

Country Motor

Australia



**Magazine produced
for Pre-1960
motor enthusiasts**

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1938 Lancia Astura

Back copies of Country Motor
are available upon request

Country Motor is a E-magazine
created for and by country motor
enthusiasts who have passion for
ancient motor vehicles,
engines, in fact any motor that is
curious and old

Please forward all editorial
enquiries and contributions to
David Vaughan

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Due to costs of printing it
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very high demand or many
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Country Motor Australia

Issue 8

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Editor's Entries

Welcome to the eighth edition of Country Motor

Eighth Issue

Thanks to a few readers who
have provided some interesting material
for issue 8. This publication is getting
like the famous "Reader's Digest", full
of varied stories.

We all love to read about
restorations and motoring adventures
with a few motoring memories thrown
in the mix. This issue has it all.

For 35 years Peter Renou
struggled to finished an epic restoration
on his 1938 Lancia Astura. He provided
a great report on the work, however if
you want more details Peter also gave
me a far larger story that would have
taken up half the magazine. I must add
that Peter restored several other cars
during the monster project.

What could be more motoring
adventurous than an Alpine Trial?
Michael Southgate joined 32 entries in
the Vintage Sports Car Club's
challenging event, covering hundreds
of miles on the most dangerous roads
in Victoria! Are they crazy or what?

Many readers who are well over
retirement age and would no doubt
relate to Jim Oliver's account of his
early work experiences as an apprentice
motor mechanic. I had aspirations of
being a motor mechanic but failed an
aptitude test when applying for an
apprenticeship at Kellow Faulkner. My
career instead was in accounting and
senior administration. I have since met
many successful mechanics who also
failed the aptitude tests! My father, who
worked in the aircraft industry, was
happier that I only got my hands dirty on
weekends.

I have organised a visit by our
local club to the Morris Minor Garage at
North Harcourt on 17th February 2019
should anyone want to join us we will be
there after 12.30pm. Great collection of
cars from 1925, particularly Morrises,
café and gardens to see.

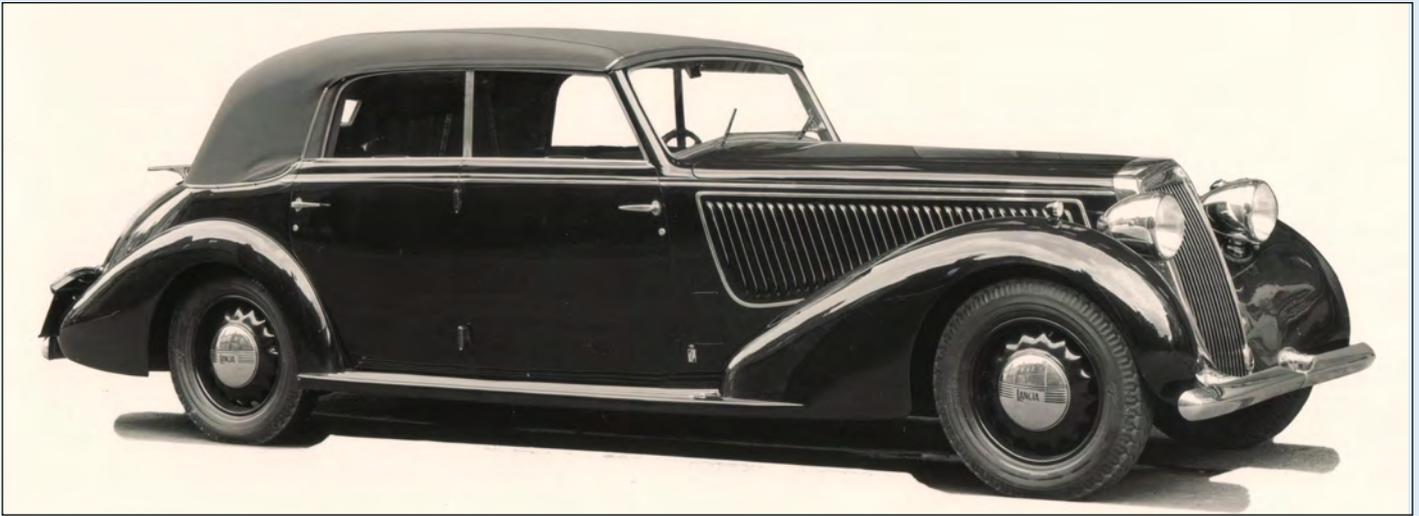
A happy and a prosperous New
Year to all readers.

David

1938 SERIES 4 LANCIA ASTURA CABRIOLET

BODY BY FARINA

restored by Peter Renou



The Astura – a Monumental Rebuild Part 1

In the late sixties Peter McAdam brought his 4th series Astura Cabriolet with him when he retired to Toowoomba from the UK. He died soon after, before anyone knew the car was here and I bought it from his nephew in 1971. Clive Beattie negotiated the deal and he and his daughter, Sue, drove it down from Brisbane. Don Wright said he had a photo of an Astura, which had been sent to him by a RAAF friend so he sent it to me. Lo and

beheld the photo was of my car. It was photographed in a field and the caption read, "Don, How do you like this one, '39 model, 27 HP, Ex- Italian Ambassador."



Astura Bowers is a publicity photo taken for the London concessionaires. It is not my car as the mouldings on the bonnet louvres are different.

Below: The Lancia stripped down for restoration



Although the car had been 'completely restored' in the UK it was in pretty bad shape. We cobbled it together and I drove it for a year to see if it was worth rebuilding. It was and I started dismantling it in November 1972. As it came apart the picture got worse and worse. A few examples will suffice: The sheet steel platform chassis was badly rusted so 'they' pop riveted sheet aluminium over the holes and the corrosion galloped. It was about to break its back just under the left 'A' pillar. The bottom quarter of the doors had been sawn off because the wood was rotten and the steel rusted; an aluminium skirt was pop riveted on and the whole bogged up. Mechanically 'they' did little better. The crankshaft had been ground 7½ thou off centre. Basically the car was totally worn out from neglect, corrosion and wear.

As it arrived from Queensland taken shortly before starting work. It didn't look at all bad but it was.

So began the 35-year rebuild. I already knew Clive Beattie as he had helped me find and maintain my first Lancia, a 5th Series Aurelia B20 and we were good friends. During this time I subsequently met Don Wright, Garth



The chassis mounted on a frame. The top side has been unroofed and new steel laid in. The bottom side shows the extent of the rust before unroofing

Rhodes, Gary Tishler, Peter McKinnon, Bob Gilbert, Bill Smith and Ken Day to name a few of the truly superb tradesmen who have helped me with the project. I am very fortunate to have them all as good friends.

The Chassis and Body

Initially it was Clive who helped me until his retirement. After I stripped the car and mounted the chassis on a vertical frame Clive skilfully 'unroofed', that is unbottomed, the chassis with the gas axe and I laid in new steel and stick welded it. That took many months of happy Saturdays at Clive's yard. Being a rank amateur, shrinkage caused the chassis to hog when I welded the bottom on. I asked all over town for someone to straighten it and I eventually met Gary Tishler. Gary said all I had to do was to place the chassis on blocks at each end and put two 20-ton jacks up to the roof. Joke! Gary did the job and then took on rebuilding the body. He persuaded me that a steel framed body is the only way to go – fortunately - as it will survive. The only wood in the car now is the door and dash cappings, the seat frames and the hood bows. He made an exact replica of the original and beautiful Pinin Farina body, even down to the slight differences side-to-side. The only original panels he could use were the bonnet tops and sides, the inner valences of the front mudguards, the firewall and the floor of the passenger compartment and boot. Gary may not be a genius but he is jolly close. He not only has an amazing ability to shape the steel, he has 'the eye'. He picked up the line and numerous subtle details, which makes all the difference and allows one to appreciate the genius of Farina's original design.

Peter McKinnon painted the car. Peter is meticulous and did a wonderful job. I wanted the green that Fiat used in the sixties and a slightly paler green above the moulding line for a subtle two-tone effect. He produced the colours I wanted in 15 minutes! He also persuaded me to use Acrylic paint for the topcoat as it is repairable. The only problem I have encountered with his job is it is very difficult to get the paint off to earth various electrical connections! Of course, I ran separate earth lines which is the proper way to go.

I worried for a long time where to find a trimmer until Garth Rhodes remembered a friend who had retired from the trade. We contacted Bob Gilbert; he came and looked at the car and he was hooked. Bob is another superlative tradesman who has a lifetime of experience and has seen and done it all. He produced all sorts of ingenious solutions to difficult problems and has done a wonderful job. We started with the front seat frames and it took us four weekends just to get them repaired and squared up in the body. The hood frames were a nightmare. Bob made new hood bows. The frames were all out of shape and worn. It took many weekends



to get the hood mechanism working properly. I had to bush all the joints and remake most of the bolts. Thank goodness for the lathe, the best toy I have ever owned. The second biggest nightmare was getting the door locks and window winding mechanisms to work. We spent many weekends juggling the windows and hood frame to get it all to fit. The rest of the trimming was straight forward - a lot of cows donated their hides to the project.

The Astura – a Monumental Rebuild Part 2

Now I come to the mechanical work. Garth Rhodes and I did the work and I couldn't have got the car to its present state without him. I have learned an awful lot from him in the past 20 years. Many times, as I embarked on a job, he said, "that won't work because...", I pressed on but he was right. Then I did it his way and the result is there to see. He bullied and cajoled me into doing the mechanical work properly. In addition I also had much help and advice from Don Wright and Bill Smith. The result – it is a wonderful motorcar.

The Suspension, Wheels and Brakes

The front suspension was worn out. The bushes, top and bottom were ground carefully to clean them up and the olives on the top and bottom of the 'king pin' were

built up with nickel bronze and turned to fit. We used nickel bronze because it work hardens. If it gives trouble I will make new olives from a case hardening steel. The little snubber springs were broken up so I had new ones made. The valves in the shocker absorber pistons also were broken up so I made new ones.

The rear suspension needed a spring reset and new silent blocks at the front. The rear shackles are the roller bearing type and these were in good shape. I fitted tubular shock absorbers to limit axle travel on rebound, as there is a risk the tail shaft could hit the rear edge of the tail shaft tunnel and bend the shaft.

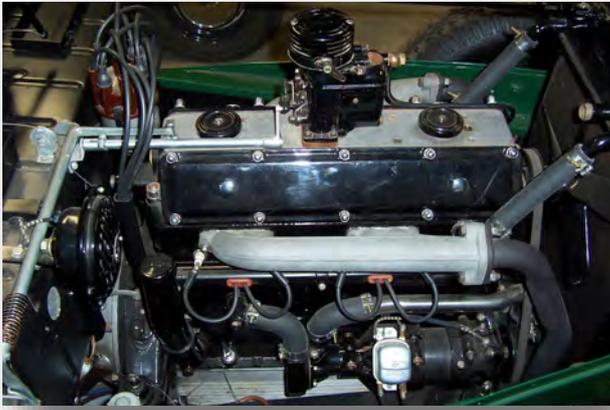
The road wheel rims were damaged from using 18" tyres, which had peeled off more than once. Initially I had Mark V Jaguar 18" rims fitted but when Michelin remade the pre-war pattern 16 x 45 tyres, I had a set of rims rolled in New Zealand.

The brakes are hydraulic using a Lockheed master cylinder, which is immersed in a tank of brake fluid and is operated by a bell crank – there is only a primary cup, no secondary cup. The master and wheel cylinders were sleeved. It is interesting that all the cylinders including the master cylinder are 1½" so the hydraulics do not increase the force on the shoes, they merely replace the mechanical linkage of the earlier cars. We turned the drums and statically balanced them; one needed 60 gm. Initially I used woven linings but these proved too 'grippy' in these very large drums. They would grab, at one stage pulling the wheel out of my hand and even lock on. I now have Ferodo 3923 material and it is very satisfactory. Incidentally it gives a better pedal than the woven linings. The brakes are very good, quite up to modern standards.

The Engine

The engine needed a total rebuild. As with all the Lancias from Lambda to Fulvia the crankshaft is a magnificent thing machined from a solid billet. The main journals of the original crankshaft had been ground off-centre but luckily I had a spare so that was ground. The rods were OK and the bottom end was rebuilt using white metal throughout. The block was bored. Pistons were made by Venolia and they did a beautiful job. The original pistons were flat topped so we made them with a sloped top and they are flush with the top of the block now. This raises the CR from 5.4 : 1 to 7.3 : 1.

The oil pump was pretty good; we just reduced the side clearance of the gears to 0.0015". A nice feature of this engine is the oil cooler. There is a labyrinth cast into the bottom cover of the sump. The oil enters it from the rear and passes over the



radiator shutters were missing but I got a set from 'I don't know where' and modified it to suit. The wax-type thermostat was rebuilt with new wax and works very well. The original water pump was located inside the timing case and was driven by a chain muff from the timing chain tensioner. The seal was the

string type and there was insufficient space for a modern seal. I really didn't fancy water in the oil so I made a pump to fit on the back of the double ended dynamo, an arrangement I had seen on the engine of the 1940 MM Astura. I used the nose and impeller from an early Flaminia pump and cast a new volute, inlet pipe and outlet into the side cover of the water jacket.

The other accessories were overhauled. The starter was OK and I replaced the dynamo with one from a VW as the original had only 90W output. Will Farnell rebuilt the distributor using an 8-lobe cam and Bosch GB700 points. The timing of the original twin point set up was all over the place. The carburettor butterfly shafts and linkages were rebuilt and that cured the backfiring on overrun, luckily.

The head was in good shape. I machined the 16 valves from modern high temperature stainless steel blanks. It is difficult material to machine and it was a laborious job on my 5" lathe. The valve guides were sleeved and hardened exhaust valve seats were fitted for unleaded fuel. The head and the top of the block were faced. I made new head studs from 41 ton steel. Despite all this I had great trouble sealing the head, combustion gasses appearing in the radiator. It was the 4th gasket, made by Swansons in Sydney that worked. They add an extra copper ring round the combustion chamber, the trick that tamed the notorious Lambda.

It was the valve gear that caused the most pain. On the first outing the rear four lobes of the camshaft and followers were damaged due to lack of oil. The oil supply has a tortuous route from the front main bearing via narrow passages to the timing chain tensioner through the flange of the water pump (which is in the timing case) and then on to the front camshaft bearing, up to the rocker shaft and finally down to the other cam shaft bearings and on to the followers and camshaft lobes. Phew! The culprit was the timing chain tensioner bush, which was worn and was allowing most of the oil to escape. We machined up a new bush, a complicated eccentric device, which incorporates a ratchet and two pawls to prevent timing chain slip if the engine is turned backwards. I also added an auxiliary external oil supply direct to the back of the rocker shaft. There is lashings of oil up there now. A new timing chain was fitted.

The Engine Accessories

The cooling system was straight forward. The radiator was re-cored. The

radiators were replaced with a sliding spline. We rebuilt the differential and replaced the bearings with taper rollers. The original gears were OK and marked up nicely. We had to make two new half shafts on Garth's lovely 8" Victor lathe.

Post Script

There is only one part I have not been able to find, the correct 3-spoke steering wheel. If anyone can help me find one (at a sub-stratospheric price) I would be most grateful.

Although this was a monumental rebuild over 35 years it was fun and I have acquired new skills in the process. There have been side projects along the way – various Appia jobs including an engine rebuild, the rebuilds of a BMW 1500 for Amy, a Fulvia Berlina for Meg and, of course, the Aprilia Ghia Grand Sport which is safely in Dorothy and Brian Hawke's hands.

The current project is the rebuild of the Augusta engine to be followed by recommissioning the lovely low mileage Aurelia B10. Roll on retirement.

The Astura – a Monumental Rebuild Addendum - 2016

Much has happened since this was written in 2005. It has taken until now to remedy all the small things that occur inevitably in a total restoration such as this.

I have now travelled 12,600 miles. In 2012, at 9,000 miles, two main and one big end white metal bearings failed so we decided to change to modern shell bearings. New connecting rods were made by Carrillo and, in the end, we had to make a new crankshaft. The engine was fitted up and balanced by Orger Engineering. They have done a marvelous job. The engine is utterly smooth and powerful now.

Peter Renou



I sold the Astura after 12,000 miles as I just don't like big cars. I love my little Appia and 1935 Augusta.

The Astura now in the museum in Gosford.

The Drive Train

Electrics and Instruments

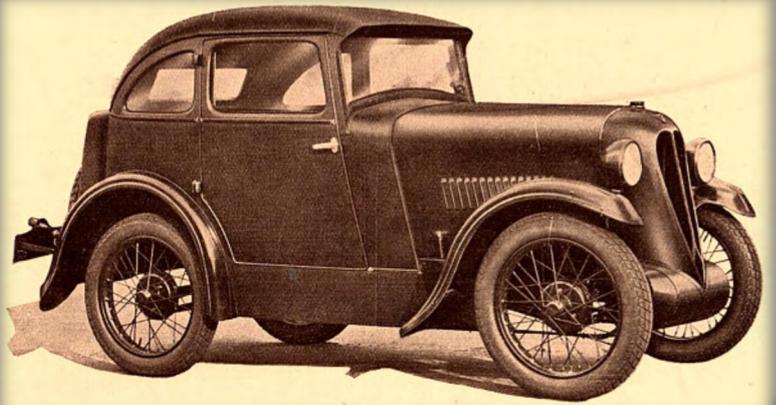
We fitted a modern diaphragm clutch and it is very smooth. The second speed gears were worn out and new ones were made. Otherwise the gearbox was OK but we fitted new bearings. The tail shaft was unusable and Ken Hastings, using a Holden Commodore tail shaft as the basis, made a new one.

These have a very nice Rezeppa CV universal joint in the middle, which takes



Australian Bodied Austin 7s

Wayne Styles forwarded a few photos of a recently rebuilt rare Floods 'Sportsman's Coupe' and a remaining 1927 J. George bodied chummy.



VSCC Alpine Trial/Alex Bryce

2-Day Rally

by Michael Southgate



When the prospect of this appeared in the calendar, plans were quickly made to participate. Firstly, a navigator was required and the breach was quickly loaded with Jack Quinn, son of the late Grahame and Jane. Heeding the warnings of the organiser James Earl, calls were made to secure lodgings in each of the overnight stays – Bairnsdale was particularly challenging due to its hosting of a number of other events, such as the Field and Game Nationals, Austin club and Bairnsdale Anniversary Ball Dance weekend. Once accommodation was secured, entry was paid and the only thing left was to look forward to a long (long) weekend of epic motoring.

PROLOGUE

My journey began the day before the Friday start, from Bendigo, and so did the adventure. In the spirit of the event, I decided on the road less travelled option and came down the Burke and Wills Track, stopping briefly for a photo at the monument commemorating the first powered flight by an aircraft designed and built in Australia. However, and unscheduled stop was necessary further down the road due to a tyre that refused to remain inflated. Having had the foresight to carry a couple of spare tubes for such an eventuality, I didn't really want to use one up before the event-proper had begun, so a minor detour via Stuckey's excellent Tyre Service in Brunswick paid off as they happened to have a suitable replacement tube in stock.

No visit to Melbourne is complete

without a visit to my mother Jill in Brighton East, in care. Unfortunately it was much later and briefer than planned, which also meant a battle with peak hour traffic out to the Yarra Valley, where I'd arranged to stay at my sister-in-law's place in Hoddles Creek for a five minute drive to the start just outside Woori Yallock at 9:30 on the Friday morning.

DAY 1—TO BAIRNSDALE

The start was significantly moistened by rain; not quite of biblical proportions, but enough for the less hardy to erect their hoods. No such luxury for this solo traveller – at this point I should advise that Jack had the misfortune to "do his back", and on doctor's advice had ruled himself out – I persevered with the hood down. At least there wouldn't be a repeat of a Tasmanian Alpine, during which I heard that someone following the same car witnessed the route instructions being flung in the air, only to disappear in its wake.

A field of 33 entries assembled outside the CFA station to receive their instructions, among which were many familiar faces – Mark and Sue Alsop, Des Dillon, John Shellard and Zhao Hang, Russell Meehan, Bernie and Helen Jacobson, Peter Holbeach, Mark Burns, Graham and Celia Burnham, Peter Latreille, Bob King, Andrew Green, Jack Lawson and Margaret

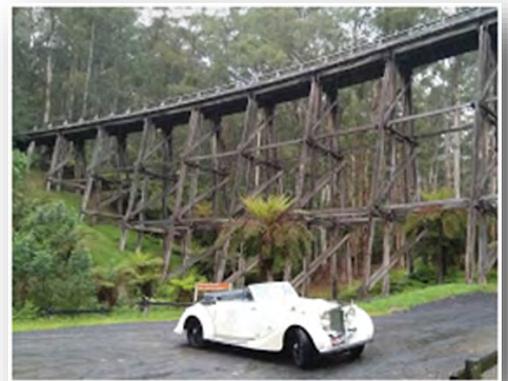


Pitt, Rob Alsop, Gerald Swinnerton and of course the organiser James Earl to name many – please don't be offended if I failed to include your name, I've been out of the loop for a while. Car-wise, the pre-war category featured a vanguard of Vauxhalls (eight in all!), a twosome of

Talbots, or a trio if you count the post-war Talbot Lago Record T26, a quartet of Alvises (Alvi?), a solo Sunbeam, a lone Lancia Lambda, a league of Lagondas (that's three – Rapier, M45R and the LG6 of yours truly), a lonely MG L Magna, a Delage, a Benz and a couple of Ford As. Moderns rounding out the field included a the handsome Talbot Lago Record T26 saloon, an Austin-Healey, a Lancia Fulvia coupe, an MGA and the

Disco of John and Helen Emery with trailer in tow in case it was needed (I believe it wasn't).

It was still a balmy 20-odd degrees, so while I was wet, I wasn't cold. My Akubra "Stylemaster" caught the rain such that each time I tilted my head to consult the instructions, a refreshing dump of water fell in my lap. Spirits were not dampened, however. Did I mention we were meant to be collecting answers to clues provided in the route notes? This task soon became secondary to keeping the car on the road in



the slippery conditions after realising that some of them required owl-like neck articulation! The route took us through Noojee, where again, I couldn't resist the photo opportunity of the Lagonda in front of Victoria's best trestle bridge, only a short detour off the main road. Proceeding almost as far as Tanjil Bren in the shadow of Mt Baw Baw, then on the C465 towards Willow Grove, one of the areas serviced by my father Wes's veterinary practice, we stayed to the north of Moe. This avoided the Princes Highway, using the C103 and C105 passing Yallourn North, Tyers, Glengarry, Toongabbie, Cowwarr and Heyfield.

It was somewhere along the way while I stopped to check a potential answer to one of the clues where I met Peter Mackie and Kate Davies in the Alvis Silver Eagle. They tipped me off regarding the lunch stop at "somewhere beginning with T" but it wasn't Toongabbie. It turned out to be the Tinamba Hotel, and sure enough, on arrival a number of proper cars were already parked nearby. An excellent meal ensued, with many remarking they'd have been happy to settle in for the arvo, but there were still many miles to cover before reaching the first overnight stop in Bairnsdale. Hoping to stay ahead of the dark clouds looming to the west, I set off, only to get another flat just

before joining the A1 near Stratford, the first indication of which was a severe case of understeer while negotiating the slight S-bend under the rail bridge – not a pleasant experience in a near two-tonne vehicle. Lagonda 1, lamppost 0 after a slight off-road excursion. A concerned motorist who was following was kind enough to stop, as was the Vauxhall of Alsop and Barrett and the Bentley of Des Dillon and co-pilot Julian Caples, but how many vintagents does it take to change a tyre? One. Apart from moral support there was not much they could do as I had the matter in hand.

The remainder of the trip to Bairnsdale was uneventful, but first port of call was to a tyre fitter to replace the spent tube. After refuelling, plotting the route for the next couple of days, inventing a few answers to missed questions in the vain hope that humour might earn me a few points, and a quick freshen-up, it was off to the RSL for dinner.

DAY 2—TO JINDABYNE

An early start of 7:30 was recommended, and we were to collect a lunch to be enjoyed on the way due to the limited options available along the route to be travelled. “Trepidatious” was the word I used when Daniel Zampatti and I shared how we were feeling about the day to come, having mapped the route and digested the ominous warnings of “the road from Tubbut to Wulgulmerang Junction being steep with extreme drop-offs and very narrow in parts”. This, combined with wash-aways and ruts, and wildlife waiting for the last moment to jump out and destroy your car unless you proceeded at walking pace, left me dreading a break down, or at least another tyre change. Daniel was having his own issues with fuel contamination in the Vauxhall resulting in his own misgivings, so we wished each other luck and prepared to depart.

Over a hundred miles of gravel awaited us but the weather was beautiful, perfect for open top motoring. I left shortly after the Dillon Bentley and Burnham A-Model ute, and headed up the highway towards Bruthen and Orbost. After misreading a signpost and heading down the wrong road, I realised my mistake and u-turned. Climbing the hill out of NowaNowa I noticed the Swinnerton Delage on the side of the road, so I stopped to see if I could help. Oil from the breather was accumulating in a spark plug recess and Gerald was checking to make sure it wasn't making its way into the combustion chamber, which we didn't think it was as the plug was tight.

On the way again and Orbost appeared next. I noticed a few cars stopped there but thinking I was way behind because of my detour earlier I pressed on along the Bonang Road, where, after about an hour and a half, 180 km of gravel roads began. In the



Peter Shellard's Lancia at Tubbut

meantime I'd passed the other Ford A as I pressed on to Tubbut, Victoria's most remote town (? – didn't even have a pub!). Being the last chance to get fuel before Jindabyne, I'd planned to slake the Lagonda's prodigious thirst here, thus significantly boosting the local economy. My arrival was greeted by the what possibly amounted to the entire town's population – two – and the familiar faces of John Shellard and Zhao Hang Chang in the Lancia Lambda, joined shortly after by a convoy of 4WDs coming from the direction in which we were to continue. The occupants showed some interest in the cars since they're not something you see every day on any road, let alone on roads some might only consider travelling in a 4WD. I asked one of the townsfolk how many cars had been through and was surprised to learn that we were the first. The Lambda departed while I refuelled and it wasn't until McKillops Bridge that I



caught up again, some 35 km further along the road. Stopping briefly for a photo once across the bridge, I caught up again and kept behind, anticipating a stop for lunch somewhere along the way. We pulled in at Little River Gorge Track for lunch, it had taken almost an hour and a half to travel 50 km. Having then eaten, John, Zhao Hang and I trekked the 400 m down to the lookout over the gorge to enjoy some spectacular views.

Back on the road with about three more hours of driving ahead of us, thankfully there were few questions to answer as much concentration was needed to negotiate the corrugations, pot-holes and ruts, the many bends and the occasional vehicle coming the other way. There was brief respite from the twists, climbs and descents as we approached Wulgulmerang East, where we joined the

Snowy River Road, this road opening up across the high plains before ascending and snaking through the hills again. It was hot and dusty as I followed the Lancia, a disadvantage that I believed was outweighed by the benefit of being able to see the hazards encountered by the car in front as I watched its back axle bounce around. It was hard at times to maintain traction out of heavily rutted corners as the back end tramped the car sideways, and the pace slowed to a crawl a few times to avoid crashing into and out of some of the more severe holes.

Crossing the border into NSW after a couple of hours it was time for another comfort stop, which we took at Wallace-Craigie lookout, where we could look back across the valley to see some of the 100,000 hectares ravaged by past bushfires, and to the road along which we'd just travelled.

With about an hour to go, the road followed the Snowy River, and I have to say it was very tempting to stop and take a dip to freshen up during the warm, dusty drive, but we pressed on. Soon we hit bitumen and enjoyed a brilliant drive into Jindabyne, almost enough to forget what preceded it. My accommodation was fortuitously right next door to the dinner venue, so after a quick shower, and a beer at the bar to wash down the dust, and greeting some of the intrepid travellers across the road at Rydges, we gathered for dinner in a room set aside for us to enjoy each other's company.

DAY 3—TO OMEO

Another big day of driving awaited us, but thankfully this was to be completely on that wonderful invention of John Loudon McAdam. With few breakfast options available, I set off early again and planned to stop somewhere along the way for something to eat and watch the contingent travel through. It was a beautiful day for motoring, with clear skies and dry roads, even in the shade. The Lagonda is quite a handful round the tight stuff but when the road opens up it comes into its own, as remarked by an Irishman I'd passed up the road, who later pulled in beside me at Corryong, where I decided to stop for a bite. He was in the area for the gliding, but reminisced about a bloke he knew who had an Alvis Speed 20 back in the day, and how he enjoyed seeing me exercise the car.

Clearly I left too early, because I waited, and waited, and then refuelled, during which I saw the Shellard Lambda pass through and continue on. Shortly thereafter, Peter Latreille and Bob King passed through in the Vauxhall, and I had a quick chat with them while they had a coffee. As they went to refuel, Jack Lawson and Margaret Pitt arrived in the MGA, and after a quick exchange of pleasantries I was on the road and catching up to the Vauxhall.

The clues were of secondary consideration since I'd faired so poorly in answering them so far, but I still wanted to make an effort. The instruction was to cross the Mitta Mitta River only once while remaining on sealed roads. The Omeo Highway was the obvious choice but taking it meant crossing the Mitta Mitta three times. VicRoads 6 indicated that the other option, Yamba Road, was unsealed. Surely we weren't meant to go the long way round via Tallangatta? No matter, I ended up staying behind the Vauxhall, and the questions seemed to indicate we were on the right track, but could the organiser be so devious as to pose questions which, if you answered correctly, indicated that you'd travelled the wrong way? Inconceivable! Regardless, we got to travel another beautiful road, through the Mitta Mitta Valley and on to another beautiful lunch venue in the Laurel Hotel, aka the Mitta Pub, an attractive spot right on the river. Some of the others in the know visited the Blue Duck Inn further down the road, scene of many a decadent session as legend would have it.

The Omeo Highway presented more twists and turns to negotiate, along with fabulous scenery and very pleasant weather, but within a couple of hours we arrived in Omeo. Most stayed at the Golden Age Hotel, the décor of which was appropriate for the visiting cars. The wide upstairs balcony was perfect for socialising with pre-dinner drinks, and many took the opportunity to do so, making for a very convivial atmosphere. Again, the venue coped ably with the influx of 60-plus out-of-towners in funny old cars.

I have very vague recollections as a six-year-old attending an event celebrating the centenary of the proclamation of the Shire of Omeo in 1972, where we camped on the footy oval, during which the locals perhaps weren't quite so welcoming. This might have had something to do with the fact that the alcohol purchased for the weekend only lasted until late on the Friday evening. I'll leave some of the more senior members of

Andrew Green's Alvis 12/50 passing the Golden Age Motel at Omeo



the club, the names of whom have been withheld to protect the guilty, to paint a more accurate picture... if they can remember it.

DAY 4-TO MANSFIELD

The weather forecast was ominous, and it proved to be challenging. A drizzly start was just a taste of what was to come, and shortly after the first clue I found the MG L-type on the side of the road. Nothing serious, they were just putting on rain gear, prudently as it turned out. Drizzle gave way to rain and then, as we gained altitude, fog. And the fog got thicker, so thick, you could barely see the side of the road. I'd caught up to the Shellard



Lambda again and it was handy to have a set of tail lights to follow. Most of the ascent and descent was done in second gear, with visibility being so low and road being so wet.

Having reached Harrierville, the worst of the weather was behind us. The next challenge was negotiating the Tawonga Gap but that was dispatched with ease. Back on the floor of the Kiewa Valley and with a clear run ahead, I overtook the Lambda and made for Myrtleford. Pressing on out of town towards Lake Buffalo and beyond, it was a welcome sight to see hops making a comeback to the land where they used to proliferate, along with tobacco, the drying kilns of which are the only reminder that it too was grown here. As per the instructions, sealed road gave way to gravel where the Buffalo River Road gave way to the Rose River Road. I also found I was having to give way to a number of motorcyclists coming the other way. The odd answer was also being found so I guessed I was on the correct route, and I arrived in Whitfield in good time for lunch at the Mountain View, where the Jacobsons were kind enough to invite me to join them on their table.

A delicious meal consumed, it was back on the road again to complete the final 60-odd kilometres to Mansfield. This left plenty of time to wander up and down the street, which was surprisingly busy for a Monday, with people taking advantage of the unofficial long weekend. There was also time to relax, make up a few more answers to clues and freshen up for the event's closing dinner held in the Delatite Hotel. Again, locals catered for us with ease, providing a separate room for our gathering so we could carry on without bothering the

other patrons. There were some brief formalities and the handing out of blocks of chocolate to participants of note, one of whom was me for travelling solo. It all seemed to end too soon, but there was the journey home consider.

EPILOGUE

Apart from the threatening weather, the two-and-a-bit hour trip back to Bendigo was uneventful. Having originally intended to have a lie in after a few days of early starts, a check of the weather radar showed storm clouds straddling my intended route so I thought it best to get a move on. I enjoyed a quick croissant and coffee at the excellent Mansfield Coffee Merchant, where I found Mark and Sue Alsop, who are adept at finding the good places, followed soon after by Des Dillon. Then I was off in a race against the rain, which I managed to win by only a few minutes. James Earl is to be congratulated for putting on a fabulous event, one which I thoroughly enjoyed. Yes, there were some long days of driving but that's something we enjoy. And some of the roads were diabolical, and tough on man and machine, but this was just like some of the rallies I remembered as a child in the same car. This was a nostalgia trip. When's the next on?

Various entries—Alvis & Model A Fords, Lagonda Rapier & Benz and Talbot Lago



A short story by Jim Oliver: Apprentice Motor Mechanic

I was in for a big shock and a new direction in my young life when I fronted up at Clifton Motors Garage in Queens Parade Clifton Hill on a bleak day in April 1951. I was to serve a three months probationary period as an Apprentice Motor Mechanic.

Somehow, I survived these three months! Then on the Twelfth of June 1951 I was duly signed up to serve for a five year Apprenticeship as a Motor Mechanic. My days as a slave for Clifton Motors had begun. Clifton Motors was run by a Mr. McEown and a Mr. Cameron. I assumed that they were in partnership? Cameron lived in a dwelling attached to the Garage. He was on site 24 hours a day. He was not a bad kind of bloke but McEown was a different type all together. Mean, unfriendly and frightening for a 15 year old starting out in the work force. I was to earn 50/6 shillings a week.

I knew nothing at all about mechanics. I had never seen under the bonnet of any vehicle. I had never taken any interest in mechanics at all! My Father however had other ideas. I guess that most males of my age also had no choice in choosing their future careers either. I was just told one day that I was to leave School, I was at Northcote High School and I was to start work as an apprentice Motor Mechanic. It was a big shock to me as I thought I would follow most of my School friends into some administration type role in life. Not for me however, I was destined to be a Motor Mechanic.

To start my life in an environment such as Clifton Motor was horrific! Once my Father had signed the Indenture Form I was on my own he had no more to do with me and my Job. I cannot recall being encouraged at all by him or being asked how I was going. I was in a new world. I rode to work on my pushbike. We lived close to the Garage and it was within walking distance anyway. My bike was my savior, friend and constant companion. Looking back I think I saved me.

I worked a 44hour week with a 4 hour stint on Saturday mornings. I was given no overalls, boots on or anything else on starting. There were 4 Motor Mechanics, one Office Clerk and myself employed there. It was a busy Garage. They must have had some kind of contract with the RAAF as we always had a couple of Dodge or Plymouth Staff Cars in for some type of mechanical work. Hoover Vacuum Cleaners also used the Garage. They had three small Bradford Vans. Weeties had a factory in Nth Fitzroy and we also had at least four of their trucks garaged within the building each night.

These were about three ton trucks which were big in those days.

My job from day one was that of a cleaner, grease monkey, parts washer, petrol pump boy, lunch boy and any other crap job that they had. First thing each morning was to clean and fill all of the Oil Bottles and put them out the front in the correct position with the Petrol Browsers. This sounds easy but for someone who did not know what 20/30/40 SAE grades of oil's were, it was a little confusing. Then there were the different brands of oil. Shell, Vacuum, Ampol and probably others. Put out the watering cans, the air hose. Hide the distilled water bottle in the office. Some customers insisted on Distilled Water to top up their battery. We had a special distilled water bottle. It had the correct makers label etc. on it but old McEown filled it up all the time with water out of the tap. He even sold it as distilled water out of the tap. This was just one of his many shifty procedures.

I had to serve petrol. I had to check on every customer's vehicle, oil, water, battery, tyres and anything else that they wanted. I guess this was a good experience in itself as I soon knew where the dipsticks were located on most models; I even learnt what a dipstick was! Batteries were another thing, some under the bonnet, some under the seat, and some under the floor; in fact they could be anywhere. I also learnt how to open bonnets! This was not an easy job for a skinny 15 year old kid lifting a side opening bonnet of a big Buick Eight. Somehow or other I managed. At least while serving petrol I was out of the workshop area. The garage was a of a reasonable size. It was draughty and cold in winter and the opposite in summer. Each morning while cleaning the oil bottles I daydreamed away and watched the Double Decker buses go past. My brother Gordon was a conductor with the M&MTB. I think he was the "Errol Flynn" of the buses. He had numerous girlfriends and they waited for his bus to come along.

This had its perks for me as I was very sweet on one of his particular girlfriends. Gordon is four years older than me and some of his admirers were about my age. Imagine my excitement when a bus came by with her on it going to work. She also looked out for me and I received a friendly early morning wave. Heaven!

MacRobinsons Chocolate Factory was not far away. One of our regular customers worked for them. In what capacity I do not know? He often gave me a brown paper bag full of chocolate seconds. These were for my Mother. She

loved them. I am sure old McEown did not know about this. Another regular was a professional punter or Bookie, I am not sure. He knew Mum had two bob on the horses each week. One day he said to me, "Tell your Mother to back Lord Burley" and another horse whose name I cannot remember. They were both in the same race and real outsiders. So, I told Mum. She said neither of them had "No hope"! We decided however that we would both put 5 shillings on each horse. I used to sell papers in and around the Clifton Pub. I knew where the SP bookies operated in the back lane. I sometimes acted as their "lookout" it was called another name (cockatoo?) that I also cannot remember. I was sent to put on the bet. This I did to the amusement of all the bods in the lane.

Mum and I were the only ones to back Lord Burley who won at 100 to 1!!! We were rich! Wonderful.

I soon became very proficient at repairing punctures. No fancy machines in those days. Two tyre levers, a rubber mallet and a big mash hammer. I don't think we even had a bead breaker. No tubeless tyre's either. We had two hoists. These were operated by air from the compressor. I had to use them by myself also. The hoists were the old railway line type. They were big and dangerous. I became a grease monkey. We did many "grease & oil changes" In those days not many people did their own. Spraying leaf springs was another dirty job that I had to do. All vehicles had grease nipples in those days. Finding them was a challenge in itself. At first I used to grease the brake bleeders as well! I soon learnt where the grease nipples were on most vehicles and trucks and not to grease the brake bleeding nipples!

Preston Motors were just up the road. They were Holden and GM dealers. Gould's Motors were British cars, Austin and Morris. Bayfords were the local Ford Dealers. We had a Machins Spare Parts Shop close by also. The shop next to Clifton Motors was an upholsterer. I think he had been there since the "Horse & Buggy days. He was a great old bloke and I became friends with him. His shop was like a Museum. In fact he still did saddles and all that stuff. I had no friends at Clifton Motors. I was bullied a fair bit and made to do almost all of the low jobs that had to be done. The Office Manager was as mean as McEown. I had to ride my push bike to the fruit shop, (in my lunch time) and get him 5 pence worth of "Mixed Fruit". I had to get at least two/three pieces of different fruit for him, can you imagine that. The fruit shop man took pity on me I think and

he always helped me out.

I must have lifted a spanner occasionally. I did do a bit of work on one of the RAAF vehicles. They were a six cylinder side valve engine. I was given the task of doing a de-coke on one of them. Nothing brain surgery about this. The head was just a lot of bolts to undo, scrape all of the carbon off and put it back. No new head gasket I add. No, I had to jex the old one clean and put it back. Needless to say the RAAF would have been charged for a new one. I was also given a job to do on an Austin A40. I am not sure just what it was that I had to do. However it required me to jack it up in the front with one of those old mechanical jacks. I had next to no training on using these jacks. I jacked it up under the radiator. I guess you can imagine the damage this caused old McEeown, not to mention the cost to him! Happy Days. One thing I did learn from McEeown, when I started the Dodge up after the de-coke job, I said" WOW it Goes"!

He lectured me that I was never to say that. Never be surprised that your work would not be good.

I always remembered that. Later on I was to pass this advice on to other budding motor mechanics. McEeown and Cameron were speed heads. They had about a 1930's Plymouth tourer that they raced somewhere? It had twin carbies and I am sure other things done to it. McEeown and one of the mechanics also had HRD motorbikes. These were the Harley Davidsons of the day. I once was a pillion passenger on one for a ride! Frightened me to death! We were doing 60 miles per hour around a side street opposite the Garage. I never got on it again.

I started school again. This time it was at a technical school. Richmond Tech. This was another big shock for me. I came out of Northcote High School with kids all the same age as me. Richmond Tech was a different world. I honestly wondered where I was on my first day. Most of the students were into their late teens or early twenties. In fact, it felt like I was in a new environment with adults. They all seemed to be competent already in Mechanics. We attended one day a month I think? However I am not too sure about this? Night classes were more frequent, maybe two a month. I rode my faithful push bike to Richmond and back from Nth Fitzroy. Night classes were all held in classrooms. Theory mainly.

Day classes involved the actual workings of Mechanics including welding both Oxy and Arc welding. I was completely lost!

At this stage of my life, I was living away from home in a boarding house. This was still in North Fitzroy not far from where I worked. I had an Auntie, Auntie Beckie, Mum's sister living in Richmond. She was great and I went there for tea on my school nights. Her two sons were both panel beaters/spray painters and we got along together. I was a couple of years younger than them. I must have been about 16 or 17 then. I think this was the only part of going to Richmond Tech that I enjoyed. There was a shop opposite the Tech that introduced me to jam donuts! Many a time I suffered a burnt lip or tongue from the hot jam. They were great however. I could probably afford only one a month.

My life at Clifton Motors came to an

abrupt end one morning in September 1953! Clifton Motors had engaged another apprentice motor mechanic maybe six months earlier. He was a suck to put it mildly and I did not get on with him at all. He was a couple of years older than me and a bit more mature. I was not aware of the intention of being called into the office on this morning. Much to my surprise there was an inspector from the Apprenticeship Commission there and McEeown and Cameron. I was informed that I was to be transferred to Riverside Motors in South Melbourne. No explanation! Nothing! That's it!

I was a bit shocked and dumfounded I can tell you. Although I hated this place, I was at a loose end with my private life and this was just another hurdle I guess. The Apprenticeship guy was great. He took me aside and told me that this was the best thing that could happen to me. He obviously knew what this place was like.

So I started my trips to South Melbourne on the Red Rattler train from Rushall Station. Leaving the faithful push bike at home. Then walking from Flinders Street Station to Yarra Bank Road, South Melbourne. Riverside Motors was a Ford Dealership.

This started some of the happiest days of my life. The journey to the end of my apprenticeship finished here at Riverside Motors. This was a wonderful end compared to a disastrous beginning. My time at Riverside Motors is another story!

James K Oliver
23rd June 2014.

Vintage Sports Car Club Traditional Motorist New Years Day 2019 Country Picnic Lunch at Muckleford South Cricket Oval close to Castlemaine in the beautifully restored 1862 school, all facilities. BYO picnic. Ham, tea and coffee provided from 11am. Enquiries Roger or Sue Rayson 5472 2002 or 0407 533 350 email: rogray7142@bigpond.com



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BITS & PIECES

It's **Brian Long** here the owner of the Aurelia B12 that you have on the cover of your excellent magazine which I did not know of.

My wife Tjitske took this photo of your car when we met in Boort. (thanks Brian, it's the first photo I have with me driving the Alvis. Note the sun roof is open, it helps to circulate the air on a hot day, also I miss open air motoring I experienced in many cars I've owned in the past)



Thanks for your latest country newsletter , a great read. As I indicated earlier I have a Citroen light 15 traction avant for sale .The car has been meticulously restored . It would make an excellent rally car , or even a daily driver. Leather trim , chrome redone, excellent paint in original colour all new body rubbers, discrete electronic ignition, electric fuel pump etc. New Michelin X tyres, nothing to spend, drives perfectly. This would be the best example available in Australia. Price : \$30,000 ,with RWC , negotiable with-out. Located at Marong. May trade Austin 7, or interesting vintage car / bike .0408170955 cordy@iinet.net.au



I don't have much history on the traction, other that it is a 1954 Slough built example I'm not sure, but I think that was the last year of production as the fabulous ID 19 came out in 1955. These have a much nicer level of trim than their French counterparts, i.e. leather & wood rather than cloth & tin. The car apparently spent most of its life in Corryong before being purchased by master restorer Brian Love of Rochester. Apparently it was a very nice tidy example before restoration to a very high standard . **David Cordy**



Thanks for magazine. I have not done much to the FJ Holden. Now we starting to get better weather I hope to have all panel work done by end of January and painted by March. **Ian Lumb**

Wreck of the Month



The EJ Holden was released in 1962 and displayed at Northern Motors, Sydney Road, Fawkner. Along side is the superseded EK Holden. My father and I had a test drive of the new car.

The word 'survivor' is a commonly used term these days, regarding vehicles that have escaped the crusher. The majority of cars are recycled for next year's washing machines.

Motor cycle enthusiast Anthony Kelly sent me photos of a sad EJ Holden ute he saw on Ebay, bidding was up to \$810 so far. It is a survivor but only just! It was located not far from Wedderburn at Bridgewater on Loddon. It's a useful parts car or a very challenging restoration. It certainly would be an unsuitable car for the preservation class at a concours.



I had the opportunity to read all the CMs that you sent me ; a pleasant hour or so! The articles on Kalorama brought back memories. I used to go to them when first married. I have a photo of my son, now aged fifty, in nappies sitting in what turned out to be Fergie Anderson's SS Jag! We never put two and two together until recently.

My Aurelia B12 is the only one on the road in Australia at the moment. I have owned it for nearly forty-five years. It was repainted about three years ago and I rebuilt the engine about six years ago. It was imported by an Italian market gardener when

he emigrated to the Mornington Peninsula. He used it to tow his produce trailer to the Vic Market which explained why it had an angle iron back bumper and tow bar, a slipping clutch and noisy first gear when I bought it from its third owner.

There is one more B12 in Creswick owned by Alan Hornsby, one in Cooma, the Vin Thomas (of Albany) one now with his son in Qld and Brian Hawke has one (wreck) in Mittagong area. All are non-runners although the Creswick and Cooma ones are close to being back on the road.

Brian Long



Our youngest son Matthew and wife Greta live in Los Angeles and they send me photos of any old cars they see in town.

Below is a 1930 Packard eight cylinder sedan and a 1958 Ford Fairlane sedan



A couple of Ferguson TE20 tractors (the 'Grey Fergy') in a repair workshop in Tallangatta, 1954. 500,00 were made in the UK and 60,000 (TO20) were made in the USA

Commonwealth Bank

Veteran Car Rally

28.06.61

David's Photo Gallery of Early Events



Don't adjust your set. I was trying out a Russian box camera that was given to me, the result was not so successful.

At the start in Sydney Road, outside the Coburg Commonwealth Bank T Ford cab of S C Lord

1914 FIAT of J Tishler

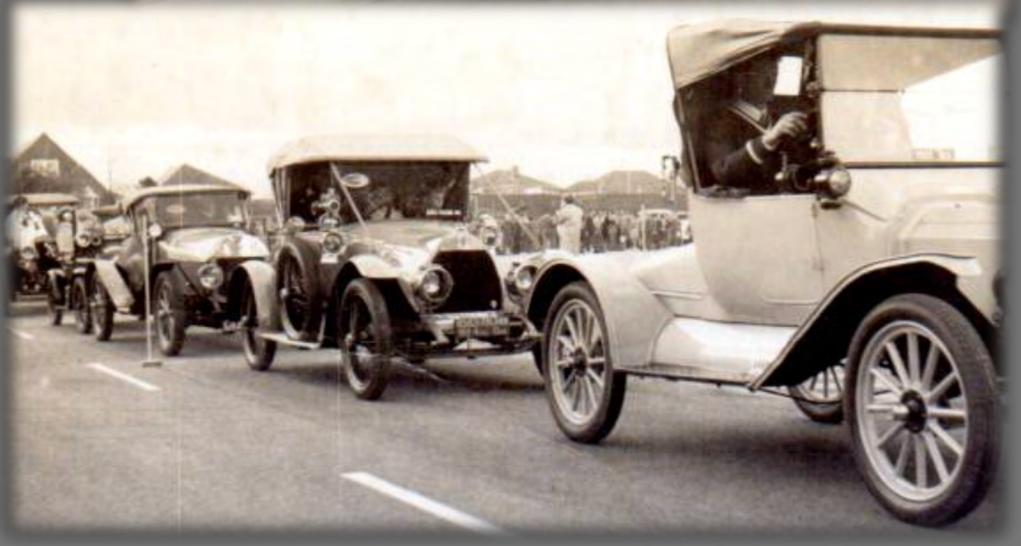
1913 La Buire owned by W R Buchanan

1904 Minerva owned by J Alderson

1913 Mercedes owned by Jack Nelson

W A Buchanan's La Buire leaves Coburg to motor to the city for lunch then onto Chadstone Shopping Centre for a few trials

1915 Model T Ford leads Frank & Jean Shield in their 1913 Aquila Italiana. The only other one of the model is in Turin. They won last year's Golden Fleece Veteran Car Rally





Who can remember when the Commonwealth Savings Bank took an interest in veteran cars? The above is a blue plastic bank-passbook envelope with a veteran Renault on the cover issued by the bank. 1913 Humberette of J P White at Chadstone, 1914 Standard saloon of R B Morrow, 1910 Daimler tourer and a Model T Ford, Val Stocks with his 1904 De Dion Bouton and De Dion Bouton of F G Neilson

