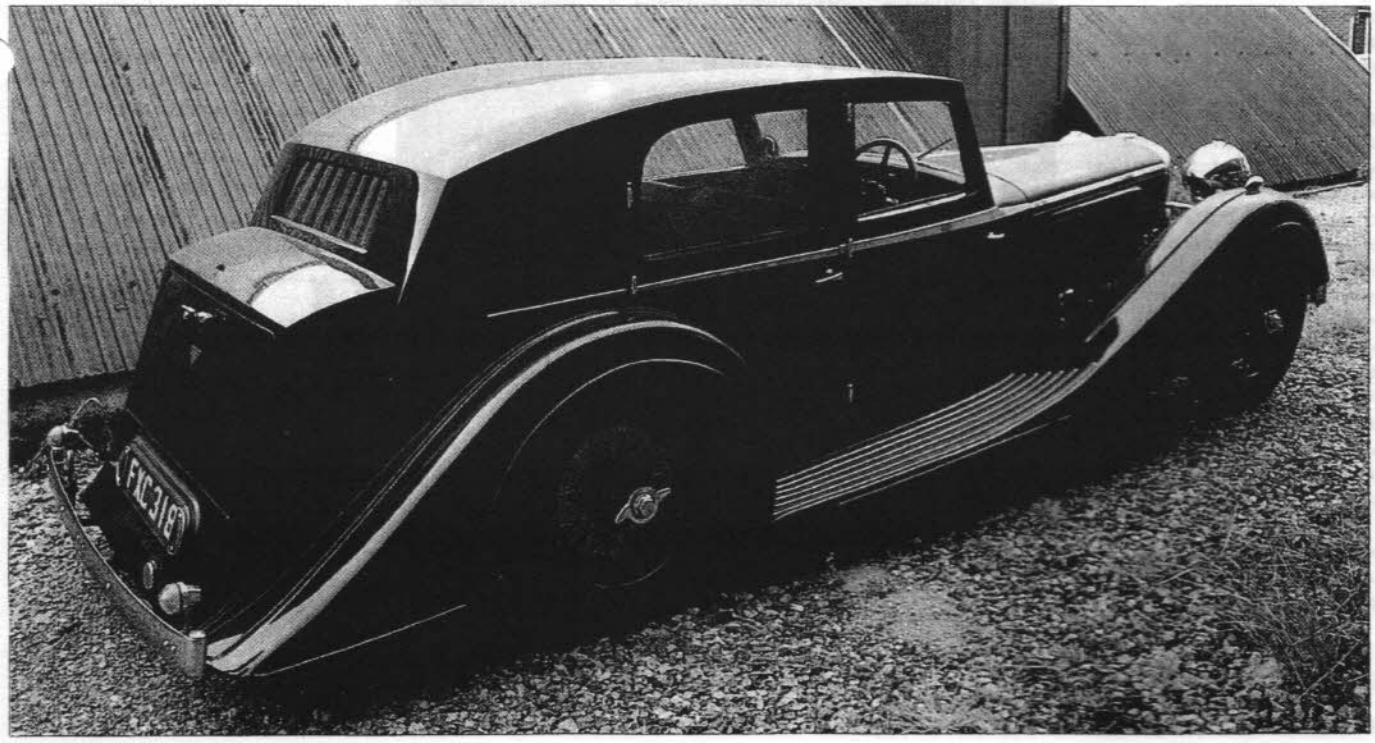
Above & below: *The similarity to the contemporary Bentley is clearly evident.*

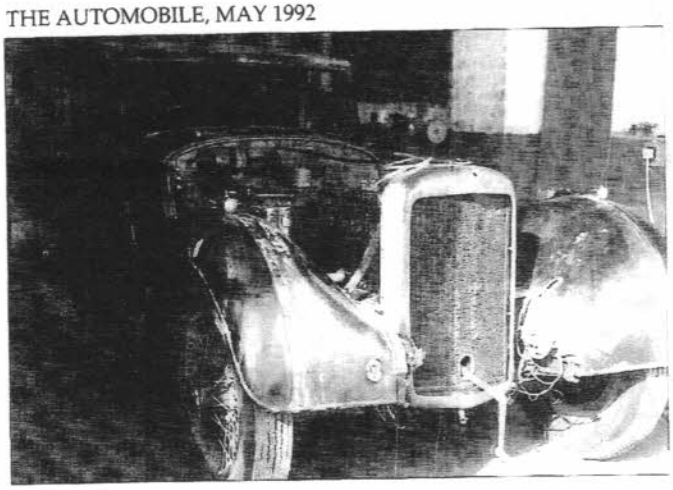
The car is unusual and rare in itself, being one of just three produced just before the war with razor-edge saloon bodies by Vanden Plas of Kingsbury Road, North London. (Remarkably enough, all three currently survive, including one which resides in Portugal). During the 1930s Alvis entirely used outside coach builders to furnish their rolling chassis, usually Charlesworth for the larger models and Cross & Ellis, Holbrook or Mulliner for the smaller cars.

This car, chassis number 14861, was apparently the first to be built, arriving at the Vanden Plas works in March 1939 although the chassis itself was actually dated the previous year. It was based on the 4.3 short chassis, although with an overall length of approximately 18' and over 40' necessary to turn it round on one lock, one cannot help wondering at this description.

The Alvis 4.3 was much admired by road testers of the period, its 4,387cc straight-six engine was rated at 31.48hp and produced 137bhp, early at 3,600rpm. This gave it impressive acceleration and a three-figure top speed. It was commented at the time that the Alvis had about as much performance as could be used on

continued on page 10





Above: *Shortly after arrival , being stripped for inspection.*

the roads of this country, yet combined this attribute with a spacious saloon body.

This comment applied to the Charlesworth-bodied car, since there are no records of a contemporary report on the Vanden Plas version. If anything the latter should have enjoyed slightly improved performance, having a lighter, all-aluminium construction as compared to the 37cwt of the all-steel saloon. In some ways the razor-edged styling of the rear of the Vanden Plas make it appear rather more modern than other coach built Alvis's of the period. It retains much the same wheel-arch lines, although seamed along the upper edges, and the imposing radiator grille with those magnificent headlights is more or less identical. Like various other models, this Alvis should have had chromed discs covering the wire wheels, but unfortunately only one of these remains attached to the spare wheel. Discovering others has proved impossible, to date.

The interior of the Vanden Plas is luxuriously appointed in leather, to Vanden Plas's own specification. The dashboard has been faced with a piece of lacquered wood, but underneath it is the standard Alvis design, with a comprehensive array of instrumentation and switchgear spread right across its width. Indeed, the speedometer and petrol gauge are placed right over on the left-hand side, where presumably it was left to the passenger to point out the no doubt frequent need for refuelling.

The early history of this particular car is not known, but it is certain that it passed through the hands of a number of owners, moving from Wednesbury near Birmingham up to Kirkcaldy in Scotland and back south of the border to Flixton. The Alvis then moved to Salford in Lancashire, where it was purchased by a Mr Hollinsworth in April of 1958.

It is at this time that the letters begin, the first of them dated September of that year. It would appear that Mr Hollinsworth was a prolific letter writer, in constant communication with a Mr Brown of Alvis's Service Department. He began by ordering a number of replacement items, including new hydraulic jacks for the car which, it would appear, had leaked for some time. A letter from a previous owner, Mr. Blyth of Kirkcaldy confirms this, together with the heavy petrol consumption, although he was delighted to hear that the car was still giving great pleasure to its owner. He had sold it, he informed Mr. Hollinsworth, because of his age — it was too fast for an old man.

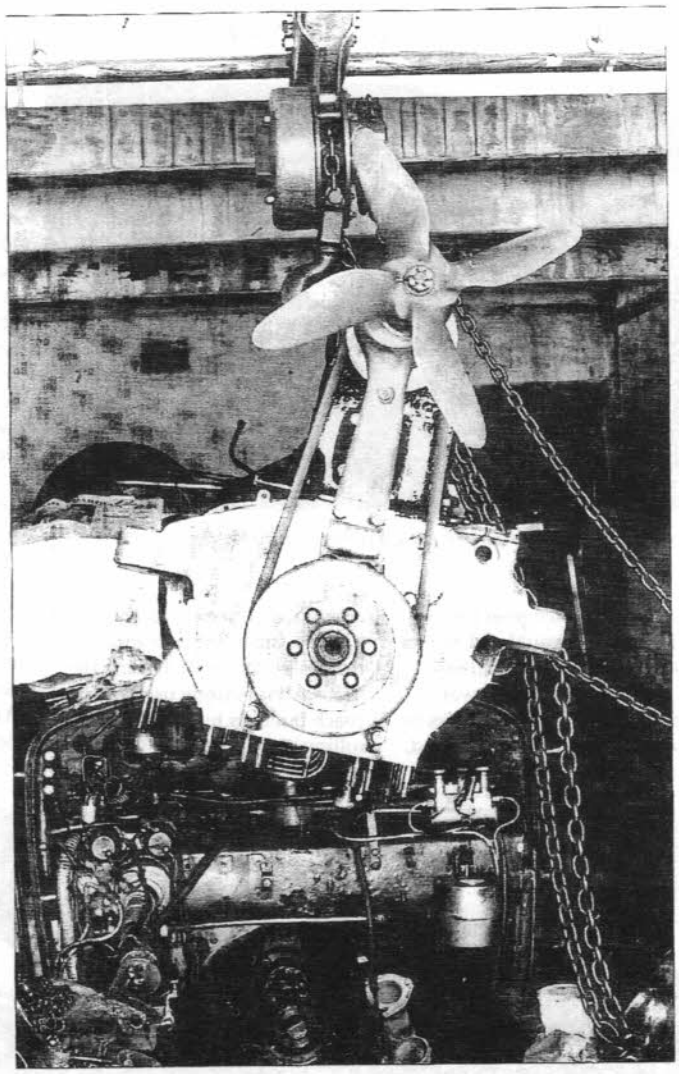
The following year Mr. Hollinsworth joined the Alvis Owners Club and took considerable pains to obtain the most favourable insurance premium for the Alvis, receiving quotes from half a dozen different companies, including both the AA and the RAC. Some were most reluctant to quote for so elderly a vehicle and would provide third party cover only. An article in one of the Sunday papers at about this time, hinting that such old cars might soon be taken off the road, induced a flood of letters to everyone including Mr Hollinsworth's MP, but his fears proved unfounded .

His communications with Mr. Brown of the Alvis Service Department continued and although they were unfailingly polite and willing to supply technical information and drawings, they were not always able to help him in his quest for parts for the car. In particular, the wheel discs were unobtainable and have remained so to this day.

In June 1960 Mr. Hollinsworth required new locks for the car, but Alvis were unable and unwilling to manufacture any, indicating that there must be many small local engineering firms more suited to the task and pointed out the specialised nature of the coachwork.

It seems apparent that anyone Mr Hollinsworth thought could aid him on the subject of the Alvis was written to, including Imperial Chemical Industries in connection with suitable exhaust manifold paint, and Mobil Oil on the subject of the best lubrication. When the brakes gave him problems he contacted Clayton Dewandre direct, plus Ferodo and Mintex, who were able to advise him on the best lining material.

Shock absorbers were another problem, and despite enquiries to Woodhead-Monroe, Armstrong and Universal Dampers for the originals, which were adjustable from the driving seat,



Left: *The benefits of a garage hoist cannot be emphasised too strongly.*

Right: *Evidence of hard usage was apparent.*

Above: *The timber was only replaced where necessary.*

Mr Hollinsworth ended up fitting Luvax items instead, which remain on the vehicle.

His relationship with Alvis was by no means trouble-free either, with a series of letters in 1962 showing that some work carried out by the Service department had caused damage to one of the lights, and poor adjustment of the brakes made it necessary for new linings and re-skimming of the rear drums.

By the mid-1960s however, Mr Hollinsworth was evidently well into rebuilding the engine, and here Alvis did supply him with much detailed information on clearances and measurements, as well as providing such components as were still available, whilst gently pointing out that the vehicle had not been in production for thirty years.

In June of 1968 the letters abruptly come to a halt, although Mr Hollinsworth was not to part with the car for another seventeen years. It would appear that two occurrences brought about this abandonment of the project, not least of which was the unfortunate death of the gentleman's parents. The other reason was the partial collapse of the roof of the garage where the Alvis was being stored, incurring some bodywork damage.

The car was not without drama during its period of storage, however, as at one point a friend of Mr Hollinsworth's informed him that he had seen the car advertised for sale in a nearby town. Further investigation showed the garage lock forced and the Alvis gone, only to be retrieved, minus its windscreen frame and having acquired more bodywork damage — this time to the front wing, where a wheel had evidently become detached.

In 1985 the garage where the car was being kept was sold to property developers and the Alvis had to go. At this point Mr Channing of Airport Garage in Eccles heard about the vehicle and went to have a look. The car was certainly looking rather sad by this time, having sunk into the soft earth of the garage floor so that it barely looked 4' high. Nevertheless, he was so taken with the outline that he agreed to buy, spending the following five years returning the car to its former glory.

Despite all the previous owner's work, the engine had seized and required a partial rebuild in order to correct the problem, although new piston rings were the only parts necessary. Mr Channing reports that otherwise the engine was in superb condition, having been meticulously reconditioned by Mr Hollinsworth.

He removed the body from the chassis, finding the latter basically very sound, requiring only one small plate, but the bodywork was in a very poor state, despite looking superficially in reasonable condition. Unfortunately the aluminium had been held onto the ash framework with metal fastenings which had now corroded, causing extensive rot to set in. Makeshift repairs had been attempted, pushing screws and nails into the body sideways and covering them with filler, which had only accentuated the problem.

Above: *Rot had attacked the rear quarters fairly extensively.*

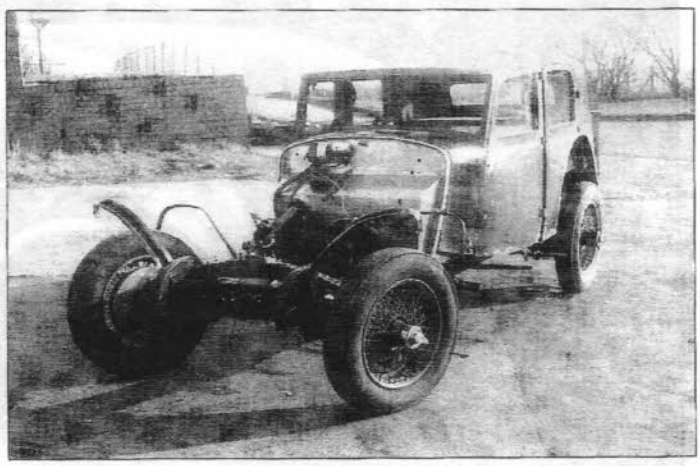
Much of the ash has been carefully replaced by a friend of Mr Channing's as has the majority of the outer aluminium shell, including the door skins. Any joints here were welded inside and out for greater strength.

Mr Channing also had to have parts of the brightwork re-chromed as the standard was quite poor, and he had to fabricate his own windscreen frame to replace the one which went missing when the car was stolen. The radiator had to be re-cored by a Coventry firm and the wheels were sandblasted and powder coated by a company in Trafford Park. Autojumbles were scoured for parts.

The interior trim required much attention to reach its current high standard, and Mr. Channing was lucky enough to have this done by a former Rolls-Royce trimmer.

The Alvis was finally put back on the road in January 1991 and has since achieved considerable success at shows and concours events around the area, although the fuel consumption somewhat prohibits long journeys. When it was first driven, the car returned just 7 mpg, although new needles and seats in the float chambers of the triple SU carburettors have improved this to 13-14 mpg, still under the manufacturer's claims of 15-18 mpg.

Looking at the car's elegant lines and imposing frontal aspect, it is easy to forgive it such faults. It is not too difficult to understand how such a vehicle could inspire so many letters and inquiries in order to keep it running in the very best of health.

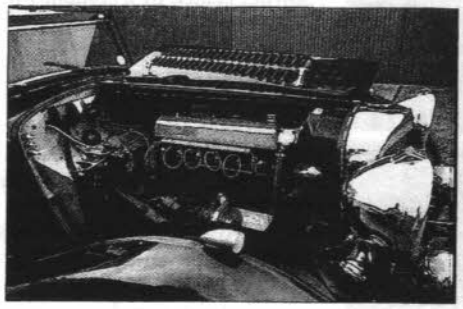


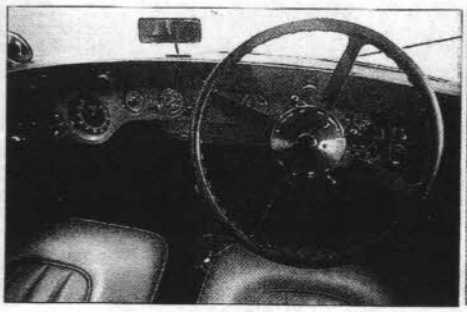
Right: *Approximately half-way complete again.*

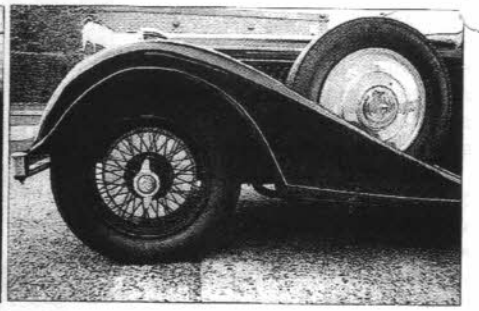
Below: *The 4.3-litre engine was closely related to its 3 ½ litre predecessor — a very strong and smooth power unit.*

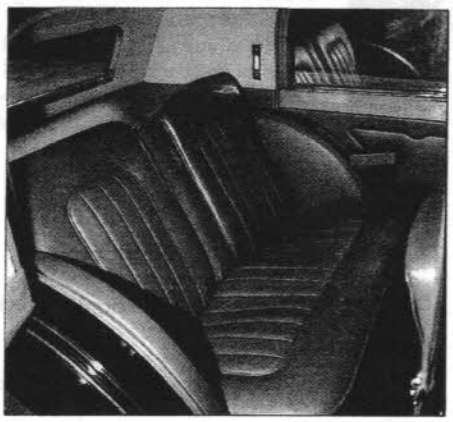
Above: *Time has done little to reduce the attractiveness of the Vanden Plas bodywork.*

Below: *Spare wheel mounting on the mudguard was 'de rigeur' for the period.*







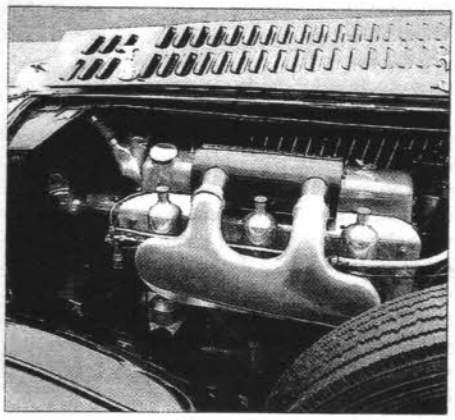


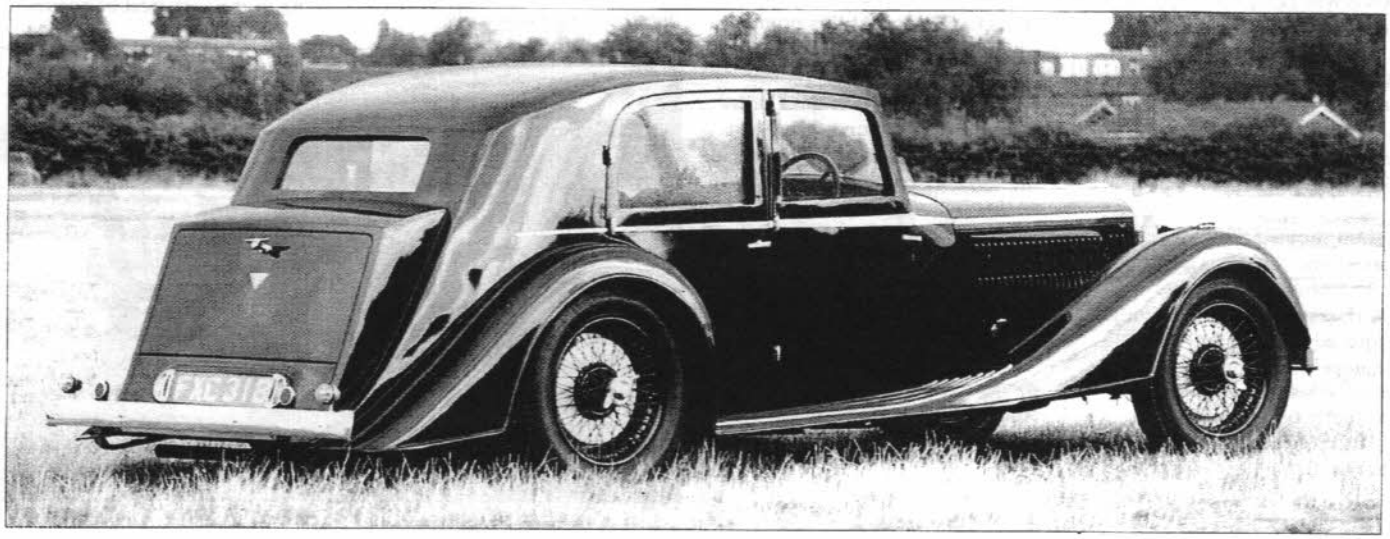
Above: *The relatively low scuttle necessitates a shallow instrument panel.*

Left: *The rear seats accommodate two passengers — no pretensions to make the car a six-seater.*

Right: Triple S.U. carburetters need twin fuel pumps to keep them from starvation.

Below: The razor-edged styling is especially pleasing from the rear view.





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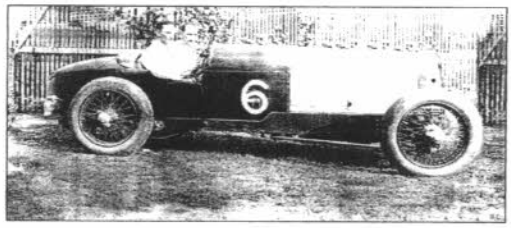

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For TA21
Headlights—one complete with chrome trim, rubber seal & globe. One as above, without rubber seal. One bare - with globe.
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Tail Lights—2 complete units, excellent chrome & glass. One needs minor work.
Parking Lights—2, c//w "Throaties" original chrome, good.
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Wheel—one with as new recap.
Instrument Panel—(incomplete no gauges, choke cable, or reserve fuel switch) Has speedo, all remaining switches.
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Wheel Brace.
Handbrake Cable—inner & outer, good.
Timber dash capping—poorly restored, sound, restorable.
Other: voltage regulator, coil, steering box parts, body & some components, no high wear bits. New suspension bits, 1 set of seat rails, demister ducts, Smiths heater parts, Bakelite fan housing, fan, motor (condition unknown)
Contact TK Maltby, 34 Dorothy St, Leopold Ph (03) 5250 1789 or *tomcat7@dodo.com.au*

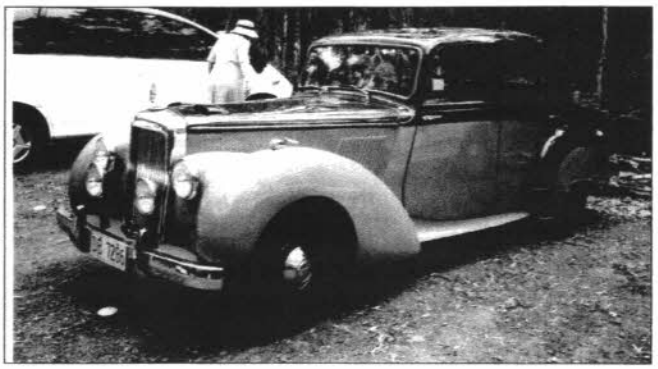
FOR SALE

Dale Hanley advises that he is prepared to negotiate the sale of his
1939 Speed 25 Cross & Ellis Tourer (ex Glasgow Police car)

Ring Dale on 07 3219 1141

FOR SALE

Alvis Grey Lady TC21-100, 1954, Car # 25638.
Fully registered (Tas DB7286) & going beautifully. Bare metal respray in 2 tone scheme. New leather upholstery, carpet & hood lining. Needs window rubbers & the heater needs attention. Eventually will need a set of new tyres. Selling price $24,000.
Contact Willy Schneider, Box 380 Margate PO Tasmania 7054 or ring (03) 6267 2740



FOR SALE

1929 Alvis Silver Eagle 16.95 h.p. Good fast vintage tourer on full Victorian reg. Recently rebuilt magneto, starter, and petrol tank. Regretful sale, but must be done due to lifestyle change. $65,000.
Warrick Hansted. tel: (03) 9 555 0463 (pre 7 July 06), or (03) 55 75 8260 (post 7 July 06).

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WANTED

For TA14 Sedan.
2 D shaped tail light lenses. 2 side light lenses, front mudguard mounted
Left & right rear doors complete or timber frames for same

Ring Mr Bruce on (08) 9417 2317

ALVIS PARTS AND REPAIRS DATABASE

Newsletters over the past year have carried a note to the effect that your committee has offered to create a database of useful parts information, to capture those useful parts equivalents that most of us hear by word of mouth or discover ourselves. With the notable exception of a lot of 12/70 & TA14 items from Bob Graham the response to date has been modest, but continues to trickle in.
To recap the intention, we are seeking to record;
· Equivalent parts for specific Alvis models (examples might include alternate magnetos, radiator hoses, valve springs, pistons etc etc)
· Sources for various general items
· Parts repair hints or techniques
If and when this database starts to reach a critical mass it will be published on the internet – for now however there is not enough information to warrant it. Please think hard and see if you can contribute one or two gems...
Information please, to Bob Northey (northeys@westnet.com.au, or 2 Orrong Rd, Elsternwick, Vic 3185).

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