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The Newsletter of the Alvis Car Club of Victoria

February 2016





#### February 2016 VOL 55 ISSUE 1

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

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Front page: The cars present at the Kevin Bartlett Reserve for the January Opening BBQ

The Editor would like to thank all contributors to this month's ALVIC

# 2016 COMING EVENTS

# ACCV 2016 EVENT PLANNING

- GENERAL MEETING Guest Speaker John Hetherington on Plane Spotting before Radar **FEB** 19
  - EARLY MORNING CABLE CAR RUN 21
- MAR 11-13 BALLARAT WEEKEND AWAY (PETER MACKAY)
  - 18 **GENERAL MEETING**
  - 20 KALORAMA 60TH BIRTHDAY
- APR 10 RACV CLASSIC SHOWCASE FLEMINGTON RACECOURSE
  - 15 **GENERAL MEETING**
- MAY 1 PETANQUE CHALLENGE
  - NATIONAL MOTORING HERITAGE DAY 15
  - **GENERAL MEETING** 20
  - **28-29 WINTON**
- **GENERAL MEETING JUN 17** 
  - EARLY MORNING RUN (MARK WELLER) 19
- JULY 15 **GENERAL MEETING** 
  - CRANBOURNE RUN (DALE PARSELL)

AUG 19 GENERAL MEETING
ROB ROY (DATE TO BE DETERMINED)

SEP 16 GENERAL MEETING 23-25 WEEKEND AWAY - MANSEFIELD AREA (ROHAN SWANEY)

OCT 15-16 SHORT WEEKEND AWAY - BIRREGURRA (ALAN MCKINNON) 21 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOV 18 GENERAL MEETING

DEC 4 CHRISTMAS PARTY (RICHARD TONKIN)

It is planned to have a guest speaker at every second general meeting

If you can suggest anyone who you think would make a good guest speaker; not necessarily on Alvis or old car matters, the committee would be happy to hear from you

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope you all had an enjoyable festive season which is now already a month ago and that 2016 will be a good year for you. Of course when it involves Alvis motoring it can't help be anything but good.

Our first event for the year, being the Club New Year barbecue in January, was an enjoyable event with a good roll up. We were also joined by members of the Armstrong Siddeley Club and there was also a Daimler in attendance. Alvises were well represented with the three 12/50s of Higgins, Ross and Northey, two Speed 20s of Weller and McDougall, one TA21 with the Wallach clan and Richard Tonkin in the blue TE21. Besides the adults enjoying each others company the dogs likewise had a great time running around the oval.

Frances and I are heading to Tasmania on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> of February for 12 days so that we can participate in a special veteran car rally from the far northwest corner to the southern most point of Tasmania. This is being staged to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Veteran Car Club in Tasmania. We will

driving the 1913 Siddeley Deasy, which we are extracting from the Launceston museum. Whilst there we will be catching up with Sally and Chester McKaige and we are keen to see the completed Delage restoration. Also Chester and Sally have been very busy organising a Delage tour of Tasmania to be held later in March.

There are a number of Alvis events coming up in the next month or so. It will be nice to get as high attendance possible as each event has plenty of interest. The first is the February monthly meeting where our guest speaker is our own John Hetherington who will be speaking on Plane Spotting before Radar. John's talk will be the first in the program of having a guest speaker at every second monthly meeting. Hard on the heals of this, on Sunday 21st of February there will be an early morning run designed to avoid the build up of traffic and ending in a brunch around 11.00am, most likely at a Yarra boathouse. This event is being put together by the McKinnons and will have the theme of cable trams and will be taking us to various locations around inner Melbourne, connected with the former cable tram network. Peter Mackay and Jen, assisted by Mark Weller have planned a great extended weekend away in the Ballarat district from Friday 11<sup>th</sup> through to Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March. This coincides with the Labour Day long weekend, however by starting it on Friday and finishing on Sunday it will avoid the peak traffic times. It will also allow us to benefit from other organised activities such as the

Begonia Festival and an antiques fair, besides the specific activities planned for us. Our weekend events are always a mixture of fun and great Alvis driving, so I highly recommend the weekend. Get in early to secure accommodation. Further details of these events are given elsewhere in Alvic.

Later in March, on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>, the 60<sup>th</sup> running of the Kalorama run and display will be held. Due to the long association our Club has had with Kalorama it will be good to have a strong representation of Alvises at their 60th event.

In the workshop I have been busy working on my 1909 single cylinder Sizaire Naudin, so as to have it ready for the National Single and Twin Cylinder Veteran Rally, being held in West Gippsland at the beginning of April. I had previously had it on the road in a semi restored condition, however it failed after 8km with a seized engine and a rotten radiator. The engine has been rebuilt and the radiator has required major repairs to overcome severe corrosion and has been fitted with new tubes. I was fortunate to be ably assisted in this task by a skilled 85 year old gentleman, as no radiator repairer would look at the job. I hope to have a better run this time.

The body restoration of my Speed 25 Charlesworth Saloon has finally reached the stage where the car can be returned home and have all the mechanical, fuel and wiring items etc installed. This has to be done so that the car can be in as near complete condition before the final detailing of door gaps and panel fit are completed, prior to painting. After many years, the car as it stands, looks to be a vast improvement over how it was when purchased. There is one major issue to be resolved and that is, that it has been out of the workshop so long that other items have taken over and there is currently no room for it. There needs to be some sorting out, so the car is unlikely to return to the workshop until May, when all the other activities are over.

I look forward to having a good roll up for our February meeting and enjoying the company of as many Alvis owners as possible throughout the year. If you can come to the Malvernvale Hotel for a meal prior to the monthly meeting please let me know by the previous Wednesday so that I can reserve an appropriately sized table.

Andrew

# **EDITOR'S CORNER**

We understand that Dorothy Chaleyer is in hospital and is very unwell. Those of us who went to the Metung Weekend Away last year, will recall that Dorothy was part of the onsite organising team and whose company we enjoyed. We would like to hear some better news on her condition. Our thoughts are with her.

I recently spoke with Warren Bonning and readers will recall that his TD21 series 2 has been for sale for some months. Warren is keen at 90 (and still playing tennis) to sell the car so that he can put food on the table and is prepared to negotiate on the price. The advertisement is on page 19. It is not concours but having had significant work done on it recently he advises that it is running well and there is nothing to spend on it and would make someone very happy. He would like to see it stay within the Club.

Allan Willingham would like it known that it was his photograph on the front page the December ALVIC, not Frances McDougall as listed. Apologies to both.

Touched base with Ken Cuming who advises that apart from age creeping up on him, the 12/50 which he uses as a daily driver 3 or 4 times a week is going well.

Des Donnan tells me that his Silver Eagle is on the road and a pleasure to drive. Interesting that he was aware that a UK friend was making a C&E frame for a Silver Eagle and so he asked him to make 2. It was shipped out and skinned and now graces his car.

Des asked if I would like a copy of his article "cars I have owned" and it is featured on page 14

Barry Gough is one of our more senior members, although looking at the membership it is hard to find someone who is not a senior member. In fact at 73 I hate being called elderly, although the media considers anyone over 60 is elderly.

Back to Barry, whose memory is as I would have liked mine to be, particularly on history matters. In 1996, Barry converted some 8mm films onto a DVD and has given me a copy. The period covers some of the Alvis escapades from the 50s to the early 80s.

Barry's printed recollections to compliment the DVD will bring a smile to our faces and remind anyone who features in them, what fun there was to be had.

We will find a suitable occasion to enjoy the 15 minutes of video.

I had contact with John Gove during the week and his Speed20 project on chassis 1158 has a crankshaft being made and plans for the body underway.

We look forward to catching up with John & Judy at an ACCV event soon.

I am advised that Mike Hirst (UK) is in hospital having had a heart attack. We wish him a speedy recovery, because we know you can't keep a good Alvis man down for long.



# EARLY MORNING RUN SUNDAY 21 FEB

The START is in Dallas Brooks Drive which is off Birdwood Avenue as it is easier to park there, in the vicinity of Domain House. 7.30 am arrival for a 8.00 am departure.

We will be taking in some history of Melbourne's early transport , i.e. cable trams. Most of the evidence has gone however there are still a number of engine houses or the remains of which collectively, form an interesting tour.

BRUNCH will be at BUONGUSTO at 261 Lower Heidelberg Rd, East Heidelberg.

Noeline McKinnon needs to know if you are coming and would appreciate a call or email. Tel: (03) 9458 4433

noeline@antiquetyres.com.au

# Alvis Weekend Away Ballarat 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2016

This weekend is being organised on our behalf by Peter Mackay and Jen, and will be a great event as it coincides with the annual Begonia Festival and an Antique Fair in Ballarat, which will provide additional interest to the planned excellent activities and eating venues.

Despite it being a busy weekend our event has been planned so that we will be traversing quieter roads and we can be assured of having an enjoyable and relaxing time, sharing great company and driving wonderful cars.

Preliminary outline for the weekend (a few items have still to be completed with final details to follow):

#### Friday 11th March

12.00 Arrival for Lunch, Boatshed restaurant, Lake Wendouree.

After lunch, Lake Wendouree & Botanical Gardens visit ... Details to be confirmed.

6.00 pm Drinks and dinner in Ballarat at a venue in short walking distance from our accommodation.

#### Saturday 12th March

9.30am rendezvous for 10am Start.

Rally directions to include morning tea & lunch. Finish mid-afternoon and return to Ballarat.

Note; the Begonia Festival, Antique Fair and other activities are on during the weekend in Ballarat.

6.30pm at Craig's Royal Hotel for drinks and dinner. 5 minute walk from accommodation.

#### Sunday 13th March

9.00 am Rendezvous for 9.30am Start.

Rally directions to include morning tea and final stop for lunch on the Melbourne side of Ballarat.

# Accommodation Options (nights of 11th and 12th March 2016):

The Quest offers a modern refurbishment of beautiful old building with apartment style rooms. Their is limited off street parking. Three of the available Quest rooms are 2 bedroom apartments which give the option of sharing, similar to the Metung weekend accommodation.

6 x Studio Rooms @ \$189 per room per night

3x One Bedroom Apartments @ \$215 per room per night

3 x Two Bedroom Apartments @ \$325 per night.

If you would like to join us please contact Peter or Jen to ascertain how best to arrange accommodation: ph. 5334 1000, or email: mackay@fieldair.com.au

# THE SAGA OF THE SPEED 25

Alvis Speed Twenty-Five, Chassis 13690, was despatched from the works on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 1937. It had a saloon body by Charlesworth finished in black, with a green Connolly leather interior and carried registration DMB 688 (Chester).

My involvement with it started roughly 71 years later, on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008, by which stage it had no body, and the remains of the interior were packed into a couple of plastic shopping bags. Quite obviously the intervening years had not been kind to it, though in spite of the enormity of the task of restoration, I felt it was a worthwhile project.

Little of its early history is known. It had been involved in a collision at some stage; damage to the near front quarter had been repaired after a fashion, but ongoing deterioration to the ash framework and aluminium body as a result of the impact, resulted in the car being put into storage. Subsequently, ownership changed hands with a renewed interest in restoration, and a lot of work was carried out, including consigning the body to the tip, as it was considered unsalvageable. Unfortunately, the car was located in an open sided shed, so work was difficult, progress was slow, and as so often happens after some years the restoration process stalled, which is where I came in.



April 2008

This was just about all that survived of DMB 688. Not shown in the photograph are the rear mudguards, front seat frames, and a few timber parts in a much deteriorated condition.

At the time I was employed in the airline industry, and my employers had a very different idea to me of how much of my time was actually my own, but as they were paying my salary, they got to call the shots. Accordingly during the first few years of my ownership little work was carried out, other than making an appraisal of what needed to be done, and gathering as much information as I could about the Alvis marque in general, and the Speed series in particular. Once I retired though, work started in earnest.

Although the car was supposedly restored to rolling chassis status, it became evident that the passage of time and weathering had left their mark, and much of the previous restoration would need re-doing, so I elected to start from scratch. During the disassembly process I came to realise that this was a wise decision, and the scale of work was to be far greater than I had first envisioned.

The disassembly process revealed that although generally there was very little wear evident, almost every single component would need to be completely overhauled as there was evidence of some poor repairs and in some instances incorrect assembly. The obvious place to start was the chassis so once this had been checked for straightness it was grit blasted and then coated with a single component moisture-cure urethane coating. This product, by KBS Coatings, is the Australian equivalent of a well known US brand and in my opinion is vastly superior.

The cast aluminium firewall was glass bead blasted and was the first component to be re-installed, work then

proceeded on overhaul of other various components. The aluminium instrument panel had had a very professional walnut veneered overlay made, but for some obscure reason the switches had been mounted on this timber panel rather than the aluminium, and to allow this modification clearance holes had been cut in the aluminium panel, so these had to be filled, re-drilled and new brackets fabricated to allow the panel to be correctly installed. The brake pedal pivot hole was worn oval so it was bored to take a Glacier bush to bring it back to standard size, and a new pivot shaft made.



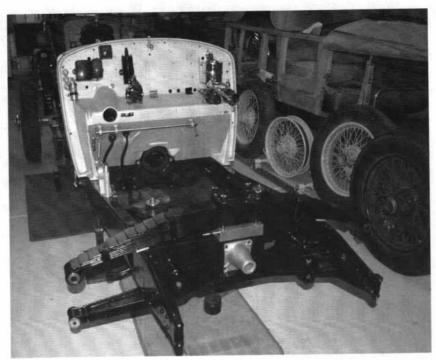
The chassis after being grit blasted and brush painted with a urethane coating. This coating has proved to be virtually indestructible, and despite all the unavoidable knocks and bangs suffered in the rebuild process still does not have one single chip!

The next component group to be reassembled was the front suspension. The original transverse spring seat had obviously been damaged in the collision, and had been replaced by an aluminium block, this should have been perfectly satisfactory, except that the spring retaining bolt holes had been drilled at incorrect centres, and no provision had been made for the locating dowel. A new spring seat was duly made to address these issues.

The nearside radius arm was very slightly twisted and needed straightening (I don't know what grade of steel Alvis made these things from, but this was the first of many instances where I was to realise no compromise had been made in the engineering specification). In addition, the radius arm had been mounted upside down, which added to my confusion. I considered replacing the radius arm needle roller bearings with bronze bushes, which would have been easier and arguably better, but in the end decided to retain the original setup using new parts.

A call to Red Triangle confirmed that new kingpins and bushes were available, but I did not feel like re-joining the airline simply to pay for them so ordered lengths of EN36 and LG2 Bronze and proceeded to make them. This was all very straight forward although cutting the 1TPI oil scroll on the kingpins using a lathe that could not go as slowly as I would have liked was an interesting exercise in hand-eye co-ordination. After heat treatment and grinding to size they turned out indistinguishable from the real thing at a fraction of the cost. I reassembled the near side first, and all went well, but when I came to the off side it became apparent that the steering upright (spring carrier in Alvis parlance) was twisted by about 2mm between the upper and lower eyes. This caused a lot of head scratching as to how such a very substantial forging could become twisted. In the end I concluded that the impact force on the left front had been transferred by the front transverse spring to the right hand upright (which would also explain the spring seat). Finding a replacement proved impossible so I resolved to attempt to straighten it. This was not quite as easy as it sounds owing to the shape of the forging and the risk of causing further damage. Eventually I machined attachments that would allow me to apply a twisting movement in the opposite direction to that which I presumed had caused the damage. My rationale was if it had been twisted, then it would twist back. Once again I was thwarted by the fact that Alvis engineers had intended that this component never break. Every time I removed the pressure, it just sprang back again! I don't recall how much pressure it ultimately required, but with the use of a 300 ton press in the end succeeded.

The steering had about 45° of free play, but when I dismantled the steering box, I found no evidence of any wear at



The front spring seat was to cause lots of grief as incorrect, shorter, spacers had been installed. When the mounting bolts were tightened, they did not fully clamp down the spring before becoming thread bound, a fact that I was not to become aware of until the engine was in and the weight of the car was on its wheels, when it took on a decided list. I had to take out the spring twice before I traced the cause.

all. However an unbelievable number of obviously home-made shims had been installed. I simply discarded all of these, retaining only the ones that appeared to be original, reassembled and adjusted the steering box along the lines Marles had intended. The result is perfect steering with no discernible free play! The friction ratchets for the hand throttle and ignition timing levers needed new parts, and the Bakelite boss at the top of the steering wheel had been butchered by screwing on a replacement horn button using PK screws. The holes were filled, the boss then repainted to match the original Bakelite colour, and the engraved lettering filled in in white. A new horn button duplicating the original was made out of Wearlon, a polyamide that happened to be exactly the right colour, and together with new contacts, the assembly was installed using the original fixing points.

The brake backplates simply needed cleaning and painting and having the adjusters freed before re-installation. I made new clevises and stop ends for the brake cables, and then new cable assemblies were made up and installed. The drive pins on one wheel were worn, so new ones made and installed.

All the steering joints were overhauled, bushes replaced as necessary, the front hubs re-installed on the correct sides as they had been transposed before the car came into my hands, and the front end was almost complete.

The Luvax-Bijur one-shot chassis lubrication reservoir and pump was overhauled – there was no bucket washer in the pump although it had been filled with oil, and the metering valves were overhauled and tested. This was a fiddly, time consuming job, as the metering valves were never intended to be dismantled, however most were completely blocked with congealed oil and I could find no equivalent with BSF thread sizes. The system was reinstated with new 5/32" copper piping throughout – 14 metres of it.

The generator and starter motor were both overhauled, the starter had new components made for the Bendix, and a repair to the drive end casting, and a new wiring harness was installed.

The rear axle was completely dismantled, and found to be generally in good order except for a wheel bearing that had failed, so with new bearings all round and a new pinion oil seal installed, I was able to move on to the engine.

The engine had seen professional attention to re-boring, camshaft grinding, crankshaft grinding and main and big-end bearings, all of which had been done to a very high standard. It had not been run subsequent to re assembly which was just as well, as a lot else needed attention. My problems started with the vast amounts of silicone sealer which had been liberally applied everywhere. This made dismantling very difficult, particularly removing the block from the crankcase.

One of the first problems I encountered was the harmonic balancer, which consists of a central body with v-groove to drive the fan, itself driven through friction discs by two cast iron side plates which are keyed to the front of the



Front steering upright. This, the near side, had suffered impact damage, and this radius arm was twisted but it was the offside upright that was slightly twisted. The kingpins needed renewing as the lower ends were pitted by corrosion. They showed very little wear leading me to believe the car has only travelled a modest mileage for its age—70830 miles are indicated on the speedometer.

rankshaft. This assembly had been installed back to front. While both sides look the same superficially, in fact the centre hole on one side is radiused to suit the fillet on the crankshaft, and no amount of percussive technology will ever make it fit if it is the wrong way around – the only thing it will do is damage the balancer. In addition, the bore of the balancer had been crudely enlarged with a file in an attempt to get it to fit. It would have been so much simpler just to install it the right way! So, off to my favourite steel merchant once again for a large lump of cast iron with which to make a new balancer.

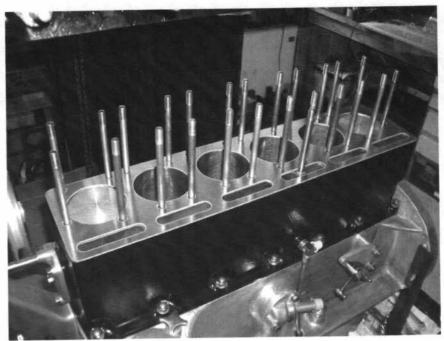
The camshaft thrust bearing had also suffered from incorrect assembly; once again new parts were required. The camshaft intermediate bearing retainers and oil feeds were missing altogether, as was the retaining bolt for the timing chain tensioner. This bolt not only retains the tensioner in the timing case, but also serves to plug the axial drilling in the tensioner shaft that feeds oil to the timing chain and sprockets. The tensioner itself was a mess, all the pawl springs were missing, and the tensioner shaft was so worn that even had the retaining bolt been fitted, very little oil pressure would have been developed. The camshaft timing was so far out that the engine would probably not have started.

The flywheel was loose, and a clutch plate more suited to the power of an Austin Seven had been installed. The flange of the oil pump intake strainer in the base of the sump was cracked from being over-tightened and was not usable. Initially I planned to make patterns to have a casting made, but considering the time and effort involved in making patterns, having the casting poured, and then the machining, I decided for a one-off it was just as easy to make it from solid aluminium. The oil pump needed machining to clean up both the housing and lower cover plate faces, which were not flat, attention to the gears to restore the correct clearance was required, and also a new drive gear was made.

I decided not to use any of the valves, which were a mixture of original Alvis inlet and exhaust valves, combined with NOS – new *very* old stock valves. I obtained blanks and set about turning up new valves, retaining the Alvis tapered collets, as I wished to keep the multiple spring layout. One new valve guide was required, to replace one that was cracked, K-Line bronze inserts were fitted to all the guides, 3-angle seats were cut and the head was as good as new.

I elected to make the cylinder head gasket from solid copper which I feel offers many advantages over the composite type – provided the mating surfaces are both completely flat. So after a laborious measuring process I developed a drawing which I converted into a .DXF file which I then emailed to a water jet cutter, who cut a trial gasket in steel sheet. Slight readjustment to the position of two stud holes was required; gaskets were then cut from 16 gauge copper sheet and vacuum annealed.

The water outlet/thermostat housing on the front of the head was corroded internally, but only where it had been in contact with the cast iron cylinder head. I thought I could reclaim it by welding, but some of the pitting was so deep, and with so many impurities that in the end I simply cut off the entire lower part of the casting and fabricated a new

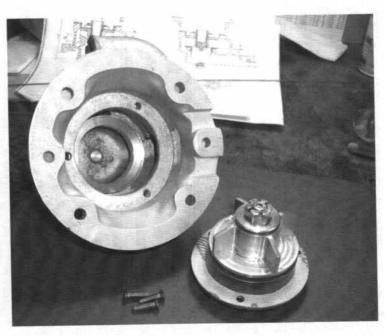


The solid copper cylinder head gasket in situ, prior to installing the head.
The gasket was cut on a CNC water jet cutter, which provides an extremely high degree of accuracy together with a very clean cut. Annealing in a vacuum furnace results in a perfectly soft gasket.

part which was welded on. The water transfer port at the rear of the head was also corroded, but to a lesser degree and was easily repaired.

The water pump impeller had been modified, this I felt offered no advantage over the original design so I made a new one from brass, replicating the original design, but increasing the diameter very slightly so as to reduce the clearance at the cutwater. As the pump body had also been altered during this modification I turned up and installed a new volute inlet much as the original would have been.

The BTH magneto/ distributor was missing, and despite my best efforts I failed to find one, so in the end elected to use a Lucas equivalent. In order to fit it to the crankcase I needed to make a mounting flange that would support the magneto and at the same time allow it to be rotated slightly so that manual ignition timing could function. The actuating and clamp lever was laser cut and then hand finished, and the bell crank and associated support bracket milled from solid steel. The magneto itself required modification as it was a magneto only, and would not allow the original dual ignition system to be used. It was disassembled, the points housing modified to take a second terminal post, and together with some internal re-wiring looks very much like the BTH original, and it works perfectly!



The water pump body and replacement impeller. I consider the original design to be perfectly adequate, provided the rest of the cooling system, particularly the radiator, is kept clean and free of sediment. However, one modification to the Speed 25 cooling system that would prove beneficial for today's traffic congested road conditions would be the addition of a shroud around the fan. This would greatly improve its efficiency.

The carburettors were in good condition, requiring just cleaning and reassembly, and new copper fuel lines were installed. The original braided flexible brass fuel line from the pumps to carburettors seeped fuel so it was replaced with a braided rubber one which looks exactly the same. The manifold, which appeared to have originally been nickel plated, was given a ceramic coating in the interests of keeping under bonnet temperatures down.

Engine assembly was quite straightforward, though I was not sure about the valve timing, not knowing whether the camshaft grind was standard or not. In the end, as I was not particularly concerned about top end performance, preferring better torque at the lower RPM range, I advanced it slightly (giving the inlet 0.005" more lift than the exhaust at TDC), and the result seems very satisfactory.



The Lucas magneto modified to enable both coil and magneto ignition to be used. The mounting plate, advance retard lever. actuating bellcrank and its support all required fabrication. It works very well and does not look too dissimilar from the BTH original.

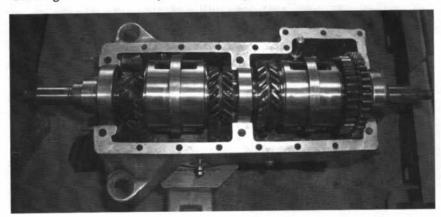
The clutch was completely disassembled, set up and re-installed together with a new plate. When it came to the gearbox I hoped my luck was about to change – upon initial disassembly it appeared to be in perfect condition. However, after removing the mainshaft I discovered that third speed gear on the layshaft was missing two teeth. My first port of call was naturally Red Triangle, who said that they did not have a third speed gear in stock, but as they had all the drawings, would arrange to have one made - the last I heard was they were having difficulty finding someone willing to do the job. I went to all the local gear cutters, some did not have the correct module



The engine just prior to installing the clutch. Of interest is the ceramic coating on the manifold, which has proved to be most effective.

The harmonic balancer and the entire lower portion of the thermostat housing where it is in contact with the cylinder head were just some of the parts that had to be made.

cutters, and others were unable to handle the ½ tooth offset that Alvis used on their double helical gears. Eventually, thanks to the efforts of Andrew McDougall, a complete gearbox was sourced which provided the required gear. I had intended to use both main and layshaft gears from this gearbox to avoid running unmatched gears together, but was not able to do so as third speed mainshaft gear on the replacement box also had a damaged tooth. So I blued the gears and trial meshed them and all appeared to be well. I suspect these gearboxes were made with an exceptional degree of accuracy like everything else on the car. However, I would love to know what the designer of the gearbox was thinking when he came up with the design of the layshaft retaining circlips at the centre bearing. For what is otherwise



On removing the top of the gearbox, all appeared to be in good order, however two teeth on the layshaft third speed gear were missing. Other than that, virtually no wear was evident in the rest of the gearbox.

a beautifully designed and very easy to work on gearbox they are fiendishly difficult to remove! I also made two new lower plates for the gearbox out of 8 gauge (roughly 4 mm) aluminium plate to replace the much distorted thinner 16 gauge originals.

Just to compound my gearbox woes, I had taken the gear lever, amongst a number of other items, to be re-plated; the electroplater was extremely busy and said the parts would be ready in six weeks. After the six weeks had passed all the other components were done but there was a problem with the gear lever. It turned out that it had spent the entire six weeks at the bottom of an acid cleaning tank and was about half its original size! - so another component to reproduce, this time quite unnecessarily. In spite of its apparent simplicity, I found it to be a very difficult item to make – everything is either tapered or spherical, and before I could turn the spherical sections accurately, I had to make a radius turning attachment for the lathe. Finally, and just to be different, I decided to leave it straight as every Alvis gear lever I have seen is cranked, seemingly all in differing directions and amounts depending upon the model, and in this particular installation I failed to see any rationale behind this as there are no clearance issues with any other components.

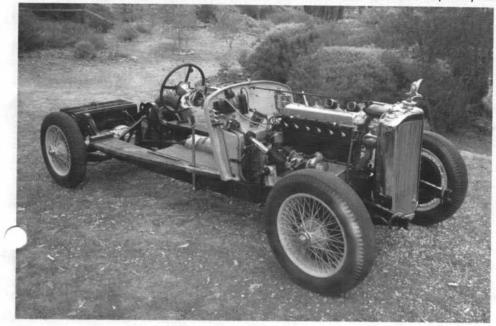
I made a simple indicating tool to facilitate lining up the engine and gearbox, and then installed new flexible drive discisorbtained from Red Triangle.

I had been given some lengths of 316 grade 2" stainless steel pipe so that was the basis for the exhaust system. Although 316 is not usually used for exhausts, in this instance the price was right so I was not going to argue. I had flanges laser cut from 10 mm stainless plate, obtained a suitable silencer, mandrel bends and a flex-bellows coupling, and after replicating the original brackets proceeded to weld it all together following the original routing, but with no rear silencer. I was initially concerned that a single straight through silencer might be too noisy but in the event I feel it sounds just right.

Finally, after 8 years of working on the project, I reached a stage where I felt satisfied that the first phase, work on the mechanical components, was complete and that the next thing to do would be to start the engine and confirm that all was working as it should. Accordingly, I primed the oil system using an external pump, and not wanting to have fuel in the tank (which is brand new), while the body is being built, rigged up a temporary fuel tank using a small fuel can strapped to one of the battery supports. I then connected a battery, and after thoroughly checking I had not overlooked anything, switched the ignition to "Start" - and the fuel pumps operated perfectly, filling the carburettors. The first couple of attempts at starting indicated some adjustment to the mixture was needed, and when this was done it started and ran beautifully. After some fine tuning to the oil pressure relief valve and the ignition timing, I switched to "Run" (magneto ignition), and increased the RPM to about 1800 for the initial camshaft break-in. It ran for about twenty five minutes at this speed before the temperature started to increase (a shroud around the cooling fan is

on the agenda). During this time there were a few minor issues, for example a slight leak from an exhaust manifold gasket, the generator cut-out could use some adjusting, and a leak from the water pump seal, which has subsequently lapped itself in, but generally a most satisfactory result for an engine that had not run for well over thirty years.

The culmination of all this work was a short test drive, so with some temporary floorboards bolted to the chassis, and



January 2016

78 years after it was built and almost 8 years undergoing rerestoration it is now in a similar state to when it left the Alvis works for Charlesworth to have the body constructed.

the driver's seat frame screwed to this, I started up and tentatively drove out of the workshop. Everything seemed to be working correctly, so once on the road I accelerated gently – without the weight of the body the performance was absolutely astonishing, and in this very short test drive I was also able to ascertain that the brakes, clutch, gearbox and steering were all functioning exactly as I had hoped. I now have renewed enthusiasm for phase two of the restoration, the bodywork. In the light of the exhilarating performance unencumbered by bodywork I am going to adopt a dictum of Henry Ford as my mantra while I construct the body – simplicate and add lightness.

Peter Miller





An unexpected night arrival the Langs

# Cars I Have Owned by Des Donnan

My Grandfather was a GP living in Holywood Northern Ireland and had the third registered car in Co Down. He used it in his practice and also enjoyed motoring as I have a photo in the form of a postcard, as was the usual developing process of the day, of three people in his car (Reg No IJ33) at the start of a hillclimb, starter with flag raised and white line marked on the road. The back of the card (which had been posted) is dated 1904. The type of car is unknown to me.

His name was William Dunlop Donnan, with the middle name as a tribute to his father's friend, Dunlop of tyre fame.

My father, Laurence Frederick Donnan, was born in 1907 at Holywood and grew up in the halcyon days of vintage motoring. During his training as a doctor, he supplemented his income by writing a weekly motoring column In the Belfast Telegraph which allowed him access to various sporting events. He told me of the Ulster Tourist Trophy at Ards in the late 20's, and in 1932 donated a trophy for the Best Pre 1930 car in the Round Ireland Rally. As his transport then was a 1923 12/40 Alvis, he used this for the Rally, a week long event with stages between major towns throughout Ireland. As it turned out, he won his own Trophy, which I inherited and subsequently donated as a trophy to the VSCC in Victoria

We have many photos of cars that he bought, usually for 5 pounds if good and 2 pounds ten shillings if not so. He would run them for a short time, then sold or traded. Amongst them are SS1, Riley Lynx, A7s, Alfa Romeo apart from the Alvis which he kept for some time.

After the war, he settled in England and I remember

his 20 HP Rolls Royce which made a great family car, being used for picnics etc. I am not sure where the petrol came from, as it was in very short supply.

#### **TOURING CARS**

My first car was a 1936 1.5 litre MG VA saloon which was given to me by my brother in 1956, after he had obtained a job with a tea planter in Ceylon and could not sell the car due to the Suez crisis, when there was very limited and rationed petrol, making cars almost unsellable. I drove this car for some time but had great trouble when a cylinder head gasket needed replacement, which cost 4 pounds 10 shillings. After that I learnt how to look after my own maintenance.

The car was sold after I cooked the motor one very cold night and after the radiator hose split, the pistons melted. It was so cold I didn't notice the lack of power! As we had no garage, but lived by a steep hill, normal starting was by running it down the hill. Unhappily, one time I forgot to remove the rug used to retain as much heat as possible under the bonnet, from the previous night and it caught fire. I tried to hand brush the paintwork but it was not a success.

My next car was the incorrectly named Flying Nine Standard, memorable for the need to lift the roof in order to open or close the door. It was horrible.

Our first impressions of Australia in 1959 were that wheels were needed, so a Hillman Minx was bought. Its problem was the necessity to hold it in top gear by hand, very trying over 12,000 miles.

My father had migrated in 1955, bringing with him as deck cargo his Speed 20 Alvis. The cost was 100 pounds for freight, but the wharfies' broke into the boot

stealing all his spares. He used this car for many years until I bought it from him in 1965. He also had a formidable collection from which he gave me a 12/50 Alvis chassis and parts, but not enough to make a complete car. He had a 1926 20/60 Vauxhall, DI Delage, Voison (a huge tourer powered by a 4 litre, 4 cylinder sleeve valve motor), a Dornier (of which I remember little), a 1936 Straight 8 Buick and a Light 15 Citroen. As he was Medical Superintendent at Beechworth Mental Hospital, he had the hospital carpenter add another garage each time he bought another car. Being in the country, he would hear of cars to be used as a saw bench, so he would rescue them.

I bought his 1938 Buick Straight 8, a very large car which had the ability to go from 5 to 95 mph in top gear, most impressive, very reliable but too heavy in petrol for me

As a present to me on my arrival, my father gave me a year's subscription to the Alvis Car Club of Vic and the VSCC of Vic. This provided me with a consuming interest in old and proper cars as well as a social interest. e also gave me an early 12/50 Alvis chassis and engine to rebuild, which I sadly never completed.

We finally bought a **1926 Alvis 12/50 Tourer** from three female University students for 50 pds after an SEC truck had run into the back of it. It gave great service and is now owned by Greg Berkman (see below). For some time it was our only mode of transport.



On a trip to UK in the 1980s I bought a 1931 TJ 12/50 and kept it there for a few years to allow vintage motoring over there (Reg No GW311). When storage became an issue, I sold it to Matthew Parkin who ran it for a couple of years before passing it on.

In 1969 we bought a DB6 Aston Martin Vantage, a car which gave us great happiness and was truly a modern vintage car. It was made in 1966 by Touring to a patent of Superleggera, which was a form of construction of tube space frame, covered on points of contact with the aluminium skin with canvas-type material. Capable of 136 mph but still giving 20 mpg at 90 mph, it could turn the back end into a smoke haze with its spinning tyres. One AM organised event to the Shepparton Skid Pan showed the excellent road manners. It is the one car I still regret selling.

In 1971 1 bought a 12/50 Ducksback from Graeme Harder in Melbourne. It was uncompleted, needing a alum skin and wiring etc. Its history was well known,

being previously owned by Graeme Quinn and Simon Ramsay. Jane Quinn described an attempt she made to catch an errant split rim that unexpectedly detached itself from the front rim by grabbing it with her hand. Fortunately she missed. The car is an early SA 12/50 delivered from the factory in Dec 1924 and usually, imported new to Australia with a Ducksback body, most cars of the era arriving as chassis only, to be fitted with Australian bodies. This restoration was my first major one and I was pleased with the result but did not do many miles as we seemed to have better cars at hand. The major effort was the drive Darwin to Canberra in '88 in the Bicentenary Rally. The need to cope with the February heat of Alice Springs required the removal of the bonnet sides and a small water leak was soldered up. We had a puncture near Canberra but lost the split rim, kindly replaced by Geoff Taylor later. We also took this car to UK in 1996 for the Edinburgh to Gaydon International Rally (British Leyland paid for the transportation) and it went well. We also took it to France and toured Roscoff to la Rochelle, a really lovely tour. We had to learn the French for "it is 72 years old," frequently asked by locals. This car is now owned by Mark Burns in Melbourne (see below) and is extensively campaigned by him in VSCC (Vic) events.



We bought three other 12/50 Alvis vintage cars. One came from Melbourne in a dismantled state and was rebuilt as a ducksback and is now owned by Mike Williams from Hobart, Tasmania. Another was bought from Chester McKaige and again rebuilt as a tourer, which is now residing in Wales owned by Mr Crook. A final 12/50 was bought, partly restored with only a body frame made (M), and sold in that state to Henry Anderson and is now owned by his son.

Other cars bought, restored and sold on after use, were a 1928 16.9 hp Sunbeam tourer, (N) unfinished when bought, so we completed it with a fabric covered tourer body. It went well and we took it to UK for a superb Rally commemorating Seagraves win at the 1923 French GP, a rally to the original track and remembered by much wine supplied by the French Mairie. Seagraves's GP win was the first for an Englishman driving an English car.

My son's car, also a 1928 Sunbeam 16.9 Tourer, was bought as a trailer load of bits and over many years, he rebuilt it. It was a good introduction for him into vintage engineering and it has beautiful steering, good brakes, a willing engine but an unfortunate selection of indirect gears. It gave us great pleasure to see him drive away

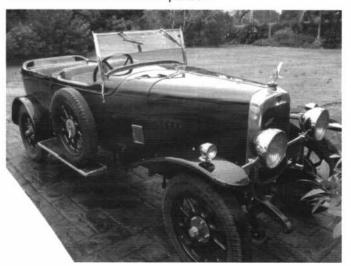
from his wedding with his new bride in that car.

Another interesting modern car was a Lancia Fulvia (1969 vintage) (O) bought at auction and used only for a couple of years in Queensland. It had a very sloping windscreen which made the black seats very hot in this climate.

I have bought two more Alvis cars, a 1928 Front Wheel Drive and a similar age Silver Eagle, which is really a 12/50 with a longer chassis and a 6 cylinder engine. The FWD took me 3 years to restore, having bought it from Moe in Victoria. It had no body and a complete engine overhaul. It's a really advanced car for its age, the first production FWD car made in the UK. Made for racing and rallying, they only made 140 of them, almost sending Alvis broke as production costs were very high and they sold them for the same price as a 12/50. Being supercharged did not quite compensate for the heavy chassis, but made for an exciting noise. We took the car to UK in 2012, competed in various hillclimbs and sold it there. It was a maintenance nightmare and very expensive to run.



The **Silver Eagle** came from Stuart Paton and needed a new body again. The engine was restored as it had its original dural conrods as well as needing new pistons. A body frame was bought from a guy in England who makes these, and skinned and painted by Ray Little in Caloundra. It is now completed.



All these things bring me back to my favourite car, the **Speed 20 Alvis** which epitomises the best of English engineering of the 30's. Over the past nearly 30 years, we have reconditioned most parts but tried to keep it as close as to the original specification. It is an excellent and spacious touring car, ideal for Australian conditions and a good choice by my Father as he faced a new world.



#### **COMPETITION CARS**

Increasing prosperity in the early 70's allowed us to buy Sabrina (R) from an ad in the Melbourne Age. It is an Australian sports car special, locally built with twin 4 inch tubes as a chassis, a Jaguar motor, Moss gearbox and IRS at the rear, all clothed with a fibreglass shell. It was very quick, but Edna never liked it as it had killed a previous owner. It was sold and is now rebuilt with its proper Austin Healey 3 litre motor with a huge supercharger and is owned by Ross Williams in Geelong.

In late 1968 I bought an early 20's Citroen (Type B14) in chassis form. We rebuilt the tiny engine and gearbox (3 speed and useless) and constructed a lightweight plywood timber body for it. We used it at Lakelands Hill Climb but it was too slow with that gearbox so we sold it to a guy in Sydney.

The Bugatti Alvis was a T40 chassis bought from Paul Conrad and fitted with a Alvis12/50 motor much improved by polishing the motor internally, raising the CR by welding discs onto the top of the pistons, polishing the interface between the head and block so much that a head gasket wasn't needed and much lightened flywheel. It was meant to be quicker than his 12/50 hillclimb car but never succeeded.

In the four years that I raced it as the Bugatti Alvis, I had my share of problems. I remember one Mt Tarrengower Hillclimb when Bugatti so called 'experts' recommended an "instant" gear change from 1st to 2nd. When I tried this I broke the gear lever near the base and had to finish the meeting using a molegrip as a gear lever. At one Winton Historic Meeting, I selected reverse instead of 1st and when the flag fell, the car behind got quite a fright. However, Paul Conrad had shortened the car to 96" which was the wheelbase of a GP Bugatti (he did the same with the 12/50 Alvis Race car) and in fact it handled very well, with slight oversteer.

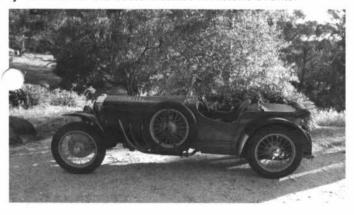
One race meeting at Lakeside Brisbane, when we towed up the Bugatti-Alvis from Melbourne, a spectator came up to Edna and said that he too possessed a

Bugatti. It turned out to be a believed 'lost' car, a 1925 Brescia once owned by Arnold Terdich's father who ran it in a late 20's Australian Grand Prix at Phillip Island, with a class win. There was little left; a chassis, bulkhead with the all important identity plate, two of the most immaculate Bugatti instruments, a steering wheel etc. I bought all this and took it to Melbourne where I swapped it with Dick Stanley for bodywork on my son's Sunbeam 16.9 Hp tourer.

Coming back to the Bugatti Alvis, at one meeting at Phillip Island I ran all the bearings and so decided to rebuild it into a proper Type 40. I had bought the bones of a T40 engine from Stuart Murdock, whose Dad owned two. David Rapley rebuilt it using many BOC Spares. I think it has A Model con rods in it.

The body frame was bought from Wilkinsons of Derby and assembled here, and skinned and painted the traditional blue on a lengthened frame. A friend made up the seats from Land Rover frames. The overall effect was good and we finished it in time to take it to the UK in 1984 for the VSCC 50th Rally. It was a good touring car if a bit inderpowered as I never got the mixture right. I sold the car to Gavin Bain (NZ) in '93 and he has re-choked the carb with great success. Bill Boddy of Motor Sport made kind words about the car after seeing it in a traffic jam near Oxford.

My Frazer Nash came from Neville Webb in dismantled and incomplete form and was the Barrie Garner single seat racer built up in the early 50s and developed to give 100mph using 16" wheels. Neville had owned the car in to late 60s and had great success including the hill climb record at Broken Hill. I wonder where they found a high enough hill! After many owners including Jumbo Goddard, it was a challenge to restore it. We enjoyed the rebuild of a most unusual mechanical device and after a year we campaigned it for the next four years all over the eastern states in historic events.

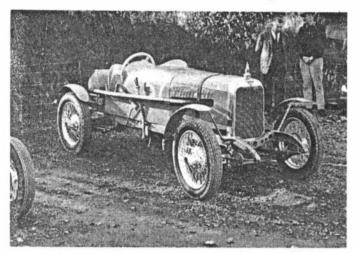


The Frazer Nash Register Raid to Bolzano in Italy from Brooklands near London was a re-run of FN's greatest Rally success in '32 and '33 and we wanted to be part of this. Warwick Parsons did a most detailed and excellent TT Replica for us using a Profile Book sections suitable scaled up. I was so pleased to park the car with some 58 other chain drive cars and as no two were the same, it fitted comfortably in place. It was a memorable Rally amongst the most spectacular scenery and showed the reason that Nash did so well in pre-war Rallies- the cornering of hairpin after hairpin on the Alpine passes was superb. We did this Raid in 1989 and repeated again in 1999, with a 1993 visit to UK for the VSCC

Anniversary Rally, all good fun. We took the car over to Ulster for a Hillclimb on public roads up a big mountain over a couple of miles.

We finally competed in two Targa Tasmania's with success and huge enjoyment. The organisers closed sections of public roads (including one of 58 km from Queenstown to Hobart) and it was flat out over these sections, keeping a wary eye out for faster cars coming up behind.

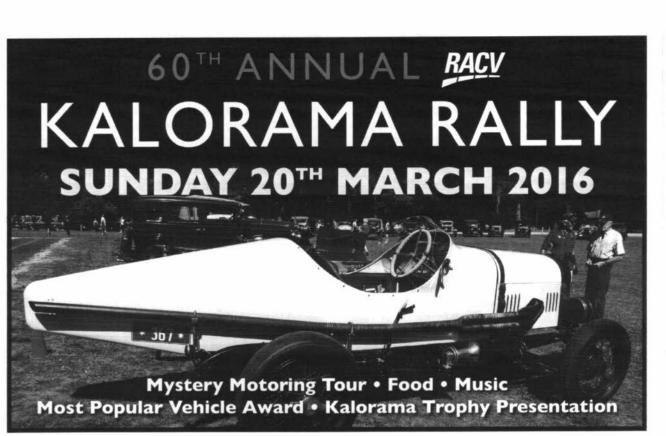
The last car is my Alvis 12/50 race car, originally built up by Paul Conrad (Victoria) in the mid 50s from a 5 pound plumbers ute he bought (the body at that time was made of 1" gal pipe clad with flat sheet). Dispensing with the body, he worked over the car doing all work himself and spending only a few pounds each year. He flattened the springs and filed the big end caps to achieve some oil pressure and went hill climbing with reasonable success. His triumph was at Rob Roy near Melbourne where he came FTD beating a blown Bugatti T37. Once again the wheel base was shortened to 96" like GP Bugattis.



I have used the car and reworked the engine. Fitted a taller back axle ratio and also fitted a 12/50 braked front axle as circuit racing does not suit 2 wheel brakes as the car was originally fitted. My worst experience was in Adelaide when I managed to break both the gearbox as well as the crankshaft - a bad day.

Steve Denner and I bought an Alvis 12/50 much modified chassis intending to race it, but it failed as a project as the cost of completion was too high, and it was sold to Richard Creed in Victoria.

Lastly in the racing department, we bought a 1937 Ford Special from Dick Vermeulen from Yandina. It was called Henry II and we raced it everywhere. It had a Ford V8 side valve motor (flat head), was very low to the ground, went like the wind, it was a wonderful machine. Dick made (I think) eight of these cars, all named Henry I to VIII. There was even one event at Lakeside with only his cars allowed in. One memorable experience was when the engine disintegrated down the main straight at Phillip Island, and was totally wrecked. A visit to a local wrecker saw another engine purchased for \$100. We called the car the Yellow Peril.



















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#### RADIATOR WOES!

ALVIC avoids making recommendations as it puts some onus back on the Club or the writer if a member accepts the recommendation and is then unhappy with the work. Below is my experience in trying to have an unserviceable radiator made good for a project car.

.....ed

To state the obvious. In restoring an old car there will be many unexpected situations crop up in which the most meticulous budgeting does not reflect what the real cost will be.

In relation to the Lang Speed 20 project, I had a paid invoice from the previous owner indicating that the radiator had been repaired and so it did not appear in the budget. It certainly didn't look new, but appeared serviceable. I took it to the radiator specialists who had recored the Speed 25 radiator thinking that if there were problems, they could fix them.

They reported that a pressure test had it leaking like a sieve and that with the side tanks that formed the side supports and carried water, they were not prepared to touch it.

Peter Mackay suggested a Ballarat company that had repaired his Silver Eagle radiator would be a good possibility.

Once again I was faced with a similar outcome, although the proprietor was prepared to spend some time with me and explain the problems that a repairer would face in trying to replace the core.

Peter Miller suggested that North Geelong Radiators was worth the trip and Marg & I met Graeme Mathlin who asked for it to be left with him.

He called me back with a proposal and quote, explaining that he was unable to source honey comb core at a sensible price within Australia or New Zealand.

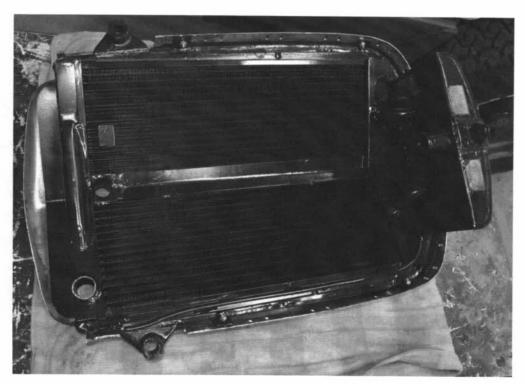
Graeme came up with a total reconstruction proposal using 2 new cores and re-using only the top radiator tank and the 2 mounting brackets.

When we picked the radiator up I was very happy with the professional way in which communications had taken place and how the project had been managed and that the cost was within the quote. Graeme mentioned that over the years they had made some very interesting one-off radiators for cars and for steam trains.

I have every confidence in the fact that North Geelong Radiators could handle any repair or re-coring that was necessary.

My comments might save you a lot of chasing around if you are in need of radiator work.

Graeme is on 5278 8368





\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

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Bruce would like any interested member to advise him of their needs by the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

It is thought that the cost of each unit would be about AU \$30 plus post and handling.

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