

February 2012

Alvic

*The Newsletter of the Alvis Car Club
of Victoria (Inc) Australia*

Saved by the War

A Story of 2 TAs



Alvis Car Club of Victoria (Inc)

A0017202F

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 Dead-
line - first Friday of the month.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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It seems ages since I wrote my last President's Report and there is no need to wish you all a Happy New Year as quite a bit of it has already gone! I guess all I can say is welcome back and trust you enjoy the outings and runs we have planned for you this year.

I'm currently involved in writing the history of the Veteran Car Club of Victoria and their first edition of every year usually reported a death or two. At least I don't have to worry about that.

One thing I have been doing in recent times has been representing ALVIC on an R.A.C.V. Advisory Board. Myself and 10 or so other people from various clubs have now met twice to look at ways the R.A.C.V. can better look after the Veteran, Vintage and Classic Car enthusiast whether it be through Total Care, sponsorship or any other related R.A.C.V. activity. If you have any thoughts that may be relevant, please by all means, drop me a line.

One thing that I think either the AOMC or the R.A.C.V. should address is a census similar to that recently carried out in the U.K. The census, undertaken by the Federation of British Vehicle Clubs, reports that interest in historic vehicles is worth at least 4.3 billion pounds annually to the U.K. economy. Furthermore, it supports 28,000 people and yet is responsible for less than 0.25% of traffic. The last census carried out in 2006 reported the movement was worth 3.2 billion and employed 27,000 people.

On the down side like here, many smaller businesses burdened with regulations and red tape may be forced to close down.

The car figures are interesting to relate. Over 850,000 vehicles made before 1981 survive, 82% of which are used no more than twice a month; 68% of historic vehicles are valued at less than 10,000 pounds and 4.5 million people attend club runs per year.

I would be very interested to see what aggregate state figures would indicate in Australia.

The January barbeque is always a good event and this year was no different. We had a couple of visitors from N.S.W. in the shape of Norman Webster and Phil Dadd, Phil arriving in his TA21 DHC.

We also had three 12/50s and the Tonkin Graber in the car park. It was a good night for vintage motoring, the weather just right.

I will not be available for the March meeting as Sal and I will be in Cobram on a Veteran Car Rally, but Mack Hulbert has asked if members would be interested to hear

another one of his talks on his motor racing exploits with ERA R4D. Look forward to catching up with you all at next meeting.

Cheers for now.

Chester

For those who would like to join us for a pub meal before club meetings:

Malvernvale Hotel, 1321 Malvern Rd, Malvern – from 6.00pm

SUPPER - the McKaiges

2012 EVENT CALENDAR

17 Feb	General Meeting	
16 Mar	General Meeting	Guest speaker Mac Hulbert
18 Mar	Day Run	Darryl Horton
20 Apr	General Meeting	
22 Apr-6 May	16 day event	TASSIE - Noeline McKinnon
18 May	General Meeting	
20 May	National Motoring Heritage Day	
15 Jun	General Meeting	
11 Jun	Day run in the Macedon Ranges	John Lang
20 Jul	General Meeting	
17 Aug	General Meeting	
19 Aug	Day Run	Chester McKaige
21 Sep	General Meeting	
19 Oct	General Meeting	
26-28 Oct	3 day event	John Hetherington
16 Nov	General Meeting	
24-28 Nov	<i>RACV 80 Years' Great Ocean Road Celebration Tour—more info to follow</i>	
2 Dec	Christmas Party	Balnarring Beach

Front Page: the shapely derrieres of the Northey & McKaige Ducksbacks

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

XMAS GREETINGS FROM AOC.

Helen and I, on behalf of all your friends in the Alvis Owner Club, send our very best wishes to all Alvic members for a truly Happy Christmas and 2012. We enjoyed very much seeing many of you in Victoria in February and March, and over here in UK during the Summer. We will be back in Victoria in October, for the Australian part of celebrating our daughter's wedding, and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. And of course, we look forward to welcoming you here in the Summer.

How on earth Christmas can be Christmas without frosty window panes and reindeer hoof prints in the snow, and Santa Claus tells me his biggest nightmare is finding cold beer at the bottom of the chimney. However, you have a great capacity for generating fun, and we sincerely wish all of you the very very best. Have A GOOD ONE!!

Best Wishes,

Chris and Helen Storrar

Happy New Year John and to all the Alvic members,

Just an update on my give away items in the advert-

all the tyres have found good homes now, but I still have the TA21 wooden door trims if anyone wants them.

Otherwise, "Alice", the TA21 drophead is continuing to give good service - definitely the best car I've ever bought.

As a result I decided to give her Christmas present- a brake servo that fits easily under the wing. It takes away some of the anxiety of driving in today's traffic. I have pencilled in getting an overdrive as the her gift!

Best regards,

Mike & Mary Osborne

Alan & Noeline McKinnon and Mike & Ruth Hirst recently participated in the New Zealand VCC Rally and the two emails below pertain to a couple of "incidents" on the event. If we can get either Alan or Noeline to sit still for long enough, a report on the event might be forthcoming.

.....ed

Alan thought he was hallucinating today.

- >
- > Here we were motoring along nicely in the 12/50 and we were passed by
- > a TA21= PASSED us!
- > Obviously this TA21 owner had found where the accelerator was!
- > Having a great time.

It gets worse!

Mike Hirst In a 12/50 has been passed by a Nash Metropolitan blazing red and cream stripes.

We're hoping Mike will recover in time to finish the rally!

Cheers
Noeline

Noeline

Dear Car Clubs of Victoria,

I couldn't miss the opportunity to share with you this new and very exciting museum just minutes from Shepparton.

The Shepparton Motor Museum is well worth the drive to take a look. A great location to incorporate as a part of a club run or visit to Winton.

Plenty of parking and lots to see with a cafe next door. I highly recommend you and your club investigate.

Hope to see you at the official launch on February 19th. For additional details please go to

www.sheppartonmotormuseum.com.au

Regards to all,
Richard Sanders

ON THE SICK LIST

We are sad to hear that both Brian and Joan Hemmings are on the sick list and hope that 2012 brings them both better health.

January BBQ

Once again the January BBQ was held at the Kevin Bartlett Reserve and yet again the Langs went sailing past the entry. Mustn't spoil a perfect record!

The location is good for just about everyone and the facilities are more than adequate.

There were six Alvis present:
 McDougall's Speed 20 Special (below left)
 And below: Richard Wallach's TA21 and Phil Dadd's TA21 DHC
 Below right is Richard Tonkin's Graber.



Allan Willingham's Ducksback appears not to talk to anyone and the Ducksbacks of Chester McKaige and Bob Northey are on the front page.

All told there were 31 people present. Not a bad way to start the year.

..ed



Photography by Frances McDougall



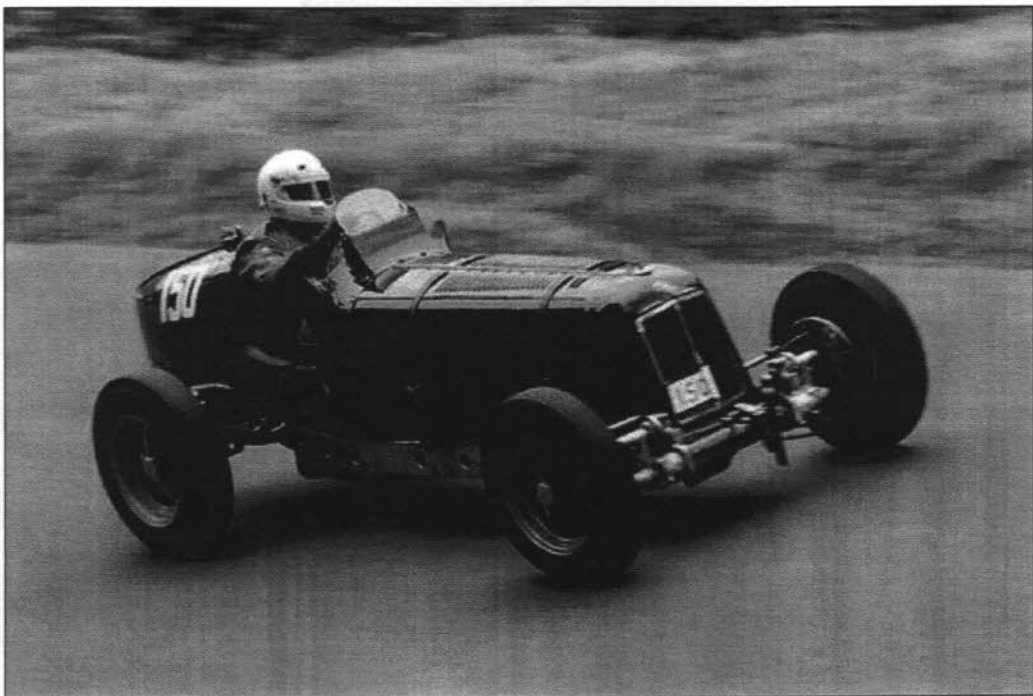
Not To Be Missed!

March General Meeting
Friday 16th at 8.00pm

Mac Hulbert

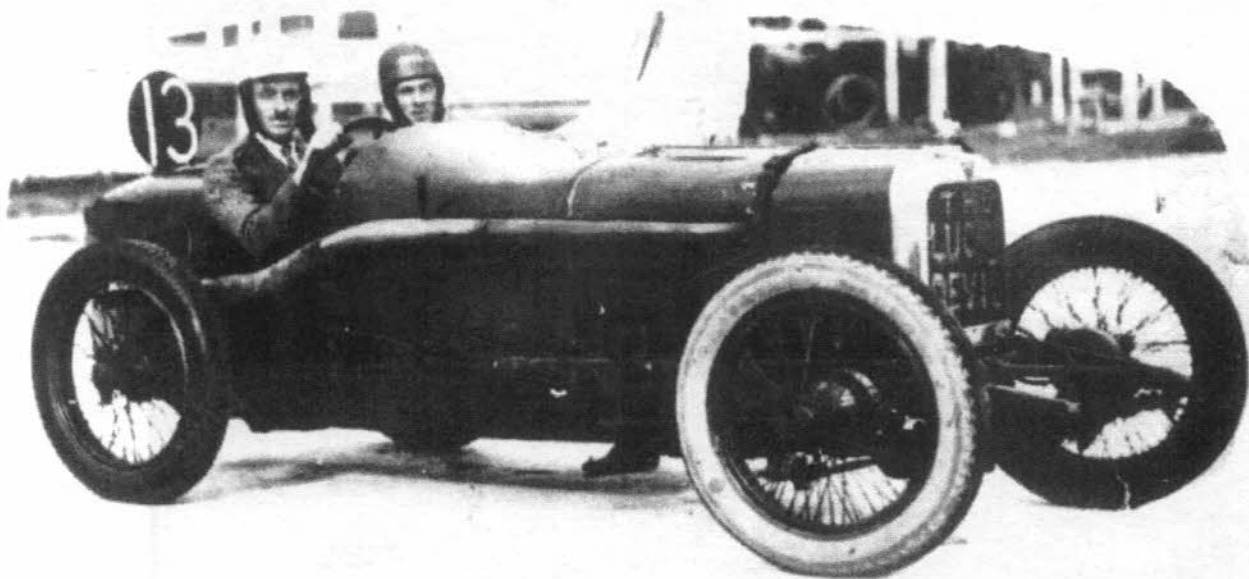
If you missed hearing Mac in March
2010, you get another chance!

Mac has agreed to tell more tales of
ERA R4D



If anyone has access to an electronic projector, please contact the Editor

The "Garlick" Alvis



Phil Garlick and 1929

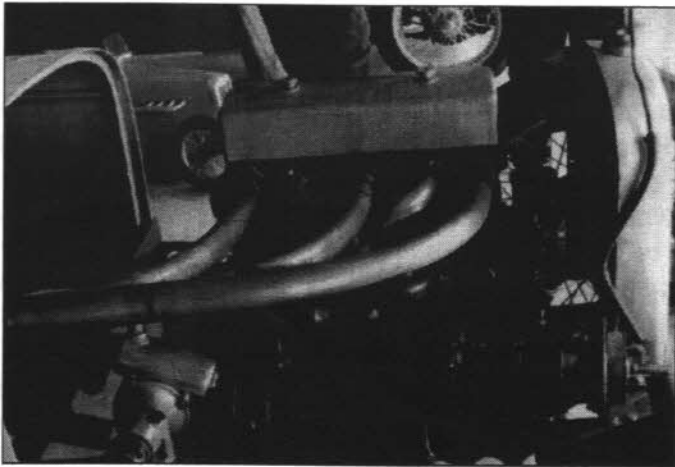
At the recent 'Bol d'Or' event run at Goulburn on the 13th to 15th January 2012, the remains of the supercharged factory racing Alvis of the late Reginald Gordon Garlick, known as "Phil" Garlick were on display and are illustrated in the accompanying photos. This car was a star at Maroubra carrying the number "13" and a sign "The Lucky Devil" and was all but unbeatable, winning countless races both scratch and handicap. It often held outright lap records. On the night of the 8th January 1927 it went over the lip of the Olympia Maroubra Bowl Speedway and the driver was killed and the Alvis never appeared in the same form again.

The car subsequently appeared powered by an American Terraplane engine with another body and the K wheels were replaced by bolt on wheels. The Garlick family had retained the car until 1936 when it was sold to a Newcastle enthusiast. It passed through the hands of a number of owners in its 'damaged' state until purchased by A.V. Turner who in turn passed it on to John Crouch (a Founder of the Vintage Sports Car Club in 1945). John Crouch raced it successfully, achieving 115.4 mph in a standing ¼ mile at Penrith, until he had an engine burst prior to WWII. A Terraplane engine had been fitted. Other owners followed including 'Doc' Bond, Laurie Oxenhead, Peter Clarke etc until David Manson purchased the car in 1961. David acquired the bent chassis, radiator, steering column and box, springs and gear box casing. David already had the old, post Maroubra body.

At present Lester Thearle (a 3 litre Bentley owner) and Fred Heming (12/50 and Anzani Bugatti replica) are involved in putting the car back together. The bronze head is fitted to the car, but no other engine bits appear to have survived. It is exciting to see this significant slice of Australian Motor Racing History survive and to be in good hands. The "Lucky Devil" trophy was also on display at Goulburn, coming over from the Motor Racing Museum at Bathurst.

Graeme Steinfort

Acknowledgements to John Blanden's "Historic Racing Cars in Australia." "A History of Australia's First Grand Prix" edited by John Lackey and the contribution from David Manson



Photography by Peter Fleming



Left: the Lucky Devil trophy

AAA

A TRIPLE A WEEKEND AWAY

France and the US may have lost their Triple A Ratings
but not the ACCV!

Put it in your diary now and in your partner's diary & write it on the side of the fridge:
FRIDAY 26th, SATURDAY 27th & SUNDAY 28th OCTOBER 2012.

This is not your average stay in a motel.

A great value accommodation package has been arranged with interesting and fun activities being planned. And all about 2 hours from Melbourne.

If you enjoyed the Merrijig and Marysville weekends you will enjoy this one.

If you missed those weekends, now is your chance to catch up.

Watch this space for details as they unfold.

John Hetherington

0419 319 339 jfh@mcmmedia.com.au



IN COMPETITION

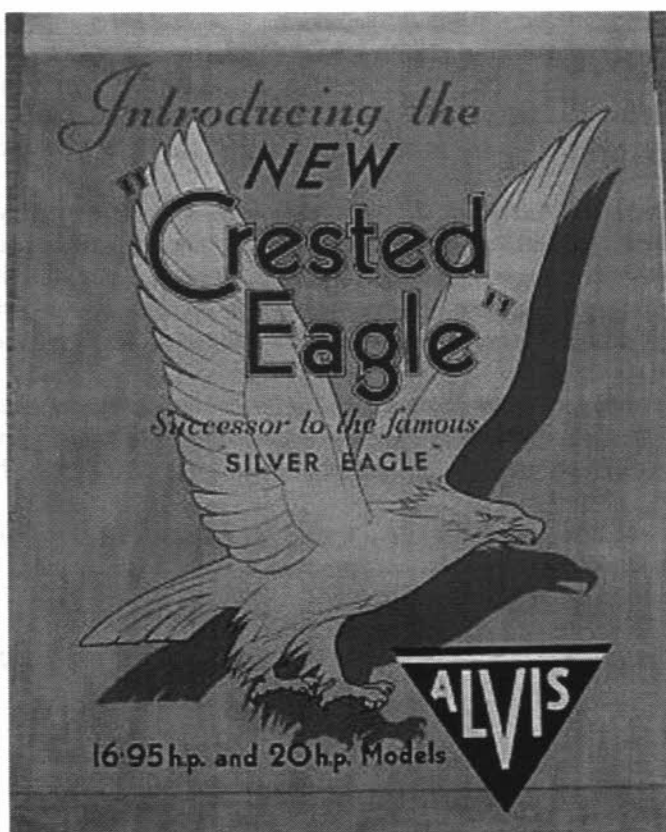
VSCC

2 Wheel Brake Rally 11/12/11.

Andrew Green/Brian McCullach 12/50
Peter Fleming/Ros Smallacombe Firebird
(Neither placed).

Bo1 D'Or Goulburn 13-15/1/12

Report of two 12/50s being present. Persons
not named.



A NASTY COLLISION!

A few weeks ago friends were involved in an unusual collision. They were driving, in the country, at 110 kph in the outside lane of a two lane freeway. On their right there was only a narrow verge before a drop of about a metre on to the grassed central reservation studded with monumental gum trees. They were in the right hand lane because they were overtaking a large truck which occupied the left hand lane. They rounded a curve and there, right in front of them, right in the middle of the lane lay a huge metal hook which had presumably fallen off a large crane. Their VW Passat hit it fair and square. In doing so it divested itself of the steering gear, the bottom of the radiator, the sump, and the bottom of the gearbox. The rear suspension was damaged and the boot floor mangled and ripped open. The car came to a halt about 300 metres down the road with all air-bags deployed, at the end of a trail of oil, coolant and shrapnel. Obviously it was a write-off. Fortunately no-one was physically hurt.



The rear suspension was damaged and the boot floor mangled and ripped open. The car came to a halt about 300 metres down the road with all air-bags deployed, at the end of a trail of oil, coolant and shrapnel. Obviously it was a write-off. Fortunately no-one was physically hurt.

Naturally I gave them my sympathy with what must have been a horrible and frightening experience. But something niggled at me about the story and it was not until a few hours later that the emotional impact of the story was tempered by a hard headed realization of what had happened.

A fundamental rule of driving had been broken. Always drive at such a speed that you can stop within the distance you can see ahead. But how often is this obviously self evident rule broken in modern traffic? Speeds are high. Roads are good. Brakes are superb. Steering is light and accurate. Other drivers usually are doing the right thing. The comfortable ride and efficient sound insulation of the modern car isolates the driver from the realities of physics.

Drivers of old cars, especially those of us who learned to drive in them should be better equipped to avoid some of the pitfalls which appear when reality is hidden. The limited roadholding capabilities of our cars with heavy steering and less efficient brakes means that we are more aware of our surroundings and circumstances. We are always looking for an escape route. Bit like riding a bike in heavy traffic!

Always go down a hill in the same gear you would use to go up it is another good old rule. Let the engine do some or all of the braking. But with the prevalence of automatic transmissions down hill is usually travelled on the over-run with consequent reduction of control. The superb brakes mean that retardation is not a concern but the reduced control does remain. Many automatic cars have a two-pedal manual function built in but few drivers use it. Many are probably unaware that it exists. Just follow a line of cars down a steep hill and watch all those brake lights go on and stay on.

If you park on a hill turn the front wheels into the kerb if you are pointing down-hill and away from the kerb if you are pointing up-hill. And leave a manual car in the "opposite direction" gear. It's no good relying on the hand brake whose cable may stretch. But on the steep residential streets of suburbia there are rows of cars parked with their wheels pointing straight ahead. Presumably most of them are automatics. Don't the owners realize that the "Park" position on the gear lever just pokes a little dowel into the side of a shaft? Would they hang any other of their valuable possessions by such a slender thread?

When you set the handbrake push the trigger and release it when you have sufficient tension on the lever. If you just pull on the lever you wear out the ratchet and loose feel for the tension. But if you are only going to keep the car for a couple of years and it has an electrically applied parking brake operated by foot, what does it matter? And what tension?

Some of the old rules are still useful but others have been superseded by modern technology. Have any of your readers got other examples of old-time rules which are no longer applied but could and should be in today's motoring world to make life safer and cheaper?

JOHN HETHERINGTON.

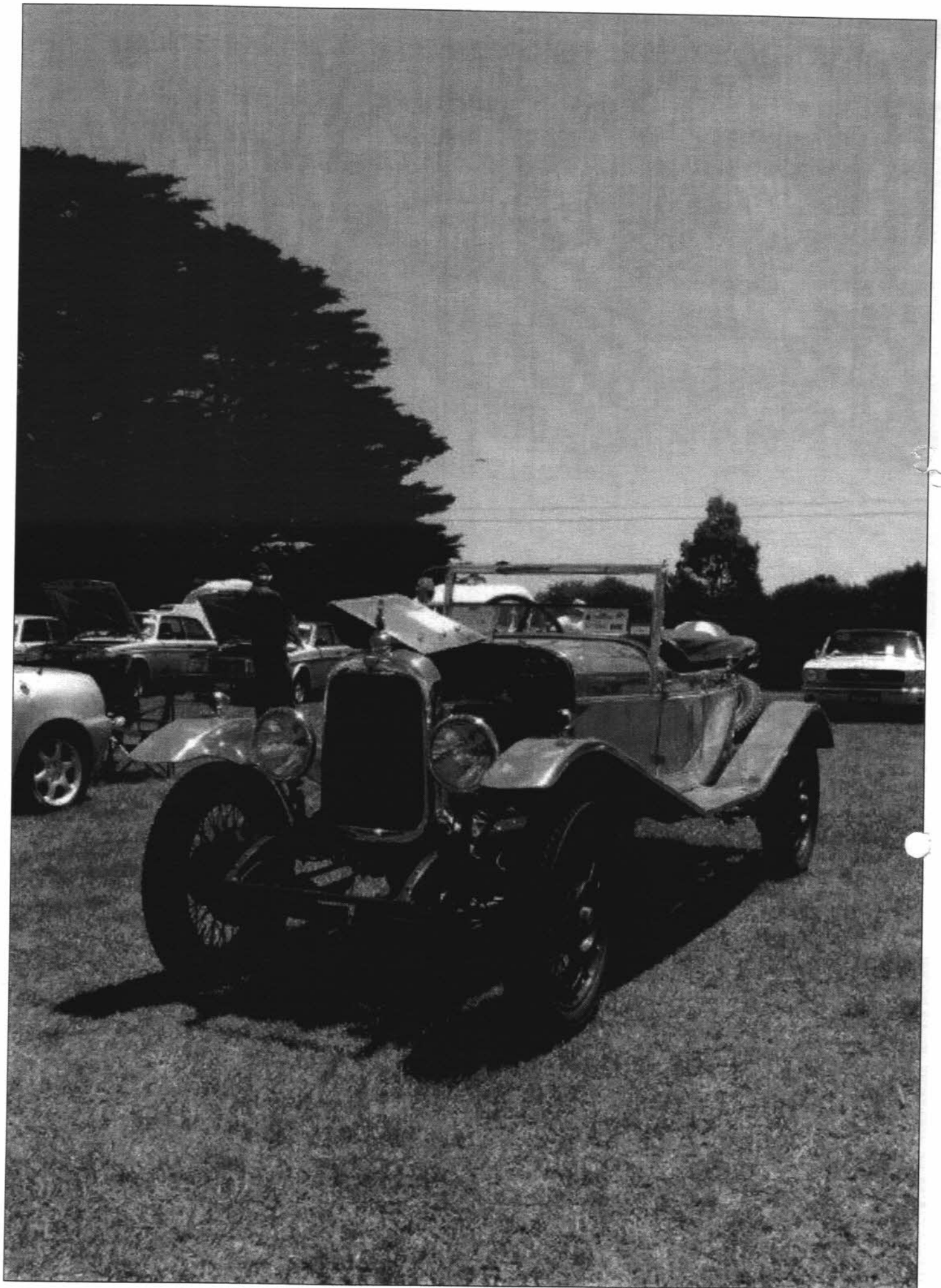


RACV Great Australia Rally: Mornington Racecourse 15 January 2012

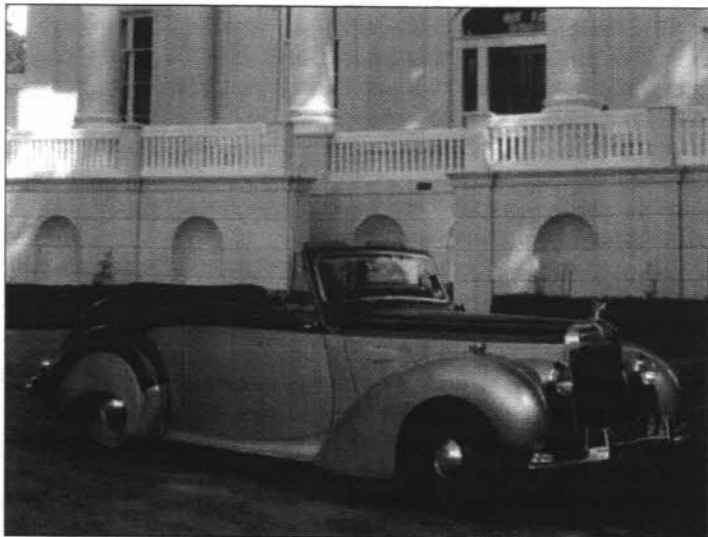
A wonderful day was had at the RACV Great Australia Rally held at the Mornington Racecourse. The grounds were full of cars from all eras and the various car clubs had staked out their picnic spots in the shade. There was an impressive array of cars from the 17 veterans to the 4 Alviis. There was a large crowd of public spectators all of whom enjoyed wandering around and asking questions about the various vehicles. Andrew & I took our 1910 Brush and while wandering we came across the Alviis of Marcia & Ian Barber (Silver Eagle Special), Darryl & Joc (TA21 DHC), Chris Higgins (12/50) and tucked away on a far field the 12/50 of Bob & Lesley Northey. Richard Tonkin attended with his Armstrong Sideley. It was good to catch up with Marcia. All in all it was a very successful day.

Frances McDougall





A STORY OF TWO TA's



Of the many real cars that have passed through my hands, two now remain, the 1953 Alvis TA21 DHC chassis # 25329 and a 1939 MG TA chassis #2982. Both are in reasonable mechanical condition and do not require the time and effort usually said to be associated with the ownership of a Classic car. Accordingly and having a fair amount of free time, we decided to make 2011 a travelling year, first using the Alvis, driving in February from Sydney to Melbourne, crossing Bass Strait on the "Spirit of Tasmania" and touring in Tasmania for three weeks through some of the best driving country in the Nation. The roads are good with very light traffic by Sydney standards. Accommodation is excellent and caters for all tastes and pockets. In the cities of Hobart and Launceston we stayed in self contained apartments using these as a hub from which we could tour on a daily basis whilst enjoying the opportunities of fine dining or self catering as it suited the mood.

Travelling in a single and somewhat unusual vehicle we were able to meet many of the local people and establish a rapport with them that may not have been possible if we had been in a convoy situation. The friendliness of the locals and our acceptance by them made for a most enjoyable trip. Visiting Huonville we were approached by a gentleman who expressed his surprise at finding an Alvis in what is one of the southern most points of the island. He identified himself as Paul Gliddon, a member of the AOC, the owner of one or two Fireflies and a resident of Perth WA.

On things mechanical; during the previous months I had chemically cleaned the engine and radiator, and then fitted an electric fan and electric water pump as well as an Alternator to carry any heavier load from these additional bits. During the trip and in the subsequent months there have been no significant overheating problems. In ambient temperatures in

excess of 38 degrees the running temperature has been a steady 75 followed by a rapid rise to 90+ when the engine was switched off. At this point the thermostat controller on the fan and water pump cut in and the temperature reduced to a little over 80 degrees. When considering the heat soak potential in the engine bay of these Three Litre cars, I think this result is most acceptable.

A week or so after the Tasmanian trip we joined "The Alvis Escape" event in NSW and travelled the roads of Southern and Central NSW with a group of like minded people.

From these trips which covered about 4000 miles, I replaced a set of points, a condenser and a coil.

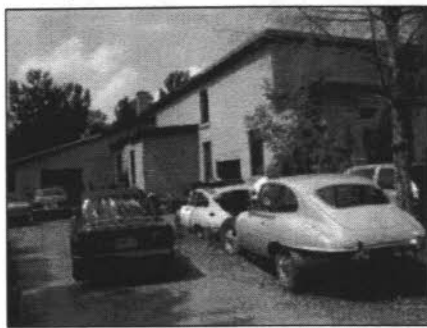
Digressing for a moment; during my travels through the years I spent some time in India and remember a sign on a garage wall "All Mechanical Repairs and general Tinkering". It seems to me that there must be a significant difference between the meanings of Indian English and Australian English as to me the word "tinkering" has more meaning as "mucking about with, generally with sometimes poor or amateurish result". I think that I fit this category as evidenced by the minor things I have done to the DHC, e.g. the conversion of the Semaphore arms to flashing units, the addition of high mounted stop and turning lights, the fitting of a battery isolation switch etc. to list but a few.

With this knowledge and to keep my busy fingers away from my cars which are in good running order, I decided to look for a new project and in June or July, found an Alvis for sale in Canada. Communication with the owner determined that it was just the thing I was looking for and within a few days we were en route to Vancouver. Becoming tourists we enjoyed the scenic beauty of Vancouver Island, followed by a two day crossing of the Rocky Mountains --- a journey highly recommended, although it is possible to meet the strangest people. I have an uncommon



surname and when boarding the train was asked if I knew the other Mr Dadd who was travelling in the same carriage. At an appropriate time I had a good look at this person whom I had never seen before and deciding that he looked quite normal, made myself known to him – to discover that he was a cousin from Perth WA and from a family line of which I was unaware. He thought it unusual that I had travelled to Canada to look at a car, but then being family, it is likely that he has some strange habits too.

Suffice it to say that we did not buy the car but discovered a treasure trove of about an acre of British sports cars, all requiring restoration. These consisted mainly of Jaguar XK 120 to 150's, E Types, Healey's, MG's and Triumph's, all left hand drive and in fairly poor condition (imagine shrubs and small trees growing through some of them). There was not an Alvis on the property!



Returning empty handed we learnt that the MG TC Owners Club of WA was to celebrate their 50th Anniversary in October. What better idea than to attend this with the MG TA, especially one on NSW conditional registration. The NSW system in quite different

to that operating in Victoria as we have no logbook, require an invitation from the host club, together with a number of other bureaucratic requirements the least of which is permission to drive an "unregistered vehicle" in WA. I carried 12 pieces of correspondence to ensure that I could legally use the MG in WA and drive it home again.



No doubt due to the fact that we have a mandatory annual vehicle inspection. I reasoned that if I could drive on a club run of 100 miles without any problems, why not drive across the Nullarbor? However, having been taught to be cautious and as a safeguard, I flushed the radiator and engine, overhauled the entire braking system, replaced the universal joints and rear wheel bearings with sealed units, replaced the fan belt, added a couple of spanners to the tool kit, threw in a spare inner tube and a sense of humour, thus I was properly prepared for the trip.

In order to guarantee that we would be in time for the event, we elected to take the car to Perth on the Indian Pacific. This is a three night train trip and although scenically quite different to that of crossing the Rocky Mountains, has the same camaraderie and is highly recommended for those who have not travelled in this way. I sought permission to drive the MG on and off the train, assuming that few of the railway employees would have the knowledge required to operate a Pre War car. This permission was obtained in writing but on arriving in Perth was advised that "you are not to set foot on my train". Accordingly this overly officious lady spent almost 20 minutes trying to start the car, and it was only because the MG was in the front of all the other vehicles that I was asked for assistance. Stupidity comes in many guises and on this particular day it was wearing the uniform of an employee of Great Southern Rail.

Using the MG as our daily transport we included a visit to the York Motor Museum with the Alvis TC21/100 Grey Lady DHC in its collection, basically quite a nice car in need of a little TLC. It had been used a few days before we arrived at the museum. The day before the rally started I was told of a Speed 20 "with cycle guards" that had not been seen for many years.

Subsequent inquiries failed to reveal the actual address where this car was reported as having been stored in a shed and we did not have enough time to further the search.

The celebration rally consisted of two parts, both hub runs with the first three days from the mining town of Collie and the next three from Busselton. It's worth mentioning that there were 32 MG TC's, 7 other T Types including our TA, an SA Saloon plus a solitary MGB. This particular car had been loaned to an American couple who had come over for the event. I am inclined to think that this is more than likely to be the largest number of MG TC's ever assembled for any event.

The touring was absolute Magic and praise must be offered to the organizers for their choice of roads and scenery. Two places in particular are worthy of comment; a spot in the Jamieson Valley known as Gnomesville, a collection of thousands of garden Gnomes placed on the side of the road. The other is an "antique" shop south of the Margaret River district called "Mucho Crappo" where I was able to find a brass Eagle the same as, or similar to those used on some of our Alvis radiators.

It was during the latter part of the rally when we had a serious problem when the water pump started to leak. This was caused by over tightening the new fan belt that I had fitted before leaving Sydney. Within 24 hours the leak was massive, so in the Motel grounds we removed the pump housing and having no replacement, packed it with some hand filed washers, a piece of soft drink can and copious amounts of Loctite. This repair was sufficient to seal the leak completely and although not leaking when we reached home, I removed the pump and had it rebuilt to proper specification.

Before starting for home we were able to spend time with friends near Augusta, an area that was devastated by bush fires a few weeks after we had left, and then with my daughter and family in Perth, but the need to journey to Sydney before the onset of the really hot weather caused us to need to commence the trek.

To those of us living in the Eastern states the concept of



"crossing the Nullarbor" in a 70 year old car (think shoe box on wheels) may appear daunting, but we found that few of the TC Owners Club members felt that way. In fact driving their MG's from West to East is a regular occurrence. Likewise our own Peter Scotney has driven his Alvis TC 21/100 from Perth to the Alvis meetings in the East on several occasions. This may well apply to many others of whom I am unaware.

Whilst on the Rally we renewed our acquaintance with Harry and Deidre Pyle who had driven their MG TC around Australia as well as through the USA and Europe. Likewise we met Bob and Lynne Douglas who had recently driven their MG TC from London through Europe, Russia, Mongolia and Asia to Australia as well as having driven it through South, Central and

North America. Deidre Pyle has written a book entitled "Drive 'em till the roads wear out" which pretty much says it all about the MG T Type!

From the experience of driving from Perth to Sydney, I define the Outback as somewhere about 50km east of Perth to (say) West Wyalong in NSW. The important issues are knowledge of the fuel, food and accommodation stops plus a plan of one's likely mileage for a day's travel.

We came via Kalgoorlie to Norseman then across the Eyre highway. From Norseman there are only Roadhouses for refuelling and accommodation. Eucla has some houses, but until Ceduna in South Australia, only the Roadhouses exist. Some of these are good, whilst others are an experience to have had.

At a time when petrol was \$1.40 per litre in Perth and Sydney, the cheapest we found was \$1.80 at Norseman and Mundrabilla with the dearest at Nullarbor Roadhouse at \$2.06. Accommodation ranged from \$90.00 per double at Mundrabilla to \$150 at Nullarbor Roadhouse which also had the highest prices for any comparable item (in one instance 14 times higher). We did not stay at Eucla and I have no information on this although it looked to have a quality Motel. Mundrabilla is an experience that must be had if you have a complaining nature, for having stopped there, you will never complain again! Although I must say that having packed a sense of humour in a very large quantity, Mundrabilla has a special charm and it is no wonder that this is the area where UFO's have been reported as being sighted!

We took 2 weeks to travel from Perth to Sydney, taking the opportunity to drive to the Great Southern Ocean and Great Australian Bight lookouts. Some of the views are outstanding and will forever be etched in our memories. In addition to this is the memory of the warped imagination of our fellow travellers. On the Goldfields Highway between Kalgoorlie and Norseman we counted hundreds of soft toys, mainly teddy bears that had been fastened to trees on the sides of the road. Later there was a toilet bowl sitting atop a huge mound of earth and crossing the Nullarbor, trees or bushes festooned with shoes and others with tea towels. For those of you with a liking for the better side of life, we also encountered a travelling Opera troupe, performing Mozart's Marriage of Figaro in the township of Merredin WA – population, 2550. Who said that culture is dead in this country?

Ever mindful that there were no mechanical services and

limited water, we stopped several days in some places in order to service the car and generally relax, on one occasion staying in a cabin at the caravan park in Ceduna, the quality of this being the equal of any accommodation we had during the entire trip.

In all we were away 5 weeks, travelled 4800 miles and apart from the water pump problem during the Rally, the only irritant was the burning out of the contact points in the Distributor and SU petrol pump together with the boiling of the Battery as we crossed the Nullarbor. This was traced to an overcharging generator, so I ran the car with the generator connected for about ½ an hour towards the end of each day and with it disconnected for the rest of the time. The MG TA has a three brush generator and I could not find anyone who had ever seen one, let alone knew how to repair it – certainly in outback Australia.

Returning home in November, we relaxed over the Christmas period, deciding then to go to Melbourne in the Alvis TA21 to visit family. This timing coincided with the January opening event on the Victorian Club's calendar, which we attended and were well received as visitors/members from interstate.

During the year we drove over 11000 miles in our Classic TA's and in all of this, only needed to keep the hood up for 4 complete days. Crossing the Nullarbor we had 5 consecutive days over 35 degrees in a shoebox on wheels with little or almost no storage space. We discovered the camaraderie that exists between drivers crossing our vast land, the quirkiness of those who ride their bicycles or the one who drove his 1914 Model T Ford, dressed on a day of 37 degrees, in his full leather coat, flying helmet and goggles. We savoured the Speed and Grace of our Alvis during the trips through NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, and even now when I enter the garage to use my modern car, I hear the Siren song from either or both of the TA's, "if you want a real driving experience, take me instead".

Philip Dadd
26/1/2012



*The Eyre Highway
Only 1986 kms to Adelaide!*

SAVED BY THE WAR

Simon Fisher
Part 1

A review of Alvis' precarious finances in the late thirties

As soon as TG John had become Chairman after the death of Ernest Peirson, the first Chairman and a Chartered Accountant, he entered into a dubious and expensive financing arrangement which almost brought down the company as early as 1924. The problems were compounded by fraud and the clear incompetence of the accounting staff. A receiver, John Davie, was appointed by the debenture holder to sort the mess out, a new Chief Accountant, MJ Vaughan, recruited, and a Chartered Accountant, Sir Arthur Lowes Dickinson, appointed Chairman.

The Oak Investment Corporation Limited came to the rescue, paying off the debenture holders at the end of 1927 and recapitalising the company with an injection of £150,000 in May 1928. At this point Alvis went public, and from then on its shares were traded on the Birmingham Stock Exchange. Little is known about the somewhat mysterious I white knight, Oak Investment Corporation, but with the help of David Manson in Australia I have been able to establish that it was incorporated in March 1927 with an issued share capital of £750,000, but was liquidated following a winding up order made on 15 October 1929. Presumably it had sold all of its holding of Alvis shares on the market prior to its liquidation.

Under the cautious eye of Sir Arthur, with TG John as Managing Director and Captain GT Smith-Clarke as Chief Engineer, the company weathered the lack of commercial success of the front wheel drive models and the depression.

The years 1933 and 1934 (when the Speed 20 and Firefly were both selling well) were (according to the audited accounts) the most profitable years of the company prior to the Second World War, but history was to repeat itself following the death of Sir Arthur on 28 February 1935. John then reverted to being both Chairman and Managing Director, and immediately embarked on a much less cautious approach to financial management.

As an example of the parsimony of the previous board, when John asked for £20,000 to design and put into production a completely new 4 cylinder car to replace the then ageing 12150, the Board turned down his request, opting to continue the current models and "doing the utmost to improve selling arrangements". This must have frustrated John, and he must have welcomed the opportunity to take charge of the purse strings. Mysteriously, just before the death of Sir Arthur, John had found it necessary to "suspend" the Chief Accountant, MJ Vaughan, and Cyril Coslett was recruited 2 months later as his replacement. By 1936 Coslett had also become the Company Secretary, replacing H Wagstaffe.

A study of the annual accounts of the company, which fortunately survive intact at the Coventry Archives, reveal some almost scandalous accounting. It is evident that Alvis rarely made an adequate return for the shareholders and practised creative accounting, particularly for 1934 and 1935, to justify good dividend payments. They then used their apparent good dividend record for 1933, 1934, and 1935 to lure investors into buying more shares. Starting with net assets of around £250,000 at the beginning of 1934, Alvis was able to raise no less than £804,000 from successive sales of shares between November 1934 and October 1936, despite falling profits. John sunk the bulk of the increased capital into setting up a completely new aero engine factory, despite the fact that he had no orders for aero engines - even when the factory was fully set up and manned - and that he was trying to break into "the ring" dominated by the four established aero engine manufacturers: Rolls-Royce, Napier, Bristol, and Armstrong-Siddeley.



T.G. John, desperate gambler or someone taking calculated risks against the background of economic turmoil, in a fast moving increasingly technical world feeling the impacts of globalisation. This article being timely, given the Business world's current challenges with many CEOs facing the same dilemmas.

The early thirties

The company's share capital from 1928 to 1934 had been £200,000: £100,000 as ordinary shares and £100,000 as preference shares. Reserves at the end of 1933 were a meagre £59,000, giving total capital and reserves of £259,000, compared with £262,000 at the end of 1928. However, the balance sheet was healthy, and late in 1934 the company was able to issue £70,000 of ordinary shares at a 100% premium - raising £140,000 in total. It is not clear what this was intended for, other than to pay off loan capital of £67,000. But for some time John had been troubled by the company's dependence on outside coach builders, so maybe he was again thinking of buying an existing coach building business. He was equally concerned about their dependency on Charles Follett for sales in the London area, and wanted Alvis to set up their own

showrooms. John was also interested in taking over Lagonda at this time, and in June 1935, soon after he became Chairman, Alvis put in a bid of £35,000 for the whole business, which was then in receivership. But this was unsuccessful and Lagonda went to Alan Good.

The aero engine factory

It seems that it was around this time (June 1935) that John got the idea of developing into the aircraft industry - specifically, aero engine manufacture. The rearmament programme had not yet got underway, but civil aviation was developing rapidly. John acknowledged later that he had not anticipated armament and that it was the civilian market he wanted to penetrate. At the same time, the falling off of car sales was already giving John cause for concern. A first step Alvis signed a Licence agreement to manufacture Gnome-Rhône radial aero engines in July 1935. This cost £50,000, which was a significant outlay for the company. The investors were still quite happy, however, and the company was able to raise a further £310,000 (fJ90,000 of ordinary shares at a premium of 20,000) without difficulty in November and December 1935. But this was not really enough for John's ambitious plans to build a new aero engine factory, and invest in "mechanisation" (military vehicles) at the same time. The company's capital expenditure between 1 January 1935 and 31 July 1937 ended up as:

	Year ended 31/12/1935 £	19 months ended 31/7/1937 £	Total £
Licence from Gnome et Rhône	50,000	-	50,000
Land and buildings	70,402	116,068	186,470
Plant and machinery	29,123	281,861	310,984
Machine fixtures, jigs, etc	5,060	16,553	21,613
Investment in Alvis Strausler Ltd	-	35,680	35,680
Trade investment (BMA)	-	25,000	25,000
Motor car development	9,205	12,569	21,774
Aero engine development	6,836	140,351	147,187
Total	170,626	628,082	798,708

As mentioned, John was targeting the civil aircraft market, and he hoped that Alvis could team up with an aircraft manufacturer. He first (1936) tried to get involved in the formation of the National Aeroplane Company Ltd. When that failed to progress, Alvis purchased from Alan Good of Lagonda, an interest in British Marine Aircraft Ltd (BMA), later renamed Folland Aircraft Ltd, in the hope that they could have a captive customer. The Trade Investment above represents the purchase of 75,000 shares in BMA from Alan Good at 6/8d (33.3p) per share.

Lloyds Bank, always a loyal supporter of Alvis, had agreed to an overdraft of £100,000 in 1935, but by mid 1936 the cash was running out, so John again turned to the Stock Market for more funds to finance his spending.

Simon's analysis continues next month, showing how creative accounting allowed the move to Aero engine manufacturing to start. But how difficult conditions reduced car sales, such that without the rearmament work, which nationally got under way from 1937 onwards, Alvis would not have survived.

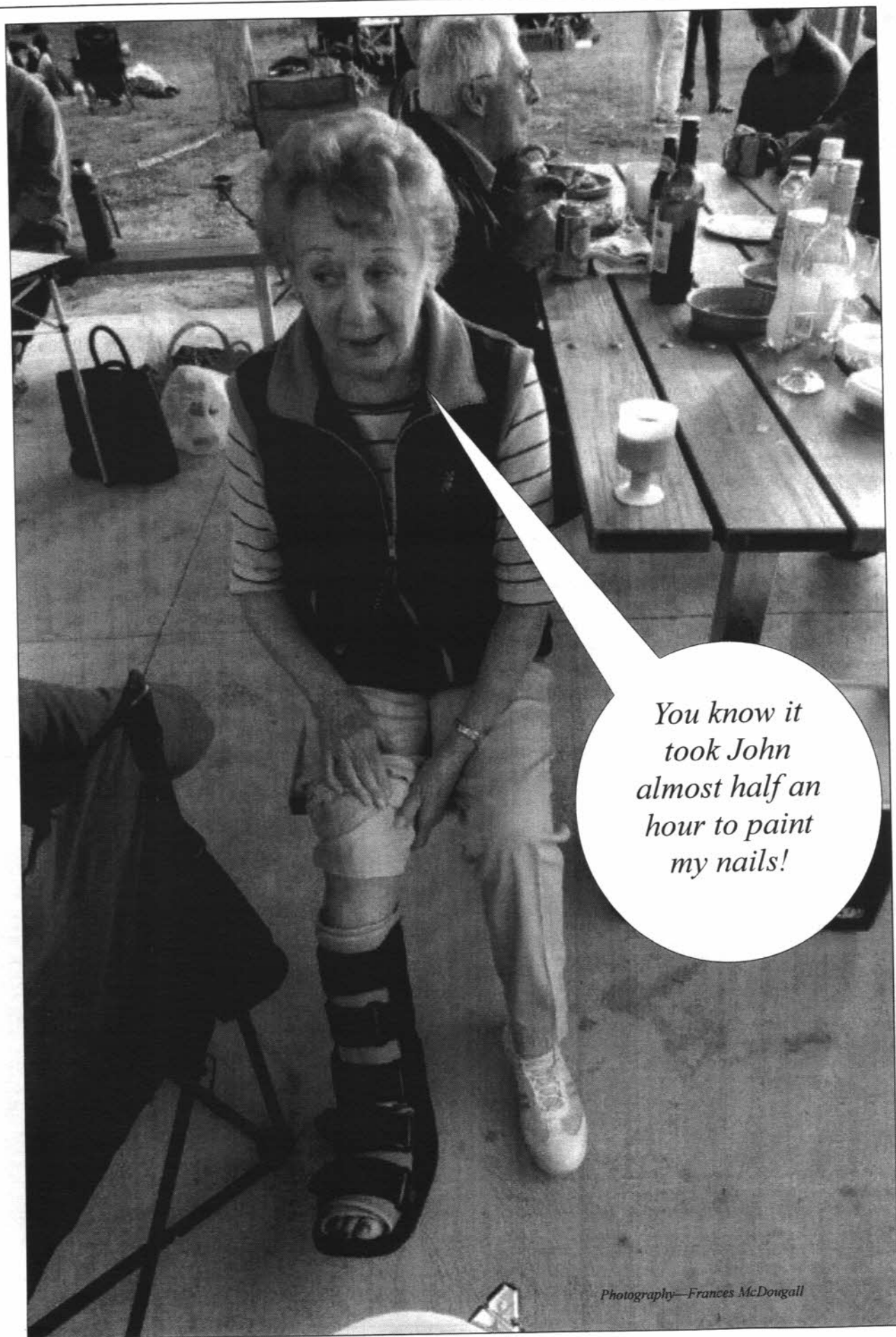


The works in the early Thirties, when the company was paying a dividend of 5%, considered good for the period and largely based on car sales. A scant few years later, car sales were reduced and the company had started on its high risk venture to enter the Aero Engine market.



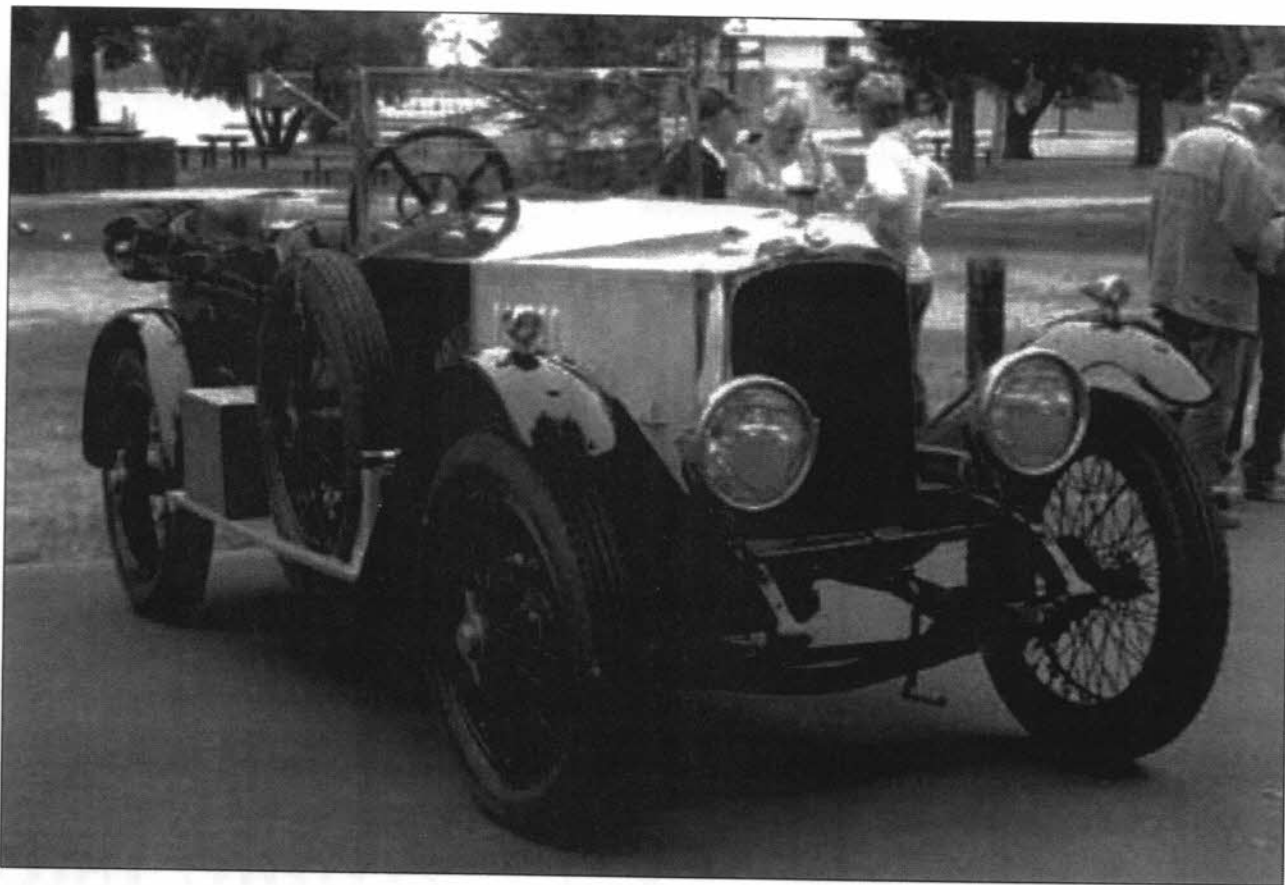
right: a copy of a Share Certificate issued in the period covered in the article. These 100 shares would have cost Miss Evans £46 5/-, but were worth only £18 10/- by January 1938 and she would not have received a dividend (of £1 5/-) until January 1941. Published with kind permission of the Coventry City Archives.

ALVIS PEOPLE BEHAVING BADLY



You know it took John almost half an hour to paint my nails!

Photography—Frances McDougall



Many people will be aware that Geoff Hood had been working on a 30/98 project for some time and it made its first appearance at the VSCC opening BBQ. Congratulations to him on what has been described as a work of art.

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page 2



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