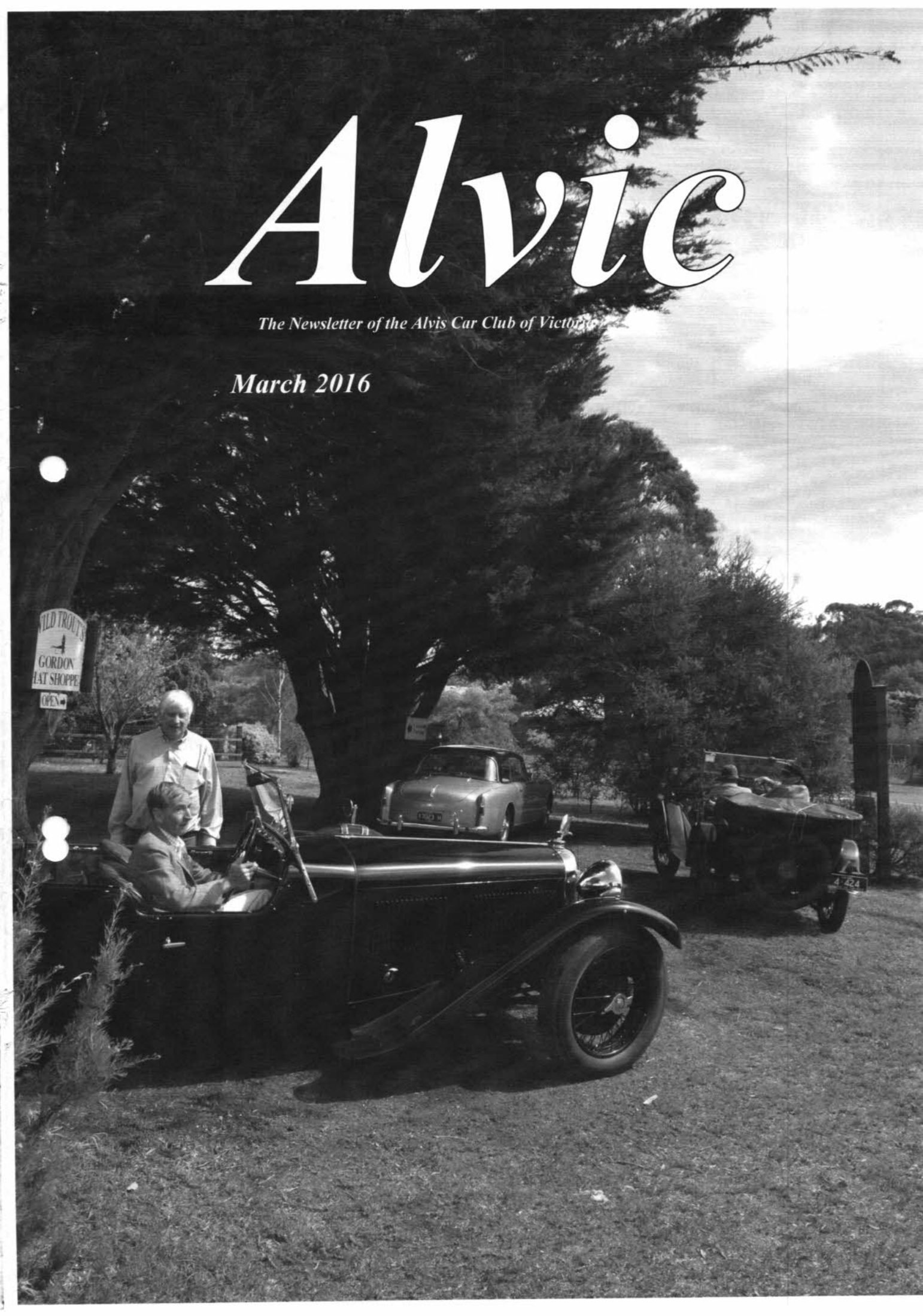


Alvic

The Newsletter of the Alvis Car Club of Victoria

March 2016





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.

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March 2016 VOL 55 ISSUE 2

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*Front page: Mark Weller & Don Bosanquet with the
Speed 20 at the Hat Shoppe. See article.*

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

2016 COMING EVENTS

ACCV 2016 EVENT PLANNING

MAR	18	GENERAL MEETING
	20	KALORAMA 60TH BIRTHDAY
APR	10	RACV CLASSIC SHOWCASE FLEMINGTON RACECOURSE
	15	GENERAL MEETING
MAY	1	PETANQUE CHALLENGE
	15	NATIONAL MOTORING HERITAGE DAY
	20	GENERAL MEETING
	28-29	WINTON
JUN	17	GENERAL MEETING
	19	EARLY MORNING RUN (MARK WELLER)
JULY	15	GENERAL MEETING
	17	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 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

At the February meeting it was pleasing to welcome Mac and Madge Hulbert who are generally around at this time of year. In fact they thought that the meeting was the following Friday when they happened to be passing the Malvernvale Hotel and realised that this was the night.

John Hetherington provided us with a most interesting presentation about Plane Spotting before Radar. It was quite amazing how elaborate the detection devices were, such as large concrete parabolic mirrors to capture the sound of approaching planes. There was quite an elaborate network of these constructions, with examples still to be found. In April we were to have a speaker talking about something completely different, however he is not available at this time so John Lang will provide us with a presentation on identifying planes via radar as part of his previous life as an air traffic controller. This as it happens will tie in well with the older technology presented by John Hetherington.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome back to our Club John and Kay Ball. They are in the process of purchasing Warren Bonning's TD21 Series II. We look forward to having them joining us regularly on events.

At relatively short notice we had to postpone the running of the Early Morning Run in February as we only realised late in the week that it coincided with the end of the White Nights Festival. Our route which was going to take us to the location of sites for the former cable tram network would have taken us into the crowds of people trying to get home after a night of revelry. This event will be rescheduled later in the year.

Many of you will have met and rallied with Mike Hirst from the UK when he has been out here on events: - the Julian Collins Memorial Rally and last year when he and Ruth were driving the McKinnon's TH 12/50. Mike recently suffered a serious heart attack, however he was fortunate to have received prompt medical attention and is on the road to recovery. We wish him all the best and hope to hear that he is up and about enjoying Alvis activities again.

Whilst not wishing to focus on heart attacks; we have become aware that there is a special offer going at present for clubs to purchase a defibrillator and accompanying training. These devices have been taken up by many clubs and are also located in many public places, such as airports, shopping centres, etc. We propose purchasing one for our Club and will subsequently advise when and where the training will be conducted. A training session can accommodate around 30 people.

As I mentioned in last month's report, Frances and I were participating in the 60th Anniversary veteran car run for the Veteran Car Club of Tasmania. We took our 1913 Siddeley Deasy which lives in the Launceston Automobile Museum. I am pleased to report that it was an excellent event going from the far northwest corner, at the former Van Diemens Land property of Woolnorth to the Southern most place accessible by road, at Cockle Creek. The weather was fantastic, the scenery wonderful and we traversed some fascinating roads. All told we covered around 1100 km without any mechanical issues and even the English Dunlop beaded edge tyres fitted to the front in 1960 managed to survive. These tyres have not had a puncture since they were fitted. We caught up with Chester and Sally McKaige at the start and after the rally. All is well there, however they were in the final hectic throws of organising the Tasmanian Delage Rally, which is about to get underway as I write this. Talking of Delage, the restoration of Chester's car is magnificent, but has still to be run and taken on the road, pending some final fettling.

Some upcoming events which I commend to you are: the 60th Anniversary Kalorama run and display on Sunday 20th March. The RACV/AOMC Classic Vehicles display at Flemington on Sunday 10th April and the interclub Boules competition on Sunday 1st May. Details of these events are provided elsewhere in ALVIC, however it will be good to get as much support as possible from our membership for these events. The RACV/AOMC display provides a great opportunity to present the Alvis marque to the public and supporting Kalorama at its 60th anniversary will be a fitting response to the close association our Club had with this event over many years.

We have just returned home from the excellent weekend away based in Ballarat, organised by Peter Mackay and Jen Hopkins. Our weekend commenced on Friday and completed on Sunday, thus missing much of the long weekend traffic. Peter and Jen did a magnificent job and provided us with some great Alvis motoring, camaraderie and entertainment. For those who couldn't make it to the weekend I am afraid that you missed out on a cracker of an event. On behalf of those who participated I wish to thank Peter and Jen for the wonderful organisation and for showing us great parts of their district. As icing on the cake the newly fettled engine in the Mackay's Silver Eagle ran perfectly.

I look forward to the monthly meeting this coming Friday night and if you are able to come to dinner at the Malvernvale Hotel prior to the meeting please let me know by Wednesday evening so that I can reserve enough places.

Andrew McDougall

THE BALLS ARE BACK!

The Balls who were members of the ACCV for many years and over that period had owned 3 lovely cars, have again felt the need to own an Alvis.

They have purchased Warren Bonning's TD21 Series 2 and it is great to see the car remain in the Club and in the hands of John who on past experience, has fettled his cars with great success.

We are sorry to see Warren and Pam Bonning now Alvisless, but understand that needs change, although their garage hides a small Italian treat and I think Warren's car interests are far from spent.

I spoke with Roger Bailey (Tasmania) recently and was interested to know whether he had brought his SA Speed 20 into the country yet. Apparently there had been some issues with Australian authorities and he has decided it might stay in the UK for a bit longer. My interest in his car, is that it is one chassis number before our Speed 20 and is also fitted with a Van den Plas tourer body.

Des Donnan writes:

I recently discovered a stock of light return springs that I had made some years ago to eliminate the "tinkle" given off by the starter pinion of a 12/50 moving forward when the car is on a downward slope. I had to buy a batch of 15 and have many left. I think \$5 plus \$1 postage would be a reasonable price if anyone needs one. They fit on the pinion shaft and keep it at the far end of its travel. The spring is overcome when the starter is operated.

Cheers Des

2017 NATIONAL RALLY

Arrangements are well underway now with most of the activities discussed with suppliers and booked, routes to various places are now being checked and lunch stops being organised. We have 57 people who have replied to us so far with 31 cars covering most of the Alvis models so there will be lots to see and talk about, with catch up being most important to all I would imagine. The motel is modern and we believe the week will be varied and interesting for everyone. The States of S.A., Tasmania, Victoria, N.S.W. and Queensland are represented. We still have room for more entrants, so if you are holding back please don't. We believe this will be a fun no pressure tour with only one fairly big day drive around 140kms with the usual good food and other places of interest and lots to do and see.

I would like to say that these 2-yearly rallies are for you so don't lose another 2 years, life is too short so go for it, your friends want to see you and so do we. The theme night, we believe, will again produce some great results - can't wait. We're looking forward to 2017 - Derek and his team are waiting to give you a rally to remember in Warwick Queensland in 2017.

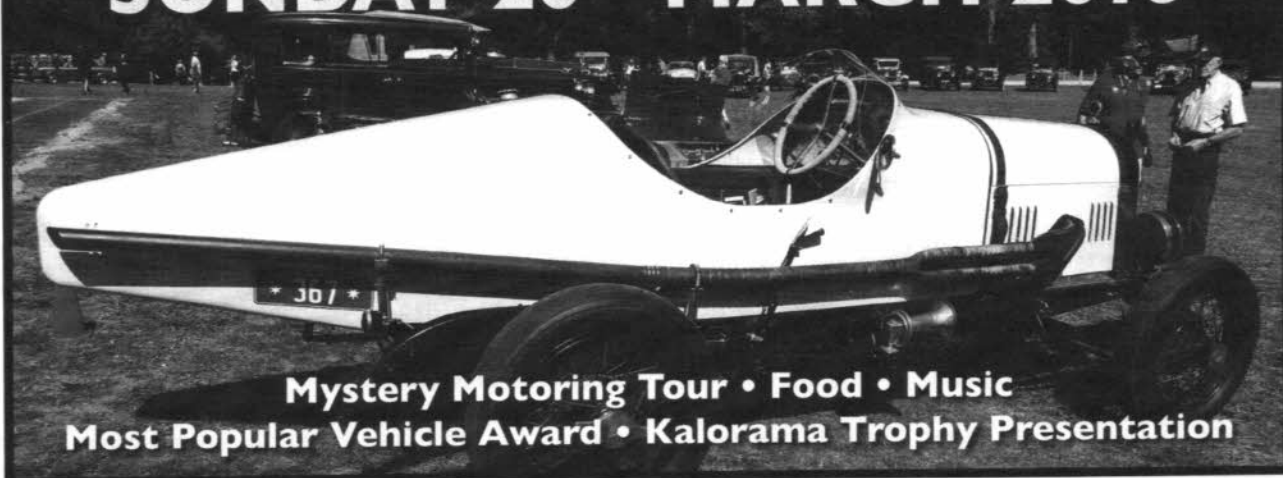
Derek Dixon



60TH ANNUAL **RACV**

KALORAMA RALLY

SUNDAY 20TH MARCH 2016



Mystery Motoring Tour • Food • Music
Most Popular Vehicle Award • Kalorama Trophy Presentation



PROUDLY
SUPPORTED BY



Kalorama Recreation Reserve, Mt Dandenong Tourist Rd Kalorama



- One of Melbourne's pioneering motoring events, running since 1956.
- Mystery Tour commencing at the Manhattan Hotel, Ringwood at 9.00am for a 9.30am start.
- Pre 1990 vehicles eligible for display on the oval.
- Inner circle of vehicles of particular interest chosen on the day.
- Most Popular Vehicle Award.
- Much coveted Kalorama Trophy awarded to the Club with the best display.
- Free face painting for children.
- Kalorama CFA kiosk with food and drinks.
- A vast array of cars from veteran to 1990.
- Vintage and post vintage motor cycle clubs.
- Display of agricultural machinery.
- Professional photographer available.
- A great place for a picnic and to generally mix with like-minded enthusiasts.
- Gate entry is still only **\$8 per person.**

**ALL PROCEEDS
TO THE
KALORAMA CFA**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PHONE:
Paul Edgar: 0419 369 542 Iain Ross: 03 9890 0524

 Find us on
Facebook

BALLARAT WEEKEND AWAY

11 - 14 MARCH

Weekend Aways are good fun and in nearly 20 years of Club membership I have not ever been disappointed.

There have been situations where we have lost some of those members who you could always rely on to be party to a load of nonsense and be creative with activities; and wondered what will we do for entertainment.

Sure we have missed the people but never been short of fun.

Ballarat was the same.

Marg and I were lucky this time that the hub was west of the city and us country folks didn't need to drive through the traffic. Sure the cat to the kennels and a pickup of rally plates for another event gave us a taste of what the others were dealing with.

Our gripe was the matter of the Speed 25 still off the road from September with a cracked head that was proving difficult to fix.

First event stop was Myrmiong's The Plough Bistro for morning tea. The expected 10 persons had evaporated to 5 due to unforeseen circumstances. Met the McDougalls and Mark Weller - coffee and tarts were good and the company always good.

It was of course the Labour Day long weekend and Ballarat was busy hosting the Begonia Festival and a variety of other functions. Lunch at Pipers on the shores of Lake Wendouree was open air and very sociable.

Warrick Hansted had traded his B-Double truck for something easier to park at the venue and we caught up with Peter and Jen our event hosts and organisers. Chris Higgins had started his journey on the ferry to Queenscliff and then 150km to Ballarat. David and Carol Head were there from Geelong. The Parsells and McKinnons arrived having done battle with Melbourne traffic from the wrong side of the city. The Hetheringtons arrived in the Alvis Cooper S with roof and windows down.

Accommodation was in the middle of Ballarat and within walking distance of both the Friday and Saturday dinner venues.

Friday afternoon, Peter took us to Field-Air at the aerodrome where he runs, fire fighting aircraft and support, aviation maintenance and many other facilities. Time was marching on and we had to tear ourselves away.

Dinner was at the Mitchell Harris wine bar down in the atmospheric dungeon beneath the eatery. Roof could have been a bit higher; I am still nursing bump to head! Warrick Hansted kept us in stitches relating some of the history of the district he lives in east of Hamilton.

Many will remember John Mitchell who was very active in Alvis matters in South Australia. His son Brad was with us on Friday night and left his father's photo albums with us to scan and enjoy. Many thanks.

Up with the sparrows on Saturday morning. Fortunately they had slept in, so 9.00am was a good compromise for both.

A very interesting tour of the district countryside was carried out and we were fortunate to have a ride with Mark Weller in his lovely SA Speed 20. Pity about the navigator (what have I said?) don't own up is a good defence although the evidence was resounding.

Lunch was at the historic town of Clunes where in 1851 gold was first found in Victoria. Stunning little township with a minimal population.

Following a quick visit to the annual Antiques Fair, it was time to make preparation for the evening dinner at Craig's Hotel.

Briefly - Thomas Bath opens the "Ballarat Hotel" in 1853. 1857 Walter Craig purchases the hotel. Various celebrity guests stay at the hotel. 1870 Craig dreams of his death and that his race horse "Nibble Foot" would win the Melbourne Cup. Both happen in 1870.

Our challenge was to dress as appropriate as one of the celebrity guests who did or may have stayed at Craig's Hotel.

Our host Peter Mackay dressed as the Captain of the U.S. C.S.S. *Shanandoah* described as a Confederate Cruiser and Jen as his companion. The Captain being in Ballarat to recruit crew members for dastardly deeds on the high seas.

John Hetherington as Lord Herbert Horatio Kitchener.

Marg Hetherington as "Peach" Melba. We didn't ask her to sing. Missed opportunity!

Frances McDougall as the ghost of Nibble Foot.

Andrew McDougall as Sir Donald Bradman (his carriage of a dangerous weapon, to wit a cricket bat into the hotel suggests the bouncer was otherwise occupied!)

Mark Weller as the equerry to George 5th who was absent on the night.

Dale Parsell as Mark Twain and Maritta his partner.

Your humble editor was unable to pass up the opportunity to be Jack Lang, who opened the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 and the only State Premier to be sacked by the

Governor of NSW. He was ably assisted by his wife Hilda Lang.

If I have missed anyone else who dressed up, I apologise, but the red wine was good and the night long!

Not a sparrow in sight on Sunday morning and Richard Tonkin greeted us following an early departure from Smiths Gully.

David Head also arrived from Geelong for another day's touring.

Morning tea at Buninyong and more interesting driving to the Gordon Wild Trouts Hat Shoppe on route to Ballan for lunch.

The Hat Shoppe can cater for every respectable Alvis gentleman's dreams from deer stalker to flat cap to bowler or bowling. And the ladies from bonnet to beanie to beret to capulet and every style there after.

Lunch at Ballan was an opportunity to award prizes for the observation section of the weekend and the McDougalls walked away with the very valuable bottle of champagne. The also-rans were relegated to a Tim Tam biscuit each suggesting more effort was required next time out!

Three stellar efforts were made to participate in the event.

Chris Higgins in his 12/50, from Rosebud to Ballarat by ferry and road on Friday then left us to join the RACV Great Australian Rally for a week touring Victoria.

David Head who overnighted in Geelong to be with us on the 3 days.

Richard Tonkin who had a 300km round trip to be with us on Sunday.

Very many thanks to Peter and Jen for their organisation, planning and hospitality for the event.

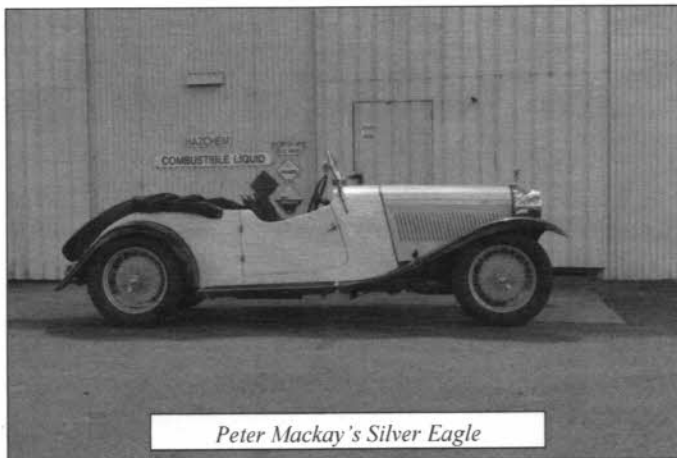
The all important car information:

David Head	Silver Eagle
Chris Higgins	12/50
Peter Mackay	Silver Eagle
Andrew McDougall	12/50
Alan McKinnon	12/50
Dale Parsell	Silver Eagle
Richard Tonkin	TE21
Mark Weller	SA Speed 20

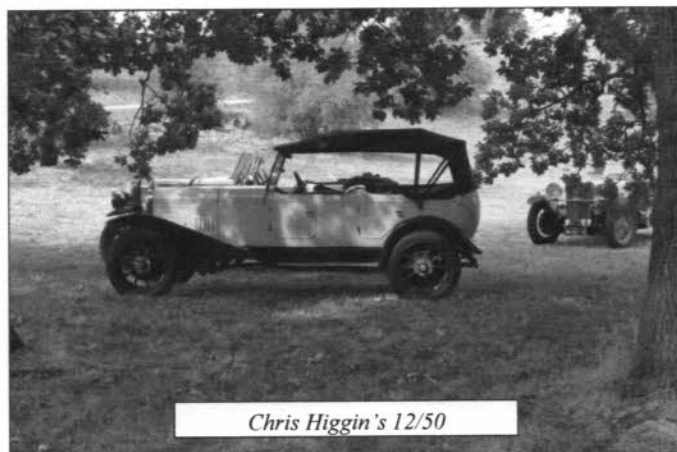
Moderns:
Bosanquets
Hansted
Hetheringtons
Langs

Photographic acknowledgement to McDougalls, Mackays, Parsells & Langs

....John Lang



Peter Mackay's Silver Eagle



Chris Higgin's 12/50



Tonkin TE21, McDougall 12/50, McKinnon 12/50, Weller Speed 20, Parsell Silver Eagle

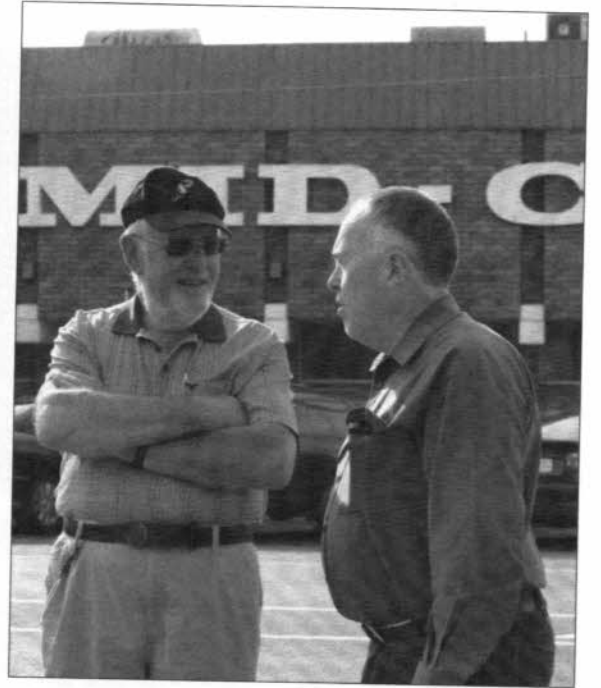


Weller Speed 20, Parsell Silver Eagle, Head Silver Eagle

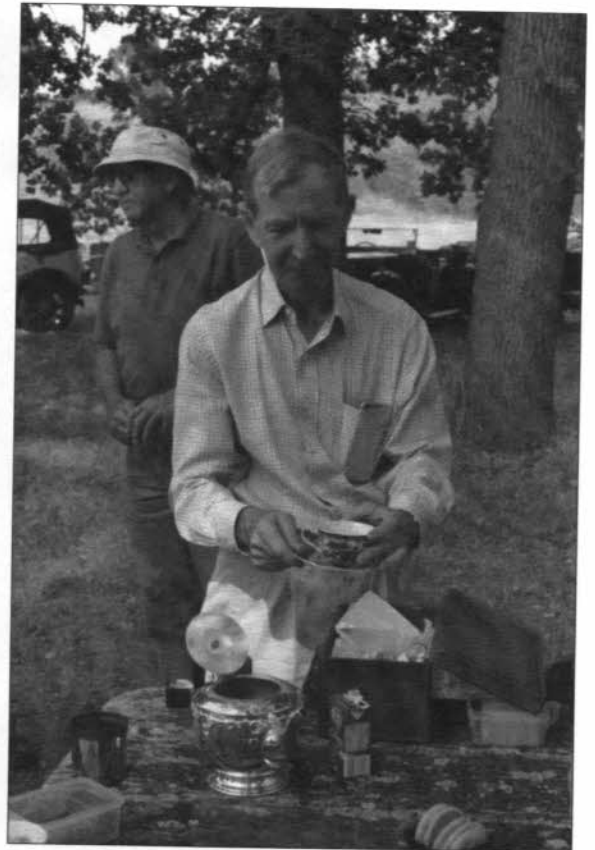


*Above: the group at Field Air with one of the Air Tractors that are used for fire fighting
Below: Saturday dinner at Craig's Hotel*

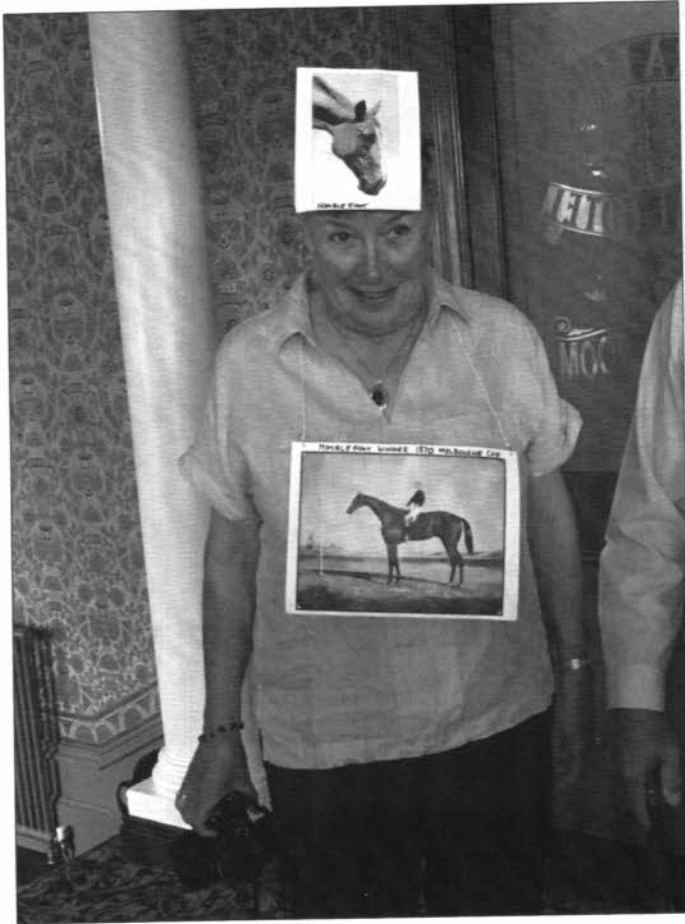




*Top left: all in at Mill Park
 Left: the Hat Shoppe at Gordon
 Above: John Hetherington & Warrick Hansted
 Below left: the dinner table at Craig's Hotel*



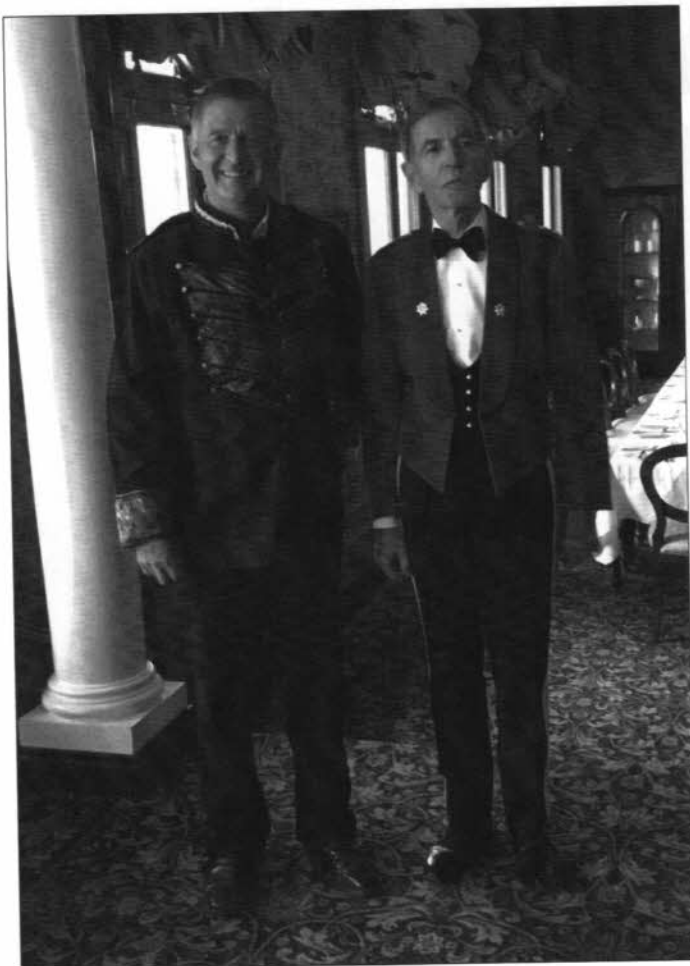
Above: Mark Weller with the the silver tea service at Mill Park



Above: The ghost of "Nimble Foot"
 Below: the Captain of the Shanandoah & George V's equerry



Above: Mr & Mrs "Jack" Lang
 Below: David Head's immaculate Silver Eagle



Photography by Noeline McKinnon

"FOR THE SHEER JOY OF DRIVING I'D LIKE TO GO THERE IN AN ALVIS"

(Advertisement in The Motor 1952)

When the TA21 failed to proceed in the way it should.

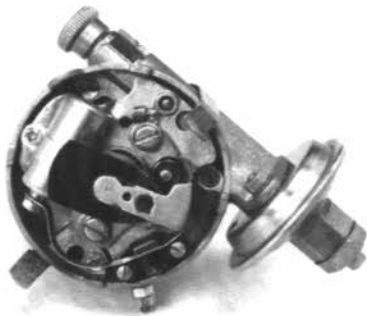
"About 90% of carburetion problems are electrical"

The comment was attributed to Don Bosanquet, the venue being a monthly club meeting some time ago. Somehow the comment just lingered at the back of my mind as, for the third time, I had removed the Solex carburettor stripped it down and in my final {somewhat desperate} attempt replaced many components just in case I was experiencing issues with old diecast.

The symptoms - you might ask? "Lumpy" idle when the choke was pulled out, lack of power and a propensity to stall when under load. When finally on the road the "lumpy" feeling became magnified as if some of the cylinders were not firing. Lastly back in the garage, with the air cleaner removed, a rather scary backfire of flame from the carburettor; and this was after the Solex was rebuilt. I had checked the idle mixture being a fixed jet carburettor and the timing was also checked with a strobe. All in all the spark seemed just fine.

That's when Don's comment just kept coming back into my mind. My attention now went to the distributor and coil. With respect to the distributor I had a few thoughts in mind such as the vacuum advance unit being perforated, the condenser or points failing or carbon tracking in the cap. I kept a spare distributor in the shed and now at the end of my tether saw no harm in replacing the one in the car. The beauty with the 3 Litre motor is that removing and replacing components is quite easy. The distributor was out and replaced within a few minutes. The coil was known to be good.

The result - the engine ran as it should.



The culprit ended up being the condenser {also known as a capacitor} by a process of elimination. With such an item there is no outward physical sign of failure. These items don't necessary totally fail, as in my case the points were not "burnt". What's more I wasn't suspecting it as the one in situ was not old. To that end I have read articles on the internet where authors lament at the lack of quality of the reproduction ones designed for Lucas applications. New old stock is not always the best way to go either as these parts can deteriorate. It pays to keep a couple of spares in the tool box. Changing one takes



about 5 minutes. Just make sure that you have handy a small spanner or tiny adjustable one in order to be able to remove the nut at the top. The only other tool required is a flat bladed screw driver. See above pictures.

For the TA-TC series of cars using the Lucas distributor DVX6A the condenser part number is **407044**.

You may well ask how such a small component can cause so much havoc. The answer is relatively simple. The coil is well understood to act as a transformer which as we know requires an alternating current (AC). This we can achieve with a set of points that can rapidly switch the direct current of the battery on and off. The change in the primary winding induces a large voltage in the secondary, which is connected to the spark plugs via the rotor, cap and leads. As a result of the transformer effect some current however will also be induced back into the primary winding, and while it is not nearly as great as the secondary current will nevertheless have sufficient voltage to jump or arc across the points. This will quickly destroy the surface of the points. (In my case the condenser was still partially functioning for as stated above there was no damage to the points). The function of the condenser is to trap and temporarily store the "damaging" charge. The charged condenser forces a flow of current back through the primary windings thus building upon that supplied by the battery. The overall effect is a larger secondary voltage and a stronger spark at the plug. It was in fact a weak spark at the plugs as a result of a failing condenser that resulted in the misfiring under load and the Alvis failing to proceed as it should.

I note that a high quality external condenser is sold and is used in racing applications. Information on this can be found at: <http://www.swif tune.com/Category/68/ignition.aspx>

Richard Wallach
richardwallach@hotmail.com

Mar 2016

Aware that this article has been published before in the AOC Bulletin and in Ken Day's "The Story of the Red Triangle," it is certainly worth reprinting for both long term Alvis owners and particularly new owners. Acknowledgement is made to the "Motor Sport Magazine" in which the article appeared in October 1972.

Charles Follett was a London car dealer, who following discussion with T.G. John about what the motoring public wanted and how a replacement for the Silver Eagle should look, provided the marketing that made the Alvis Speed 20 so successful.

In Nick Simpson's book, "The First Speed Twenty the SA 19.92 H.P.," Follett is accredited with selling 164 SA Speed 20s.

The interview with Charles Follett by Bill Boddy, the then Editor of Motor Sport.

.....ed

Chatting with Charles Follett

The Editor interviews a well-known Motoring Personality

Before and after the war Charles Follett was one of the great figures in motoring, both in Trade circles and in racing where he was an official and a competitor. The other day I tracked him down, a non-stop 74, who farms in Wiltshire in his retirement, and talked with him about how it all began.

During the early 1920s Follett had built up a lucrative business in the better used cars, which he would search out all over the country and dispose or to dealers in the Great Portland Street area of London. He developed this to a fine art, to a situation where his cars were bought by one firm at an agreed price, with no stipulations, because they knew Follett would sell them good vehicles which they could dispose of at a useful profit to satisfied customers. Around the latter part of what we now call the vintage years these used-car partners with whom Follett was doing business on this agreeable basis rang him up and asked him to have breakfast with them. He went along to see what was afoot and was told they had bought a showroom in Berkeley Street from where the Lancia Concessionaire-ship operated and wanted him to run it for them. At first Follett was disinterested, because he enjoyed travelling far afield looking for suitable vehicles to sell them and had no wish to be tied to working in London. However, he knew these used-car dealers would never be able to run a new-car agency on their own and the next day he agreed to do the job for them, on his own terms.

Follett thought the current Lancia Lambda "looked hellish", and he decided that as he was to sell them, he had better do something about it. So he went to the Albany Carriage Co. and persuaded their Mr. Button to make him Weymann bodies of improved appearance. With more rounded lines than the detachable-top Lambda had ever possessed and revised dashboards, etc. the advanced Italian product began to appeal to British tastes. Unfortunately Lancia's were lumbered at the time with Sixth Series cars which they could not sell and were therefore reluctant to supply Follett with the Seventh Series chassis which was the only Lambda to which special bodywork could be fitted.

This constituted a deadlock and while he was pondering this difficulty Follett went to the current Olympia Show

where the dealers met their many friends, and was told that Alvis Ltd. were in financial trouble and that their Distributors, Henlys Ltd. were unwilling to pay their Show expenses, so that the SMM & T might withdraw the allocated stand space. Follett was persuaded to meet Tommy John and discuss Alvis cars with him. Now it so happened that after severing his connection with the Berkeley Street showroom and Lancia business, Charles Follett had a special drop-head coupé body put on a Speed Six Bentley chassis for Capt. Eric Smith, then of Thom. Cooks and destined to go on the board of Rolls Royce Ltd. and important banking concerns, etc. At the time no-one, in Charles' opinion, knew how to build a decent body; they would point to the enforced low fulcrum-point of the hood-irons as an excuse for an untidy hood. He took his problem to Maythom's and told them to build the body with the hood down and, after he had approved the lines, it would then be their problem to erect it. This strategy worked and Capt. Smith was very pleased with the car. Some time after this Follett's bank manager asked him to call. He was disinterested but as a personal favour eventually agreed to a meeting, at which he was told that a very sizeable sum of money was to be made anonymously available to him, to run a motor business. He disliked this kind of approach but elicited from the Manager that the Bank was behind the intention. When the Alvis problem was presented to him he remembered this financial offer and rang his accountant at 2 a.m., telling the unfortunate man to get dressed, as they were about to leave in Follett's 36/220 Mercedes-Benz for Coventry, planning to arrive at 8 a.m.

The outcome was that Follett bought the showrooms at 18, Berkeley Street and took on the London Distributorship for Alvis. He recalls the first 14/75 with blue body and yellow wheels that he took away. Forming the Company of Charles Follett Ltd. he found Alvis cars reasonably easy to sell, but considered their body lines terrible. He had stormy meetings with a very stubborn T. G. John and a difficult Smith-Clark whom he had to fight about improving the lines and putting a bigger engine into the Alvis. But he took cars as they were finished buying 100 in a batch. In a couple of months there was a new Speed-20 for him to try but John didn't enjoy all their hustle! This was the time when the specialised coachbuilding trade was in a sorry plight and Vanden Plas were desperate. Follett went to their Mr. Fox and told him to prepare to make money. He told him he was going to make the best-looking dh coupé and open tourer bodies yet, and at £195 each instead of the customary £600 to £800. If they would do that, Follett explained he would order 100 right away. Young Fish of Vanden Plus went to work with cardboard and black paint and

designed bodies round Follett's big frame and soon splendid spray-gun drawings had been made of light bodies with thin pillars and Follett's favourite one-piece front wings. He considered that wings "were so expensive they made or broke a car," and soon his special Alvis bodies were being widely copied.

He tells the story of how he drew £895 from his bank in nice clean new £1 and 10s. notes, went to Coventry, and told John he wanted his board-room and to be left alone in it until he rang. This did not go down at all well but Charles had a forceful manner and his request was granted. He arranged the notes all round the table, then summonsed in the Alvis top-brass. "That" he told them "is what a customer has to lay out on one of your cars. Isn't it important that you offer them everything they want, and of good quality?". Having made his point by these spectacular methods, Follett proceeded to point out that leg room, headroom and plenty of luggage space must be provided, and production costs not allowed to interfere. The car had got to be worth its price.

Things progressed well. Smith-Clark was a very capable engineer, responsible for the impeccable Alvis all-synchromesh gearbox and the leaf-spring i.f.s. of the later Speed-20. The latter gave initial bothers with wheel tramp, cured by fitting harmonic front bumpers, but Follett regarded Alvis quality as very high, although they might not take quite as much trouble as Rolls-Royce. The 4.3 Alvis could have been their best line, given a little more development, but Follett considers the bigger-engined Speed-20 to have been the best model. Of earlier Alvis cars, he regarded the 12/60 highly but says it was tied up with so many patents that development was restricted. The Silver Eagle was the modernised version, good but heavy, and the later Speed-25 engine was very good. Dunn, says Follett, was an extremely fine engineer, responsible for the Alvis military vehicles. Reverting to the body situation, eventually Follett got Vanden Plas onto flow production, but then the wood mills suffered and they wouldn't wear his idea of a common mill supplying all the specialist coachbuilders, to keep them in continued production. "But I even got Thrupp & Maberly to build bodies for £200 each", Follett told me . . .

For publicity purposes he decided to race Alvis cars in those races which were for cars similar to those in his showroom. If customers then wanted the extra performance, it could be provided. He had had long experience of the Sport, having been an official at Brooklands in the Parry Thomas days and was on the Council of the go-ahead Junior Car Club, etc. Now he saw a way of being elected to membership of the exclusive BRDC: but it was to cost a fortune before he qualified! He had workshops at Hammersmith, and here R. F. Oats did miracles on the cars Follett proposed to race, aided by Zéré. Their first venture was with a 1,496 c.c. 12/50 Alvis. The Alvis works insisted on preparing it and it was intended for the JCC "Double-Twelve", with Lord Settrington (now the Duke of Richmond & Gordon) sharing it with Follett. But when they saw the ungainly body, so high that Settrington could not see out of it, the project was abandoned. But for the 1933 Brooklands season Follett ran this 12/50 with the body shortened by

Oats, a narrow red racing two-seater with cowled radiator. This Alvis won its first race at the 1934 August Brooklands Meeting, driven by W. E. Humphries, a Junior Long Handicap at 87.2 m.p.h. At the Easter Meeting of 1935 Oats drove it into second place in the Junior Short Handicap, almost tying with a Frazer Nash, and Follett drove it himself at the August Meeting, coming in second to Harry Bowler's 3-litre Bentley and only a fifth of a second between them, although the bigger car had had three seconds' start. Follett often used to go down to Brooklands late in the day to practise, paying the half-crown fee for the Track to be kept open. Oats tuned the engine of the 12/50, using a c.r. of 8 to 1 and alcohol fuel. At the 1935 Autumn BARC Meeting Follett ran a green 2.7-litre Type SC Alvis Speed-20 with full touring body, which won the October Long Handicap from Baker's Graham-Paige, lapping at 104.63 m.p.h. It was this car which, when Bradley was asking selected drivers to tell him the location of the notorious Brooklands bumps, caused Follett to look him straight in the eye and say "Percy, *what* bumps?", because, for its day, the i.f.s. gave a very good ride. It was then raced on some occasions with its front bumper in place, perhaps to damp the i.f.s. oscillations. This big Alvis secured a second place at the Easter 1936 races, and later in the season gained a third place, its best lap being at 108.57 m.p.h. In order to beat its handicap, the 1 1/2-litre Alvis was given a light-alloy flywheel made from a billet of Y-Y metal which someone had recommended. Follett recalls that it burst soon after he left the start! He has a big lump of the stuff, which entered the cockpit, to this day. . . . This 12/50, however, had lapped Brooklands at 96.71 m.p.h. in 1933 and was driven on that occasion by the Hon. Brian Lewis. It was perhaps inevitable that in the end a rift should occur with Alvis Ltd. They were very single-minded and when Follett won the Torquay Rally with a Speed-20 saloon of his own conception, against the works cars, he was not much loved. So he turned his attention to other makes. He quite liked the Railton and took on the agency. His black 1935 Light Sports Radical became a very famous car indeed. As first used in competition it went well. Oats having hastily revised the exhaust pattern, and later, with a special head, it was one of the most versatile cars ever. Its achievements have been well documented elsewhere; suffice it to say that it was equally useful in the Brighton Speed-Trials, at Shelsley Walsh, at Donington and on all the Brooklands circuits. It gave Follett the Shelsley Walsh sports-car record, fastest time at Brighton and it just failed to do a *standing* lap at Brooklands at 100 m.p.h. At the 1938 Dunlop Jubilee Meeting it clocked 98.43 m.p.h. for the first lap of the Outer Circuit Handicap and did its two flying laps at 111.17 m.p.h., to finish third. Later it lapped in a BRDC race at 112.7 m.p.h. Follett had great hopes of this accelerative car in the LCC Three Hour Sports Car Race but its weak gearbox selectors broke up, leaving him mainly with only top gear, and as it soon lost its brakes, the position was hopeless, although the Railton finished in 7th place. This last Railton was so light on tyres that it would do two seasons on one set, and it was run on pump Discol. It was the sort of car in which its driver could leave the West End, detained by work, about 1 p.m. and arrive about an hour later just as the Brighton Speed Trials were starting, driving straight through the Paddock to the line. It was an exciting car round Brooklands, where you had to know all the tricks,

driving straight at the Vickers Sheds, for instance, so that the air pockets would bounce you off, and where the wind was always very dodgy to contend with. Railtons sold well in saloon form, and might have done even better had Noel Macklin been less pessimistic.

Follett also took up the Lea-Francis, being on the Company's Board for a time, when the model with the two-camshaft Riley-like engine was in production. He entered a silver 1 1/2-litre at the Track in 1938, without success, although he lapped at just over 93 m.p.h. He recalls that, like Alvis, Lea-Francis were difficult about bodywork. He pressed them for a roomy 2/4-seater coupe with room for all the usual impedimenta, including grandma, the kids and the dogs. But no one at Lea-Francis apparently had a grandmother . . . Union troubles, body problems and no money killed that project.

Lord Avebury had come along with the American-base Lammas-Graham with its centrifugal supercharger. The latter ran at stupendous speeds and was in line with the occupants' necks if it should disintegrate but, asking Oats' advice, Follett decided to take it up. They ran a long-duration test at the Track, engine speed having to be kept down in deference to a difficult oil pump, although Avebury let the bumps send the revs up, with disastrous results. The unusual blower allowed power to build up after lift-off, like a turbine, but the car wasn't too bad and one or two saloons were sold, and on Brooklands in 1936 this 3-litre car lapped at 96 1/2 m.p.h.

After the war Follett realised that to get into the Bentley market, in competition with Jack Barclay Ltd., at the time of the steel-bodied Mk. IV he must devise a special body. So he persuaded Maythorn's to make him a sportsman's coupé with stowage for fishing rods, guns, etc. and sold six of them. Much of the fun vanished with the demise of the coachbuilder's art and one-off cars for individual clients and when a take-over bid ensued Charles Follett got out. Today he farms and breeds pedigree cattle and his wife breeds pedigree dogs. He motors in a much-liked, regularly serviced Daimler Sovereign and speaks with high praise of the economy and reliability of the Ford Cortina 1600 estate car he uses as a hack. His son now manages the Company, at the same premises in Berkeley Street, the emphasis being on Jensen cars. — W. B.



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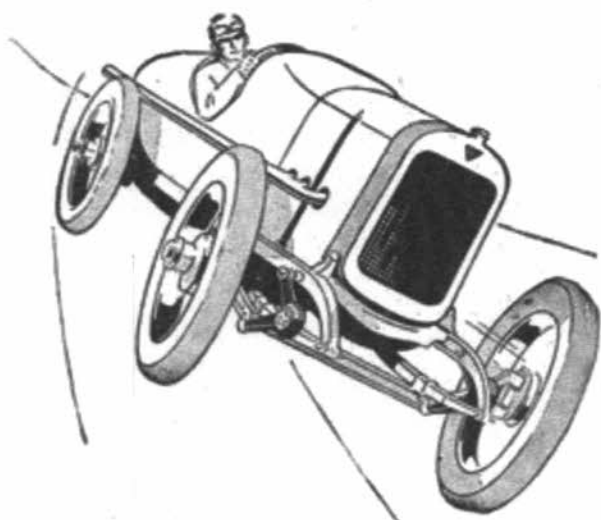
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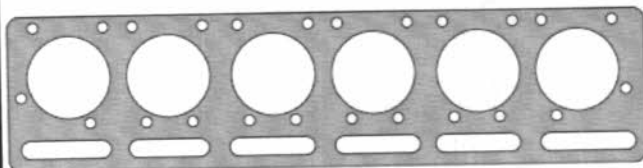
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Back Page:

John Link kindly sent me this photograph of a UK based Alvis 12/60. My records suggest that there are very few 12/60s in Australia and the model has not featured regularly in ALVIC.

In 1931 the 12/50 was joined by an even sportier partner, the 12/60hp. Introduced in 1931, the 12/60 came with a raised compression ratio and twin carburettors, modifications that raised its maximum power to 56bhp. A sports saloon, four-seater sports and two-seater sports were offered, the last clothed in graceful 'beetleback' coachwork. Testing a 12/60 'beetleback' in 1931, *Motor Sport* found that the car could almost touch 80mph, yet was capable of returning 30mpg even when driven hard. Today, Alvis 12/50 and 12/60 are among the most highly sought after sports cars of their day, with an enthusiastic following worldwide.

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